

**United States Coast Guard Activities-
Report to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team**

Submitted November 2016

Activities since November 2015 Conf Call

The USCG has a robust program for the protection of marine species, including large whales. The USCG contributes to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) through at-sea enforcement using USCG vessels and aerial assets. In support of the development and enforcement of the ALWTRP, the USCG serves in an advisory capacity to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team. In addition to enforcement, the USCG contributes to the non-regulatory components of the ALWTRP and its protected species through internal compliance and stranding/disentanglement response.

FISHERIES INTERACTIONS

Guidance and Training

District Fisheries Officers provide guidance to the field through patrol orders, Law Enforcement Bulletins, and quarterly or annual enforcement guidance. The information helps to identify threats and priorities, and it guides the operational commanders' patrol activities.

The USCG trains boarding officers, managers, and operations officers about right whales and their regulations through the Northeast and Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Centers. The training highlights the status of large whales, discusses current regulations, and provides hands-on training.

ALWTRP Cases:

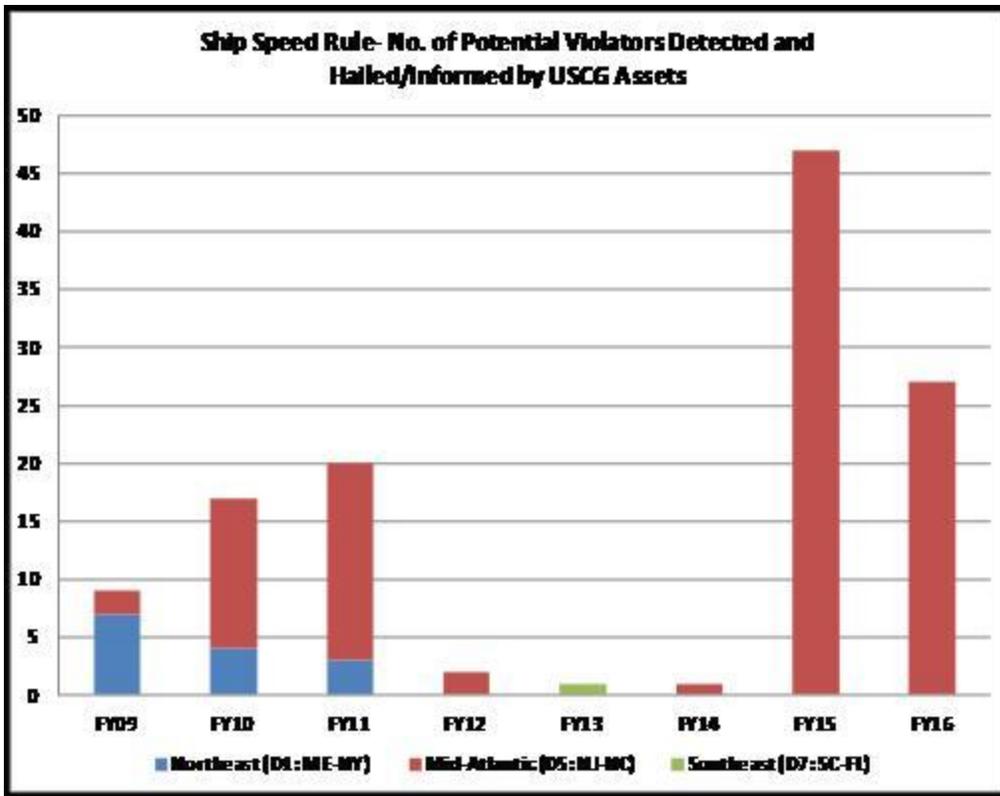
USCG cooperates with law enforcement partners, and CG detected a potential ALWTRP violation since the last CG Enforcement Report. The overall compliance rate for each District, pooled across all living marine resources boardings, exceeded USCG's goal of 96.5% observed compliance for FY16, by coming in at 97%.

JUL 2016: District 1 (NE: NJ-ME): CGC OCRACOKE issued an enforcement action report regarding an ALWTRP violation: failure to have sufficient gear markings on lobster pot lines.

VESSEL STRIKE REDUCTION

Enforcement of NOAA's Ship Strike Reduction Rule

NOAA OLE, NOAA General Counsel and the USCG partner on enforcement efforts. Working closely with NOAA OLE, USCG developed a web based near real-time system to filter AIS data to help enforce and monitor the ship strike rule. This filtered AIS data records vessels that are going faster than 10 knots in a Seasonal Management Area (SMA). Annually, USCG provides guidance to its fields units regarding the at-sea and shore side enforcement posture which compliments NOAA OLE's.



CG actions included detecting the potential violators, hailing them, and informing them of the ship strike rule and speed requirements. USCG then provided written notification to NOAA OLE for further engagement, as necessary. USCG also implemented an educational and enforcement pulse operation, OP Right Speed, in the Mid-Atlantic during winter 2015 to ensure compliance. Those efforts have commenced for winter 2016.

Right Whale Aerial Surveys

USCG provides funding toward aircraft support for the detection of right whales. USCG partners with NOAA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Navy in support of aerial surveys within the southeast; and USCG partners with NOAA in the northeast. These aerial surveys are known as the Early Warning System and Sighting Advisory System, respectively. These initiatives help prevent ship strikes and contribute important data for management purposes. To this end, USCG contributed over \$213k in FY16.

Outreach/Education

Through USCG's communication system, it provides mariners with information regarding recent sightings of right whales, aggregations, injured animals, and Dynamic Management Areas. USCG also issues seasonal broadcasts to mariners informing them that right whales are known to occur during that particular time/area. These are accomplished through Local Notice to Mariners, Broadcast Notice to Mariners, NAVTEX, and VHF.

In March 2016 USCG conducted Op Splash Zone, a pulse op that educated the boating public and enforced the Marine Mammal Protection Act and whale watching guidelines (including close approach and departure procedures) during the course of normal boardings. Units provided 21 pamphlets to boaters.

Mandatory Ship Reporting (MSR) System

USCG, in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries, operates the MSR, a ship reporting system designed to reduce the risk of commercial vessels colliding with North Atlantic right whales. The IMO-approved program commenced in 1999, and it requires all commercial ships greater than 300 gross tons to report their position, course, speed, destination, and route to the USCG prior to entering 2 designated areas of whale habitat. Ships submit these reports via satellite communications to the MSR, an automated database, which sends a return message to the ship advising them of the endangered status of the right whale and providing them with the locations of recent right whale sightings, and information on how to minimize their risk of collision. The MSR also records information from the ship reports to facilitate analysis of vessel traffic patterns in right whale habitat.

Through Q3CY16, the system provided 554 reports to vessels in the northern reporting area and 1878 reports to vessels in the southern reporting area. The total cumulative observed compliance rate for CY16 through September was 67%.

INTERNAL COMPLIANCE

The USCG is committed to enforcing and complying with the natural resources management requirements of Federal and state statutes. As such, the USCG faces a difficult challenge, enforcing laws and regulations that, at times, require operation in protected habitat and in proximity to protected species. It is Coast Guard policy that its vessels over 65 feet in length operate under the same restrictions, unless operations or safety of navigation require otherwise.

STRANDING/DISENTANGLEMENT RESPONSE

USCG vessels and aircraft provide operational assistance, logistic support, and safety standby for stranding and disentanglement responses. FY16 examples of USCG assistance for species protected under the ALWTRP include:

Date	Location	Species	Situation	USCG Response
1/9/16	Thimble Shoals Channel, VA	Whale, humpback	Resight attempt	CG aided VA Marine Resources Commission and 2 Stranding Network members attempt to resight an animal reported in distress. Found several whales; none appeared in distress/injured.
1/14/2016	Chesapeake	Whale,	Safety perimeter	CG launched a small

	Bay entrance, VA	unknown species		boat and diverted a patrol boat to divert vessel traffic away for a possible entangled whale. Whale located; not entangled.
1/15/16	Chesapeake Light	Whale, humpback	Dead floater	CG received a report of a dead whale and diverted to take pictures and provide a skin sample.
3/27/16	Love Ladies, NJ	Whale, humpback	Photo- documentation	CG received news of a dead whale and transited to take pictures for the Stranding Network.
4/24/16	Herring Cove, MA	Whale, humpback	Disentanglement	STA Provincetown provided an on-scene standby assist while the Stranding Network disentangled the whale.
5/14/16	Cape Cod Bay, MA	Whale, humpback	Disentanglement	Assisted Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies with an anchored whale. Successfully freed.
5/21/16	Point Pleasant Beach, NJ	Whale, humpback	Disentanglement	Diverted a CG surface asset to an entangled whale. Took pictures. Animal was freed. Recovered disentangled gear and relayed to NOAA OLE.
5/26/16	Herring Cove, Provincetown, MA	Whale, humpback	Disentanglement	Assisted Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies by transporting a staff member to take pictures and standing by entangled whale until CCS vessel arrived to disentangle.
6/22/16	Race Point, MA	Whale, finback	Disentanglement	CG established a safety perimeter for Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies to disentangle whale.
7/5/16	Chatham, MA	Whale, humpback	Sighting	CG assisted the Center for Coastal Studies with

				notification of an entangled whale.
8/3/16	New York Harbor, NY	Whale, species not identified	Sighting	CG sighted a dead whale while patrolling. Relayed sighting to Stranding Network. Army towed whale shoreside.
8/29/16	Manasquan Inlet Sea Buoy	Whale, humpback	Resight attempt	CG launched in response to a request to resight injured whale. Located whale; appeared uninjured and not entangled.
9/16/16	Chatham, MA	Whale, humpback	Disentanglement	A CG small boat stood by an entangled whale until Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies could respond. Successful disentanglement.
9/25/16	Portland, ME	Whale, right	Tow	A CG small boat relieved Maine Marine Patrol of a tow of an entangled and deceased right whale ashore for necropsy.

Data compiled 10NOV16.

POC: Ms. Katie Moore, 757-398-6504, Katie.S.Moore@uscg.mil