

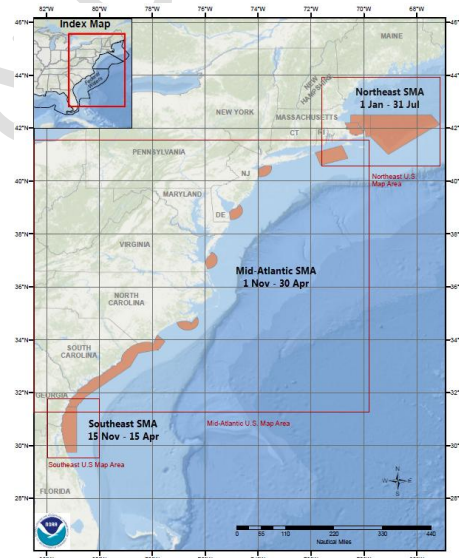
Circular From GARD
Date: 15 November 2016
US East Coast - Slow Down to Protect Whales

Mandatory speed restrictions are, as of 1 November 2016, in force in six defined seasonal management areas along the US East Coast, protecting North Atlantic right whales from being fatally struck by vessels.

The **North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*)** is one the world's most endangered species of large whale. They are found almost exclusively along the East Coasts of the US and Canada where their primary causes of mortality are vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. In an effort to reduce right whale deaths caused by vessel strikes, the US implemented rule **50 CFR 224.105** in 2008, requiring all vessels 65 feet (19.8 m) in overall length or more to travel at 10 knots or less in defined seasonal management areas (SMAs) along the US East Coast. See also our [Gard Alert of 12 December 2013](#).

As of **1 November 2016**, the mandatory 10 knot speed limit is in force in the six Mid-Atlantic SMAs along the whales' migratory route and calving grounds from Rhode Island to Brunswick, Georgia. From **15 November 2016**, the same requirement applies in the Southeast SMA along the whales' calving and nursery grounds from Brunswick to St. Augustine, Florida.

Members and clients should make every effort to ensure that vessels' masters are informed of the relevant SMAs with speed restrictions in force well before approaching US East Coast ports. Maps of the SMAs together with data for geographic information systems (GIS) representing the areas set out in Rule 50 CFR 224.105 are available [here](#).



Click [here](#) for a larger image.

The mandatory 10 knot speed limit may only be exceeded if the Master or pilot determines that a higher speed is required due to the prevailing conditions to maintain the safe manoeuvrability of the vessel. Such deviations must be duly recorded in the vessel's log book. Violations of Rule 50 CFR 224.105 can lead to civil administrative penalties being issued against the vessel.

Additional voluntary 10 knot speed restriction zones, referred to as dynamic management areas (DMAs), may be established at short notice when right whales are sighted in a certain location. Active DMAs will be announced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through its customary maritime communication media. When active DMAs are announced, Masters are encouraged to avoid

these areas or reduce the vessel's speed to 10 knots or less while transiting through these areas. Additional information can be found on [NOAA Fisheries's website](#).

Information about Canada's actions to protect the North Atlantic right whales can be found on [Fisheries and Oceans Canada's website](#). On 7 November 2016, Canada also announced its national [Oceans Protection Plan](#), which includes an initiative to protect marine mammals from the effects of shipping. According to their [press release](#), researchers will locate and track marine mammals in high vessel traffic areas and provide this information to mariners.

Source of Information: Gard P&I Club

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