
Notice to Fish Harvesters

April 30, 2018

MARITIMES REGION – NEW MANAGEMENT MEASURES STARTING IN 2018 TO MINIMIZE THE RISKS OF INTERACTIONS WITH MARINE MAMMALS

Dartmouth – Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) wishes to inform industry of new mandatory and voluntary management measures that will be in place across Maritimes Region fisheries starting in 2018.

A shift in the distribution of the North Atlantic Right Whales population in recent years has resulted in an increased rate of entanglement and deaths of the whales in waters along the North Atlantic Coast. In an effort to minimize the risks of interactions with the species, DFO has undertaken multiple meetings across the region with stakeholders to discuss options for mitigating risks and is announcing important changes to management measures for the 2018 fishing seasons.

Mandatory Management Measures for Maritimes Region Fisheries

Marine Mammal Interaction Reporting

New reporting requirements for Marine Mammal interactions will be established in 2018 licence conditions. The licence holder must report on all lethal and non-lethal Marine Mammal interactions during fishing trips. For this report, an interaction is defined as bycatch, collision, and sightings of Marine Mammals entangled in fishing gear. Marine Mammal interactions must be reported using the DFO Marine Mammal Interaction form, available at <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/mammals-mammiferes/index-eng.htm>.

Lost Gear Reporting

Starting in 2018, licence holders are required to report lost gear that is authorized to be fished under their licence. This new management measure will help quantify the amount of gear lost annually and identify the need to increase efforts to retrieve gear that has been lost, which may reduce the risks of whale entanglements.

The following information must be reported to DFO.MaritimesGear-EnginsMaritimes.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca within 24 hours of the trip being completed:

- the tag number(s) attached to the trap(s) that has been lost (if applicable);
- the vessel registration number (or for Aboriginal COL: vessel identification number) and identification number written on the buoy (if applicable);
- the latitude and longitude of last known position of lost gear; and
- the last date the gear was fished.

Additional Voluntary Management Measures

In addition to the mandatory measures outlined above, the Region is also asking harvesters to voluntarily comply with the following measures.

Shortening of Line between Buoys

Harvesters are asked to shorten the line between the primary and secondary buoy beyond the requirements outlined in their licence conditions to further reduce the risks of North Atlantic Right Whale and other whale entanglements.

Reduction of Floating Rope at Surface

Harvesters are asked not to have rope attaching fishing gear to a primary buoy floating on the surface of the water after the gear has been set. This is to further reduce the risks of North Atlantic Right Whale and other whale entanglements.

Reporting Sightings of North Atlantic Right Whales and Marine Mammals

Harvesters are also asked to report all sightings of North Atlantic Right Whales and Marine Mammals that are in distress or dead. All sightings of North Atlantic Right Whales should be reported to XMARwhalesightings@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or 1-844-800-8568. The following information must be provided in the report as soon as practicable:

- date and time of sighting;
- the latitude and longitude of your position when whale was sighted;
- the number of North Atlantic Right Whales observed;
- species certainty (certainty of species identification using the following codes: 1 = unsure/possible, 2 = probable, 3 = definite);
- identifying features (the features used to identify the species—for example, no dorsal fin for the North Atlantic Right Whale); and
- provide photographs if possible.

If you encounter a dead or distressed Marine Mammal you are asked to contact the Marine Animal Response Society at 1-866-567-6277 as soon as practicable. In this report, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- species encountered (if known);
- date and time of sighting;
- the latitude and longitude of your position when Marine Mammal(s) was sighted;
- the number of animals observed; and
- provide photographs if possible.

The efforts to protect North Atlantic Right Whales and other Marine Mammals are being undertaken by DFO and industry alike. The responsibility to protect this species and support its recovery is felt by all. Additional incidents with North Atlantic Right Whales, regardless of the fishery or region involved, could have serious implications for all Canadian fisheries. DFO is committed to working with industry to explore additional management measures that will further reduce risks to North Atlantic Right Whales and protect Canada's vital fisheries sector.

FOR INFORMATION:

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