

August 14, 2007

Dr. William Hogarth
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
14th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Hogarth,

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) is a Washington D.C.-based non-profit, non-partisan public interest organization concerned with honest and open government. Specifically, PEER serves and protects public employees working on environmental issues. PEER represents thousands of local, state and federal government employees nationwide. We have been involved in the North Atlantic right whale issue since 2001.

On July 31, 2007, the House Natural Resources Committee, led by Chairman Nick J. Rahall, held an oversight hearing on "Crisis of Confidence: The Political Influence of the Bush Administration on Agency Science and Decision-Making." At this hearing, you were asked about NOAA's proposed rule to limit speed limits of vessels in right whale habitat. As you are aware, this rule appears to be held up by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). You stated that you were confident of the science on which the rule was based, and affirmed that the rule would be finalized within two weeks.

Two weeks have passed since your testimony at the hearing, and the rule has not yet been issued. Therefore, we ask that you check on the status of the rule, and let us know when the rule will be promulgated in its final form. With only 300 right whales left, additional delays threaten the very survival of the species.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jeff Ruch
Executive Director