



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 20, 2005

### **NOAA SOLICITS PUBLIC COMMENT ON RESEARCH PERMITTING PROCESS FOR STUDYING RIGHT WHALES**

NOAA Fisheries Service will host a series of public meetings to discuss the permitting process for research projects involving the endangered northern right whale in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The meetings will take place Nov. 3 through Jan. 19, 2006, in New Bedford, Mass, San Diego, Calif. and Silver Spring, Md.

In compliance with the Endangered Species and Marine Mammal Protection Acts, researchers are required to get a permit from NOAA Fisheries Service, the agency charged with recovering these endangered animals. Studies are most often conducted in important habitat areas for these whales in the Gulf of Maine, Cape Cod Bay, Great South Channel off western Georges Bank, Massachusetts Bay, Georgia Bight and other areas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Public meetings are an important step in getting public input on issues and alternatives to be considered when developing an environmental impact statement (EIS). In 2007, the agency expects to complete an EIS that will cover a range of current and projected research methods and techniques.

In the western North Atlantic, right whales primarily inhabit coastal or shelf waters, ranging from winter calving and nursery areas off the southeastern United States to summer feeding grounds in New England waters and north to the Bay of Fundy and Scotian Shelf. Less is known about the distribution of right whales in the North Pacific.

The meetings are open to the public to provide input on the range of actions, alternatives and impacts that NOAA Fisheries Service should consider.

Written comments may be sent through January 31, 2006 to Steve Leathery, Chief, Permits, Conservation, and Education Division; Office of Protected Resources; NOAA Fisheries Service; 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705; Silver Spring, Md. 20910. Comments may also be sent via email to [rweis.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:rweis.comments@noaa.gov) or by fax to 301-427-2582.

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Meeting Times and Locations:

PLACE	TIME	DATE
New Bedford, Mass. New Bedford Whaling Museum Auditorium 18 Johnny Cake Hill	3 to 6 p.m.	Thursday November 3, 2005
San Diego, Calif. Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, Elizabeth A, One Market Place	6:30 to 9:30 p.m.	Saturday December 10, 2005
Silver Spring, Md. NOAA Science Center, Silver Spring Metro Center, Bldg. IV, Science Center 1301 East-West Highway	1:00 to 4:00 p.m.	Thursday January 19, 2006

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service 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 Service, please visit: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>