



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

August 10, 2007

Dear Commercial Trap/Pot and Gillnet Fisherman:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces the availability of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that evaluates modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP). Publication and review of the FEIS precedes issuance of the final rule, which will implement regulatory changes associated with the ALWTRP.

The FEIS describes a range of management measures that impact state and federal trap/pot and gillnet fishermen from Maine through Florida. The final preferred alternative to the ALWTRP identified in the FEIS has several components: the addition of several new fisheries to the ALWTRP; the implementation of area-specific gear modifications for trap/pot and gillnet fisheries; and the implementation of broad-based gear modifications for all fisheries regulated under the ALWTRP. The enclosure to this letter contains a summary of the management measures under the final preferred alternative.

The FEIS is available at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/> or by contacting Diane Borggaard at NMFS Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930; 978-281-9300 ext. 6503; or Diane.Borggaard@noaa.gov.

NMFS is seeking public comment on the FEIS, which will be reviewed and considered before the approval of the final rule. Written comments must be received no later than **September 17, 2007**. Comments should be submitted by mail to Mary Colligan, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources, NMFS, Northeast Region, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, Massachusetts, 01930, or by facsimile (fax) to (978) 281-9394. Electronic comments may also be submitted by e-mail to whalefeis.comments@noaa.gov. Please include the phrase "ALWTRP FEIS" in the subject line of all written, faxed and/or electronic comments.

The final rule is expected to publish following the review period on the FEIS and subsequent issuance of the agency's Record of Decision (ROD). An additional permit holder letter will follow when the final rule has published to notify you of your requirements and the associated effective dates.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

