

# Right Whales – What the Prudent Mariner Needs to Know when operating along the Mid-Atlantic Region and Southeast Coast

## **Compliance with Seasonal Management Areas**

The **Mid-Atlantic Seasonal Management Areas (SMA)** and associated speed restrictions of 10 kts are effective for Mid-Atlantic coast ports from Long Island Sound to Savannah from November 1<sup>st</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup> each year. SMAs are active during this period within a 20 nm radius seaward of the port of New York, the entrance to Delaware Bay, the entrance to Chesapeake Bay, the port of Morehead City, and the port of Beaufort, NC. Additionally, a continuous SMA has been established 20 nm from shore between Wilmington, NC and Brunswick, GA. This SMA is active from November 1<sup>st</sup> through April 30<sup>th</sup>. When operating in any of these SMAs from November 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>, vessels of 65 feet in length or greater must transit at 10 kts or less regardless if whales are reported to be in the area or not.

The **Southeast U.S. Seasonal Management Area** which includes the ports of Brunswick, Fernandina and Jacksonville, is effective each year from November 15<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup>. This area extends from the shoreline east to longitude 80°51.6'W with southern and northern boundaries at latitude 29°45'N and 31°27'N. When operating in this SMA, from November 15<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup>, vessels of 65 feet in length or greater must transit at 10 kts or less regardless if whales are reported to be in the area or not.

When operating in **any** active SMA, in addition to reducing speed to a maximum of 10 kts, vessels should take the following precautions: Post lookouts trained in spotting right whales; maneuver around whales, and, if practicable, avoid transits in reduced visibility. Vessels entering or departing the ports of Brunswick, Fernandina, & Jacksonville between November 15<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup> are also requested to use the recommended two-way routes. These recommended routes are clearly marked on your navigational charts.

## **Compliance with Mandatory Ship Reporting (MSR) Requirements**

**MSR** is **only** required for vessels of at least 300 gross tons, who enter the WHALESSOUTH between November 15<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup>. The WHALESSOUTH area extends from the shoreline east to longitude 80°51.6'W with the southern & northern boundaries at latitude 30°00'N and 31°27'N., respectively. While vessels who enter the Southeast SMA must comply with **MSR** requirements, vessels entering a Mid-Atlantic SMA need not report unless transiting through the WHALESSOUTH area en route to their destination. Reporting is only necessary when entering the WHALESSOUTH zone and is not required when departing.

All ships equipped with INMARSAT C must report in the IMO standard format. Vessels not equipped with INMARSAT C must still report via alternate satellite equipment to [rightwhale.msr@noaa.gov](mailto:rightwhale.msr@noaa.gov) or Telex: 48156090. Vessels unable to use satellite equipment should contact the U.S. Coast Guard Communication Area Master Station, Chesapeake, VA via published voice frequencies on 2182 kHz, 4125 kHz, 6215 kHz, 8291 kHz, 12290 kHz, 16420 kHz 24 hours per day or by phone at 1-800-742-8519 ext. 0.

## **Deviations from Speed Restrictions**

Vessels transiting in an active SMA may operate at a speed greater than 10 knots **only** if necessary to maintain a safe maneuvering speed in an area where conditions severely restrict vessel maneuverability as determined by the pilot or master. **Masters of vessels operating inside the federal navigational channel, should heed the advice of the pilot who is familiar with the local conditions that may necessitate transiting in excess of 10 kts to ensure safe maneuverability.** If a deviation from the 10 knot speed restriction is necessary, the following information must be entered into the vessel's logbook: Reasons for deviation; speed at which vessel is operated; latitude and longitude at time of deviation; and, time and duration of deviation. The vessel's Master must sign and date the logbook entry.

## **Actions to take if you Spot or Strike a Right Whale**

If you spot a right whale during your transit (alive, dead, injured, entangled, etc.) please report the sighting immediately to the U.S. Coast Guard via Channel 16 and notify other vessels in the area.

## **Disclaimer**

***Information contained in this document is not designed nor does it replace any information contained within the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Notice to Mariners, U.S. Coast Pilot, etc.***

The successful recovery of the North Atlantic Right Whale is dependent on the continued support and vigilance of the commercial maritime community. Thank you for your continued protection of these remarkable animals.