



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

MAY 9 2005

ADM Thomas H. Collins
Commandant, United States Coast Guard
Department of Homeland Security
2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Collins:

Over the past decade, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have taken many joint steps to reduce northern right whale deaths due to vessel collisions. The USCG assists NMFS in: detecting and, in some cases, towing carcasses of whales that have died at sea; actively participating in Recovery Plan Implementation Team meetings; leading the joint operation of the Mandatory Ship Reporting systems; and assisting in education and outreach programs for the commercial shipping industry. Most recently, the USCG has initiated Port Access Route Studies to identify shipping routes at two U.S. locations to identify routes that may reduce the risk of right whale ship strikes. The USCG continues to be an important partner in right whale conservation.

We are asking once more for your assistance in reducing the risk of mortality to right whales as a result of ship strikes. We are requesting that information distributed to mariners through broadcast Notices to Mariners and the Mandatory Ship Reporting system include language from NOAA recommending speeds of 12 knots or less in areas used by right whales, when consistent with navigational safety. The exact language is enclosed.

Thank you for considering our request in this very important matter. Please do not hesitate to call my staff or me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

William T. Hogarth

William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.

Enclosure



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THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES



NMFS requests the following changes, in *bold italics*, in the U.S. Coast Guard's broadcast Notice to Mariners, and the Local Notice to Mariners provided by all U.S. Coast Guard Districts along the U.S. eastern seaboard (seasonally, when appropriate).

QUOTE: THE ENDANGERED NORTHERN RIGHT WHALE MAY BE ENCOUNTERED WITHIN 20-30 NM OF SHORE AS THEY MIGRATE FROM FLORIDA TO THE GULF OF MAINE. RIGHT WHALES ARE SLOW MOVING ANIMALS THAT ARE PRONE TO COLLISIONS WITH VESSELS. VESSEL OPERATORS ARE REMENDED TO USE **EXTREME CAUTION** AND PROCEED AT **SLOW SAFE SPEEDS** IN AREAS USED BY RIGHT WHALES TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF COLLISIONS WITH VESSELS. **NOAA RECOMMENDS SPEEDS NOT TO EXCEED 12 KNOTS WHEN ALSO CONSISTENT WITH NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY.** INTENTIONALLY APPROACHING WITHIN 500 YARDS OF RIGHT WHALES IS PROHIBITED AND IS IN VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW. A MINIMUM DISTANCE OF 500 YARDS MUST BE MAINTAINED FROM A SIGHTED WHALE. NOAA RECOMMENDS THAT OPERATORS ASSUME THAT ANY WHALE SIGHTED WITHIN 30 NM OF THE COAST IS A RIGHT WHALE. FOR LATEST ADVISORIES AND SIGHTINGS, MONITOR USCG BROADCAST NOTICE TO MARINERS, NAVTEX, NOAA WEATHER RADIO, CAPE COD CANAL VESSEL TRAFFIC CONTROL AND BAY OF FUNDY VESSEL TRAFFIC CONTROL. CONSULT US COAST PILOT FOR WAYS TO AVOID HITTING RIGHT WHALES AND APPLICABLE REGULATIONS. COMMERCIAL VESSELS OVER 300 GT ARE REMENDED TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MANDATORY SHIP REPORTING SYSTEM. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONSULT 33 CFR 169 OR THE US COAST PILOT.
UNQUOTE.

The new NTM is transmitted at regularly scheduled broadcasts until 30Apr05:

QUOTE: DURING THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, VARIOUS SPECIES OF WHALES, INCLUDING THE SEVERELY ENDANGERED RIGHT WHALE, MAY BE ENCOUNTERED IN OFFSHORE AND COASTAL WATERS. RIGHT WHALES ARE SLOW MOVING ANIMALS THAT ARE PRONE TO COLLISIONS WITH VESSELS. VESSEL OPERATORS ARE REMENDED TO USE **EXTREME CAUTION** AND PROCEED AT **SLOW SAFE SPEEDS** IN AREAS USED BY RIGHT WHALES. **NOAA RECOMMENDS SPEEDS NOT TO EXCEED 12 KNOTS WHEN ALSO CONSISTENT WITH NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY.** INTENTIONALLY APPROACHING WITHIN 500 YARDS OF RIGHT WHALES IS PROHIBITED AND IS A VIOLATION OF FEDERAL LAW. A MINIMUM DISTANCE OF 500 YARDS MUST BE MAINTAINED FROM A SIGHTED WHALE. NOAA RECOMMENDS THAT OPERATORS ASSUME THAT ANY WHALE SIGHTED WITHIN 30 NM OF THE COAST IS A RIGHT WHALE. PLEASE REPORT ALL RIGHT WHALE SIGHTINGS TO 978-585-8473 OR TO THE COAST GUARD VIA CHANNEL 16. UNQUOTE.