The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Change in Command Ceremony Ushers in New Officer in Charge of the Gloria Michelle

NOAA Corps officer Lt. Jr. Grade Alexander Creed "fleeted up" to become the new commanding officer of the R/V *Gloria Michelle* at the change of command ceremony in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, on June 8. The *Gloria Michelle* is a 72-foot vessel that conducts surveys and other science research projects from Virginia to Canada. The NOAA Corps is a uniformed service that operates and manages ships and aircraft for NOAA's research efforts. It has commanded the *Gloria Michelle* since 1980.

Creed relieved Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin VanDine, who had been the officer in charge on the vessel for the past 4 years. Under VanDine's command, the *Gloria Michelle* lost no sea days because of mechanical or medical issues. This is an impressive feat for an assignment that spanned the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In VanDine's next assignment, he will serve as the executive officer of the Surface and Upper Air Division in the Office of Observations at NOAA's National Weather Service in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Creed's connection to NOAA actually began in high school at the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST). The academy is a public vocational high school with a focus on marine science located at Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Teachers there mentioned NOAA Corps as a possible career path. He already knew he wanted to work in the marine sciences field, and took advantage of classes in marine biology and oceanography.

Creed's interest in the marine world led him to Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg, Florida. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in marine science with a focus on marine biology, and a minor in coastal management. Most of his college extracurricular studies, via internships and personal interest, were focused on wetlands and coastal ecosystems. They included work with a professor to study mangrove forests in Florida and Indonesia.

"While I was in college a friend of mine who graduated two years ahead of me went into the NOAA Corps," Creed said. "That reignited my interest in the organization." A recreational diver since 2009, he has been a NOAA diver since March 2019. "Not all NOAA Corps officers are divers, but the opportunity to dive as part of my work was an extra incentive for me to join the Corps. Once I completed basic training, I was assigned to NOAA Ship *Pisces*, based in Pascagoula, Mississippi."

NOAA Fisheries photo

Alexander Creed stands in front of the R/V Gloria Michelle in his NOAA Corps dress uniform on June 8, 2022, the day he took over as the vessel's commander.

His next stop was Woods Hole, Massachusetts and the R/V *Gloria Michelle*. He joined the vessel as junior officer in charge at a formal change of command ceremony October 11, 2019.

His favorite part of the job as a NOAA Corps officer? "It's the breadth of experience we get in all aspects of NOAA's missions. I like being involved and seeing the research NOAA scientists are conducting, and facilitating that research by running an operational platform. I look forward to the hands-on nature of the work and running the boat."

His advice for students interested in a career in the Corps is to reach out and talk to an officer about what it's like. "It is a great career that offers a wealth of opportunities."

For now, the next few years will keep him in Woods Hole. "I hope to make NOAA Corps a career, so hopefully I will be somewhere in the fleet or ashore with NOAA for the next 20 years, or beyond."

2022 NOAA Northeast Sea Scallop Survey Results

Every summer NOAA Fisheries and our partners survey the Atlantic sea scallop population from Georges Bank through Mid-Atlantic waters. On June 13, the Science Center finished its 2022 survey, completing 98% of the planned HabCam survey transects and 87% of the planned dredge stations. In the Great South Channel and in the deeper water along the northern edge of Georges Bank, we saw significant numbers of "recruits" to the population, the most since 2014. One dredge tow in the western portion of Closed Area I caught more than 40,000 small scallops, the second most ever for a single tow. That record was set in 2013, when one dredge tow brought up more than 60,000 recruits.

During the survey, two of our scientists blogged about their work and survey life. Zach Fyke, biological science technician at our Woods Hole Lab, was on Leg 1 of the survey and talks about shoreside prep work, HabCam, sunsets, the lunar eclipse, and marine mammal and basking shark sightings. Christine Kircun, biological science technician at our Woods Hole Lab, was on Leg 3 and talks about dredging, processing samples, and tiny creatures. Visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/science-blog/atlantic-sea-scallop-survey-returns>

NOAA Fisheries/Dvora Hart photo

A fraction of the contents of the largest dredge tow in the 2022 Northeast Fisheries Science Center Sea Scallop Survey.

THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

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The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

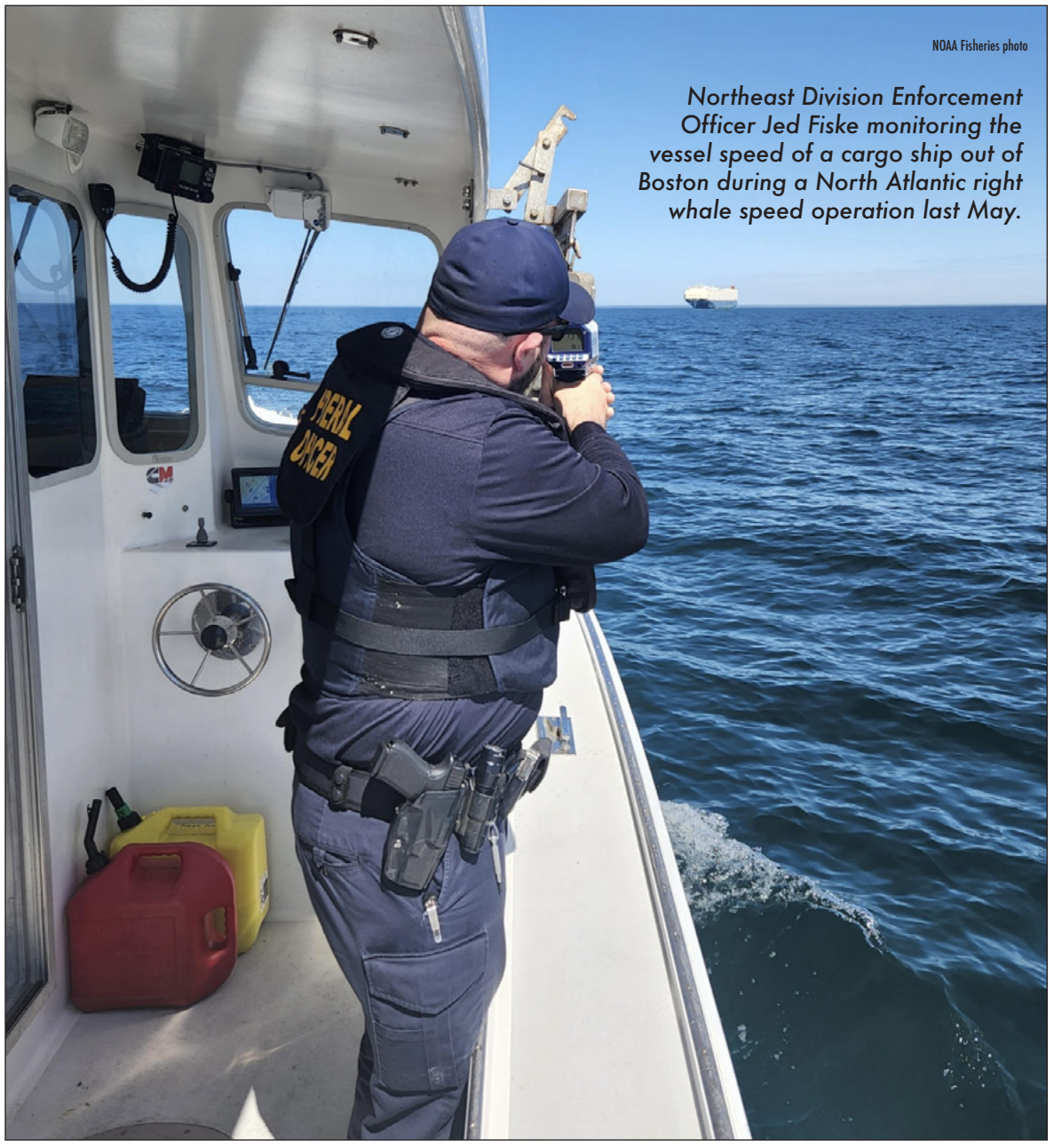
North Atlantic Right Whale Enforcement Efforts

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement plays an important role in protecting and conserving endangered North Atlantic right whales. Right whales inhabit coastal waters, making them particularly vulnerable to vessel strikes and entanglement in fixed fishing gear. These are the two human activities responsible for the majority of right whale deaths and serious injuries. We enforce speed rules and other regulations that protect these whales so that they are less likely to be struck by vessels and entangled in fishing gear.

To reduce entanglements in fishing gear, NOAA Fisheries worked with a team of fishermen, scientists, conservationists, and state and federal officials from Maine to Florida. The team developed the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan in 1996, which addresses gear and closed area restrictions. The Plan has been updated several times. With the help of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team, we are undertaking efforts to reduce the risk of entanglement in fixed gear fisheries. NOAA Fisheries added significant new regulations in 2021 to address right whale entanglement in Northeast lobster and Jonah crab trap/pot gear.

To protect right whales from vessel strikes, NOAA Fisheries implemented a vessel speed rule in 2008. The speed rule designated Seasonal Management Areas (SMA) where most vessels 65 feet in length or greater are subject to a 10 knot speed limit. These areas are active from November through July in different locations to reduce risk of vessel strikes to right whales. The 2008 speed rule is being revised, with proposed modifications to further reduce risk of vessel strikes.

The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement enforces both of these regulatory strategies, which are instrumental in protecting not only right whales, but all large whales along the Atlantic coast. We also participate in the development of on-demand (or ropeless) technology. We provide vessel owners and operators the information they need to remain in compliance with federal regulations.



NOAA Fisheries photo

Northeast Division Enforcement Officer Jed Fiske monitoring the vessel speed of a cargo ship out of Boston during a North Atlantic right whale speed operation last May.

Compliance Assistance

Earlier this year, NOAA Fisheries implemented a graduated enforcement approach to help fishermen comply with recently required gear modifications. Since November of 2021, we have notified the owners of approximately 400 vessels along the Atlantic coast, informing them of the vessel speed rule and the potential penalties for violations. In addition, reacting in near-real time and leveraging satellite-based technologies, we sent out more than 100 alerts on two separate days in mid-May to vessels operating in close proximity to right whales. While the SMA season in the Mid-Atlantic concluded on April 30, speed restrictions in the Great South Channel off the coast of New England continued through July 31.

Enforcement Operations

We are regularly on the water, inspecting fixed gear for compliance with new rules designed to protect right whales. Many of our patrols and those conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard and our state partners over the last few months have focused on gear compliance. Many more gear patrols are planned for this summer. We will provide a detailed summary of our related enforcement efforts so far this year at the Fishery Management Council meetings.

We conduct targeted remote monitoring, patrols, and operations throughout the right whale SMA season to enforce the speed rule. Operations can be more complex than patrols and involve multiple partner enforcement vessels over several days, often targeting specific vessel activity. Enforcing the speed limit on the ocean is more complicated than setting up a highway speed trap. We use all available technologies to track vessel speed and proximity to whales. These include visual observations, radar, and positional and speed information obtained by satellite. We may also use referrals from the general public and social media, if available.

In mid-December of last year and in mid-April this year, we targeted vessels that were out of compliance with speed regulations in the Mid-Atlantic. We also conducted multiple patrols and one operation this spring in New England to monitor compliance with vessel speed regulations. In the Southeast, we conducted three operations during the last SMA season targeting speeding violations. We often collaborate with our state and federal enforcement partners on vessel speed operations and patrols. These partners have independently identified speed violations during their own patrols.

See ENFORCEMENT, page 4

Please Remember Closed Area Requirements

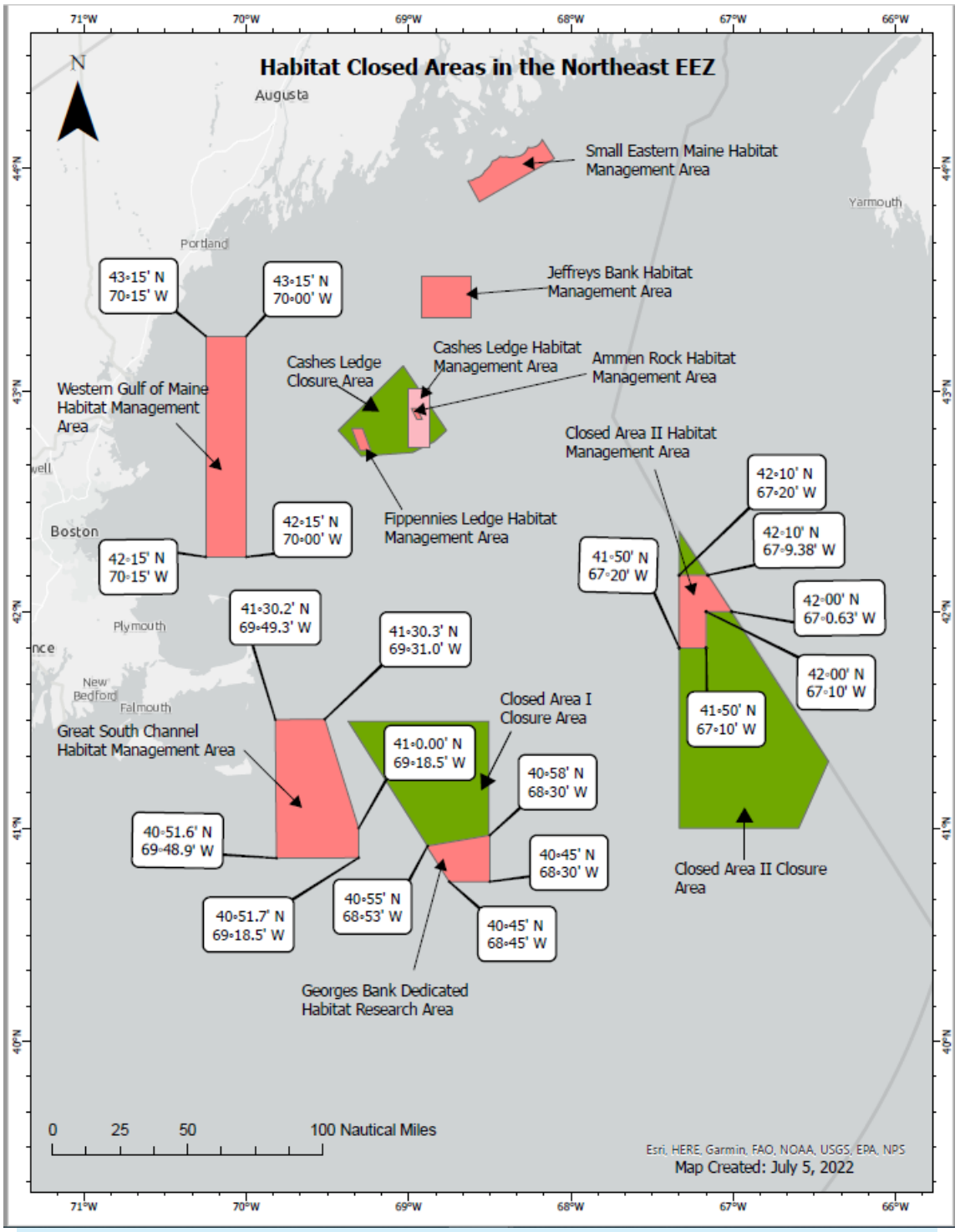
If you are a commercial fisherman fishing out of Northeast and/or Mid-Atlantic ports, please verify your plotters are up to date with the latest closed area maps and coordinates. Staff with the Office of Law Enforcement, Northeast Division (NED), noticed an increase in the number of vessels who have crossed over the border and appeared to either be fishing illegally inside or illegally steaming through a closed area (an incursion) recently, in particular this past June. From January through June this year, within closed areas managed through the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), OLE observed a total of about 35 incursions. This included nine mobile gear incursions alone in June; five occured in the Habitat Management Closed Areas (see map). Some of these incursions were several miles within the closed area.

Vessel owners and operators have also reported incursions in other areas closed to mobile and fixed gear. In many cases, we have learned operators are using out of date maps in their plotters. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that any maps or charts they use are up to date with fishery specific closed area changes due to Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Framework Adjustments and Amendments. A closed area violation may result in civil administrative penalties ranging from a written warning to $48,000, but could be higher depending on the facts and circumstances of the case.

Where can I find updated maps?

Updated files and maps potentially compatible with your plotter are available on the NOAA Fisheries website <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/science-data/maps-and-geographic-information-systems-data-program-new-england-mid-atlantic> and on the NOAA Geoplatform website <https://noaa.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html> for closed areas. On the NOAA Fisheries website, Habitat Management Area boundaries, for instance, may be found here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/map/habitat-management-areas-map-gis>. You can download these files as PDFs or in shapefile format from the NOAA Fisheries website. Shapefiles are simple GIS files readable on many devices such as plotters. Our files may also be streamed when you have internet access to an online map from the NOAA Geoplatform website (for example, for the habitat management areas: https://services2.arcgis.com/C8EMgrsFcRFL6LrL/arcgis/rest/services/Habitat_Management_Areas_20180409/FeatureServer).

See REQUIREMENTS, next page



NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Division (NED) of the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)

The above map illustrates all of the Habitat Closed Areas managed in the northeast Exclusive Economic Zone.

Upcoming Stock Assessments for the Northeast Region Coordinating Council

The Northeast Region Coordinating Council developed a collaborative stock assessment process that involves two assessment types: management track and research track. Assessments are scheduled years in advance to allow for better planning.

Management track assessments provide routine, scheduled, and updated advice to directly inform management actions. These assessments are designed to be simple, quick, efficient, and flexible and are able to incorporate new information on a regular cycle.

Research track assessments are complex scientific efforts that are designed to be carried out over several years. They focus on research topics or individual stocks, evaluate new issues or models that could apply to those stocks; and consider extensive changes in data, model, or stock structure.

All assessment related meetings are open to the public and are invited to attend. To find out more visit Individual Research track Stock Assessment webpages:

- NRCC 2022-2026 Stock Assessment Schedule <https://www.nefmc.org/library/2022-2026-stock-assessment-schedule>
- The NOAA Fisheries Event Calendar <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/all-events?>

Upcoming Stock Assessment Meetings

August 3, 2022 - Assessment Oversight Panel Meeting for American Plaice

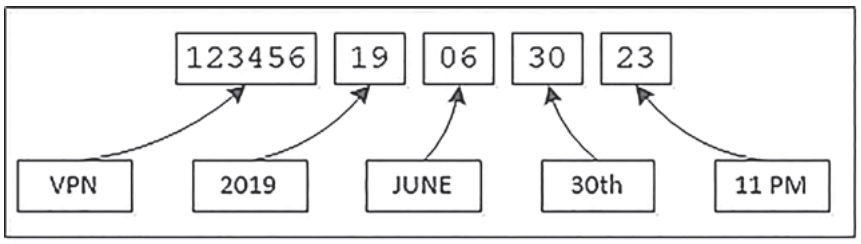
September 19-23, 2022 - September Management Track Peer Review Meeting for haddock, American plaice, monkfish, and multiple groundfish stocks

For questions, please contact Michele Traver at <michele.traver@noaa.gov>.

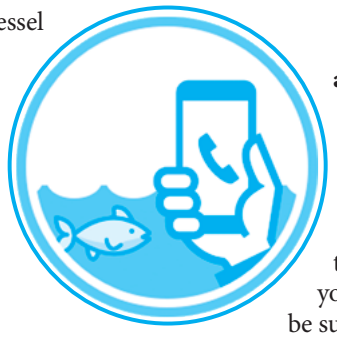
The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Frequently Asked Questions From Industry: Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting

Since November 10, 2021, Greater Atlantic Region permitted commercial and for-hire fishing vessels, with the exception of those vessels that only hold an American Lobster permit, have been required to submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) electronically using a GARFO approved Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) application.



How is the eVTR reconciled with the Dealer reporting? At the time of sale, vessel operators must provide the 14-digit eVTR trip number to the dealer. GARFO matches dealer reports and eVTRs to identify any major discrepancies. Catch weights reported on eVTRs should be estimated hail weights that are reasonably close to the weights reported by dealers.



Now that there is no dealer copy of the paper eVTR, what do fishermen provide the dealer when they sell their catch? Fishermen are required to provide dealers with the eVTR trip number which replaces the traditional paper 8-digit VTR number. The eVTR Trip number has 14 characters and is formatted based on vessel permit number, year, month, date, and hour in which the eVTR was created. For a representation of the 14-character format, refer to the graphic below.

Fishermen should provide their dealer with the eVTR trip number that was automatically generated within their eVTR app when they created the trip report. Federal dealers **MUST** enter **that entire 14 digit number** in the VTR section of the dealer report.

What happens when a boat comes in and doesn't offload in 48 hours? How do I get the weight information from the dealer?

You are submitting hail weights (estimate of catch) and not dealer weights on eVTRs. You do not need to wait for the exact information from your dealer(s). The exact weights will be submitted by the dealer(s) you sell your catch to and matched to your trip.

What is the procedure for scallop vessels laying behind the line with product onboard that then need to start a new eVTR once the trip resumes?

Limited access scallop vessels on an open area DAS trip that are seeking safe harbor, where they do not land or offload but lay behind the VMS demarcation line, should continue to report the initial eVTR upon continuance of the trip. IF the vessel hits the dock, they then need to close the initial eVTR and report the catch as 4 - Retained for Future Sale in the dealer sections. When the vessel eventually leaves the dock, they should start a new eVTR.

Do I need a reporting device onboard the vessel?

Vessels MUST have their eVTR reporting device onboard the vessel during a trip. eVTR's should be filled out at sea, not after the vessel completes their trip. Prior to landing, vessels must record an estimate of weight for each species on board using their reporting device.

What if a trip ends before fishing is started due to a breakdown, weather, etc.?

You can submit a No Effort trip. For more information, see the Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) Instructions <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-04/eVTRReportingInstructions08Apr2022-GARFO.pdf>.

For more information, instructions, and instructional videos about eVTR reporting, please visit the eVTR informational page <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/frequent-questions-electronic-vessel-trip-reporting>.

For further assistance please call the Vessel Reporting Help Desk at (978) 281-9188 or contact your local Port Agent <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/contact/port-agents-greater-atlantic-region>.

Requirements

Continued from previous page

The shapefiles, data, and maps found on the NOAA Fisheries website are not the complete set of regulations (GIS files are considered to be approximate representations and are not an official record for the exact regulated area boundaries). It is the user's responsibility to ensure that all relevant and applicable regulations and areas are considered. If you have difficulty downloading a particular file or have questions about the compatibility of that particular file with your plotter, please contact Talya TenBrink, GARFO's GIS specialist at (978) 675-2190. For specific closed area boundary coordinates, please refer to the appropriate FMP regulations published in the Code of Federal Regulations: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50.

If you have questions related to closed area maps and regulations, please see information found on the GARFO website (e.g., the Atlantic Sea Scallop closed areas: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/atlantic-sea-scallop#management-areas). You may also call the OLE/NED main line for assistance at (978) 281-9213 (option 2 for Compliance Assistance). In addition, signing up for GARFO's Gov.Delivery alerts (https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNOAAFISHERIES/subscriber/new) is a great way to stay up to date with the current regulations.

Enforcement

Continued from page 2

Civil Penalties

This spring, we issued 12 Notices of Violation and Assessments to vessel owners along the East Coast for violating the vessel speed rule. Each individual vessel was documented traveling in excess of speed restrictions while transiting various SMAs. Penalties ranged from $7,500 to $20,000, based on the number and severity of the violations. This year we also reached a settlement with a repeat offender of the speed rule for more than $50,000. Additional suspected violations are actively being investigated at this time.

Encouragement to Voluntarily Comply

We will continue patrols focusing on the new fixed gear requirements as we roll through the summer months. The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan contains details on how to comply with those changes. You can also contact the Northeast Division at (978) 281-9213 (ext. 2, compliance assistance) for more information.

We appreciate the efforts of all fixed-gear fishermen who have gone to great lengths to comply with the new regulations and all vessels that have complied with speed restrictions. It will take everyone's cooperation to save these endangered whales, and put them on a path to recovery.

NOAA Fisheries photo

To report a violation, please call the Enforcement Hotline, available 24/7 at (800) 853-1964). To report a whale or other marine animal in distress, please call the Greater Atlantic Marine Mammal Stranding Network at (866) 755-6622.