

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

The Publication of the Southeast United States Right Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team and the Northeast Ship Strike Implementation Team

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Northeast Ship Strike Implementation Team Replaces Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team

In a surprise announcement, the National Marine Fisheries Service (also known as NOAA Fisheries) has decided to replace the Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team with a Northeast Ship Strike Implementation Team. The change is intended to concentrate and focus the team's efforts on the implementation of the ship strike component of the North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan (the plan is still in draft form). The team will support the NMFS Right Whale Ship Strike Strategy Working Group, a national NOAA Fisheries group working on a strategy for the US east coast. The reorganization also eliminates a layer between the Working Group and what was the Ship Strike/Vessel Interaction Committee of the old NEIT.

The replacement of the old NEIT apparently eliminates the team's role in implementing strategies to reduce fishing gear interactions, habitat degradation and the recovery of three other species of endangered whales (humpback, fin and sei).

The new Ship Strike Implementation Team will meet in Boston on March 8 (see Calendar of Events, page 16, for details).

NMFS Denial of Critical Habitat Expansion Petition Earns Strong Rebuke from the Marine Mammal Commission

On August 28, 2003, the National Marine Fisheries Service announced in the *Federal Register* its determination to deny the Ocean Conservancy's petition to expand current critical habitats for the North Atlantic right whale off Massachusetts and the Georgia/Florida coast. NMFS decided that action was "not warranted at this time," preferring to defer action to some unspecified time in the future, following analysis of right whale sighting data and human activities in and around the critical habitats (see *Right Whale News* 9(4):3 and 10(4):1 for background).

The agency's determination has drawn sharp criticism from the Marine Mammal Commission, especially since the Northeast Regional Office of NMFS has consistently determined that designated right whale critical habitats are the only areas in which it will restrict fishing and other activities. In a December 5 letter to Mary Colligan, Assistant

Administrator for Protected Species in the Northeast Regional Office, MMC Executive Director David Cottingham wrote that NMFS already has the information necessary to analyze the petition. Further, he recommended that NMFS proceed with modifying the boundaries as quickly as possible.

The full text of Mr. Cottingham's letter is available on the MMC's web site:
www.mmc.gov

Three Right Whales Die in Early 2004, Two by Ship Strike

On the morning of February 3, a 14-foot male right whale calf, estimated to be from one to five days old, stranded alive on the beach at Amelia Island, Florida. Over the course of that day, great efforts were expended trying to save the calf and developing various response options. The decision was made by NOAA to reject euthanasia and instead transfer the animal to a rehabilitation center. Unfortunately, as the whale was being transported off the beach, it died. It was taken to the University of Florida's School of Veterinary Medicine in Gainesville for necropsy under the direction of Dr. Bob Bonde. Definitive results await numerous tests, but preliminary findings include an empty stomach without milk from the mother. The identity of the mother is not known. On February 7, participants in a whale-watching trip sponsored by the Virginia Marine Science Museum (VMSM) sighted a dead right whale floating about five miles off Virginia Beach. A wave passed by and the carcass ruptured, expelling a large near-term male fetus (about 16 feet in length). VMSM staff anchored the carcass in place but it broke loose. The U.S. Coast Guard sighted the whale off Bodie Island near Oregon Inlet, North Carolina. The animal was brought ashore near Nags Head, where researchers identified it as *Stumpy* (so named for its missing fluke; # 1004 in the New England Aquarium's right whale catalog). *Stumpy* was one of the largest right whales known from the western North Atlantic at 52 feet, 6 inches; she was also a prolific breeder. According to Amy Knowlton, the whale had first been seen in 1975; she was seen with a calf in 1980 and with four other calves in subsequent years. This would have been her sixth known calf. Dr. Michael Moore of Woods Hole led the necropsy team; they determined that *Stumpy* had been killed by a ship strike. According to Dr. Moore, "this is the poster child of the right whale that should not have been killed." *Stumpy* was also one of the right whales that East Coast Ecosystems of Canada offered for adoption along with her daughter *Pollyanna* and granddaughter *Esperanza*.

Report from Southeast US Calving Grounds

Whales. As of February 6, 2004, nine mother/calf pairs have been documented and identified in waters off the southeast U.S. coast. An additional 18 to 24 right whales have been reported and photographically identified, including four females from last year accompanied by yearling calves.

A number of unusual or noteworthy events have occurred so far during the calving season. On December 28, a right whale was reported in Ponce Inlet just north of New Smyrna Beach, Florida; this event was not photographically verified. On February 3, a right whale was again sighted and photographed in the entrance to Ponce Inlet. On January 21, a juvenile right whale was reported near Sister's Creek in the St. John's River east of Jacksonville, having traveled about 4.5 nautical miles up the river. Four days later on January 25, a different right whale was sighted and photographed in the St. Johns River. These whale(s) are currently still unidentified, and it is not known if it was the same individual on both occasions. At the southerly end of the habitat, on January 9, a right whale with a severed right fluke was reported and subsequently photographed off Juno Beach, just south of Jupiter Inlet. On January 27, a mother/calf pair was reported two miles south of the St. Lucie Inlet in Peck Lake, off the Intracoastal Waterway (this report was unverified). On January 30, a mother/calf pair was reported and photographed just off the entrance to the Port of Miami. According to New England Aquarium researchers, this mother is a rarely sighted individual. On January 31, a right whale was reported near the entrance to Port Canaveral; the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) is awaiting photographic verification.

Whale and Boat Collide. On Sunday, January 25, on a beautiful morning with sunny skies, light winds and calm seas, members of the Volunteer Sighting Network observed a mother/calf pair about a mile offshore of Crescent Beach, just north of Matanzas Inlet, Florida. The observers saw a 20-foot recreational fishing boat approach directly to the whales, followed by a huge splash that spun the boat. Either the boat had hit the whales, or a whale had hit the boat. The observers speculated that the mother, protective of the calf, had lashed out with her flukes. The boat's registration number was recorded and reported. NMFS Law Enforcement officers are currently investigating the incident.

Survey Efforts. The survey effort for the 2003-04 calving season has been modified slightly. The primary focus – the Early Warning System (EWS)/Mandatory Ship Reporting area extending from Brunswick, Georgia, south to approximately St. Augustine, Florida – has been partitioned into three sections: EWS-North, EWS-Central, and EWS-South. The Wildlife Trust/Georgia Department of Natural Resources conducts aerial surveys of EWS-North (Sapelo to Cumberland islands); the New England Aquarium, EWS-Central; and the Florida Marine Research Institute, EWS-South (Jacksonville Beach, south of the St. John's River entrance to Anastasia Island, south of St. Augustine inlet). The Georgia coastal surveys (Savannah to Sapelo Island) previously conducted by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and the North Carolina/Virginia surveys previously conducted by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington are not being conducted this season. The Volunteer Sighting Network, a collaboration of the Marine Resources Council, Marineland of Florida, and Associated Scientists at Woods Hole, conducts shore-based observations from just north of St. Augustine to the southern end of the critical habitat and somewhat beyond.

The New England Aquarium and FMRI aerial survey teams are flying Cessna 337 Skymasters, while the Wildlife Trust/Georgia DNR team uses a NOAA Twin Otter fitted with a belly mounted camera – a photographic device developed by researchers at the

NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center. Within the Volunteer Sighting Network, following on the work of the Marineland group, Marine Resources Council researchers have obtained new camera equipment and are striving to photo-document and perhaps photo-identify a greater percentage of the volunteer-reported sightings.

Right whale warnings on NOAA Weather Radio: Thanks to the hard work of Nick Chrobak, Barb Zoodsma and others, NOAA Weather broadcasts on the marine VHF band now carry warnings about the presence of right whales. (NOAA Weather also broadcasts right whale warnings off Massachusetts.)

Sources and Contributors. Participation in these efforts and contributors to this news item are gratefully acknowledged: Associated Scientists at Woods Hole, Florida Marine Research Institute, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Marineland of Florida, Marine Resources Council, New England Aquarium, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Sea World, Volunteer Sighting Network, Wildlife Trust, and others.

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team Meets

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) met February 3 and 4 in Providence, Rhode Island, to address bycatch of whales in Atlantic fisheries. Summaries of the meeting will not be available until they have been reviewed and approved by the ALWTRT. A summary of last year's ALWTRT meeting is now available; see page 14 for citation and access information.

For additional information about the ALWTRT and the ALWTR Plan, consult the website: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/> or contact ALWTRP Coordinator Diane Borggaard at 978-281-9328, ext. 6503 or Diane.Borggaard@noaa.gov

For questions on specific gear modifications required by the ALWTRP, please contact NOAA Fisheries' industry liaisons: for the New England area, John Higgins (207-677-2316) and for the Mid-Atlantic, Glenn Salvador (302-644-2375).

Implementation Teams Plan Meeting For Mid-Atlantic Region

The Southeast United States Right Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team (SEIT) and the Northeast Ship Strike Implementation Team (NEIT) are planning a joint meeting in early May to address large whale conservation measures in the Mid-Atlantic. Tentatively, the meeting will be held at the Virginia Marine Science Museum in Virginia Beach. The dates for the meeting are tentative, so check for details as they evolve with either Jamison Smith, chair of the SEIT (904-573-4910 or Jamison.Smith@fwc.state.fl.us) or Tom Fetherston, chair of the NEIT (401-832-5857 or FetherstonTN@Npt.NUWC.Navy.Mil)

2004 Fishing Gear Mini-Grant Program Offers Funding for New Ideas and Products

In 2002, the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office (NOAA Fisheries) created a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to administer several gear research programs developed and designed by NOAA Fisheries. The gear research program provides several separate funding sources designed to target specific industry sectors. Each of the gear research programs is intended to solicit new and innovative gear modification ideas that will reduce the risk of serious injury and mortality to right whales which encounter fixed gears such as trap/pot and sink gillnet gear. The intent of the partnership between NOAA Fisheries and NFWF is to help facilitate a quicker response to new ideas developed by industry.

Since forming its partnership with NFWF in 2002, NOAA Fisheries has developed three programs that have been successfully implemented and administered by NFWF. One of the most successful has been the NFWF/NOAA Fisheries' Fishing Gear Mini-Grant Program. This program targets ideas from commercial fishermen or other industry-related professionals who do not necessarily possess the skills associated with basic research design. NOAA Fisheries encourages applicants to the Mini-Grant Program to work with NOAA Fisheries staff to develop their research ideas or concepts. This hands-on approach was highly successful in 2003. Several promising gear modifications and products were funded that may significantly reduce the risk of serious injury and mortality to right whales which become entangled in commercial fishing gear.

The Fishing Gear Mini-Grant Program is open to all U.S. citizens and is offered annually, as funding allows. Awards are made twice a year, in amounts from \$2,000 to \$20,000. Applications for this year's awards are due by April 1 or September 1. Initially, for FY2001-02, approximately \$175,000 was available through the program. An additional \$300,000 was allocated during the FY2002-2003 cycle. In all amounts transferred to NFWF, a 5% administrative cost is deducted from allocated funds. A total of about \$202,425 is available for this year's April 1 round of grants.

Projects can be submitted in either of two program categories: Idea Grants and Pilot Grants. Applicants should request an Idea Grant if they intend to develop a process or an object; applicants should request a Pilot Grant if the funds will be used to construct a prototype. The partnership encourages any U.S. citizen to apply, especially members of the fishing industry. The "Request for Proposals" can be found on the NFWF web site: www.nfwf.org/programs/WhaleFund.htm

Twenty-five Projects Funded by 2003 Mini-Grant Program

Round One

In 2003, 17 mini-grant proposals were received for the April round, and ten of those projects were funded for a total of \$168,825. Funded projects included the following.

Zap Buoy — This project will develop a remotely releasable buoy to eliminate vertical lines now used to locate lobster and crab traps.

Weak Rope and Role Reducing Right Whale Entanglement — This project will develop weak rope for use for gillnet float-lines. The prototype rope will be tested in the lab to fine-tune a rope that will meet NOAA Fisheries' desired specifications.

Cost and Acceptance Evaluation for Acoustic Release — This project will evaluate the cost feasibility and the potential industry acceptance of a low-cost acoustic release system (ARS) for buoy lines used in pot and net fisheries. Reducing the cost of this equipment should make this a potential solution to high strength, vertical buoy lines in the water column and therefore more acceptable to the fishing industry.

Secondary Phase of Construction, Testing and Evaluation — This project will design, construct, and evaluate a machined prototype of materials that will yield a very dependable, durable, and economic universal gear solution through the production of a rope cutting device.

Production of machined plastic units for NMFS — This project will involve the production of 80 machined plastic units for extensive in situ testing. These units will be delivered to NMFS for deployment with industry participants in various fisheries applications.

Fishing Gear and Whale Flukes: A Tool for Studying Entanglement — A load generator will be designed and fabricated as a testing apparatus for objectively evaluating the abrasive impact of various fishing gear lines and synthetic materials on the tissues [collected from a dead stranded animal] of a large whale fluke. Abrasive tests will be conducted on this fluke.

Testing & Product Development of Marine Safety — This project for the Marine Safety Recovery Device enables the retrieval of submerged lost gear. Through intensive field-testing and end-user focus group research and analysis, the investigators intend to come up with recommendations for improving a durable device which may provide a low cost unit withstanding the rigors of the marine environment.

Down East Coast, Gulf of Maine: Reduction of Floating Groundline Arc Profile Study — This project will investigate line profiles in part of the Down East Maine waters, particularly floating ground lines in rocky and strong tidal areas, in order to develop reasonable, long term gear modifications that will equally protect the whales and the Maine commercial lobster industry.

Mid-coast, Gulf of Maine: Reduction of Floating Groundline Arc Profile Study — This project will investigate line profiles in mid-coast Maine waters, particularly floating

ground lines in rocky and tidal areas, in order to develop reasonable, long term gear modifications that will equally protect the whales and the Maine commercial lobster industry.

Southern Coast, Gulf of Maine: Reduction of Floating Groundline Arc Profile Study — This project will investigate line profiles in southern-coast Maine waters, particularly floating ground lines in rocky and tidal areas, in order to develop reasonable, long term gear modifications that will equally protect the whales and the Maine commercial lobster industry.

Round Two

A total of eight mini-grant proposals were received during the second round; five were funded at a total of \$80,000. Funded projects included the following.

Zip Link – This project will develop and test a device that serves as a releasable link on ground rope of lobster trawls. The link will part if a whale catches the ground line in its mouth, but will still allow normal operations of trawls.

Glow in the Dark Rope of Controllable Stiffness – The project will test the hypothesis that “glowing” ropes may help whales to avoid them, with test on rope stiffness character as a means to prevent entanglement.

Investigation of Alternative Ground Lines – This project will replace floating ground line on traps with sink and neutral buoyant lines to reduce entanglement in the mid-Atlantic area; quarterly samples will be taken and workshops with industry will be conducted.

Lobster Gear Profile Separation Test – This project will discover what part of the trap line profile separates, at what tension, and what portion remains via a series of gear tests. Twenty-four trials will be conducted using several gear combinations used to harvest lobsters.

Use of Microchip Technology to Identify Fishing Lines – This project will embed “scanable” microchips in various fishing lines to identify the type of fishing practice.

More Information and Contacts:

The National Whale Conservation Fund – NFWF/NOAA Fisheries Mini-Grant program is a collaborative effort between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and NOAA Fisheries. For further information, please contact:

Michelle Pico at the NFWF, 1120 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036. Phone: (202) 857-0166; fax: (202) 857-0162;

Email: pico@nfwf.org, or Sal Testaverde, Ph.D at NOAA Fisheries, 1 Blackburn Dr., Gloucester, MA 01930. Phone: (978) 281-9328 ext. 6502; Email: salvatore.testaverde@noaa.gov.

NOAA Fisheries and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Partnership Awards Right Whale Grants

In addition to the fishing gear grants noted in the previous article, NOAA Fisheries and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have awarded grants for right whale projects under the General Call program. These projects were recommended for funding in 2003 by the National Whale Conservation Fund Advisory Council.

Studying North Pacific Right Whales and Sound in the Bering Sea: The Fund awarded \$30,000 to the Regents of the University of California to deploy five acoustical devices in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska for a one-year duration. The acoustic data sets will be combined with other available oceanographic data, such as satellite data, to examine right whale habitat preferences and provide data on ship presence, type and other human noise production. A comparison of ship locations and right whale locations will be made to determine potential conflicts due to noise or other habitat degradation.

Whale-Friendly Lobster Gear Replacement in Massachusetts Waters: The Fund awarded \$250,000 to the International Fund for Animal Welfare to run a program that will offer Massachusetts lobster fishermen a gear exchange opportunity to assist them in switching from dangerous floating line to whale-friendly neutrally-buoyant line, at only 25% of the cost. The grantee would organize the availability of product, a venue to exchange the gear and the disposal of the old gear.

In addition to these General Call grants, the NFWF/NOAA Fisheries partnership made a number of awards to states for right whale initiatives in 2003. All of the projects listed below were jointly reviewed by NOAA Fisheries and the National Whale Conservation Fund Advisory Council. Funding was provided by NOAA Fisheries.

Aerial Survey for Marine Mammals in the New York Bight: Award of \$226,545 to the New York State Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Rescue Program to conduct aerial surveys to monitor large whales in the New York Bight and east of Block Island. Due to the large territory of the whales, the New York State Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Rescue Program hopes to increase the efforts of aerial surveys in order to produce more accurate information for management. Whales will be surveyed on a bi-monthly basis, weather permitting, with flight times of four to seven hours. New York State will work in partnership with the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research to coordinate and provide support to National Marine Fisheries Service in locating and verifying sighting reports, and the location of animals floating offshore in the region.

North Atlantic Right Whale Informational Signs for Mariners (FL): The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was awarded \$54,500 to promote mariner

awareness of right whale conservation efforts in Florida and Georgia through informational signs directed towards reaching commercial charter fishermen and the general boating public. The project will identify and target marinas that are full service facilities capable of berthing 50+ foot vessels and high traffic launch facilities, in close proximity to the designated North Atlantic right whale critical habitat in Florida and Georgia. Information will be placed on permanent, metal signs and include graphics and text to help identify characteristics of the right whale, its behaviors, and its endangered status including associated laws and guidelines pertaining to encounters with right whales.

Right Whale Recovery Planning (ME): The Maine Department of Marine Resources proposes to collaborate with Maine's lobster and gillnet industries to develop and implement a cooperative Recovery Plan for the North Atlantic right whale with \$57,075 in support. The sightings/surveillance and disentanglement networks will remain as fundamental components of the Plan; however, gear modification research and industry outreach will be given the highest priority in order to address the issues of risk associated with vertical and ground lines. This effort will build on recommendations to investigate line profiles in Maine waters, particularly floating ground lines in rocky and tidal areas, in order to develop long-term area-specific gear solutions. The Maine Department of Marine Resources anticipates that following an intensive coast-wide survey of ground line and habitat profiles in 2003, they will develop, test and implement workable gear modifications for the inshore lobster industry that will reduce the profile of floating ground lines by 2008.

Measuring the Effects of Vessels on Right Whales in the Southeast U.S. (GA): The Partnership provided \$125,700 to Georgia's Department of Natural Resources to gather information about how right whales react to approaching ships. This information will assist managers in determining the best methods for vessel traffic management within right whale habitat. Final products for this study will include an analysis of right whale behavior in proximity to ships and suggestions concerning correctly interpreting these data to make informed and effective vessel traffic management decisions.

Massachusetts Right Whale Conservation Plan II: With \$259,416 in support, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) will continue to monitor right whales in Cape Cod Bay and adjacent waters by using aerial and vessel-based platforms of its Right Whale Surveillance and Habitat Monitoring Program. In addition, DMF will collaborate with researchers from Cornell University to detect right whales through use of passive bio-acoustics and investigate the use of real time acoustic monitoring. This year, DMF will be adding a new project to their conservation planning activities to address gear/whale interactions. Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries will identify those portions of the water column where fishing gear and right whales commonly overlap and hence, have the greatest chance to interact. Sections of gear that occupy the same depth strata as right whales will be identified as candidates for modification. By comparing right whales against profiles of species that are less often entangled, DMF will gain a better understanding of how diving behavior can modify the risk of fishing gear entanglement.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Working Groups Will Address Right Whale Issues

The Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) is currently reviewing the management plan for the Sanctuary off the coast of Massachusetts. The review process calls for the development of a series of action plans. To help develop these action plans, the SBNMS staff and Sanctuary Advisory Council have identified a number of critical issues and grouped them into 12 headings or topics. For each of these topics, working groups were established within the Advisory Council framework. Several of these working groups will address issues that involve right whales. They include working groups addressing vessel strikes on marine mammals, behavioral disturbance of marine mammals and marine mammal entanglement. The recommendations of the working groups are to be presented to the Sanctuary Advisory Council in the spring of 2004. The final management plan is expected to be released in 2005. The SBNMS web site (<http://stellwagen.nos.noaa.gov/>) has additional information including member lists for each working group, schedules of meetings, upcoming meeting agendas, meeting summaries and other information. To receive periodic updates, contact Nathalie Ward at 781-545-8026, ext. 213 or nathalie.ward@noaa.gov

NOAA Fisheries SERO Awards Certificates of Appreciation

Cynthia Taylor of Wildlife Trust; **Alicia Windham-Reid** of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and **Monica Zani** of the New England Aquarium, were recently awarded Certificates of Appreciation by the NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Office. All three individuals have demonstrated outstanding dedication to North Atlantic Right Whale recovery efforts in the southeast U.S. right whale calving area. Cyndi, Alicia, and Monica have tirelessly dedicated themselves to providing leadership to their aerial survey teams. This was particularly obvious during the 02/03 calving season when we lost our friends and colleagues in the January 26, 2003 airplane crash.

People

Katrina "Kate" Van Dine has left her position as project manager for management plan review at the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary to take on a consulting project. **Heather Pettis** will assume her responsibilities as Secretary of the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium after returning from maternity leave in July or August. In the meantime, **Marilyn Marx** will continue as Secretary. Both are with the New England Aquarium.

Ocean Life Institute Holds Forum On North Atlantic Right Whale

With the fate of the North Atlantic right whale hanging in the balance, the Ocean Life Institute at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution convened an Ocean Forum on the Endangered North Atlantic Right Whale November 6-7, 2003. The goal of the forum was “to assess what we know and need to know about the North Atlantic right whale’s predicament and to devise collaborative, multi-pronged research strategies to catalyze advances in knowledge and enhance conservation efforts.”

Speakers at the forum and the titles of their talks included Scott Kraus (North Atlantic right whale conservation issues: An overview); Glenn Salvador (The current status of whalesafe fishing gear research); Norm Holy (Gillnet that minimizes negative environmental impact); Michael Moore (Rope-baleen interactions: A strategy to reduce entanglement); Bruce Russell (Mitigating the impact of shipping trauma: The next steps); Doug Gillespie and Christopher Clark (Acoustic detection of right whales); Darlene Ketten and Susan Parks (Right whales’ ears); Peter Tyack (Reducing the risk of ship collision); Rosalind Rolland (Reproductive endocrinology, biotoxins and health); Michael Moore (Pollutants, body condition and reproductive success); Mark Hahn (Contaminant susceptibility genes in North Atlantic right whales); Mark Baumgartner (What can we do to ensure healthful habitats for right whales?); and Hal Caswell (North Atlantic right whale population dynamics).

The presentations have been edited and are now available on the web at:
<http://www.whoi.edu/institutes/oli/activities/rwforum.html>

Last Chance to Order “From Whaling to Watching” Video

State budget cuts have resulted in the closing of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Film and Video Unit. As a result, the video “From Whaling to Watching: The Northern Right Whale” will no longer be for sale after June 1, 2004. The award-winning video features film footage of right whales feeding, mating and swimming from Nova Scotia to Florida and describes the many threats right whales face. The 20-minute film was created in 1997 by Sarah Ross (formerly Mitchell) while she was Education Coordinator at the Gray’s Reef National Marine Sanctuary, and Ann Smrcina, Education Coordinator at the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The video accompanies a teaching module for grades 6-8 (which includes a 40-page handbook and a poster of right whale anatomy) produced by the two Sanctuaries. The video may be ordered for \$14.95 plus \$3.00 shipping from the Film and Video Unit by calling 404-657-9851 or by visiting their web site at: www.gadnrfilms.com The teaching module may be ordered from Gray’s Reef NMS: contact Cathy Sakas at 912-598-2417 or Cathy.Sakas@noaa.gov The package of video and teaching module would make a fine gift to a local school.

Right Whale Papers Presented at 15th Biennial Conference

The 15th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals was held in Greensboro, North Carolina, December 14-19. The Conference was sponsored by the Society for Marine Mammalogy. The Conference Committee was chaired by Edward Keith, and the Scientific Program Committee chaired by Aleta Hohn. The 16th Biennial Conference will be held December 11-16, 2005, in San Diego. The 17th Biennial will be held in South Africa in 2007.

A number of papers addressing one or more of the three recognized species of right whales were presented at the Conference. Most are listed here along with the senior author and the page number in the Conference's *Abstract Book*. For a complete list of authors and their affiliations and for the abstract text, consult the 203-page *Abstract Book*, which is available on line at:

<http://smm2003biennial.marinemammalogy.org/documents/Abstract%20Book.pdf>

Baker, S.C. et al. Diversity and phylogeny of major histocompatibility complex (MHC) class II genes among baleen whales. *Abstract Book* page 11.

Baumgartner, M. et al. The foraging ecology of North Atlantic right whales and its potential energetic implications. Page 12.

Berta, A. et al. Morphologic and molecular evidence for phylogenetic relationships within the Mysticeti. Page 17.

Best, P.B. et al. A summer feeding ground for right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) on the west coast of South Africa. Page 17.

Borberg, J. et al. Biomass and energy transfer to baleen whales in the South Atlantic sector of the Antarctic. Page 20.

Bowman, R. et al. New telemetry analysis tools for entangled whales. Page 22.

Cabana, N. Safer surveys – A model for developing safer marine mammal aerial surveys. Page 27.

Clapham, P. Managing Leviathan: Conservation challenges for the 21st century. Page 33.

Clark, C.W. et al. The seasonal occurrence of northern right whales, *Eubalaena glacialis*, in a Critical Habitat: When, why and how many? Page 34.

Cole, T. et al. Probability of disturbance: Right whales and ships off the northeastern United States. Page 35.

Folkens, P. Global climate change and implications for marine mammal survival. Page 53.

- Gaines, C.A. et al. Evaluating phylogenetic relationships among right whales using nuclear gene regions. Page 57.
- Groch, K. et al. Use of an electronic theodolite to monitor the movements of southern right whales in relation to whalewatching boats off Santa Catarina State, southern Brazil. Page 65.
- Johnson, T. et al. Entanglements: Understanding conflicts and contradictions in efforts to reduce incidental take of whales in fishing gear. Page 80.
- Keller, C. et al. North Atlantic right whale distribution in relation to sea surface temperatures in the southeast United States calving grounds: Implications for management. Page 83.
- Knowlton, A. et al. Morphometry, gross morphology and available histopathology in northwest Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) mortalities (1970 to 2002). Page 85.
- Landry, S. et al. The success of a disentanglement event may depend upon the species. Page 91.
- McLellan, W. et al. Winter right whale sightings from aerial surveys of the coastal waters of the US Mid-Atlantic. Page 109.
- Michaud, J. et al. Energy available in the prey field of the Northern Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) in the Bay of Fundy, and why it matters. Page 111.
- Nichols, O. et al. Spatial and temporal distribution of North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) in Cape Cod Bay, USA, 1998-2002 and implications for management of fishing practices. Page 117.
- Nowacek, D.P. et al. North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) ignore ships but respond to alarm signals. Page 120.
- Pace, R. Two new methodological approaches useful for estimating scarring rates of Cetaceans from mark-recapture data. Page 125.
- Parks, S.E. et al. Sound production by North Atlantic right whales in surface active groups. Page 127.
- Stimpert, A.K. et al. Distributions of four baleen whale species in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean based on large-scale aerial survey data. Page 157.
- Vladimirov, V.A. et al. On the contemporary distribution and number of baleen whales in the Okhotsk Sea. Page 170.

Ward, L. et al. Characterization of ship traffic in right whale Critical Habitat: Three years of the Mandatory Ship Reporting System. Page 171.

Windham-Reid, A. et al. Observations of North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) entanglements and related mortalities in the southeast U.S. calving grounds. Page 178.

Wise, S.S. et al. The effects of environmental contaminants on Balaenidae whales (*Balaena mysticetus* and *Eubalaena glacialis*): Metal toxicity in bowhead whales. Page 179.

Authors of Report on *Porter* Note Missing Acknowledgements

The note "Two-way trans-Atlantic migration of a North Atlantic right whale" by Karl-Otto Jacobsen, Marilyn Marx and Nils Øien in the January 2004 issue of Marine Mammal Science (20(1):161-166) describes the movement of *Porter*, an adult male right whale (NE Aquarium #1133), from east of Cape Cod, Massachusetts (May 1999) to Kvaenangen, Norway (September-October 1999) and back to Cape Cod Bay (March 2000). The note also reports that *Porter* broke several records: His sighting off Norway appears to be the northernmost sighting of a right whale in the 20th century, and the distance he traveled was the longest for right whales.

Marilyn Marx reports that the note is missing some very important acknowledgements. Marine Mammal Science will publish an erratum in a subsequent issue. In the meantime, the following are acknowledged as being integral to bringing this story to fruition: the National Marine Fisheries Service for the sighting and photo of the right whale "Porter" taken in May 1999 in Great South Channel (under permit no. 917); the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries and the Center for Coastal Studies for the Cape Cod Bay sighting and photo taken in March 2000 (under Scientific Permit to Take Marine Mammals No. 633-1483-01 issued by NMFS to Dr. Charles Mayo); the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium for all the catalog and sighting information; and Greg Donovan, who tracked down the early sightings references and provided valuable comments on previous drafts.

Scientific Literature and Reports

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Calendar of Events

March 1: Pre-proposals due for grants from the National Whale Conservation Fund to support projects that address whale conservation needs. For further information, contact Michelle Pico at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: 202-857-0166 or pico@nfwf.org

March 1: Pre-proposals due for Atlantic Coast States Cooperative Planning for Right Whale Recovery grants. For further information, contact Dr. Sal Testaverde at the National Marine Fisheries Service (978-281-9328, ext. 6502 or Salvatore.testaverde@noaa.gov) or Michelle Pico at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (202-857-0166 or pico@nfwf.org)

March 8: The new Northeast Ship Strike Implementation Team will meet at the Black Falcon Terminal, MASSPORT, Boston from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. Topics on the agenda include education and outreach, ongoing economic research, vessel traffic management scenarios and new business. For additional information, contact Pat Gerrior at Pat.Gerrior@noaa.gov

March 30-31: Canadian right whale science and research coordination meeting, St. Andrews, New Brunswick. For further information, contact Dr. Robert Stephenson at 506-529-5882 or stephensonr@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca

April 1: Deadline for submitting proposals for fishing gear mini-grants. See article starting on page 5 for details.

May: dates to be determined. Joint meeting of the Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team and the Southeast United States Right Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team (SEIT) at the Virginia Marine Science Museum in Virginia Beach. The two-day meeting will focus on Mid-Atlantic large whale issues. For further information, contact SEIT chair Jamison Smith at 904-573-4910 or Jamison.Smith@fwc.state.fl.us

May 18-19: Workshop: "Shipping noise and marine mammals: A forum for science, management and technology." Arlington, VA. Sponsored by NOAA, the Marine

Mammal Commission, the US Navy, American Bureau of Shipping, INTERTANKO and Chamber of Shipping of America. For more information, contact the event website: <http://www.shippingnoiseandmarinemammals.com>

September 1: Deadline for submitting proposals for fishing gear mini-grants. See article starting on page 5 for details.

November 3-4: Annual meeting of the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium, New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts. Dates and location are now confirmed. For further information, contact Marilyn Marx, consortium secretary, at 617-973-6584 or mmarx@neaq.org

December 11-16, 2005: 16th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, San Diego, California. Sponsored by the Society for Marine Mammalogy. For more information, visit the Society's web site: <http://www.marinemammalogy.org/>

Right Whale News

Right Whale News is a publication of the Southeast U.S. Right Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team and the Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team. The editor is Hans Neuhauser. The editorial board consists of Bill Brooks, Moe Brown, Phil Clapham, Jerry Conway, Jim Hain, Scott Kraus, Mike Payne, Sigrid Sanders and Jerry Wallmeyer.

The Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (www.MassEnvironmentalTrust.org), the Southeast Regional Office of NOAA Fisheries and the Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team underwrite the costs of *Right Whale News*. Thanks to their support, *Right Whale News* is published quarterly and is distributed free of charge.

The **current issue** of *Right Whale News* is available on line at a web site maintained by the Georgia Environmental Policy Institute: www.GEPInstitute.com. An **index** of the first eight years of *Right Whale News* (1994-2001) is available along with current and **back issues** on the Internet, thanks to April Fendley of the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. The web site address is: <http://www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov/rightwhaleneews.html>

To subscribe to *Right Whale News* or to submit news, articles or commentary for publication, contact the editor, Hans Neuhauser, at the Georgia Environmental Policy Institute, 380 Meigs Street, Athens, GA 30601, USA. Telephone 706-546-7507. Fax 706-613-7775. E-mail: gepi@ix.netcom.com

