

## RIGHT WHALE NEWS

Volume 2, Number 3 AUGUST, 1995

### CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET AXE THREATENS RIGHT WHALE RESEARCH

House budget cutters succeeded in cutting funding for right whale research. Then others succeeded in getting the funds back in. Whether the funding survives the House vote is anyone's guess. Making certain that funds either stay in or get put back in will require Senate action, first to re-instate the funds in its version of the budget and then to insist on their staying there during the resolution of House/Senate budget differences. The New England Aquarium and others have approached Senator John F. Kerry of Massachusetts to introduce the measure. Write to him or your own Senators to provide your views on right whale funding. The address: U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20515. Time is of the essence.

### RHODE ISLAND MORTALITY

Amy Knowlton of the New England Aquarium has reported that a two-year old male right whale died in Rhode Island waters earlier this summer. The animal's right flipper had been entangled with some kind of fishing line (not netting) for about a year and a half. At death, the rope had worked itself three inches into the bone of the whale. It is not known whether the death was caused by the gear entanglement or whether it was just a contributing factor. Six percent (2 of 32) of known right whale mortalities between 1970 and September, 1994, have been attributed to entanglement.

There have been several other reports of dead whales, including a possible submarine strike with a whale and two dead whales floating off Cape Hatteras. The identity of these whales have not been determined. There have been no further sightings of the calf (#2404) that was struck and entangled off Florida in February, 1994 (Right Whale News, August 1994, page 2.)

### NEW ENGLAND TEAM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team met on May 10, 1995, at the New England Fishery Management Council office in Saugus, Massachusetts. Some highlights of the meeting follow.

Dr. Sal Testaverde was introduced as the new National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff person who will provide direct support to the Team and its tasks.

The NMFS Northeast Science Center has committed \$156,000 in FY 94 carry-over funds and \$200,000 in FY 95 funds for the following right whale research projects: (1) satellite tagging work to determine unknown right whale habitat, (2) conduct vessel interaction modelling, (3) stranding or entanglement response support, (4) genetic studies, (5) population modeling, (6) data base management and (7) habitat studies in Cape Cod Bay and on the Scotian shelf. The Center has issued an umbrella contract to the New England Aquarium for a significant portion of this work. The contract will also involve the University of Rhode Island and the Center for Coastal Studies. (For background information on this research, see Right Whale News, May, 1995, pages 11 - 12, and Right Whale News, November 1994, page 8.)

The NMFS Regional Office is addressing key recovery plan issues including stranding responses, establishment of a disentanglement protocol, increasing the effectiveness of whale watch enforcement and monitoring and coordination of recovery plan implementation. The Regional Office has also

received FY 95 funding for right whale work including \$60,000 to support the recovery team, \$15,000 for entanglements and \$100,000 for monitoring the impacts of contaminant sources in the Massachusetts Bay and Cape Cod Bay areas.

The First Coast Guard District, the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the National Marine Fisheries Service adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on January 4, 1995. The MOU has resulted in increased monitoring support by USCG vessels and aircraft and better surveillance in critical areas. A detailed training and operational plan is in effect for all District operations from the Canadian border south to Cape May, NJ, regarding whale watch enforcement, entanglement response, dedicated mammal surveys and opportunistic sighting reports.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Boston Harbor improvement project will be coming out this summer. Team members were urged to pay particular attention to this dredging and disposal project.

The New England Fishery Management Council is working on amendments to three Fishery Management Plans (scallop, lobster and groundfish). Two measures that may affect whales are: (1) area closures under the groundfish plan are likely to become permanent and (2) limits are also being discussed for lobster pots, a potential source of right whale entanglement.

The Sub Groups on Vessel Interaction/Gear Conflict and Habitat Characterization also met on May 10.

Another meeting of the New England Team took place on July 13 at the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary office in Plymouth, Massachusetts. One of the highlights of the meeting was the lively discussion about the Great South Channel area closure issue, which revolves around the fact that the New England Fishery Management Council's Area 1 closure overlaps with but does not coincide with the right whale's Critical Habitat. Some argued that the Team should wait until the New England Fisheries Management Council finished the revisions to their Fishery Management Plans before considering whether supplementary actions were needed to protect the right whale Critical Habitat. Others argued that the Council's decision to close Area 1 was based on haddock data and not right whale data. Decisions to protect right whales should be based on right whale data. Therefore, the Team should not depend on the Council; instead, the Team should recommend that the NMFS develop a proposed rule to close the Critical Habitat to hazardous gear such as large offshore lobster pots and gill nets.

Also discussed were membership on the Team (a formally appointed team was recommended) and the need to establish some kind of liaison with the mid-Atlantic and Canadian whale recovery interests.

For a copy of the minutes of these meetings, contact Doug Beech, Chairperson, New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team, NMFS, Habitat Division, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930; tel. 508-281-9254.

## IMPROVED GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE WATCHING

According to a note in the Marine Mammal Society Newsletter (Vol. 3, no. 2, page 2; June 1995), the Patagonian Coastal Zone Management Plan includes improved guidelines for the management of whale watching of southern right whales. The plan is being conducted by the Fundacion Patagonia Natural under the administration of the United Nations Development Program. The purpose of the three-year project is the conservation of biodiversity in coastal Patagonia, particularly marine bird colonies and marine mammals. At least 34 species of cetaceans have been recorded from the area and five, including the southern right whale, have coastal Patagonia as one of the most important geographic areas in their distribution. For further information, contact Claudio Campagna, Centro Nacional Patagonico, 9120

Puerto Madryn, Chubut, Argentina.

In addition, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency sponsored a July 26 -30 workshop to address whale watching in Australia, including best practices and codes for the industry, regulation, priorities for research on whales and whale watching, and development of education and information material.

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE ADDRESS CHANGES

Hans Neuhauser, the editor of Right Whale News, has accepted a new position as Director of the Georgia Land Trust Service Center, a special project of the Georgia Environmental Policy Institute. The purpose of the Service Center is to increase the capacity of land saving organizations and their leaders to conserve significant open space. Please note the new address, telephone and fax number: Hans Neuhauser, Georgia Land Trust Service Center, 640 Cobb Street, Athens, GA 30606. Telephone 706-546-7507; fax 706-613-7775.

#### WILL HON S RIGHT WHALE POSTER AVAILABLE

The offices of the Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary and the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary are making available the remarkable right whale poster produced by the renowned artist and environmental educator, Will Hon. Will, now retired, produced the poster while working for the University of Georgia's Marine Extension Center in Savannah. The poster, which measures six feet by two feet, features drawings of the right whale's external and internal anatomy, migration routes, critical habitats and the locations of the two sponsoring Marine Sanctuaries. The poster will be accompanied by supplementary information and materials for teachers. Copies of the poster may be obtained from Grays Reef NMS, 30 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411; tel 912-598-2381. The poster is free.

#### JACKSONVILLE MUSEUM EXHIBIT TO FEATURE RIGHT WHALES

The Jacksonville Museum of Science and History (MOSH) is preparing a major exhibit on the Great Marine Mammals of Northeast Florida. The exhibit will feature a fifty foot bas-relief sculpture of right whale cow and calf along with displays of the humpback whale, pilot whale, dolphin and manatee. The exhibit will draw comparisons and connections between each Northeast Florida marine mammal and humans. Interpretive themes will include behavior, physiology and conservation. The target date of the opening of the exhibit is February 28, 1996. For more information, contact Ms. Cat Varvel at the Exhibits Office, Jacksonville MOSH, 1025 Museum Circle, Jacksonville, FL 32207-9053; telephone 904-396-7062, ext. 247.

#### RECENT SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AND REPORTS

Cendrero, O. 1993. Note on Findings of Cetaceans off Northern Spain. *Boletin del Instituto Espanol de Oceanografia* 9 (1): 251 - 255. (In Spanish.)

Dixon, J. M., and L. Frigo. 1994. *The Cetacean Collection of the Museum of Victoria: an Annotated Catalog*. Museum of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. 38 pp.

Kornev, S. I. 1994. A note on the Death of a Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) off Cape Lopatka (Kamchatka). Pages 443-444 in: Perrin, W. F., G. P. Donovan and J. Barlow, eds., *Gillnets and Cetaceans*. Report of the International Whaling Commission Special Issue 15. ix & 629 pages.

Moses, E. 1995. *Distribution of North Atlantic Right Whales, Eubalaena glacialis, in Relation to Oceanographic Features of the Scotian Shelf*. M.S. Thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

## CALENDAR

September 18 - 20, 1995: Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Health Workshop, Hanover, NH. The first day's sessions, which are open to the general public, include plenary talks and audience participation. The second day's working group sessions and the third day's synthesis sessions are for invited participants only. One of the working groups will address protected species including marine mammals; the group's work will be facilitated by Dr. Robert Hoffman of the Marine Mammal Commission. For further information (FFI), contact Ms. Eugenia Braasch, Associate Director, RARGOM, at 603-646-3480.

September 27, 1995: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI: Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368

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October 31, 1995: Southeastern U.S. Right Whale Recovery Implementation Team meeting, Brunswick, GA. FFI: Barb Zoodsma, 912-264-7218.

November 30, 1995: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI: Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368

December 14 - 18, 1995: Eleventh Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Clarion Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, Orlando, Florida. FFI: Dr. Dan Odell, tel 407-363-2662.

January 31, 1996: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI: Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368

February 28, 1996: Tentative opening date for Great Marine Mammals of Northeast Florida exhibit, Jacksonville Museum of Science and History. FFI: Ms. Cat Varvel, 904-396-7062, ext. 247.

March 28, 1996: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI: Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368

## RIGHT WHALE NEWS

Right Whale News is a quarterly publication of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. The editor is Hans Neuhauser. The editorial board consists of Bill Brooks, Lorraine Guise, Scott Kraus, Mike Payne, Jerry Wallmeyer and Barb Zoodsma. To subscribe or submit news or articles for publication, contact the editor, Hans Neuhauser, at the Georgia Land Trust Service Center, 640 Cobb Street, Athens, GA 30606. Telephone 706-546-7507; fax 706-613-7775.