



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
THE DIRECTOR

SEP - 4 2007

Mr. Jeff Ruch
Executive Director
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
2000 P Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Ruch:

Thank you for your letter regarding the status of the draft final rule to restrict vessel speeds in certain areas along the U.S. east coast to protect North Atlantic right whales from the threat of collisions with vessels.

The draft final rule is still in review. As I indicated in testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee on July 31, 2007, this is an important issue for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service. Vessel collisions are the primary threat to the recovery of this highly endangered species. At the time of my Committee testimony, I was optimistic review of the rule would be completed in short order. However, the review is ongoing.

I appreciate your interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,

William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.

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