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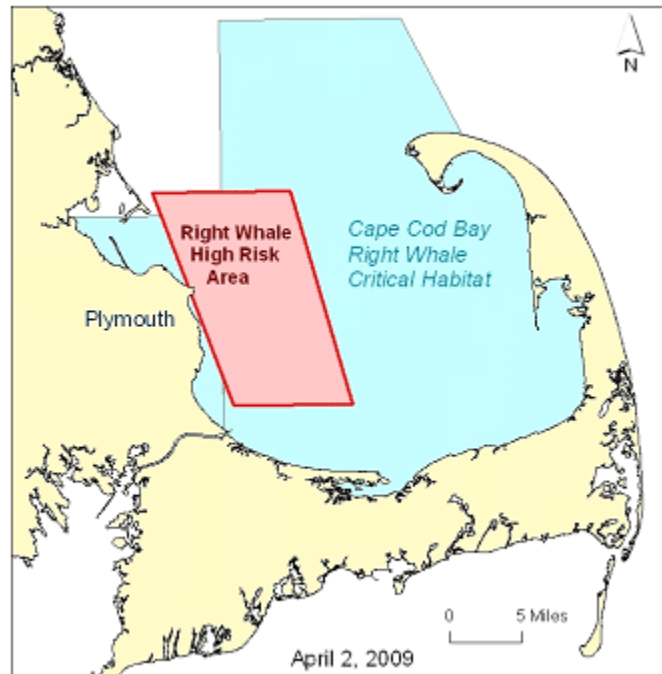


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April 2 , 2009
Advisory To Mariners

HIGH RISK AREA FOR RIGHT WHALES IN WESTERN CAPE COD BAY

Zooplankton collection throughout Cape Cod Bay on April 1, 2009, coupled with observed right whale behavior, indicate a High Risk Area in the western portion of Cape Cod Bay. Approximately 12 right whales were observed sub-surface feeding near the shipping lanes. These near-surface feeding activities are known to put whales at risk of vessel collision. Our observations indicate that a significant resource is present in the area, but that it is not substantial enough to persist for more than several days, unless a new food resource rotates into the bay. However, based on the current zooplankton resource, sub-surface feeding behavior, and the proximity to the shipping lanes, mariners are advised of this area of elevated risk. Mariners should reduce speed within the designated area and be alert to the presence of whales feeding just beneath the sea surface.



A new federal law prohibits vessels greater than 65 feet in length from exceeding speeds of 10 knots in Cape Cod Bay during this time of year; however right whales are still vulnerable to collision with smaller vessels. For the safety of both mariners and the whales, **vessel operators are strongly urged to reduce speed (less than 10 knots), post lookouts, and proceed with caution to avoid colliding with this highly endangered whale.**

Vessels are also prohibited by state and federal law from approaching within 500 yards of a right whale. Massachusetts Environmental Police and U.S. Coast Guard are authorized to enforce the 500- yard rule. Fishermen are reminded that the approach rule also prohibits them from starting fishing operations (setting or hauling gear) within 500 yards of a right whale.

When right whales depart the area, the advisory will be lifted.

Whales that are surface and subsurface feeding on dense blooms of zooplankton (copepods) are at great risk for vessel strike. More vessel traffic is expected in this area over the next few weeks with seasonal increases in recreational and commercial fishing, as well as whale watching, and passenger ship activity. Right whales are the most endangered large whale in the North Atlantic , with a population of approximately 400 animals. Vessel strike is a major cause of human-induced mortality for right whales.

Management of maritime activities near right whales is part of the *Marine Fisheries* Right Whale Conservation Program. The Right Whale Conservation Program is a cooperative effort between *Marine Fisheries* and the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) to study and protect right whales in Cape Cod Bay.

Real-time monitoring of right whales through vessel and aerial-based surveillance, and forecasting of right whale presence through habitat analysis, makes the Massachusetts Right

Whale Conservation Program the most comprehensive of any program throughout the species' range. The presence of whales is also being monitored by *Marine Fisheries* and Cornell University researchers through real-time acoustic listening stations.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) issues warnings to mariners via the Northern Right Whale Sighting Advisory System (SAS). Participating agencies in the SAS include *Marine Fisheries* and the Massachusetts Environmental Police, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), CCS, and other research groups. Advisories can be viewed at the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Region web site (<http://rwhalesightings.nefsc.noaa.gov>) and are broadcast over NOAA weather radio ([http:// 205.156.54.206/nwr/](http://205.156.54.206/nwr/)).

For more information, visit the *Marine Fisheries* website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries or contact Erin Burke (Erin.Burke@state.ma.us, 978 551-0152) or Dan McKiernan (dan.mckiernan@state.ma.us, 617 626-1536). Center for Coastal Studies (www.coastalstudies.org) right whale researchers Dr. Charles (Stormy) Mayo and Dr. Ruth Leeney can be reached at (508) 487-3623.

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