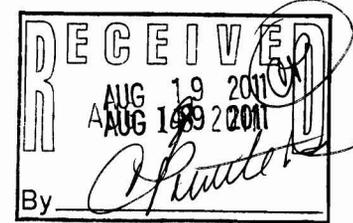




Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
John R. Griffin, Secretary
Joseph P. Gill, Deputy Secretary

August 8, 2011



Attn: ALWTRP Scoping
Mary Colligan
Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Ms. Colligan:

This letter is to provide comment on the Federal Register notice 76 FR 34654 for the 2011 ALWTRP scoping meeting and regulation amendments.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Service (MDNR) manages commercial fisheries in state waters and works closely with NMFS on many issues relating to fisheries interactions with protected species including sea turtles, large whales, and other marine mammals. As part of that effort, MDNR provides NMFS a periodic comprehensive characterization of Maryland commercial and recreational fisheries and participates on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT).

MDNR supports the continued development of the NOAA co-occurrence model in attempt to further characterize fisheries vertical lines with large whale population data. Additionally, we encourage NOAA to enhance the large whale population and sightings data collection in the mid-Atlantic region.

The MDNR appreciates and supports complete understanding of threats to protected species and is ready to assist in the development and targeting of appropriate monitoring strategies.

Please contact me at 410-226-5193 or searly@dnr.state.md.us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Steve Early
Assistant Director
Fisheries Service