



Paul J. Diodati
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626.1520
Fax (617) 626.1509



May 7, 2007

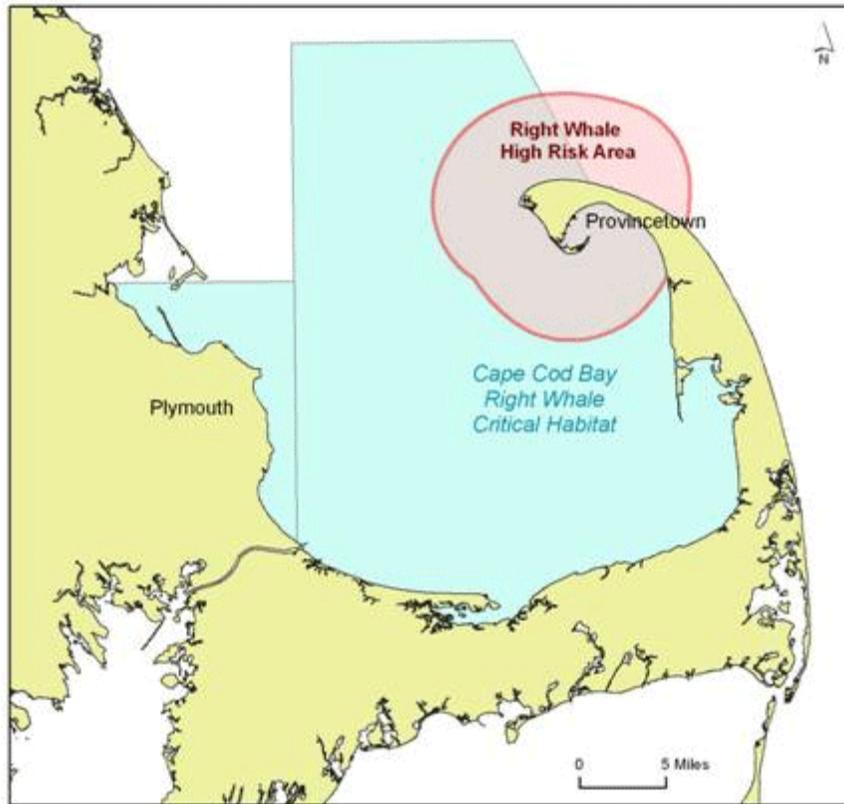
Marine Fisheries Advisory

AGGREGATION OF RIGHT WHALES FROM LONG POINT TO HIGHLAND LIGHT

Updated Advisory to Mariners

An aggregation of right whales off Provincetown has prompted the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) to re-issue an advisory to all vessel operators. Operators are advised to reduce speed (10 knots), post lookouts, and proceed with caution to avoid colliding with this highly endangered whale. On April 25, *Marine Fisheries* issued an initial advisory for this area. The DMF/CCS aerial survey team reported an aggregation of 20 right whales surface feeding around the tip of Cape Cod. Survey efforts conducted on May 5 established that right whales are still present and feeding in this area. Whales that are surface feeding on dense blooms of plankton (copepods) are at great risk for vessel strike. We will re-evaluate the level of risk after analyzing whether the plankton resources in this region remains high enough to support right whale feeding, aggregation, and residency. When right whales depart the area, the advisory will be lifted.

Vessels are 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.



Right whales are the most endangered large whale in the North Atlantic , with a population of approximately 350 animals. Ship strikes are a major cause of human-induced mortality for right whales and 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. On March 12, 2007 , the CCS aerial surveillance team spotted a juvenile right whale off Provincetown with deep propeller wounds. It is unknown where this vessel interaction took place, but based on the condition of the wound, the injury likely occurred only weeks prior to the sighting. This sighting highlights the risk posed to right whales by vessel traffic.

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. Since 2003, *Marine Fisheries* has collaborated with Cornell University and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) to build the world's first real-time acoustic monitoring system for right whales in Cape Cod Bay . Right whale "call" are detected by the buoys and communicated back to Cornell and shared with

researchers, vessel operators, and fishery managers. Support for the Conservation Program is granted from NOAA Fisheries and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation.

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 (www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/whale.htm) and are broadcast over NOAA weather radio (<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. Nathalie Jaquet can be reached at (508) 487-3623.