

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S. IMPLEMENTATION TEAM FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE NORTHERN RIGHT WHALE

VOLUME I, NUMBER 1 JULY, 1994

WELCOME TO THE *RIGHT WHALE NEWS*

Right Whale News is a new quarterly publication of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. It is produced with the intent of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of recovery efforts for the world's most endangered large whale, the Northern Right Whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*. The special focus of the newsletter will be on efforts in the Atlantic coast of the southeastern United States: the only known calving ground for the species. Relevant information from other areas will be included from time to time and as space allows.

Right Whale News is for people who are participating in the efforts to bring the Northern Right Whale back from the brink of extinction. Participation is broadly defined, so as to include everyone who is actively involved: ship operators, harbor pilots, port authorities, fishermen, educators, scientists, managers, policy makers, non-governmental organizations and other concerned citizens.

The *Right Whale News* is edited by Hans Neuhauser. The editorial board consists of Bill Brooks, Scott Kraus, Barb Zoodsma, Lorraine Guise and Jerry Wallmeyer. At present, the production of the newsletter is underwritten by the Institute of Community and Area Development (ICAD) of the University of Georgia. To subscribe, send your name and address to the editor, Hans Neuhauser, at ICAD, University of Georgia, 1234 South Lumpkin Street, Athens, GA 30602-3553; telephone 706-542-3350, fax 706-542-6189.

Submissions of news or articles for publication in *Right Whale News* are encouraged.

CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATED

On June 3, 1994, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published the Final Rule designating Critical Habitat for the Northern Right Whale (Federal Register, Vol. 59, number 106, pages 28793 - 28808). After consideration of public comment and based on the best available scientific information, the NMFS designated critical habitat as described in the proposed rule (Federal Register Vol. 58, p. 29186). The effective date for the Final Rule was July 5, 1994.

The designated habitat includes portions of Cape Cod Bay and Stellwagen Bank, the Great South Channel (each off the coast of Massachusetts) and waters adjacent to the coasts of Georgia and the east coast of Florida. The three areas designated as Critical Habitat are the same as proposed in the Right Whale Recovery Team's petition (May 18, 1990 and Federal Register Vol. 55, p. 28670). In the southeast, the specific area designated as critical habitat "encompasses waters between 310 15'N (approximately located at the mouth of the Altamaha River, GA) and 300 15'N (approximately Jacksonville, FL) from the shoreline out to 15 nautical miles offshore; and the waters between 300 15'N and 280 00'N (approximately Sebastian Inlet, FL) from the shoreline out to 5 nautical miles." This area is depicted on the "Caution Mariners" placard that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and others are distributing to mariners and other interested parties in the southeast.

The designation provides notice to Federal agencies and the public that the right whale is dependent on these areas and features for its continued existence and that any Federal action that may affect these areas or features is subject to the consultation requirements of section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

While no additional regulations accompany the designation, as some commentators had recommended, the designation does help focus Federal, state and private attention on the designated areas. In addition, some incremental protection is provided in those cases where a proposed action may not directly impact right whales but may affect the whale's habitat (for instance, actions that will occur in the critical habitat but at a time when the right whales are not present.)

For a copy of the Final Rule, contact the Director, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1335 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Mike Payne, Protected Species Management Division, NMFS

BAD NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Last December, a 30 to 35 foot long female right whale was killed off Cape Charles, Virginia, probably by a passing ship. The loss of a juvenile female is bad enough, but for this one, we also lost information that could have been of value to both science and the recovery effort. While the fresh carcass was observed and photographed by NMFS personnel, it took six months for word of the event to reach the scientists who would have been able to salvage the carcass. Efforts are underway to try to improve the system for reporting dead right whales, as called for in the Right Whale Recovery Plan (Objective 2, page 27).

In February, 1994, a right whale calf (#2404) was injured off the Florida coast. The cut flukes and the head scars suggested that the animal had been entangled in large mesh fishing gear and struck by a propeller. The severe nature of the injury led to speculation that the animal may not survive, particularly after being weaned from its mother. The animal was last seen on February 23 east of Amelia Island. As of July 12, neither the injured calf nor its mother (#1004) have been seen in northern waters. Scott Kraus of the New England Aquarium provides a word of caution: "we don't yet know what this means."

In June, a dead male right whale - some 38 feet long - was found on Kent Island in the Bay of Fundy.

THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S. IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

In drafting the "Final Recovery Plan for the Northern Right Whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*," the Right Whale Recovery Team recognized that the plan, when adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), was not the end of the recovery effort but the beginning: "Cooperation and support by many Federal, state, local and private organizations will be needed to implement the objectives of this recovery plan. To help initiate the implementation of this plan, an Implementation Committee should be developed. The committee should include representatives of [appropriate] agencies including representatives of foreign governments as necessary. The representatives should be the contact on matters related to recovery efforts."

The NMFS decided that, as a matter of practicality, that there should be two regionally based

implementation teams, one in the southeast and one in the northeast. In the southeast, the NMFS provided funds to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to, among other things, create a Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. The SEUS Implementation Team has been formed and has held several meetings to review progress and discuss future recovery efforts. The next team meeting is scheduled for November 9, 1994, in Brunswick, GA. For more information, contact Mike Harris (see below).

As of July, 1994, the team members are:

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A SURVEY OF RIGHT WHALE EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS IN THE SOUTHEAST

Education is an important part of the effort needed to bring the Northern Right Whale back from the brink of extinction. Unfortunately, limited resources - of talent, funds and time - justify the need for efficiency in the delivery of right whale educational programs, materials, exhibits and other activities. In an initial attempt to increase the efficiency of right whale educational efforts, a telephone survey was conducted in the spring of 1994 to determine what the current status of right whale educational activity was in the southeast. The survey would serve as a basis for identifying efforts that overlapped or duplicated other efforts. It would also identify areas where further effort might be needed and where collaboration might be beneficial.

The survey revealed that a number of target audiences are being reached with right whale education efforts, including ship operators and harbor pilots, small boat operators, museum and nature center visitors, teachers, schools, members of organizations, the news media and the general public. The nature of the educational offerings included exhibits (museum exhibits and murals), publications (newsletters and teachers' guides), materials (videos, slide shows, placards, posters, fact sheets, coffee mugs and decals) and activities (news releases, radio and television, training, programs and adopt-a-whale programs).

Among the major educational efforts underway are:

* Aguar Brothers Film Productions offer copies of "The Fate of the Right Whale: It's Up to You" video describing the risk of ship collisions to right whales. They also maintain extensive film footage of right whales that can be used in the production of videos and television programs.

* To avoid collisions with whales, the Canaveral Port Authority, the Georgia Ports Authority, the Jacksonville Port Authority and the Port of Fernandina provide "Post-it" notes to be affixed to navigation charts of vessels entering and leaving their respective ports. The notes urge "caution" and "yield" in right whale habitat from December through March.

* The Canaveral Port Authority also publishes a brochure urging mariners to watch for and yield to whales, turtles and manatees.

* The Coastal Naturalist is preparing television programs that will include the right whale.

- * The Fernbank Natural History Museum in Atlanta is hosting the robotics exhibit, "Whales: Giants of the Deep" from October 1, 1994 through January 15, 1995. The exhibit will include information on the right whale.
- * The Florida Department of Environmental Protection distributes warning placards to vessel operators and others. They also provide training seminars for harbor pilots and vessel operators. A slide show has also been prepared. See separate note regarding their poster.
- * The Georgia Department of Natural Resources also distributes warning placards and provides training for pilots and others. They are also producing a poster with general information about the right whale on it.
- * Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary has provided financial support to the University of Georgia's Marine Extension Center for the production of teacher handbooks and a classroom poster that features a life-sized baby right whale.
- * The Jacksonville Museum of Science and History is preparing an exhibit, scheduled to open in 1996, that will include materials on the right whale.
- * The New England Aquarium provides others with much of the factual information on right whales in southeastern U.S. waters. They maintain a right whale adoption program and cooperate with the Ocean Society in their adoption program.
- * In addition to its adoption program, the Ocean Society distributes educational kits to teachers. They sponsored California artist Wyland's painting of the "whaling wall" - a city block long mural of five life-sized right whales in downtown Atlanta.
- * The Savannah Science Museum recently opened an exhibit "Endangered Giants of the Georgia Coast" featuring the right whale and the loggerhead turtle. The exhibit includes the skeleton of the baby whale whose discovery helped initiate the definition of the Southeast U.S. right whale calving ground.
- * The Save the Beach organization has produced coffee mugs identifying the "Northern Right Whale Calving Grounds St. Simons Island, GA."
- * Sea World is preparing a television show on whales, including the right whale. It is scheduled for broadcast on January 6, 1995. They are also planning a symposium on whales, including the right whale; it will be held in February, 1995.
- * The U.S. Coast Guard provides both written and broadcast notices during the calving season.
- * The U.S. Navy trains its personnel, including crews at the Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay, and surface ships at Naval Station Mayport, as well as helicopter and patrol aircraft crews flying out of Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport.

A copy of the complete survey results may be obtained by contacting Hans Neuhauser at the Institute of Community and Area Development, University of Georgia, 1234 South Lumpkin Street, Athens, Georgia 30602; tel. 706-542-3350.

Hans Neuhauser, University of Georgia

"WANTED - RIGHT WHALE SIGHTINGS" POSTER AVAILABLE

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has updated and printed 9,000 copies of the "Wanted - Right Whale Sightings" poster. Free copies are available from FDEP. Contact Bill Brooks, FDEP, Florida Marine Research Institute, 7825 Baymeadows Way, Suite 200B, Jacksonville, FL 32256-7577; telephone 904-448-4300, extension 229.

1994 - 1995 WORK PLAN

The Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale (Team) will be actively involved with numerous efforts to protect right whales while they are in southeastern Georgia and northeastern Florida during the 1994/95 calving season. Conservation efforts will fall into three general categories: education, Early Warning System surveys and research.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Nongame/Endangered Wildlife Program (GDNR) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Marine Research Institute (FDEP) will again be jointly presenting educational seminars to mariners associated with various ports and government installations. These seminars, slated to begin in November, inform mariners about right whales and their plight, how to recognize a right whale, how the Early Warning System operates, and what to do if a right whale is spotted. Educational materials such as video tapes, placards, posters, and brochures are distributed at the seminars and are available to other interested parties. Last year, with the assistance of representatives from port authorities and government installations such as the Navy and Coast Guard, GDNR and FDEP biologists were able to address approximately 100 mariners at six locations along the Georgia and Florida coasts.

In addition to replicating last year's educational efforts, this year GDNR and FDEP plan to expand their educational campaigns to encompass the commercial fishing industry. To round off the Team's educational efforts during the calving season, the U.S. Coast Guard will be broadcasting daily notices to mariners via marine band radio; and a written local notice to mariners will be published weekly. The designated Critical Habitat (see previous article) will eventually be published on NOAA nautical charts.

The Early Warning System will again be carried out during the upcoming calving season. This effort is a cooperative effort on the part of many Team members, the agencies they represent, and other biologists. Aerial surveys comprise the hub of the system and will be flown daily (weather permitting) from 1 December to 31 March. Aerial coverage will approximate that of last year and also similar to last year, east-west transects will be flown. Locations of whales sighted during surveys will be relayed to harbor pilots, ports, and military installations. If whales are sighted, in or near a shipping channel, area vessels and harbor pilots will be contacted directly by the survey plane and alerted to the presence of the whale (s). Vessels will be asked to reduce their speed to the minimum speed necessary to maintain safe steerage. This speed reduction is requested as a voluntary measure on the part of harbor pilots during the above mentioned training seminars.

Details have yet to be ironed out regarding research aspects of the 1994 - 1995 work plan; however, among the list of "things to do" are (1) produce a document summarizing or characterizing the physical attributes of the calving area, (2) investigate alternative methods of detecting whales and (3) use radio telemetry to monitor small-scale temporal and spatial movements and habitat utilization. One thing, however, is clear: right whales observed during the Early Warning System aerial surveys will be photographed for possible inclusion in the Right Whale Consortium Catalog currently maintained by the New England Aquarium. Researchers are able to track reproduction and movements of individual whales using the catalog. Ultimately this information gives the best insights into trends of the North

Atlantic population of right whales as a whole.

Barb Zoodsma, GDNR, and Bill Brooks, FDEP

RECENT SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

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Carretta, J. V., M. S. Lynn, and C. A. LeDuc. 1994. Right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) sighting off San Clemente Island, California. *Marine Mammal Science* 10(1): 101 - 105.

Ford, T. J., and S. D. Kraus. 1992. A rete in the right whale. *Nature* 359: 680.

Heyning, J. E., J. G. Mead, and M. M. Bryden. 1993. A palatal rete in the right whale? *Nature* 361: 24 - 25.

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Kenney, R. D., H. E. Winn, and M. C. Macaulay. In press. Cetaceans in the Great South Channel, 1979 - 1989; Right Whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*). *Continental Shelf Research* 14.

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Kraus, S. D., R. D. Kenny, A. R. Knowlton, and J. N. Ciano. 1993. Endangered Right Whales of the Southwestern North Atlantic. Final Report. Minerals Management Service, Contract No. 14-35-0001-30486. Edgerton Research Laboratory, New England Aquarium, Boston, MA. 69 pages.

Mate, B. R., S. Nieukirk, R. Mesecar, and T. Martin. 1992. Applications of Remote Sensing Methods for Tracking Large Cetaceans: North Atlantic Right Whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*). Oregon State University, Hatfield, OR.

Schaeff, C. M., S. D. Kraus, M. W. Brown, and B. N. White. 1993. Assessment of the population structure of western North Atlantic right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) based on sighting and mtDNA data. *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 71: 339 - 345.

Amy Knowlton and Scott Kraus, New England Aquarium

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 17 - OCTOBER 10, 1994: Coastweeks 1994. Wildlife is the theme of the second week (Sept. 24 - 30); this will be a good opportunity to teach citizens about the endangered right whale. For further information (FFI), call the national coordinator for Coastweeks, the Center for Marine

Conservation, at 202-429-5609.

OCTOBER 1, 1994 - JANUARY 15, 1995: "Giants of the Deep" robotics exhibit, Fernbank Natural History Museum, Atlanta. FFI, call 404-378-4314.

NOVEMBER 9, 1994: Meeting of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. Brunswick, Ga. FFI, call Mike Harris at 912-264-7218.

NOVEMBER 14 - 16, 1994: American Society of Civil Engineers Dredging Conference, Orlando, FL. FFI, call Lorraine Guise at 407-783-7831.

DECEMBER 1, 1994: Early Warning Surveys begin and Florida Department of Environmental Protection coastal aerial surveys begin. These surveys are flown until March 31, 1995. FFI: call Bill Brooks at 904-448-4300, ext. 229.