Update on NOAA Fisheries
Right Whale Recovery Actions

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Overview

1. Monitoring the ALWTRP
2. Reinitiation of Section 7 consultations for fisheries biological opinions
3. Recent US/Canada joint initiatives to address right whale mortality
4. Update on the 2017 North Atlantic right whale 5-year review
1. Monitoring the ALWTRP

- Annual monitoring webinar
  - Reviewing latest serious injury/mortality and entanglement data
  - Presenting information from recovered gear
  - Population abundance estimates
  - Law enforcement update
- Information sessions
- In-person meetings & subgroups
1. Monitoring the ALWTRP

- Longer-term monitoring considerations
  - Additional resources at GARFO
- Building on the ALWTRP Monitoring Strategy (2012)
- Two primary goals:
  - Monitor changing indicators quickly
  - Relay timely updates to the TRT
- We welcome guidance from the TRT
Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act requires federal agencies to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out do not jeopardize the existence of any species listed under the ESA, or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat of any listed species.
2. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act

- In 2013, formal consultation led to a “Batched” Biological Opinion on the following FMPs:
  - Northeast multispecies, monkfish, spiny dogfish, Northeast skate complex, Atlantic mackerel/squid/butterfish, Atlantic bluefish, and summer flounder/scup/black sea bass
- We completed formal consultation and issued Biological Opinions on the Atlantic Deep-Sea Red Crab FMP in 2002 and on the American lobster fishery in 2014.
2. Reinitiating Consultation for Fisheries

• Why reinitiate?

• Consultation process:
  1. Status of the species
  2. Description of the action
  3. Effects analysis
3. US/Canada Joint Effort on Right Whales

- Bilateral Right Whale Working Group
  - Representatives from the Canadian and US governments
  - Scientists and Resource Managers
- Met in Boston in September
- Upcoming meeting in Montreal in December
- Goal to identify areas where both nations can jointly fund research and management efforts
4. Right Whale 5-Year Review

- A Requirement of the Endangered Species Act; follow-on from the North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan
- Findings of the 2017 5-year review:
  - A low rate of reproduction,
  - Longer calving intervals,
  - Declining population abundance,
  - Continued mortality from vessel and fishing gear interactions,
  - Changes in prey availability, and
  - Increased transboundary movement and risk.
- Confirms endangered status
4. Right Whale 5-Year Review

- Recommendations for the period 2017-2022:
  - Developing a strategy for understanding the energetic stressors on right whales including the effect of chronic, sublethal entanglement on overall and reproductive health and the effects of changes in environmental conditions and prey availability.
  - Developing a long-term, cross-regional plan for monitoring right whale population trends and habitat use.
  - Prioritizing funding for a combination of acoustic, aerial, and shipboard surveys of right whales that can be used to understand right whale presence in near real time.
  - Evaluating the effectiveness of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and the Ship Speed Rule to determine whether it may be necessary to modify or extend these protections for right whales.
  - Analyzing the effects of commercial fishing on right whales.
4. Right Whale 5-Year Review

- Recommendations currently underway:
  - Convening a bilateral work group with Canada to focus on addressing science and management gaps
  - Reinitiate our fisheries Biological Opinions under the Endangered Species Act
  - Designating a dedicated Right Whale Recovery Coordinator in the Greater Atlantic Region
  - Developing a new North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team