

Island Ad-Vantages

THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

October 8, 2020 – I’ve written several times on the concerns about whether the lobster fishery represents a risk to the endangered Right Whales. At this time, NOAA is preparing its updated “biological opinion” as part of the risk assessment that will inform a new set of regulations in 2021. In response to the lawsuit against NOAA, the court has demanded that the new proposed regulations be delivered by May 30, 2021. An important part of that analysis is to understand whale migratory behaviors. Since Right Whales tend to swim and congregate at the surface, one source of information comes from aerial surveys that NOAA conducts from their twin-engine Otter planes. There has been some question about whether these aerial surveys are conducted in the right places and at the right times to accurately document whether Right Whales migrate into the areas that Maine’s lobstermen fish. I recently reached out to the NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center to find out more about current survey plans. Dr. Jon Hare indicated that NOAA will resume aerial survey trips on October 13 and will survey until November 24. After a break, they will then resume for a few weeks in December before the holidays and then they will survey from January 1, 2021 through mid-June. Weather conditions tend to determine the actual survey days. The geographic coverage area is from Maine to New Jersey and out to the EEZ. The NOAA flights follow pathways flying transects that systematically cover large areas of the ocean. Jon told me there are a few other groups doing aerial surveys in smaller localized areas including Cape Cod Bay. NOAA will also deploy acoustic listening stations and gliders to listen for the sounds of Right Whales throughout the Gulf of Maine. When a whale or group of whales is spotted, the crew circles above, takes photographs to try and identify the particular whales, and documents the location. This data, along with other biological factors will help to inform the risk assessment and the set of regulations on the fishery later in 2021.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 207.367.2708. Learn more about MCCF by visiting us online at www.coastalfisheries.org.

FISHERIES LOG

Prices to Harvesters in Stonington

Lobsters (sheddors): \$3.85/lb.

Bait (herring): \$82/bu.

Fuel (diesel): \$2.09/gal.