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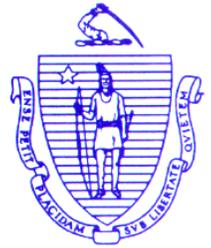
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MAY 4, 2015 - ADVISORY TO MARINERS

Update on Right Whale Persistence in Cape Cod Bay

The Division of Marine Fisheries is issuing this advisory to update mariners of the ongoing situation in Cape Cod Bay. A large aggregation of up to 75 right whales continues to feed in Cape Cod Bay especially in the southern and western portions close to shore. This persistence of whales during this first week of May is later than the historical norm. .

Recreational boaters and commercial fishermen are reminded that state and federal law prohibits approaching a right whale within 500 yards. **The 500 yard rule also prohibits the setting of fishing gear, including fixed fishing pots, within that distance of a right whale.** Fishermen are urged to wait to set gear until the whales have left the area. Massachusetts Environmental Police and U.S. Coast Guard are authorized to enforce the 500- yard rule. Vessels that find themselves within 500 yards of a right whale should slowly and cautiously exit the area. Vessel collision and entanglements are the major causes of human-induced mortality for right whales. For the safety of both mariners and whales, **vessel operators in this area are strongly urged to proceed with caution, reduce speed (less than 10 knots), and post lookouts to avoid colliding with this endangered whale.**



DMF will publish further advisories in the days ahead as whales change their distribution and depart the Bay. Data to determine whale distribution and feeding behaviors come from the Massachusetts Right Whale Conservation program supported by NOAA Fisheries and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

Through these funding sources, DMF contracts the Center for Coastal Studies to conduct aerial surveillance to determine whale presence and perform habitat sampling to understand foraging behavior.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) issues notices 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://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/psb/surveys/>) 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 researcher Dr. Charles (Stormy) Mayo can be reached at (508) 487-3623.

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