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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Trap Gear Closure and Speed Limit in Cape Cod Bay Lifted Today (Tuesday, May 15, 2018)

May 14, 2018 Aerial Survey shows that right whales have departed Cape Cod Bay

The Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (PCCS) conducted an aerial survey of Cape Cod Bay yesterday (Monday, May 14, 2018) as part of DMF's ongoing right whale conservation efforts. Clear weather conditions allowed PCCS' aerial survey team to complete an entire survey of the Bay and no right whales were observed in the Bay. **Consequently, DMF has lifted its emergency regulatory closure on the setting of lobster traps and the speed limit of 10 knots or less on small vessels (smaller than 65') in Cape Cod Bay effective today, Tuesday May 15, 2018.** DMF's lifting of the trap closure allows commercial and recreational fishermen to begin setting their lobster gear in the previously closed waters of Cape Cod Bay.

DMF extended the trap closure because in late-April there was an aggregation of over 100 right whales feeding on dense zooplankton, and remained through the first week of May - beyond the scheduled May 1 opening. Feeding right whales are susceptible to entanglement in vertical buoy lines. Because yesterday's aerial survey found no right whales in the Bay, DMF is lifting the closure today. However, as right whales are migrating off the Massachusetts coast, all mariners are advised to be cautious of their presence. Furthermore, it is unlawful to set or haul any lobster gear - or even approach - within 500 yards of a right whale. If you observe a whale entangled in fishing gear while on the water, report it immediately to the Center for Coastal Studies (800-900-3622), the Office of Environmental Law Enforcement (800-632-8075) or the National Marine Fisheries Service's Entanglement Hotline (866-755-6622).