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PRESS RELEASE

Division of Marine Fisheries Extends Restrictions to Protect Endangered Right Whales

Seasonal Trap Fishing Gear Closure and Vessel Speed Restriction in Cape Cod Bay Extended Due to Presence of Whales

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4/28/2020

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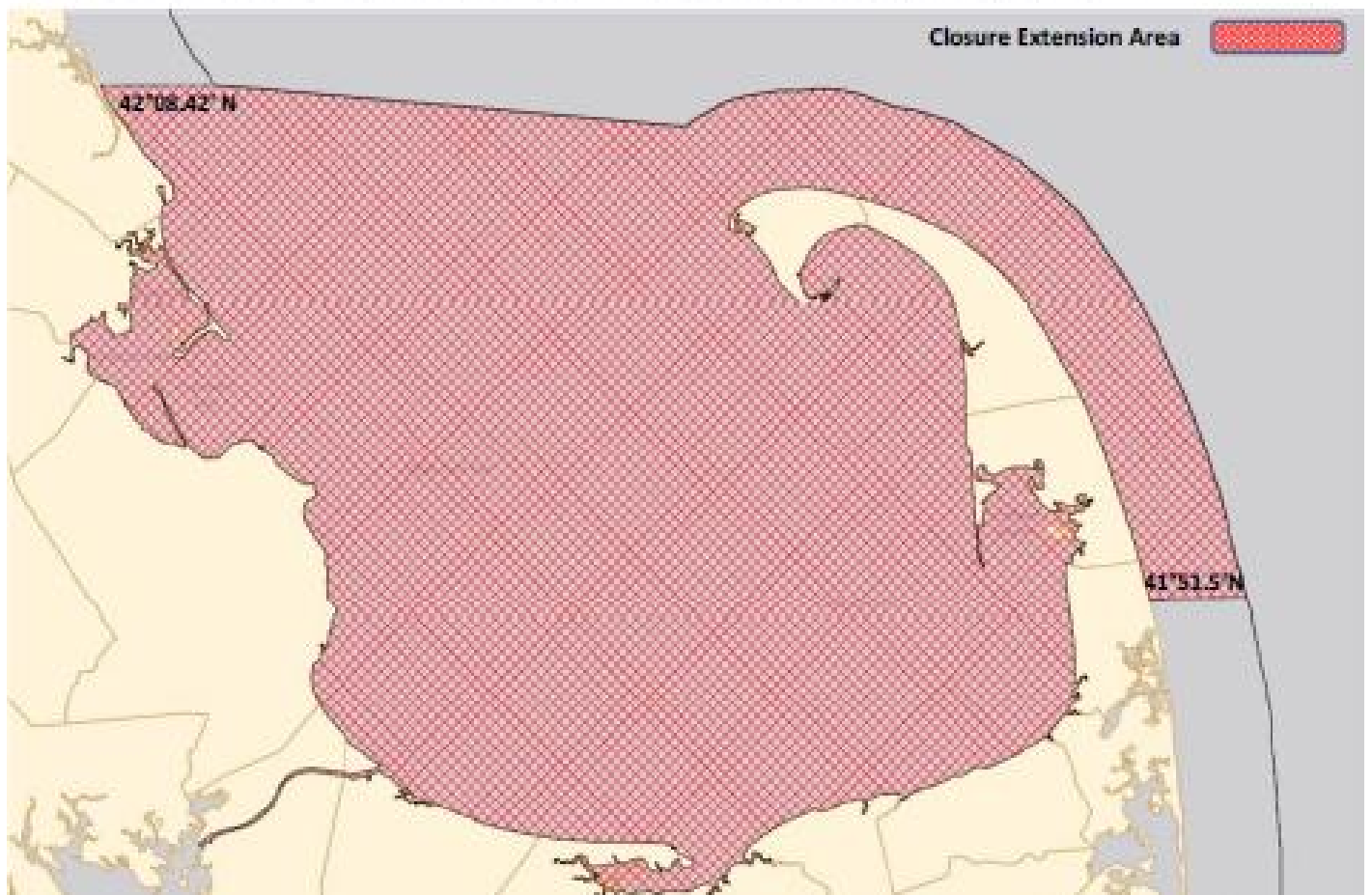
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BOSTON — As a result of the continued presence of endangered right whales feeding in Cape Cod Bay, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) today announced that restrictions in place to protect this highly endangered species will be extended. most of Cape Cod Bay and portions of the Outer Cape **will remain closed** (</doc/042720-dmf-extends-cape-cod-bay-seasonal-fixed-gear-closures-through-may-7/>) to the setting of recreational and commercial traps and pots until May 8, 2020. Additionally, seasonal speed limit restrictions for small vessels in most of Cape Cod Bay **will be extended** (</doc/042720-dmf-extends-seasonal-speed-limit-in-cape-cod-bay-through-may-7-0/download>) until May 8, 2020.

Right whales are common in Cape Cod Bay during late winter and early spring, and usually depart before May 1, when the restrictions affecting this area were scheduled to be lifted. On April 25, 2020, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies conducted an aerial survey for right whales in Cape Cod and along the Outer Cape. The survey estimated there were five right whales feeding at or near the surface in southern Cape Cod Bay, including two mother/calf pairs, which elevates the need for conservative management. Based on historical precedence and the amount of zooplankton available in the Bay, these mother/calf pairs are not expected to linger long. The duration of these restrictions may be shortened or extended based on continuing aerial and vessel-based surveys.

Both recreational and commercial fishermen will continue to be prohibited from setting any trap gear or other fixed gear in within 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 (see map below).

Fixed Gear Closure Extension Area – Area Closed Through May 7, 2020



Under the speed restriction, all vessels with an overall length of less than 65' operating within those waters of Cape Cod Bay south of 42° 08' north latitude and north and east of Cape Cod west of 70°10' west longitude may not travel at a speed of greater than 10 knots (see map below). Vessels with an overall length of 65' or greater are subject to a federal 10 knot speed limit rule in this area through May 15.

Small Vessel Speed Restricted Area Extended through May 7, 2020



The North Atlantic right whale is one of the most endangered large whales in the world, with a population of only about 400 animals. The population of right whales is suffering due to low birth rates and excessive mortality to adults.

Because right whales engage in surface and subsurface feeding, they are highly vulnerable to entanglements in vertical buoy lines as well as vessel strikes. It is unlawful to approach within 500 yards of a right whale or to harass or harm any right whale. If you observe a right whale entangled in fishing gear while on the water, report it immediately to the Center for Coastal Studies (800-900-3622), the Massachusetts Environmental Police (800-632-8075) or the federal Entanglement Hotline (866-755-6622).

For more information about the restrictions, visit the Division of Marine Fisheries' [website](https://www.dmf.maryland.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries) ([/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries](https://www.dmf.maryland.gov/orgs/division-of-marine-fisheries)).

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The Department of Fish and Game works to preserve the state's natural resources. We exercise responsibility over the Commonwealth's marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife species, plants, and natural communities, as well as the habitats that support them.

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