



NOAA Fisheries Service Protected Species

*Striving to balance species
recovery with the financial
success of marine resource
users*

Protected Resources

The Protected Resources Division of NOAA Fisheries Service's Northeast Region is working to manage, conserve and recover populations of marine mammals and Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species in rivers, bays and estuaries and in marine waters from Virginia to Maine.

Primary Activities

The Protected Resources Division is composed of two primary programs: the Endangered Species Program and the Marine Mammal Program.

The Endangered Species Program focuses on the protection and recovery of listed species including marine mammals, sea turtles, Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon. The staff also proactively identify species that may warrant protection under the ESA and attempt to implement protective measures to help avoid having to list additional species.

The Marine Mammal Program is responsible for the development and monitoring of "take reduction" plans which identify measures to minimize the risk to Atlantic large whales, harbor porpoise and a variety of species captured in trawl and other fisheries throughout the Northeast. Protection is achieved through consulting with federal agencies, publishing regulations, and cooperating to increase our knowledge and implement measures to protect species and their habitats.

Division staff work with state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, fishermen and others on a variety of efforts to decrease the likelihood of serious injury or mortality of marine mammals, sea turtles and other marine life including testing gear modifications, developing measures to reduce ship strikes, improving habitat connectivity through barrier removal (e.g. Dams) and providing recommendations to avoid or minimize impacts of federal agency permitted projects.



Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). Photo: William Hartley, USFWS



Atlantic sturgeon. Credit: University of Maine



Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
Photo: © Ursula Keuper-Bennett/Peter Bennett

Front photo: North Atlantic right whales Credit: NOAA

The division also is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the marine mammal and sea turtle stranding and disentanglement network for the region. The network responds to reports of dead or injured marine mammals or sea turtles found on beaches or near shore or in the water but which are unable to return to their natural habitats without assistance.

Applicable Laws

The work of the Protected Resources Division focuses on the implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the ESA. These laws provide NOAA with a mandate for the protection of endangered and threatened marine life, marine mammals and their habitats and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The MMPA strives to restore populations to optimal sustainable levels, by among other things, requiring that “takes” in commercial fisheries be reduced. The ESA is dedicated to the protection and recovery of threatened and endangered marine species and provides a means to conserve the ecosystems upon which listed species depend.

Emerging Issues and Priorities

Three issues which will remain a priority for Protected Resources are protection of right whales which are critically endangered, listing and recovery efforts for Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon populations and recovery of sea turtles. The division has had considerable success working with fishermen and others to develop new gear to minimize the impact on ESA-listed sea turtles, perfect acoustic deterrent devices to minimize harbor porpoise entanglement in gillnet fishing gear, and develop fishing gear modifications to minimize whale entanglements in pot/trap fisheries. Through continued collaboration with fishing and community organizations, Protected Resources hopes to identify workable solutions to better protect our marine resources and still provide viable economic opportunities for marine resource users.

For more information on NOAA's Protected Resource activities in the northeast, please visit our website: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prd/>

NOAA Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
978-281-9300
<http://www.nero.noaa.gov>

