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To: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Northeast and Southeast Regional Administrators

Via: Northeast Implementation Team (NEIT) for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale and humpback whale; and Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team (SEIT) for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale.

From: Bruce Russell, co-chair Ship Strike Committee of the NEIT and SEIT, lead author

Re: Final Report on recommended measures to protect the northern right whale from vessels

I hereby submit recommendations for specific measures to reduce the risk of vessel collisions with right whales.

The report calls for three basic measures: (1) routing of ships around high-risk areas; (2) speed restrictions on vessels operating in high-risk areas; and (3) mandatory shipping lanes through high risk areas to minimize miles traveled through right whale habitat. The report calls for different measures or combinations of measures in different U.S. East coast waters, in particular in port approaches; the report also recommends other actions.

- geographically targeted seasonal and dynamic routing of vessels and speed restrictions applicable to all commercial and recreational vessels, with length greater than or equal 65 feet or 20 meters, and tugs and tows, operating in coastal waters from Port Canaveral, Florida north to the Canadian border;
- mandatory or recommended routing of ships through critical habitat to minimize miles traveled through right whale habitat;
- operating measures and education programs addressing recreational and other small vessels;
- ongoing and future research and development;
- ongoing economic analyses and risk assessments;
- merchant mariner qualifications and education;
- voyage planning requirements; and

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action by several Federal maritime operating agencies to consult with NMFS pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

These recommendations are based on a series of discussion papers or drafts (seven papers in total) addressing the rationale for each recommendation. These papers provided the basis for a series of 10 regional and industry association briefings, the April 10-11 2001 workshop at the Coast Guard Academy, and five ad hoc working meetings with port and shipping company interests (New England, Southeast US, International Council of Cruise Lines, and the Harbor Safety Committee for the ports of New York and New Jersey, Brunswick, GA, and Jacksonville and Fernandina, FL). The discussion papers or drafts, and a preliminary list of participants have been provided to NMFS and the I-Teams in the course of our work and are incorporated into this report by reference. I will provide a complete list of participants at the September Implementation Team meetings. These working papers are archived and will be provided to NMFS and other agency project managers as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce A. Russell.
co-chair, Ship Strike Committee
Consultant to NMFS
and maritime advisor to the
International Fund for Animal Welfare

Attachment