



**Daniel J. McKiernan**  
*Acting Director*

# *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

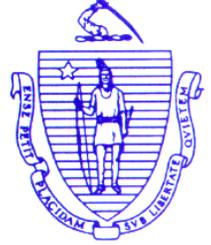
## **Division of Marine Fisheries**

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April 30, 2020

*Marine Fisheries Advisory*

### **Seasonal Fixed Gear Closure Extension is Rescinded Effective May 1**

The April 29, 2020 aerial survey conducted by the Provincetown Center of Coastal Studies demonstrates that the right whales present in Cape Cod Bay have migrated out of the area and adjacent state waters. As a result, the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries has issued a declaration to rescind the extension of the seasonal fixed gear closure ([Notice of Declaration](#)). This prior extension, issued on April 27, 2020, would have kept those waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth within Cape Cod Bay south of 42° 08.42' north latitude and east of Cape Cod north of 41° 51.5' north latitude at Nauset Light closed to fixed gear through May 7 ([see Advisory](#)).

Accordingly, effective May 1, 2020, fixed gear fishing may resume in state waters north and east of Cape Cod. Commercial and recreational trap gear fishermen will be authorized to set and fish trap gear within all of the Large Whale Seasonal Trap Gear Closure Area ([see map](#)). Additionally, on May 1, 2020, commercial gillnet fishermen will be able to set and fish gillnet gear in state-waters outside of the Gillnet Closure in Right Whale Critical Habitat and Cape Cod Bay ([see map](#)). This gillnet closure remains in effect through May 15. All fixed gear must comply with the applicable gear configuration regulations at 322 CMR 4.00 and 12.00 and the setting of gillnets is further restricted by the groundfish closures at 322 CMR 8.00.

Right whales are a critically endangered species and their population has been decreasing since 2010 due to continued mortality and low birth rates. These whales seasonally migrate into Massachusetts waters and aggregate in Cape Cod Bay to feed on zooplankton. In recent years, more than 60% of the known right whale population was observed in our waters during late winter and early spring. The Large Whale Trap Gear Closure and Cape Cod Bay Right Whale Critical Habitat Gillnet Closure protect these endangered whales from entanglements in fixed fishing gear, which are a major sources of mortality.

For more information about the management of protected species in Massachusetts, contact DMF at 617-626-1520 or visit our website at [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries).