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West Coast
Region

Using the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect whales



April 30, 2014



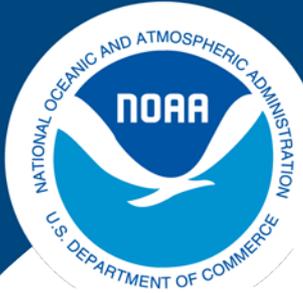
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North Atlantic Right Whales

Listed as endangered in 1970, current population about 450 animals

Recovery plan major actions include:

- *Reduce or eliminate injury or mortality caused by ship collision*
- Reduce or eliminate injury and mortality caused by fisheries and fishing gear
- Protect habitats essential to the survival and recovery of the species
- Minimize effects of vessel disturbance
- Continue international ban on hunting and other directed take
- Monitor the population size and trends in abundance of the species
- Maximize efforts to free entangled or stranded right whales and acquire scientific information from dead specimens



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Recovery Actions for Right Whales

- Continue ongoing ship strike reduction measures, including research on technologies and whale behavior
- New vessel operational measures, such as routing measures and speed restrictions
- Negotiate a bi-lateral conservation Agreement with Canada
- Federal agency consultations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act
- Education & outreach programs



NMFS developed a Ship Strike Reduction Strategy



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- Evaluated 100s of options
 - *e.g., post lookouts, night-time transits, guide boats, routing changes*
- Weighed conservation value
- Focused on minimizing impact to industry in time and space
- Weighed economic effects (not required by the ESA)
- Relied upon well known whale occurrence, distribution, seasonality



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Actions taken to reduce the threat of strikes.

- *Mandatory vessel speed restrictions in Seasonal Management Areas*
- *Voluntary speed reductions in Dynamic Management Areas*
- *Recommended shipping routes and in an Area To Be Avoided*
- *Modification of international shipping lanes*
- *Aircraft surveys and right whale alerts*
- *Mandatory Ship Reporting Systems*



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Seasonal Management Areas (SMAs)

Established regulations under the Section 11(f) of the ESA

(73FR60173; 50 CFR 224.105)

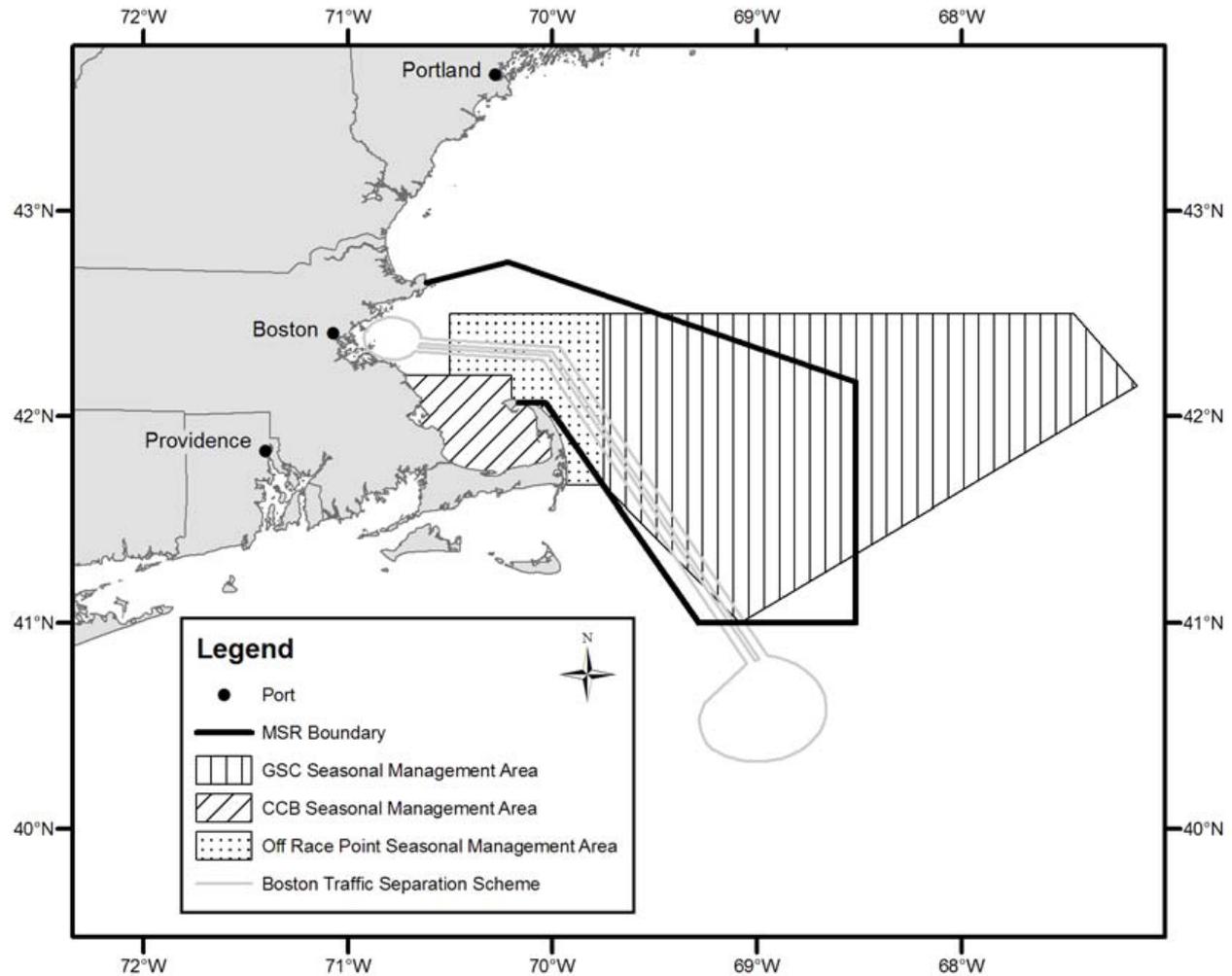
Based upon certain areas, certain times when both ship and whale densities are known to be high.

Vessel 65 feet or longer must travel at 10 knots or less in SMAs during specific time periods.

SMAs along the entire East Coast based on feeding and calving areas.



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CCB: Jan 15 – May 15

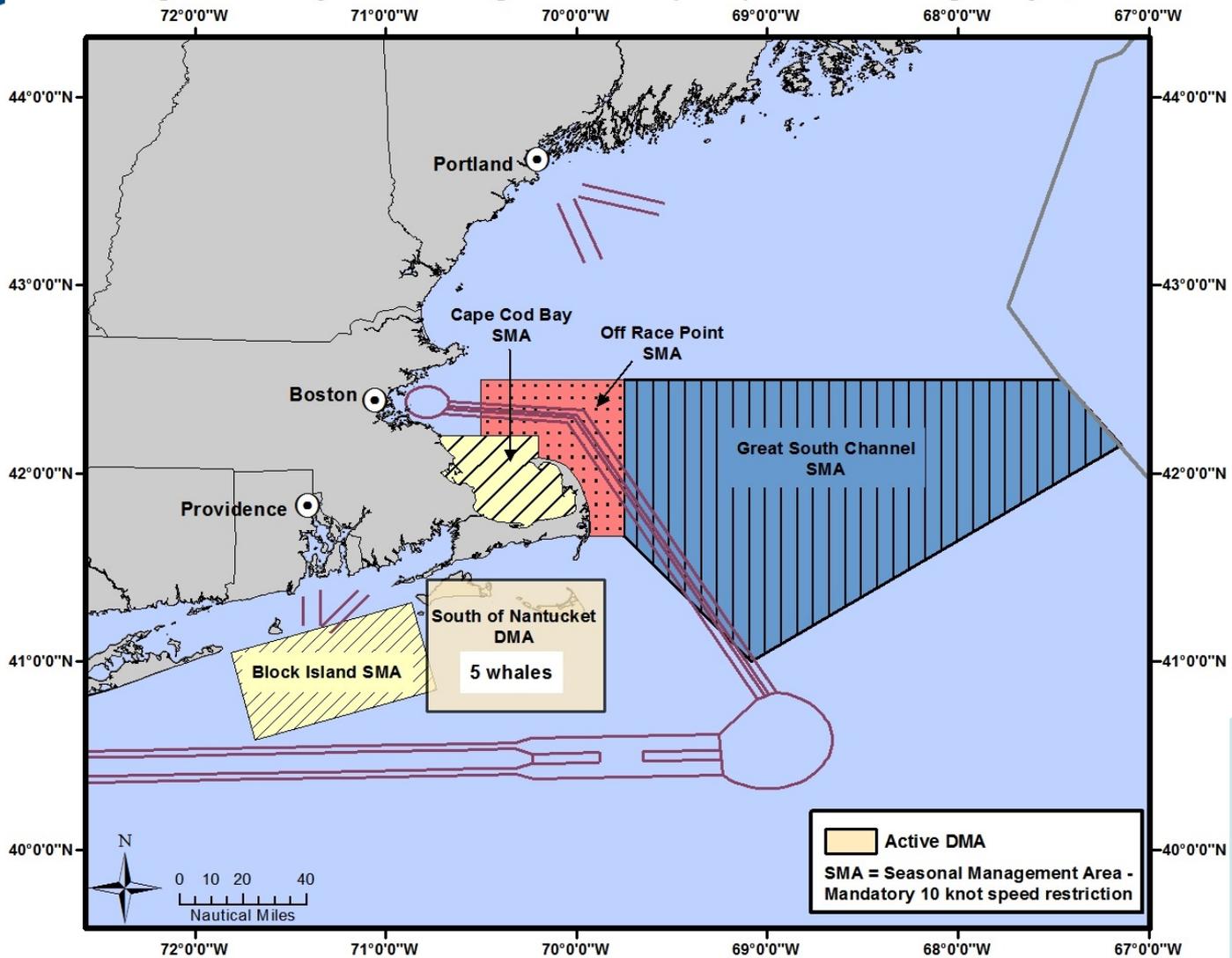
Off Race Point: March 1 – April 30

Great South Channel: April 1 – July 31



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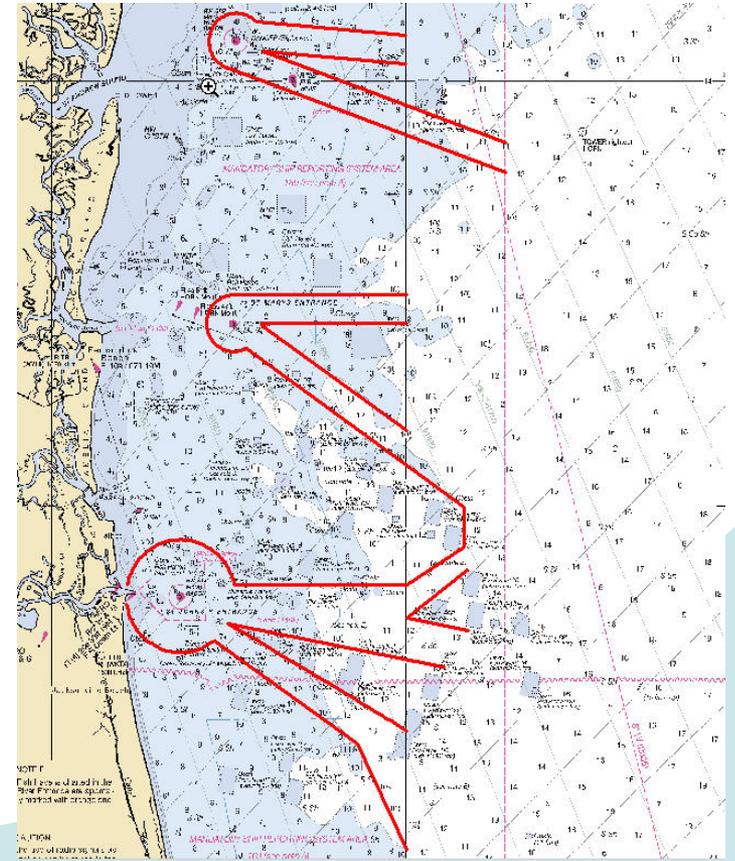
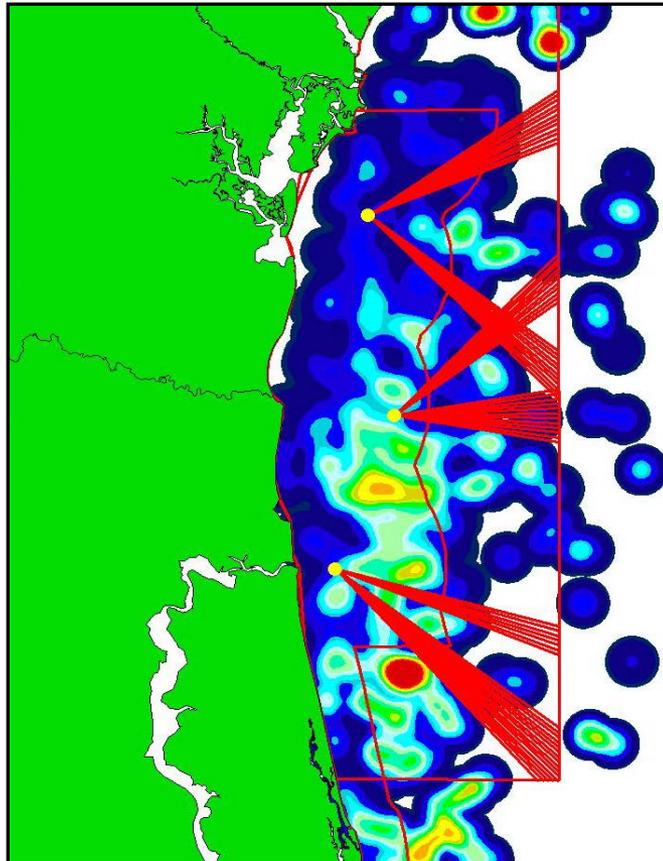
Right Whale Dynamic Management Area (DMA) in effect through May 1, 2015





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Routing measures Recommended Routes – Southeast U.S. Added to NOAA nautical charts Nov 2006



Vessel regulations in Washington for Southern Resident killer whales



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- Finalized April 14, 2011
- Require vessels to remain 200 yards from whales and not interfere with travel
- Scientific studies indicate that vessel traffic is a threat to the population
- SRKW population estimate is only 83 animals





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Some good news!



On April 21, 2015, NOAA Fisheries proposed to revise the ESA listing for the humpback whale to identify 14 Distinct Population Segments (DPS), list 2 as threatened and 2 as endangered, and identify 10 others as not warranted for listing.

