

**J. Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations**

Executive Order 12898 (59 FR 7629, February 16, 1994) establishes federal executive policy on environmental justice. Its main provision directs federal agencies, to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, to make environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States.

EPA has determined that this rule will not have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations because it does not affect the level of protection provided to human health or the environment. This action merely determines that the BPA nonattainment area has not attained by its applicable attainment date, and to reclassify the BPA nonattainment area as a moderate ozone nonattainment area and to adjust applicable deadlines.

**K. Congressional Review Act**

The Congressional Review Act, 5 U.S.C. 801 et seq., as added by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996, generally provides that before a rule may take effect, the agency promulgating the rule must submit a rule report, which includes a copy of the rule, to each House of the Congress and to the Comptroller General of the United States. EPA will submit a report containing this rule and other required information to the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the Comptroller General of the United States prior to publication of the rule in the **Federal Register**. This rule is not a “major rule” as defined by 5 U.S.C. 804(2).

**L. Petitions for Judicial Review**

Under section 307(b)(1) of the Clean Air Act, petitions for judicial review of this action must be filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the appropriate circuit by May 19, 2008. Filing a petition for reconsideration by the Administrator of this final rule does not affect the finality of this rule for the purposes of judicial review nor does it extend the time within which a petition for judicial review may be filed, and shall not postpone the effectiveness of such rule or action. This action to

reclassify the BPA area as a moderate ozone nonattainment area and to adjust applicable deadlines may not be challenged later in proceedings to enforce its requirements. (See section 307(b) (2).)

**List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 81**

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, National parks, Wilderness areas.

**Authority:** 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.

Dated: March 6, 2008.

**Richard E. Greene,**

*Regional Administrator, Region 6.*

■ Part 81, chapter I, title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

**PART 81—[AMENDED]**

■ 1. The authority citation for part 81 continues to read as follows:

**Authority:** 42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.

■ 2. In § 81.344 the table entitled “Texas—Ozone (8-hour Standard)” is amended by revising the entries for Beaumont/Port Arthur, TX to read as follows:

**§ 81.344 Texas.**

\* \* \* \* \*

**TEXAS—OZONE**  
[8-hour standard]

Designated area	Designation <sup>a</sup>		Classification	
	Date <sup>1</sup>	Type	Date <sup>1</sup>	Type
<b>Beaumont/Port Arthur, TX:</b>				
Hardin County .....	.....	Nonattainment .....	(3)	Subpart 2/Moderate.
Jefferson County .....	.....	Nonattainment .....	(3)	Subpart 2/Moderate.
Orange County .....	.....	Nonattainment .....	(3)	Subpart 2/Moderate.
*	*	*	*	*

<sup>a</sup> Includes Indian Country located in each county or area, except as otherwise specified.

<sup>1</sup> This date is June 15, 2004, unless otherwise noted.

\* April 17, 2008.

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**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

**50 CFR Part 229**

[Docket No. 080311419-8426-01]

RIN 0648-XG33

**Taking of Marine Mammals Incidental to Commercial Fishing Operations; Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan**

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Temporary rule.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (AA), NOAA, announces temporary restrictions consistent with the requirements of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan’s (ALWTRP) implementing regulations. These regulations apply to lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet fishermen in an area totaling approximately 1,370 nm<sup>2</sup> (4,699 km<sup>2</sup>), northeast of Boston, Massachusetts for 15 days. The purpose of this action is to provide protection to

an aggregation of northern right whales (right whales).

**DATES:** Effective beginning at 0001 hours March 20, 2008, through 2400 hours April 3, 2008.

**ADDRESSES:** Copies of the proposed and final Dynamic Area Management (DAM) rules, Environmental Assessments (EAs), Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) meeting summaries, and progress reports on implementation of the ALWTRP may also be obtained by writing Diane Borggaard, NMFS/Northeast Region, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Diane Borggaard, NMFS/Northeast Region, 978-281-9300 x6503; or Kristy Long, NMFS, Office of Protected Resources, 301-713-2322.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Electronic Access**

Several of the background documents for the ALWTRP and the take reduction planning process can be downloaded from the ALWTRP web site at <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/>.

**Background**

The ALWTRP was developed pursuant to section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to reduce the incidental mortality and serious injury of three endangered species of whales (right, fin, and humpback) due to incidental interaction with commercial fishing activities. In addition, the measures identified in the ALWTRP would provide conservation benefits to a fourth species (minke), which are neither listed as endangered nor threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The ALWTRP, implemented through regulations codified at 50 CFR 229.32, relies on a combination of fishing gear modifications and time/area closures to reduce the risk of whales becoming entangled in commercial fishing gear (and potentially suffering serious injury or mortality as a result).

On January 9, 2002, NMFS published the final rule to implement the ALWTRP's DAM program (67 FR 1133). On August 26, 2003, NMFS amended the regulations by publishing a final rule, which specifically identified gear modifications that may be allowed in a DAM zone (68 FR 51195). The DAM program provides specific authority for NMFS to restrict temporarily on an expedited basis the use of lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet fishing gear in areas north of 40° N. lat. to protect right whales. Under the DAM program, NMFS may: (1) require the removal of

all lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet fishing gear for a 15-day period; (2) allow lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet fishing within a DAM zone with gear modifications determined by NMFS to sufficiently reduce the risk of entanglement; and/or (3) issue an alert to fishermen requesting the voluntary removal of all lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet gear for a 15-day period and asking fishermen not to set any additional gear in the DAM zone during the 15-day period.

A DAM zone is triggered when NMFS receives a reliable report from a qualified individual of three or more right whales sighted within an area (75 nm<sup>2</sup> (257 km<sup>2</sup>)) such that right whale density is equal to or greater than 0.04 right whales per nm<sup>2</sup> (3.43 km<sup>2</sup>). A qualified individual is an individual ascertained by NMFS to be reasonably able, through training or experience, to identify a right whale. Such individuals include, but are not limited to, NMFS staff, U.S. Coast Guard and Navy personnel trained in whale identification, scientific research survey personnel, whale watch operators and naturalists, and mariners trained in whale species identification through disentanglement training or some other training program deemed adequate by NMFS. A reliable report would be a credible right whale sighting.

On March 7, 2008, an aerial survey reported an aggregation of four right whales in the proximity of 42° 38' N. latitude and 69° 32' W. long. The position lies approximately 70nm northeast of Boston, Massachusetts. After conducting an investigation, NMFS ascertained that the report came from a qualified individual and determined that the report was reliable. Thus, NMFS has received a reliable report from a qualified individual of the requisite right whale density to trigger the DAM provisions of the ALWTRP.

Once a DAM zone is triggered, NMFS determines whether to impose restrictions on fishing and/or fishing gear in the zone. This determination is based on the following factors, including but not limited to: the location of the DAM zone with respect to other fishery closure areas, weather conditions as they relate to the safety of human life at sea, the type and amount of gear already present in the area, and a review of recent right whale entanglement and mortality data.

NMFS has reviewed the factors and management options noted above relative to the DAM under consideration. As a result of this review, NMFS prohibits lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet gear in this area during the 15-day restricted period unless it is

modified in the manner described in this temporary rule.

The DAM Zone is bound by the following coordinates:

42° 59' N., 70° 00' W. (NW Corner)  
42° 59' N., 69° 04' W.  
42° 18' N., 69° 04' W.  
42° 18' N., 69° 24' W.  
42° 30' N., 69° 24' W.  
42° 30' N., 70° 00' W.  
42° 59' N., 70° 00' W. (NW Corner)

In addition to those gear modifications currently implemented under the ALWTRP at 50 CFR 229.32, the following gear modifications are required in the DAM zone. If the requirements and exceptions for gear modification in the DAM zone, as described below, differ from other ALWTRP requirements for any overlapping areas and times, then the more restrictive requirements will apply in the DAM zone. Special note for gillnet fishermen: portions of the DAM zone overlap the Northeast Multispecies year-round Cashes Ledge Closure Area found at 50 CFR 648.81(d), the Northeast Multispecies year-round Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area found at 50 CFR 648.81(e), the (March) Northeast Multispecies seasonal Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure Area I found at 50 CFR 648.81(f)(1)(i), and the (April) Northeast Multispecies seasonal Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure Area II found at 50 CFR 648.81(f)(1)(ii). Due to these closures, sink gillnet gear is prohibited from these portions of the DAM zone.

**Lobster Trap/Pot Gear**

Fishermen utilizing lobster trap/pot gear within portions of Northern Nearshore Lobster Waters that overlap with the DAM zone are required to utilize all of the following gear modifications while the DAM zone is in effect:

1. Groundlines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line. Floating groundlines are prohibited;
2. All buoy lines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line, except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line;
3. Fishermen are allowed to use two buoy lines per trawl; and
4. A weak link with a maximum breaking strength of 600 lb (272.4 kg) must be placed at all buoys.

Fishermen utilizing lobster trap/pot gear within the portion of the Offshore Lobster Waters Area that overlap with the DAM zone are required to utilize all of the following gear modifications while the DAM zone is in effect:

1. Groundlines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line. Floating groundlines are prohibited;

2. All buoy lines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line, except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line;

3. Fishermen are allowed to use two buoy lines per trawl; and

4. A weak link with a maximum breaking strength of 1,500 lb (680.4 kg) must be placed at all buoys.

#### Anchored Gillnet Gear

Fishermen utilizing anchored gillnet gear within the portions of the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area that overlap with the DAM zone are required to utilize all the following gear modifications while the DAM zone is in effect:

1. Groundlines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line.

Floating groundlines are prohibited;

2. All buoy lines must be made of either sinking or neutrally buoyant line, except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line;

3. Fishermen are allowed to use two buoy lines per string;

4. The breaking strength of each net panel weak link must not exceed 1,100 lb (498.8 kg). The weak link requirements apply to all variations in net panel size. One weak link must be placed in the center of the floatline and one weak link must be placed in the center of each of the up and down lines at both ends of the net panel.

Additionally, one weak link must be placed as close as possible to each end of the net panels on the floatline; or, one weak link must be placed between floatline tie-loops between net panels and one weak link must be placed where the floatline tie-loops attach to the bridle, buoy line, or groundline at each end of a net string;

5. A weak link with a maximum breaking strength of 1,100 lb (498.8 kg) must be placed at all buoys; and

6. All anchored gillnets, regardless of the number of net panels, must be securely anchored with the holding power of at least a 22 lb (10.0 kg) Danforth-style anchor at each end of the net string.

The restrictions will be in effect beginning at 0001 hours March 20, 2008, through 2400 hours April 3, 2008, unless terminated sooner or extended by NMFS through another notification in the **Federal Register**.

The restrictions will be announced to state officials, fishermen, ALWTRT members, and other interested parties through e-mail, phone contact, NOAA website, and other appropriate media

immediately upon issuance of the rule by the AA.

#### Classification

In accordance with section 118(f)(9) of the MMPA, the Assistant Administrator (AA) for Fisheries has determined that this action is necessary to implement a take reduction plan to protect North Atlantic right whales.

Environmental Assessments for the DAM program were prepared on December 28, 2001, and August 6, 2003. This action falls within the scope of the analyses of these EAs, which are available from the agency upon request.

NMFS provided prior notice and an opportunity for public comment on the regulations establishing the criteria and procedures for implementing a DAM zone. Providing prior notice and opportunity for comment on this action, pursuant to those regulations, would be impracticable because it would prevent NMFS from executing its functions to protect and reduce serious injury and mortality of endangered right whales. The regulations establishing the DAM program are designed to enable the agency to help protect unexpected concentrations of right whales. In order to meet the goals of the DAM program, the agency needs to be able to create a DAM zone and implement restrictions on fishing gear as soon as possible once the criteria are triggered and NMFS determines that a DAM restricted zone is appropriate. If NMFS were to provide prior notice and an opportunity for public comment upon the creation of a DAM restricted zone, the aggregated right whales would be vulnerable to entanglement which could result in serious injury and mortality. Additionally, the right whales would most likely move on to another location before NMFS could implement the restrictions designed to protect them, thereby rendering the action obsolete. Therefore, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), the AA finds that good cause exists to waive prior notice and an opportunity to comment on this action to implement a DAM restricted zone to reduce the risk of entanglement of endangered right whales in commercial lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet gear as such procedures would be impracticable.

For the same reasons, the AA finds that, under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), good cause exists to waive the 30-day delay in effective date. If NMFS were to delay for 30 days the effective date of this action, the aggregated right whales would be vulnerable to entanglement, which could cause serious injury and mortality. Additionally, right whales would likely move to another location

between the time NMFS approved the action creating the DAM restricted zone and the time it went into effect, thereby rendering the action obsolete and ineffective. Nevertheless, NMFS recognizes the need for fishermen to have time to either modify or remove (if not in compliance with the required restrictions) their gear from a DAM zone once one is approved. Thus, NMFS makes this action effective 2 days after the date of publication of this document in the **Federal Register**. NMFS will also endeavor to provide notice of this action to fishermen through other means upon issuance of the rule by the AA, thereby providing approximately 3 additional days of notice while the Office of the Federal Register processes the document for publication.

NMFS determined that the regulations establishing the DAM program and actions such as this one taken pursuant to those regulations are consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved coastal management program of the U.S. Atlantic coastal states. This determination was submitted for review by the responsible state agencies under section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act. Following state review of the regulations creating the DAM program, no state disagreed with NMFS' conclusion that the DAM program is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved coastal management program for that state.

The DAM program under which NMFS is taking this action contains policies with federalism implications warranting preparation of a federalism assessment under Executive Order 13132. Accordingly, in October 2001 and March 2003, the Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs, Department of Commerce, provided notice of the DAM program and its amendments to the appropriate elected officials in states to be affected by actions taken pursuant to the DAM program. Federalism issues raised by state officials were addressed in the final rules implementing the DAM program. A copy of the federalism Summary Impact Statement for the final rules is available upon request (**ADDRESSES**).

The rule implementing the DAM program has been determined to be not significant under Executive Order 12866.

**Authority:** 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.* and 50 CFR 229.32(g)(3)

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Dated: March 12, 2008.

**John Oliver,**

*Deputy Assistant Administrator for  
Operations, National Marine Fisheries  
Service.*

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