

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

*An independent forum for right whale conservation and recovery,
published four times a year in February, May, August, and November*

Special Issue

12 April 2012

NOTICE:

20 APRIL COMMENT DEADLINE

From time to time, Right Whale News posts a Special Issue for important topics that are time-critical and do not fall into our regular publication schedule. This Special Issue addresses a single topic that has a review and comment deadline of 20 April 2012. We have been advised that the process does not include public review of the draft document nor provision for public review meetings. Therefore, this will be the principal opportunity for input and comment. Editor.

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Endangered and Threatened Species; Initiation of 5-Year Review for the North Atlantic Right Whale and the North Pacific Right Whale

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of initiation of 5-year reviews; request for information.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a 5-year review of North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) and North Pacific right whale (*Eubalaena japonica*) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended. A 5-year review is based on the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of the review; therefore, we are requesting submission of any such information on these whales that has become available since the last status review in 2006.

DATES: To allow us adequate time to conduct this review, we must receive your information no later than April 20, 2012. However, we will continue to accept new information about any listed species at any time.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on this document, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2012-0057, by any of the following methods:

Electronic Submissions: Submit all electronic public comments via the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal www.regulations.gov. To submit comments via the e-Rulemaking Portal, first click the "submit a comment" icon, then enter NOAA-NMFS-2012-0057 in the keyword search. Locate the document you wish to comment on from the resulting list and click on the "Submit a Comment" icon to the right of that line. Mail or hand-delivery: Angela Somma, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources, Endangered Species Division, 1325 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Instructions: Comments must be submitted by one of the above methods to ensure that the comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered. All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on www.regulations.gov without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.) submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NMFS will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word or Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Larissa Plants, Office of Protected Resources, 301-427-8471, or Shannon Bettridge, Office of Protected Resources 301-427-8437.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the ESA requires that we conduct a review of listed species at least once every five years. The regulations in 50 CFR 424.21 require that we publish a notice in the Federal Register announcing species currently under active review. This notice announces our active review of right whales, currently listed as endangered. To ensure that the 5-year review is complete and based on the best available scientific and commercial information, we are soliciting new information from the public, governmental agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, industry, environmental entities, and any other interested parties concerning the status of right whales. Categories of requested information include: (1) Species biology and demographics (population trends, distribution, abundance, genetics, etc.); (2) habitat conditions (amount, distribution, suitability, quality, etc.); (3) conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species; (4) status and trends of threats; and (5) other new information, data, or corrections including, but not limited to, taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the list of threatened and endangered species, and improved analytical methods, if any. Any new information will be considered during the 5-year review and will also be useful in evaluating the ongoing recovery programs for these whales.

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Right Whale News is a publication of Associated Scientists at Woods Hole. It is disseminated online through the courtesy of the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium. The Editor is Jim Hain.