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December 11, 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

EVENTS

December 12

Free **Atlantic Shark Identification Workshop** in St. Petersburg, Florida.

January 9

Public input meeting on **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Draft Strategic Plan** in New Jersey.

January 9 - March 20

Three free **Atlantic Shark Identification Workshops** in Louisiana, Virginia, and Florida.

January 8 - March 20

Six free **Protected Species Safe Handling, Release, and Identification Workshops** in



A Changing Climate for Endangered Species

NOAA Fisheries scientists are working to ensure that the Endangered Species Act, which turns 40 this year, remains effective in the face of a changing climate. A special section in the latest issue of *Conservation Biology* highlights their progress. Eight papers, authored by NOAA scientists and their research partners, consider strategies to incorporate climate change into our decision-making for listed species.

NOAA Responds to Pilot Whales Stranding

On December 3, the National Park Service found a pod of short-finned pilot whales stranded on the edge of the Florida Everglades National Park and notified NOAA Fisheries, the lead coordinating agency for responding to marine mammal strandings. Of the 51 whales originally stranded, 22 have died and 29 are still missing. Read the daily updates of this event online and follow it on [Twitter](#) at @NOAAFish_SERO.

Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Florida, and Texas.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

December 12

Applications due for **Nancy Foster Scholarship Program.**

FEDERAL REGISTER ACTIONS

[Click here](#) for a list of only those actions open for public comment. Scroll search for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

For a list of all daily actions, check the Federal Register [online](#).

Right Whale Recovery Requires Staying on Course

North Atlantic right whales are among the most endangered whales in the world, but a number of whale conservation actions, combined with relatively high birth rates, are allowing the population to grow a little each year. To maintain this fragile recovery, NOAA Fisheries will stay on course with conservation measures.

NOAA Fisheries Makes Ship Strike Rule Permanent

NOAA Fisheries permanently extended the ship strike reduction rule, which requires large ships to travel at low speeds when and where the critically endangered North Atlantic right whales are known to feed, reproduce, or travel. Since the rule's introduction in 2008, no known fatal ship strikes have occurred in these areas.

Proposed MMPA List of Fisheries for 2014 - Open for Public Comment

By **January 6**, submit your comments on NOAA Fisheries' proposed List of Fisheries for 2014. The list, required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), includes commercial fisheries that interact with marine mammals and classifies each into one of three categories based on their level of interaction.

Bluefin Tuna Amendment - Public Comment Extension

By **January 10** (formerly December 10), submit your comments on the proposed rule to implement Amendment 7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan. The proposed rule includes a variety of management measures to ensure sustainable management of Atlantic bluefin tuna fisheries.

Great Lakes

Thunder Bay Boundary Expansion - Re-Opened for Public Comment

By **December 19** (formerly November 27), submit your comments on a proposed boundary expansion of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Lake Huron.

Northeast

NOAA Fisheries Working to Protect Right Whales

NOAA Fisheries is working with fishermen, environmentalists, scientists, representatives of the shipping industry, and others to protect North Atlantic right whales, one of the most endangered whale species. These collaborations have led to progress in reducing ship strikes and entanglement with fishing gear, two of the right whales' greatest threats.

New Assistant Regional Administrator in Mid-Atlantic

NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Administrator John Bullard announced the appointment of Dr. Kevin Chu to serve as assistant regional administrator. Dr. Chu will be stationed in Annapolis, Maryland to represent NOAA Fisheries in the region and serve mid-Atlantic stakeholders.

Authorized Volunteers Sought to Help with Marine Mammal Strandings

NOAA Fisheries is seeking qualified volunteers, especially those with experience working with the New England Aquarium, to respond to stranded marine mammals on Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and the Massachusetts north shore. See announcement for details.

Southeast

Oil Spill Trustees Propose \$627 Million in New Restoration Projects

By **February 4**, submit your comments on a draft plan proposing more than \$625 million in new early restoration projects across the Gulf of Mexico states. This plan, put forth by the Trustees of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, outlines the third phase of early restoration-the initial steps taken to fulfill the responsible parties' obligations.

West Coast

Remember to Give Whales a Wide Berth

It's easy to be mesmerized by the colossal size and strength of whales when seen up close. But getting too close to whales can be dangerous to you and to the whales. Always remain at least 100 yards away.

Scientists Quantify Bird Predation on Steelhead

NOAA scientists at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center devised an experiment to quantify Western Gull predation on threatened juvenile steelhead in six watersheds along the central California coast. By tagging the juvenile fish and then searching the gulls' colonies for the regurgitated tags, scientists estimate that gull predation may be as high as 30% during some years.

Alaska

Mapping Deep-sea Corals and Sponges in Alaska

Deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems are widespread

throughout most of Alaska's marine waters, but scientists lack specific knowledge of where these organisms occur in high abundance. An ongoing research project uses bottom trawl survey data to model coral and sponge location, checking the model predictions with randomized drop camera surveys. Insight into the distribution of these ecosystems will inform management decisions.

Proposed 2014-2015 Groundfish Harvest Limits - Open for Public Comment

By **January 9**, submit your comments on proposed harvest specifications, apportionments, and prohibited species catch allowances for the groundfish fisheries of the [Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands](#) and the [Gulf of Alaska](#). These harvest limits are proposed for the 2014 and 2015 fishing years.

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