

January 2023 ALWTRT Updates

Rulemaking Updates

We recently announced an [Emergency Rule](#) to restrict buoy lines of the MRA Wedge closure again this year from February through April. We have completed an [Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review](#) associated with the Emergency Rule, which you now can find posted on our website.

Entanglement Updates

Contact David Morin for more information on gear analysis of entanglement cases.

New Entanglements:

[#4904, 4 year old female off of NC on Jan 8](#): complex entanglement involving rostrum, peduncle, and fluke wraps. In fair condition but with some considerable wounds. Currently classified as a serious injury. Last seen gear free in May 2022 in Cape Cod Bay.

[#3812 \(Nimbus\), 15 year old male seen off of GA on Jan 20](#): rope exiting both sides of mouth and trailing aft with no wraps. Disentanglement efforts in the SEUS removed a significant amount of gear. It was left with a short segment remaining in the mouth which we hope the whale will shed on its own. Gear analysis is pending. Animal is in fair condition and currently classified as a morbidity. Last seen gear free in August 2022 in Gulf of St. Lawrence.

[#1218 \(Argo\), adult male off NC on January 27](#): embedded peduncle and fluke wraps, swimming by using flippers only. Disentangled by SEUS responders. Most, if not all, gear was recovered including two wire mesh traps. Gear and injury analyses are pending. Last seen gear free in May 2022.

New Sightings of Known Entanglement Cases:

[2021 calf of #3720 seen in CCB on Jan 18](#): in fair condition but currently classified as a serious injury. First seen entangled in August 2022 in Canadian waters; last gear free sighting in May 2022 in Great South Channel. Resighted on January 30, 2023, but no response possible. Condition and entanglement appear the same as previous sighting.

Calving Updates

As of Jan 30, 2023, the calf count is 12. There are 11 mom/calf pairs that have been sighted in the Southeast US, ten have previously calved and one is a first time mom. Additionally, in North Carolina, a calf was sighted [alone without its mother](#) before dying and initial findings suggest the calf was only a day or two old when it died. Additional details can be found on the North Atlantic Right Whale Calving Season [2023 webpage](#).

Gear Development Updates

On-demand fishing in the South Island Restricted Area and the Massachusetts Restricted Area is scheduled to occur between Feb 1 and April 30 of this year. We have 14 fishermen who will likely be participating in this study. The goals of this project are to: (1) Trial the efficacy of available on-demand fishing gear using buoyless trawls in wintertime conditions. (2) Trial gear

marking systems that communicate with existing data hubs and visualization platforms to accomplish:

- a) consistent and adequate location of fishing gear
- b) allow other fishermen, including those in the fixed and mobile fleets, to visualize the gear locations electronically without physical buoy markings.

Additionally, The Gear Team, with the help of Christin Khan and Brett Alger, has engaged with a working group to develop standards for interoperability. This group will help develop the straw-man for a larger meeting that will include manufacturers and engineers and will be hosted, through a contract, by the Marine Technology Society (MTS).

Questions about wind development and whale deaths in the mid-Atlantic

We know there have been a lot of questions about the frequent large whale strandings in the mid-Atlantic and the potential link to offshore wind development. Recently NMFS held a teleconference to address this. We encourage Team members with questions to listen to the [recording](#).

You might also be interested in these [FAQs](#) that were recently posted on our website.

Useful Resources

For the latest on the Team and Plan, see the [Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan webpage](#). The site includes links to help you locate specific information, including:

- [A public Google calendar of ALWTRT Events](#) - Tip: this allows you to copy events to your own calendar
- [Upcoming meetings](#)
- [Recent team meetings, recordings, and associated materials](#)
- [Compliance guides](#) and [approved weak rope or inserts to be used in buoy line](#)
- [Entanglement reports](#)
- [2021 modifications to the Plan](#)

Information on Active Unusual Mortality Events

- For the most up to date information on North Atlantic right whale mortalities, serious injuries and morbidity cases, including entanglements and vessel strikes, see the [NARW Unusual Mortality Event website](#).
- For updates on the humpback incidents, see the [Atlantic Humpback Whale Unusual Mortality Event website](#).

For information on entanglement and regional disentanglement response, see:

- [NMFS Disentanglement Website](#), which includes FAQs
- [Greater Atlantic Region Marine Mammal Disentanglement and Gear Analysis](#)
- [Southeast Stranding and Entanglement Response](#)

Large Whale Sightings or Detections

- For whale detections across multiple platforms, including aerial and shipboard surveys, opportunistic sightings, as well as buoy and glider data, see [Whale Map](#).

- For acoustic detections of a wider variety of taxa, see the [Passive Acoustic Cetacean Map](#)

Risk Modeling

- [2019 Decision Support Tool Peer Review Results](#)
- [2023 Plans for Peer Review of Decision Support Tool Updates](#)
- [Duke Habitat Base Marine Mammal Density Models](#)

The ALWTRT specifically addresses large whale entanglements in commercial fishing gear. Find out more about what NMFS is doing to address [vessel strikes](#).