



- Alyeska Seafoods
- Alaska Crab Coalition
- Alaska Draggers Association
- Alaska Groundfish Data Bank
- Alaskan Leader Fisheries
- Alaska Pacific Seafoods
- Aleutian Islands Brown Crab Coalition
- Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association  
Akutan, Atka, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski, St. George
- At-Sea Processors Association
- Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.  
Aleknagik, Clark's Point, Dillingham, Egegik, Ekwok, King Salmon, Levickok, Manokotak, Neknek, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Portage Creek, South Neknek, Toqiak, Twin Hills, Ugashik
- Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association  
St. Paul
- City of Unalaska
- Coastal Villages Region Fund  
Chefornak, Chevak, Eek, Goodnews Bay, Hooper Bay, Kipruuk, Kongiganak, Kwillingok, Mekoryuk, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nightmute, Oscarville, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tunululik, Tununak
- Groundfish Forum
- High Seas Catchers Cooperative
- Icicle Seafoods
- McCarty and Associates
- Mid-Water Trawlers Cooperative
- Motherhood Group  
PV Excellence  
PV Ocean Phoenix  
PV Golden Alaska
- North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation
- North Pacific Longline Association
- Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation  
Brevig Mission, Diomedes, Elm, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Saint Michael, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, White Mountain
- Pacific Seafood Processors Association
- Prowler Fisheries
- Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference
- Trident Seafoods Corp.
- United Catcher Boats  
Akutan Catcher Vessel Assoc.  
Arctic Enterprises Assoc.  
Northern Victor Fleet  
Peter Pan Fleet Cooperative  
Unalaska Co-op  
Unisea Fleet Cooperative  
Westward Fleet Cooperative
- U.S. Seafoods
- Waterfront Associates
- Western Alaska Fisheries, Inc.
- Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association  
Alakanuk, Emmonak, Grayling, Kotlik, Mountain Village, Nunam Iqua

Press Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2006

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## **RIGHT WHALE CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATED** **Industry Initiative to Protect Whales Complements Habitat Protection**

A final order designating critical habitat for the Northern Right whale will help protect the endangered species and fits well with steps already taken by the Alaska fishing fleet to avoid the whales, according to David Benton, Executive Director of the Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA). The final order was issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) today.

“There is no history of interaction between Right whales and the Alaska fishing fleet and we’re committed to keeping it that way,” Benton said. “Earlier this year, the industry took steps to educate mariners on how to identify and avoid the Right whales and today’s designation of critical habitat areas in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska is another step to help protect this endangered species.”

The North Pacific Right Whale Guide produced by MCA and NOAA’s Alaska Fisheries Science Center describes the endangered whales and includes a checklist of what fishing vessel captains should and shouldn’t do if they encounter one.

Thousands of the laminated guides were printed and distributed to fishing vessel owners, captains, fishery observers and others. The guide also includes a chart of all Right whale sightings since 1941 and comparative photographs of right whales, humpback whales, and gray whales to ensure proper identification.

MCA also translated the guide into Russian and partnered with the World Wildlife Fund to distribute it among the fishing fleets in Vladivostok and Petropavlovsk. The guide identifies past sightings on the Russian side of the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk.

“The North Pacific fishing industry understands the importance of a healthy ecosystem and we’re being proactive to do our part,” Benton said. “We’ve set aside other broad areas of the Bering Sea to protect fish habitat and have set sustainable fishing levels backed by science and as a result, no species are currently considered overfished. Taking positive steps to protect whales is part of that same commitment.”

Once believed to number more than 10,000, the slow-swimming Right whales were slaughtered in the 1800s. Even after they received international protection in 1931, their population numbers never rebounded and are now believed to number around a hundred animals. Small numbers of Right whales have been sighted in the Bering Sea in recent years, with most reports confined to a small area east of the Pribilofs and between Cape Newenham and Port Moller.

Today's final order designating critical habitat stemmed from a June 2005 order by U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup in San Francisco.

The Marine Conservation Alliance is a coalition of seafood processors, harvesters, support industries and coastal communities that are active in Alaska fisheries. The MCA represents approximately 75 percent of the participants in Alaska shellfish and groundfish fisheries and promotes science based conservation measures to ensure sustainable fisheries in Alaska. [www.marineconservationalliance.org](http://www.marineconservationalliance.org)

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