

**State of Rhode Island
Coastal Resources Management Council
Public Notice
CRMC File 2024-07-047**

The Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) is in receipt of a regional federal consistency certification filed on June 18, 2024, by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Protected Species for the proposed amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule ("speed rule") pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), 16 U.S.C. § 1451 *et. seq.* and 15 CFR part 930, subpart C. The proposed amendments to the existing North Atlantic right whale (NARW) vessel speed rule are intended to further reduce the likelihood of mortalities and serious injuries to endangered right whales from vessel strikes which are the leading cause of the species' decline and primary factor in an ongoing "Unusual Mortality Event."

To achieve a reduction in vessel strikes to NARW, the proposed rule amendments would make the following changes in U.S. Waters:

1. Modify the boundaries and timing seasonal speed restrictions (renamed Seasonal Speed Zones or SSZs) to better align with areas characterized by elevated collision related mortality risk;
2. Create a Dynamic Speed Zone (DSZ) program to implement temporary mandatory speed restrictions when whales are known to be present outside acted SSZs;
3. Extend the size threshold of regulated vessels to include most vessels 35 ft (10.7 m) or greater in length;
4. Update the speed rule's safety deviation provision (See <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/08/01/2022-16211/amendments-to-the-north-atlantic-right-whale-vessel-strike-reduction-rule>)

The proposed annual effective dates of the proposed SSZs are summarized as follows:

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|----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Atlantic Zone | November 1 – May 30 |
| • Great South Channel Zone | April 1 – June 30 |
| • North Carolina Zone | November 1 – April 30 |
| • South Carolina Zone | November 1 – April 15 |
| • Southeast zone | November 15 – April 15 |

The amendments were informed by a coastwide collision mortality risk assessment, and updated information on NARW distribution, vessel traffic patterns, and vessel strike mortality and serious injury events.

The R.I. CRMC is providing this public notice concerning the regional federal consistency certification in accordance with 15 C.F.R. § 930.42. All interested parties are invited to submit written comments concerning the proposed amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule on or before **August 9, 2024**. Comments should be specifically directed as to whether the proposed amended rules are consistent with the enforceable policies of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program. (See <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/organizations/subchapter/650-20-05>)

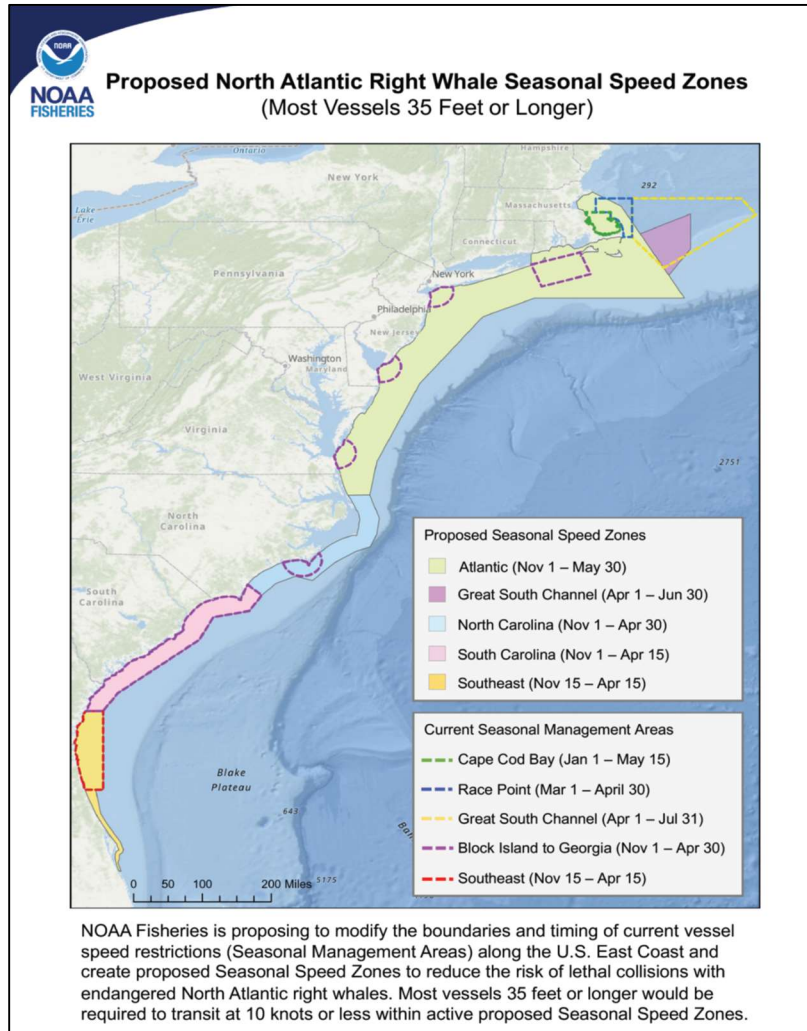
Additional information:

Regional federal consistency certification: <http://www.crmc.ri.gov/>

Proposed amendments to the NARW Vessel Strike Reduction Rule:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/amendments-north-atlantic-right-whale-vessel-strike-reduction-rule>

Unusual Mortality Event information can be found here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-life-distress/2017-2024-north-atlantic-right-whale-unusual-mortality-event>

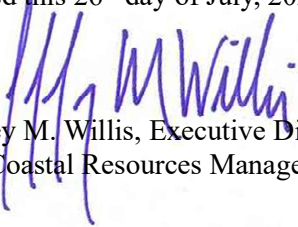


Mailing Address for Public Comment Submissions:

Coastal Resources Management Council
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Wakefield, RI 02879
Attn. Jeffrey Willis, CRMC Executive Director

Written comments may be emailed to the CRMC at: cstaff1@crmc.ri.gov

Signed this 26th day of July, 2024.


Jeffrey M. Willis, Executive Director
R.I. Coastal Resources Management Council