



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JUN - 6 2011

Dear Trap/Pot and Gillnet Fisherman:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is holding numerous public scoping meetings to solicit public comments on ways to reduce the risk of serious injury or mortality of North Atlantic right, humpback and fin whales as a result of vertical lines (buoy lines) in commercial trap/pot and gillnet fisheries. Please see the attached documents for a list of scoping meetings in your area and instructions on how to provide comments.

NMFS implemented the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) to reduce serious injuries and deaths of large whales (North Atlantic right, humpback, and fin) due to incidental entanglement in fishing gear. The ALWTRP is an evolving plan that changes as NMFS learns more about why whales become entangled and how fishing practices might be modified to reduce the risk of entanglement. It has several components including restrictions on where and how gear can be set; research into whale populations and whale behavior, as well as fishing gear interactions and modifications; outreach to inform and collaborate with fishermen and other stakeholders; and a large whale disentanglement program. Since its implementation in 1997, the ALWTRP has been modified on several occasions to further reduce the serious injury and mortality of large whales in commercial gillnet and trap/pot fishing gear.

Despite these efforts, there has been continued serious injury and mortality of large whales from entanglement in commercial trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear. Therefore, NMFS determined that additional modifications to the ALWTRP are warranted. Specifically, NMFS is focusing on reducing the risk of serious injury and mortality of large whales that encounter buoy lines associated with commercial trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear.

NMFS is interested in eliciting guidance on addressing buoy line entanglements by identifying: (1) where to manage (coast wide or based on whale density or fishing density); (2) when to manage (should the vertical line strategy be year round, seasonal or a combination); and (3) how to manage (what management strategies should be considered – traps-per-trawl limits, seasonal or year-round closures, etc. – to drive vertical line reductions).

A scoping document will be available on July 1, 2011. To obtain a copy of the scoping document visit the ALWTRP web page (www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/) or please contact the ALWTRP Coordinator, Kate Swails (978-282-8481 or Kate.Swails@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator

for



Schedule of ALWTRP Public Scoping Meetings

The dates, times, and locations of the ALWTRP scoping meetings are scheduled as follows:

- 1. Monday, July 11, 2011- E. Machias, ME**
6 - 9 PM
Washington Academy
66 High Street
East Machias, ME 04630
- 2. Tuesday, July 12, 2011- Ellsworth, ME**
6 - 9 PM
Ellsworth City Hall
Auditorium
1 City Hall Plaza
Ellsworth, Maine 04605
- 3. Wednesday, July 13, 2011- Rockland, ME**
6 - 9 PM
Rockland District High School
Auditorium
400 Broadway
Rockland, ME 04841
- 4. Thursday, July 14, 2011-Portland, ME**
6 - 9 PM
Portland City Hall
State of Maine Room
389 Congress St
Portland, ME 04101
- 5. Monday, July 18, 2011- Providence, RI**
5:30-8:30 PM
Providence Public Library
150 Empire Street
Providence, RI 02903
- 6. Tuesday, July 19, 2011- Plymouth, MA**
6 - 9 PM
Plymouth Public Library
Fehlow Room
132 South Street
Plymouth, MA 02360
- 7. Wednesday, July 20, 2011-Chatham, MA**
6 - 9 PM
Chatham Community Center
Large Meeting Room
702 Main Street
Chatham, MA 02633
- 8. Thursday, July 21, 2011-Gloucester, MA**
6 - 9 PM
NMFS Northeast Regional Office
Hearing Rooms A&B
55 Great Republic Dr.
Gloucester, MA 01930
- 9. Tuesday, July 26, 2011-Morehead City, NC**
6 - 9 PM
North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries
5285 Highway 70 West
Morehead City, NC 28557
- 10. Wednesday, July 27, 2011- Virginia Beach, VA** 6 - 9 PM
Oberndorf Central Library
Folio Meeting Rm.
4100 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Virginia Beach, VA 23452
- 11. Thursday, July 28, 2011- Ocean View, DE**
6 - 9 PM
Ocean View Town Hall
John West Park
32 West Ave.
Ocean View, DE 19970
- 12. Friday, July 29, 2011- Manahawkin, NJ**
6 - 9 PM
Stafford Township Municipal Building
Council Meeting Room
260 Bay Avenue
Manahawkin, NJ 08050
- 13. Monday August 22, 2011- Cape Canaveral, FL** 5-8 p.m.
Cape Canaveral Public Library
201 Polk Avenue
Cape Canaveral, FL 32920

14. Tuesday August 23, 2011-Jacksonville, FL

6 - 9 PM

Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT)

Board Room

2831 Talleyrand Avenue

Jacksonville, FL 32206

15. Wednesday August 24, 2011- Garden City, GA

6-9 PM

Garden City City Hall

100 Central Avenue (at intersection of Dean Forest Rd. and Constantine Rd.)

Garden City, GA 31405

How do I Comment?

1. Provide verbal comments at one of the scoping meetings in your area.
2. Provide written comments via-
 - a. fax: (978) 281-9394; or
 - b. mail to:

Mary Colligan, Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930
Attn: ALWTRP Scoping