



## NEWS FROM NOAA

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### **NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE RELEASES RECOVERY PLAN FOR ENDANGERED NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES** *Less Than 300 Critically Endangered Right Whales Exist*

NOAA Fisheries Service today announced a formal plan to promote the recovery of the endangered North Atlantic right whale. The recovery plan is expected to boost the number of right whales through a framework of management and research efforts.

“This recovery plan is a valuable tool to help guide right whale management activities and in particular, address human-caused threats to these rare whales,” said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service director. “This is particularly important because we estimate that there are less than 300 right whales left in the north Atlantic Ocean.”

The recovery plan highlights the necessity of reducing or eliminating right whale deaths and injuries from shipping and commercial fishing operations. The plan also recommends protecting important habitat, monitoring the distribution and abundance of the species, and conducting further studies to assess the health of the species.

In addition, the plan places priority on identifying and addressing other potential threats to the species, such as contaminants, noise and coastal development, and developing contingency plans for each. NOAA Fisheries Service plans to continue working closely with state, federal, and international and private organizations to coordinate research and recovery efforts.

Currently, NOAA Fisheries Service conducts a multi-faceted effort aimed at reducing human-caused injuries and deaths to North Atlantic right whales. To address the threat of ship strikes, the agency developed a comprehensive ship strike reduction strategy that includes operational measures for vessels in U.S. Atlantic waters. NOAA Fisheries Service and partners conduct aerial surveys to notify mariners of the location of right whales, and NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard operate mandatory ship reporting systems to provide right whale locations to mariners entering right whale habitat.

To address the threat of entanglement in fishing gear, NOAA Fisheries Service uses both seasonal and dynamic management tools to reduce the overlap between gear and right whales. They also work with a multi-stakeholder take reduction team that provides recommendations to reduce fishery interactions, and supports the development of gear modifications to help reduce entanglements. In addition, the agency supports regional recovery plan implementation teams that provide recommendations to NOAA Fisheries Service on recovery activities. This updated recovery plan provides a framework for these efforts.

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The North Atlantic right whale primarily lives in coastal or shelf waters. It ranges from winter calving and nursery areas in coastal waters off the southeastern United States to summer feeding grounds in New England waters and north to the Bay of Fundy and Scotian Shelf.

Historically depleted by commercial whaling long ago, the North Atlantic right whale suffers the most injury and death from human-related activities such as ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. These events may continue to contribute to the species decline and inability to recover.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires recovery plans to serve as guides to promote the conservation and recovery of listed species. NOAA Fisheries Service completed the last recovery plan for the North Atlantic right whale, formerly classified as the Northern right whale, in 1991.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through research to better understand atmospheric and climate variability and to manage wisely our nation's coastal and marine resources.

- 30 -

On the Web:

Recovery Plan for North Atlantic Right Whale: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr3/recovery](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr3/recovery)

PDF: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/readingrm/Recoverplans/narwrecplan2005.pdf](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/readingrm/Recoverplans/narwrecplan2005.pdf)

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>