

## **Northeast Implementation Team (NEIT) Protocols**

**Northeast Implementation Team (NEIT):** The Northeast Implementation Team (NEIT ) shall function as a continuation of the former Northeast Large Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team's Ship Strike Committee. The NEIT's focus will be on North Atlantic right whale ship strike reduction and support of the National NOAA Ship Strike Strategy Working Group. The NEIT shall from time to time receive guidance and direction from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) in support of NOAA Fisheries' National Ship Strike Strategy. The NEIT may also initiate projects and seek funding from various sources.

The NEIT will be a streamlined team that will report directly to NOAA Fisheries. The initial NEIT co - chairs will be the current co - chairs from the former Ship Strike Committee (SSC). The NEIT co - chairs will serve in this lead NEIT role at the discretion and pleasure of the Northeast Regional Administrator and will work with other federal and state agency input via an **Agency Coordinating Committee (ACC)**.

The NEIT membership will consist of the NEIT co - chairs (specified above) and the members of the Agency Coordinating Committee (specified below). The NEIT will not operate as a consensus seeking body, but will consider and include all written comments provided on it's work. At the discretion of the NEIT co - chairs, a vote may be taken by NEIT members on some issues.

**NEIT Steering Committee:** The NEIT co - chairs, the Agency Coordinating Committee co - chairs ( NOAA Fisheries and Coast Guard) and the Secretary will function as the **NEIT Steering Committee**. The NEIT Steering Committee will advise NOAA Fisheries on right whale ship strike reduction matters.

**Agency Coordinating Committee:** The Agency Coordinating Committee shall be made up of the following federal and state agencies. Participating agencies on the ACC will be updated on NEIT issues and activities by their representative and shall provide support for the NEIT, as reasonable. Additional ACC representation will be at the discretion of the NEIT Steering Committee.

Agency Coordinating Committee members:

NMFS (NOAA Fisheries) co-chair  
US Coast Guard co - chair  
US Navy  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Port Authorities (Massport & the North Atlantic Port Authorities (NAPA) representative)  
National Ocean Service, NOAA  
Commonwealth of MA  
Marine Mammal Commission  
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary  
Maritime Administration (MARAD)  
Military Sealift Command?  
Any agency with a fleet (Army, EPA)  
Other state agencies

All ACC members will designate an alternate to represent their agency.

**Secretary:** A Secretary will be appointed by the co - chairs and the ACC from the Agency Coordinating Committee membership to document proceedings from meetings and recommendations made to NOAA Fisheries. Meeting summaries shall be reviewed by the Steering Committee and when approved, posted to an appropriate web site. The web site shall be the official clearinghouse of NEIT information.

**Non Governmental Organizations, Scientists, Researchers and Shipping Interests:** Non Governmental Organizations, scientists, researchers, and shipping interests may be involved in the NEIT in one or more capacities.

**Advisor:** an interested party who is not a co - chair of the NEIT or on the Agency Coordinating Committee who provides input and recommendations to the NEIT Steering Committee. Advisors will meet at the request of the co - chairs and serve as working group members to develop and guide NEIT projects and activities. Any individual or organization desiring to be appointed as an advisor should make their intentions known at a NEIT meeting, in writing or in person. Advisors will be appointed by the NEIT Steering Committee and noted in the meeting summaries. Appointment is pro - forma. Advisors will normally attend all full NEIT and working group meetings, as possible. The NEIT will maintain an updated list of advisors annually. However, from time to time the NEIT Steering Committee may meet with regional participants and stakeholders. It may not be practicable for advisors to attend such meetings; meeting summaries shall be provided to the full NEIT.

**Participant:** an interested party who attends the NEIT and working group meetings.

**Budget:** NOAA Fisheries will provide funding annually to the NEIT, primarily for identified projects that support right whale recovery goals (ship strike related). The level of this funding may vary each fiscal year. The funding may also be utilized for limited travel and support of the

NEIT co-chairs and Secretary, as appropriate. Projects will be competitively awarded through the most cost effective and efficient process as determined by NOAA Fisheries.

**Project Committee :** The NEIT may from time to time establish ad hoc project committees to focus on particular issues. Project committees shall report on their activities to the NEIT. A Project Committee chair will be appointed by the NEIT Steering Committee who will be responsible for reporting back to the full NEIT.

**Meetings -** meetings of the full NEIT will be scheduled 2 - 3 times per year at the discretion of the NEIT Steering Committee. A combined meeting with the Southeast Implementation Team (SEIT) will be scheduled one time per year and held in the mid - Atlantic to facilitate discussions with shipping interests and others in the mid - Atlantic.

## **NEIT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The NEIT is responsible for the following:

1. In collaboration with NOAA Fisheries and on an annual basis, identify priority tasks with measurable goals that could be undertaken by NEIT co - chairs, agencies, advisors, participants, individuals, and other organizations. The tasks must be related to North Atlantic right whale recovery goals (ship strike related).
2. In collaboration with NOAA Fisheries and on an annual basis, develop a work statement and time line to address the priorities identified in item 1 above that can be undertaken by NEIT co - chairs, agencies, advisors, participants, individuals, and other organizations.
3. In collaboration with NOAA Fisheries and on an annual basis, develop an appropriate annual budget for addressing the critical needs of the NEIT as developed in items 1 and 2 above. Budget considerations should be considered on an annual basis and may include project funding, travel, possible meeting facilities, administrative support, etc.
4. On an annual basis identify tasks in conjunction with item 2 above that can be undertaken by NOAA Fisheries and other federal and state agencies.
5. Monitor regulations implementing ship strike mitigation measures, as enacted from the Ship Strike Strategy, to ensure the management measures adequately address the North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan objectives.
6. Provide comment, as appropriate, to other agencies, associations, or organizations concerning the impact associated with respective projects/actions on the North Atlantic right whale recovery. Projects/actions commented on by NEIT must be thoroughly investigated. Any comments submitted on a project/action must be discussed by the full

NEIT.

7. Produce draft and final meeting summaries of all NEIT meetings. The draft summary must be circulated to the NEIT for review prior to final submission to NOAA Fisheries. The final meeting summary must be submitted to NOAA Fisheries within 30 days following the NEIT meeting and must identify tasks undertaken, progress made since the previous meeting, and any formal recommendations to NOAA Fisheries. NEIT meeting summaries shall be posted on the web with the assistance of NOAA Fisheries.
8. Produce an annual report highlighting the NEIT's projects and results for the year. The report should also include potential tasks identified for the upcoming year, including recommendations for research. NEIT annual reports shall be posted on the web with the assistance of NOAA Fisheries.