



Right Whales – What the Prudent Mariner Needs to Know when Operating Along the Mid-Atlantic Region and Southeast Coast

Compliance with Seasonal Management Areas (SMAs): Seasonal speed restrictions of 10 kts or less are effective in the following areas and times for vessels of 65 feet in length or greater:

Mid-Atlantic SMA (November 1st through April 30th, annually): Block Island Sound waters bounded by 40°51'53.7" N 070°36'44.9" W, 41°20'14.1" N 070°49'44.1" W, 41°04'16.7" N 071°51'21.0" W, 40°35'56.5" N 071°38'25.1" W then back to starting point; and within a 20 nm radius seaward of the COLREGS line at the entrances to the ports of New York, Delaware Bay, Chesapeake Bay, Morehead City, and Beaufort, NC. Additionally, a continuous SMA has been established from shore and the COLREGS line out to 20 nm between Wilmington, NC and Brunswick, GA.

Southeast U.S. SMA (November 15th through April 15th, annually): Includes ports of Brunswick, GA, Fernandina, FL, and Jacksonville, FL. This area extends from the shoreline and COLREGS line east to longitude 80°51.6'W with southern and northern boundaries at latitude 29°45'N and 31°27'N.

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

Vessels may operate at a speed greater than 10 knots **only** if necessary to maintain a safe maneuvering speed in an area where oceanographic, hydrographic, and/or meteorological conditions severely restrict vessel maneuverability and the need to operate at such speed is confirmed by the pilot on board or, when a vessel is not carrying a pilot, the master of the vessel. If a deviation is necessary, the following information must be entered in the vessel's logbook: Reasons for deviation; speed at which vessel 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.

Recommended two-way Whale Avoidance Routes: The U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries established two-way whale avoidance routes for three ports: St. Simons Sound/Brunswick Harbor, GA; St. Marys Entrance/Cumberland Sound on the GA/FL border; and St. Johns River Entrance, FL. Mariners are requested to use these lanes to reduce collision risk with right whales.

Compliance with Mandatory Ship Reporting (MSR) Requirements: MSR is required for self-propelled vessels of at least 300 gross tons (**tug/barge combos are only required to submit if tug is 300 gross tons or above**), who enter the WHALESSOUTH area November 15 each year through April 16 of the following year. 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. This area includes the ports of Brunswick, Fernandina and Jacksonville. Reporting is required as the vessel enters the WHALESSOUTH zone.

All ships equipped with INMARSAT C must report in the IMO standard format. Only vessels not equipped with INMARSAT C may report using the following means in order of precedence: 1) Narrow band direct printing (SITOR), 2) HF voice communication, or 3) MF or VHF voice communications. Ships in this category must provide all the required information to the Coast Guard watchstander.

Whale Alerts: Right whale sightings from survey aircraft can be distributed to maritime interests with direct vessel management/navigational responsibilities including your office, dispatch center or vessels. **To subscribe to the sighting distribution list, please send an e-mail to nmfs.ser.rw.subscribe@noaa.gov with the following information: Your name, your company, contact info (i.e. phone/email), e-mail address for notifications (may be multiple), Port region(s): Jacksonville/Fernandina, Brunswick, Savannah, Charleston, and/or Wilmington.**

Actions to take if you Spot or Strike a Right Whale: If you spot a right whale (alive, dead, injured, entangled, etc.) please report the sighting immediately to 1-877-WHALE-HELP or to the U.S. Coast Guard via VHF Channel 16 and notify other vessels in the area. **Please be advised that it is illegal to approach within 500 yards of a right whale—vessels must steer a course away from and immediately leave the area at a slow, safe speed.**

Disclaimer: *This guidance is for quick reference only. It does not supersede any information contained within the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Notice to Mariners, U.S. Coast Pilot, etc.*