



NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE VESSEL STRIKE REDUCTION RULE

Comment due October 31, 2022

SUMMARY

“NOAA Fisheries is proposing changes to the North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW) vessel speed regulations to further reduce the likelihood of mortalities and serious injuries to endangered NARW from vessel collisions, which are the leading cause of the species’ decline and a primary factor in an ongoing unusual mortality event.”

PHOTO CREDIT: NOAA FISHERIES

SOUTH ATLANTIC CHANGES:

The **proposed** vessel speed rule aims to reduce the likelihood of lethal vessel strikes by:

- broadening the spatial boundaries and timing of seasonal speed restriction areas,
- expanding mandatory speed restrictions of 10 knots or less to include most vessels 35–65 feet in length,
- creating mandatory Dynamic Speed Zones that establish temporary 10-knot transit zones when right whales are detected outside of the designated areas.

For anglers in the South Atlantic, the broadening of spatial boundaries and expansion of the mandatory speed restrictions from vessels 65 feet and greater to vessels 35 feet and greater will have the biggest impact. See a map of proposed area expansions [HERE](#), specific coordinates can found in [the proposed rule](#).

COUNCIL GUIDANCE:

Write a letter to NMFS providing comment on the proposed vessel speed regulations.

- Recommend NMFS spend more time and effort conducting outreach to the boating and fishing communities. Include public comments
- Concerns about available law enforcement and continued enforcement of fishing regulations.
- Suggestions for alternative regulations:
 - Spend additional money on monitoring NARWs to allow for dynamic zones only.
 - Partner with other groups to provide boats with real time information on whale locations.
 - Limit scope of current regulations to only those vessels with inboard motors and exclude outboard motors.

QUESTIONS FOR THE AP:

How might the proposed regulations affect fishing for snapper grouper species?

Does the AP have any suggestions for alternative regulations that would protect NARWs without a large cost to the fishing industry?

The following figures illustrate how many South Atlantic-managed, permitted vessels may be affected by the proposed changes to the North Atlantic Right Whale (NARW) vessel speed regulations. Note that the total vessels numbers are not additive, as a single vessel may hold more than one permit. Additionally, vessels with homeports outside of the proposed NARW speed areas are included as many vessels may transit through the proposed areas to get to fishing grounds.

Data provide by the SERO Permit Office on August 26, 2022.

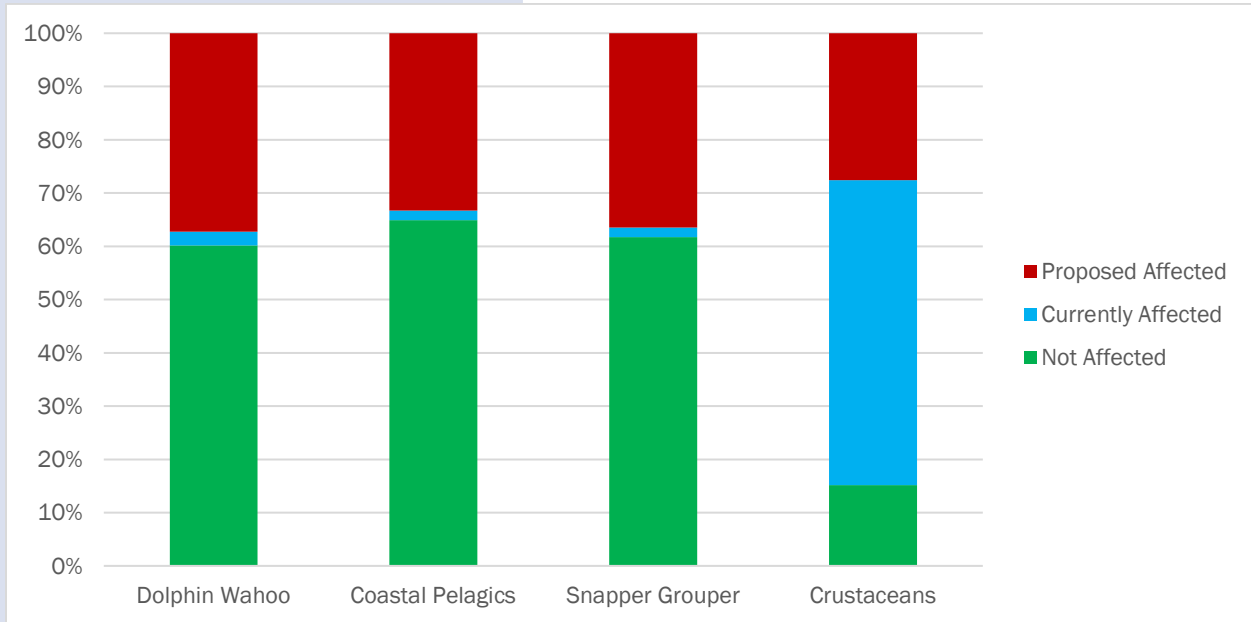


Figure 1. Percentage of South Atlantic permitted vessels that are impacted by the current North Atlantic Right Whale speed regulations, would be affected by the proposed changes to vessel speed regulations, and those that would not be affected (2022).

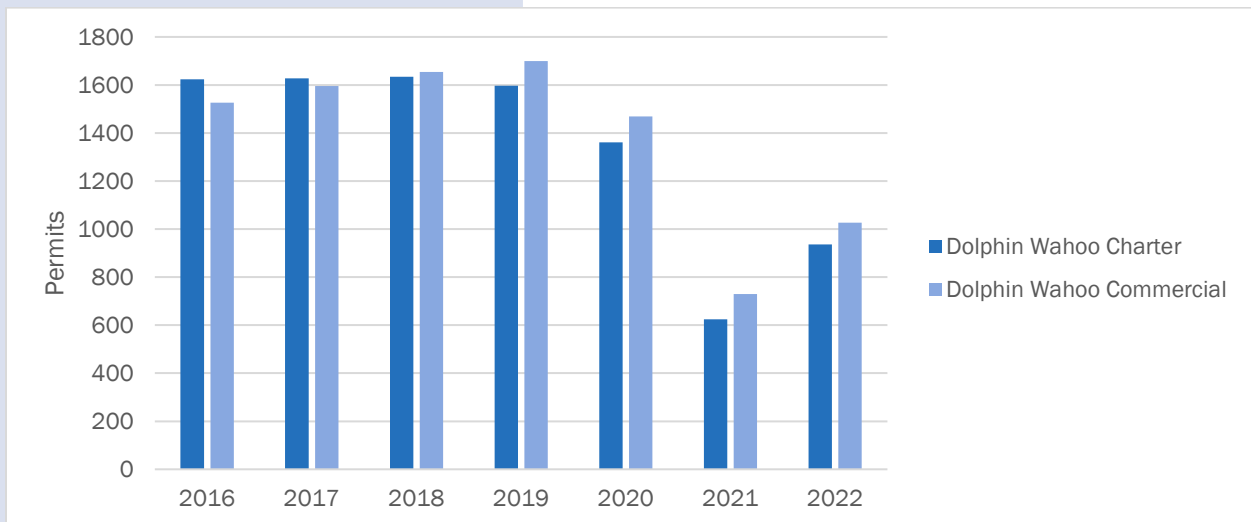


Figure 2. Vessels holding a dolphin wahoo charter and/or commercial permit than are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

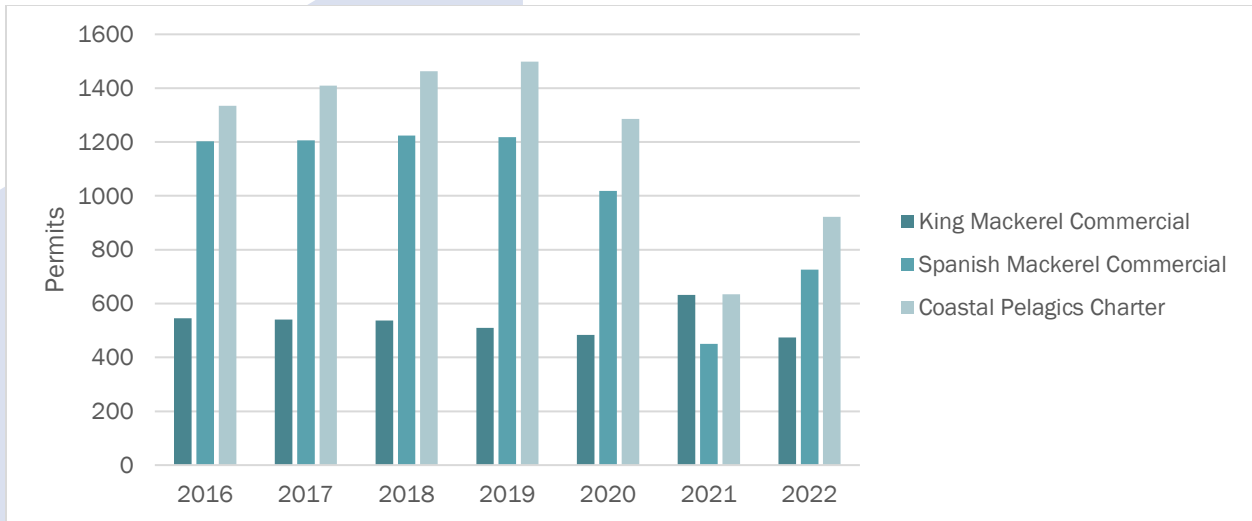


Figure 3. Vessels holding a coastal pelagics charter permit, king mackerel permit, and/or Spanish mackerel permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

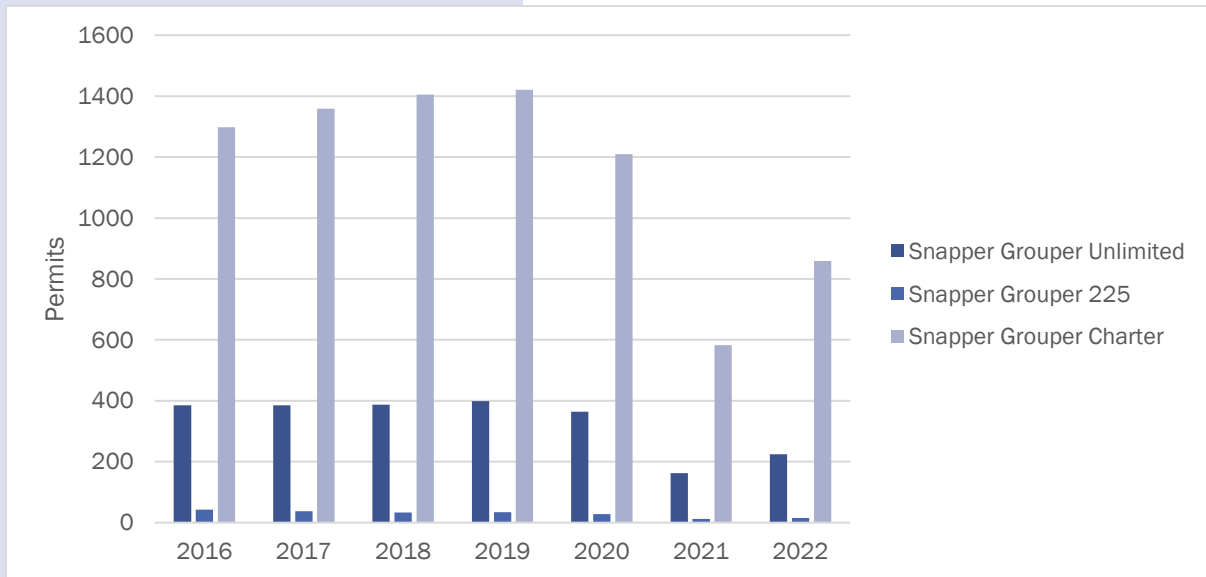


Figure 4. Vessels holding a snapper grouper charter permit, snapper grouper unlimited permit and/or a snapper grouper 225 permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

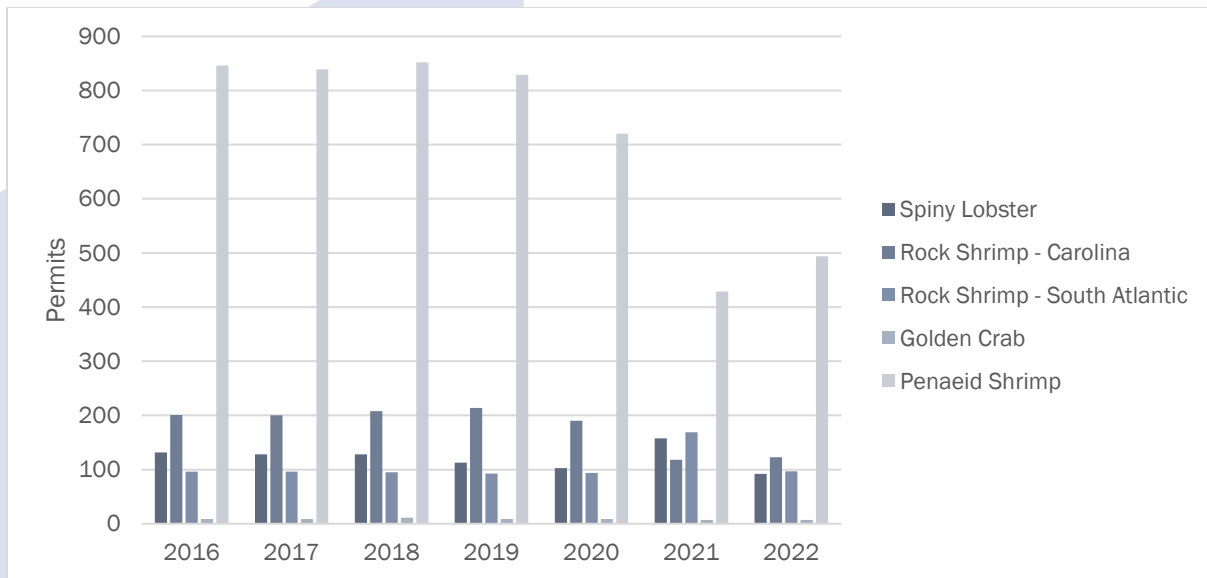


Figure 5. Vessels holding a spiny lobster permit, rock shrimp permit, golden crab permit, and/or a penaeid shrimp permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).