

# GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS



American Sportfishing Association  
Leading the Way for Sportfishing's Future  
[www.ASAfishing.org](http://www.ASAfishing.org)

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## Proposed Vessel Speed Rule Would Cause Excessive Harm to Coastal Economies Industry supports protecting right whales, but current NMFS proposal is misguided

*While the recreational fishing community understands the importance of protecting right whales, we were not consulted in this rulemaking process and have serious concerns over its severity and possible ineffectiveness.*

### The American Sportfishing Association Supports Right Whale Protections

- The sportfishing industry understands the importance of protecting right whales from extinction. They are a vital part of our coastal ecosystems, and stakeholders must work together toward their survival.
- Unfortunately, NOAA's proposal is not based on evidence that proves it will have the intended effect and was introduced without any input from the recreational fishing and boating community.

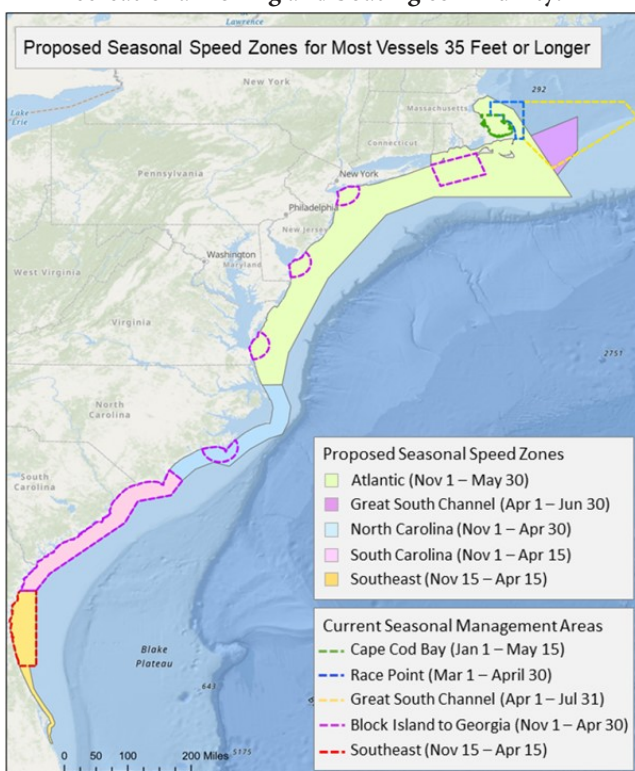


Figure 1. Proposed Seasonal Speed Zones and Existing Seasonal Management Areas.

Image Provided By NOAA

### NMFS' Proposal Will Not Serve Its Intended Goal And Could Decimate Local Economies

- The proposed speed zones would be in effect annually from November through April or May, directly overlapping with fishing seasons for popular fisheries throughout the speed zones.
- NOAA estimates that there are about 9,000 recreational fishing vessels between 35 and 65 feet in length that would be impacted. ASA estimates there are 63,000 recreational vessels that could be affected.
- While whale vessel strikes are tragic, they are extremely unlikely. Since 2008, there have been five small vessel strikes on right whales. In that same time period, there have been 5.1 million recreational fishing trips in smaller vessels, meaning that the odds of a fishing trip resulting in a lethal strike is less than one in a million.
- The speed zones extend as far as 90 miles off the coast in parts. Due to the extra time being needed to travel at such slow speeds, **fishing excursions won't just take longer to occur, they will not happen.**
- Lost fishing opportunities will harm coastal economies in the region, as saltwater recreational fishing in the region generates \$6.3 billion in sales and supports 61,000 jobs.
- NMFS needs to work with recreational fishing stakeholders on a solution that both protects whales and the recreational fishing industry.