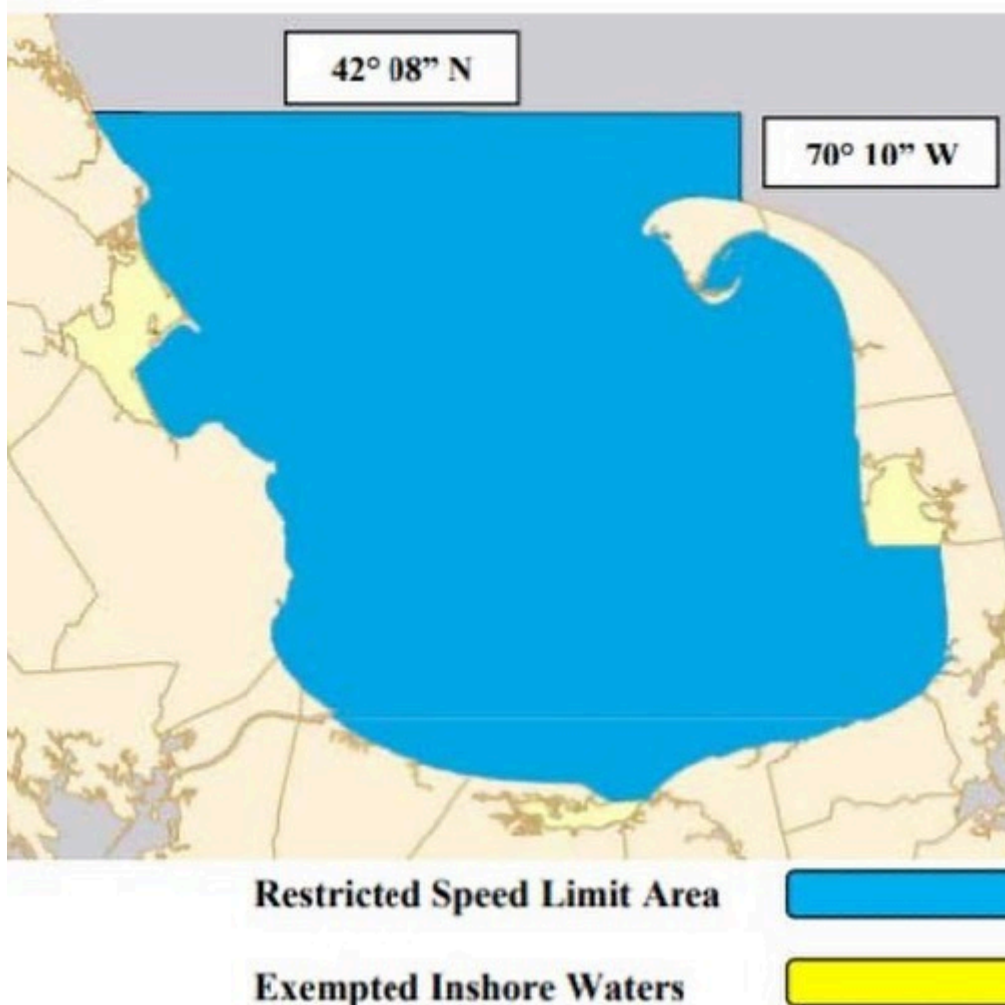


Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries extends small vessel speed restrictions due to presence of right whales

“As a result of the ongoing presence of large aggregations of right whales, the Division of Marine Fisheries is extending the small vessel speed restriction in Cape Cod Bay through May 15, 2021.

Small vessels (less than 65') are required to travel at speeds no greater than 10 knots in this area. Right whales are highly susceptible to injury and death due to vessel collision. A complementary federal speed restriction in the same area applies to vessels 65' and greater until May 15.



Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries photo.

During aerial surveillance on April 27 and 28, the Center for Coastal Studies documented at least 160 right whales (~40% of the known population) in Cape Cod Bay and along the South Shore, all of which were skim feeding at the surface or just below the surface. This intense feeding behavior makes them somewhat oblivious to their surroundings, often difficult to see and highly susceptible to vessel collision. Ten right whale mother/calf pairs have also been documented in the area.

All mariners are advised to follow the speed limit and use extreme caution when transiting the area. Additionally, it is unlawful, under state and federal law, to approach a right whale within 500 yards. If you observe a right whale entangled in fishing gear while on the water, report it immediately to the Center for Coastal Studies (800-900-3622), the state Office of Environmental Law Enforcement (800-632-8075) or the federal Entanglement Hot Line: (866-755-6622).

For more information about the speed restriction on right whales, contact Division of Marine Fisheries Protected Species Biologist, Erin Burke at (919) 824-3114 or erin.burke@mass.gov. Individuals are also encouraged to visit the Division of Marine Fisheries' website (<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries>)."