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**NOAA TEAM POSTPONES ATTEMPT TO REMOVE ROPES
FROM ENDANGERED RIGHT WHALE**
Young Right Whale Moves Further North

Wilmington, N.C. – The U.S. Commerce Department’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) and their rescue team partners postponed disentanglement operations this morning. During the night the entangled right whale traveled further than expected and moved out of range of the team and into bad weather

“We are not giving up on attempts to save this whale, however we have decided for now that it is best to postpone disentanglement operations,” said Dr. Teri Rowles, lead veterinarian for NOAA Fisheries and the head of the nation’s Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program. “As long as the tracking device stays on the whale and functions correctly, we will continue to monitor his location and assess the situation. As you can imagine we are very disappointed.”

The team had planned to intercept the whale and attempt to remove as much rope and gear as they could today. But during the night, the whale traveled north quickly and ended up off Cape Lookout in North Carolina and out of range of the team’s research vessel.

On March 17, the disentanglement team attached a satellite tracking device to the whale off Anastasia Island, Fla. On March 18, the whale was relocated off the coast of Jacksonville, Fla., with the help of the NOAA Twin Otter aircraft surveillance team. Since that time, it has been steadily traveling north.

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Other members of the team include disentanglement and whale experts from the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, Mass., the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The North Atlantic right whale is the most endangered off American coasts. After a period of intense whaling in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was on the brink of extinction. Although whaling practices have ceased, right whales face serious risks from ship collisions and entanglements in fishing gear and marine debris. The North Atlantic right whale population is now estimated to be approximately 300 animals and is listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973. Right whales and all other species of marine mammals are also protected under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries 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. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

- 30 -

On the Web:

<http://www.coastalstudies.org/rescue/kingfishermap.htm>