



NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE VESSEL STRIKE REDUCTION RULE

Comments due September 30, 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](#).

POINTS TO PONDER:

1. The size of vessels that typically participate in Council managed fisheries and whether they would be affected by the mandatory speed restrictions of 10 knots for vessels 35-feet or greater.
2. How far those vessels need to travel to get to productive fishing grounds and how much of their route will be within the seasonal speed restriction areas. NOTE: This is likely to vary by fishery and community.
3. How the additional travel time may affect commercial and for-hire fishing businesses.
4. The current cost of fuel and the extra cost associated with slower travel.
5. What fisheries are open and actively fished during the speed restrictions (November through April)?

COUNCIL ACTION:

DETERMINE WHETHER TO PROVIDE COMMENTS TO NOAA FISHERIES’ ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE VESSEL STRIKE REDUCTION RULE.

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.

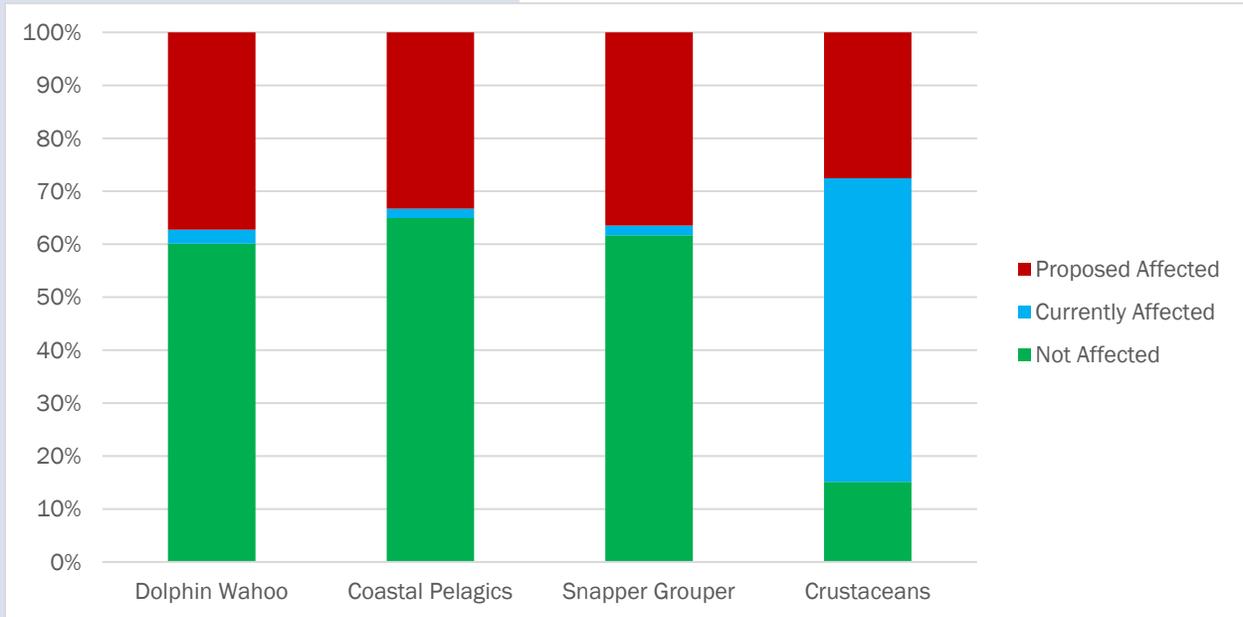


Figure 1. Percentage of South Atlantic permitted vessels that are impacted by the current North Atlantic Right Whale speed regulations, would be affected by the proposed changes to vessel speed regulations, and those that would not be affected (2022).

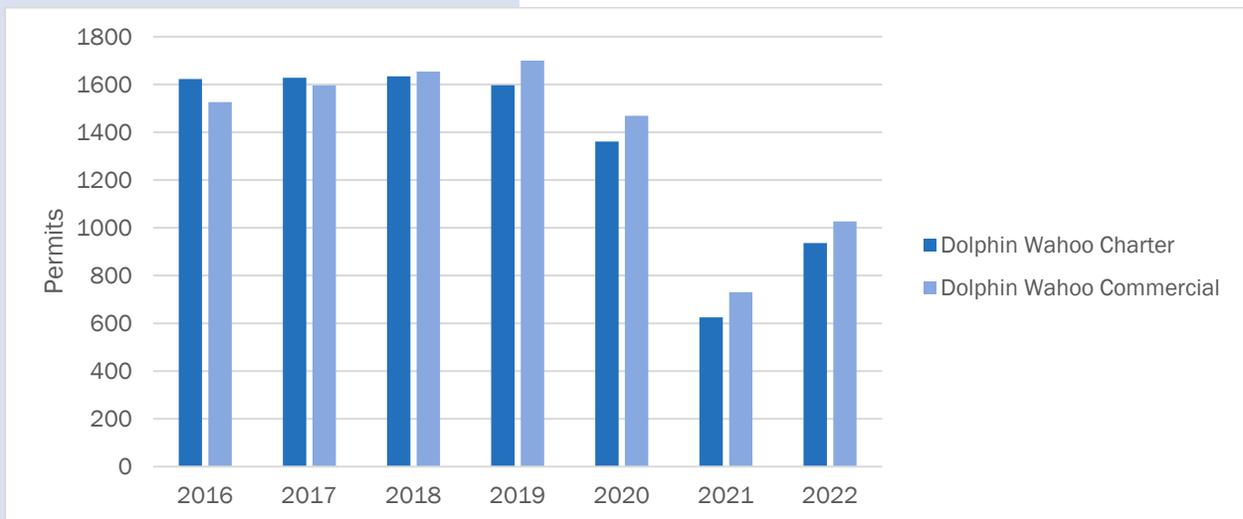


Figure 2. Vessels holding a dolphin wahoo charter and/or commercial permit than are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

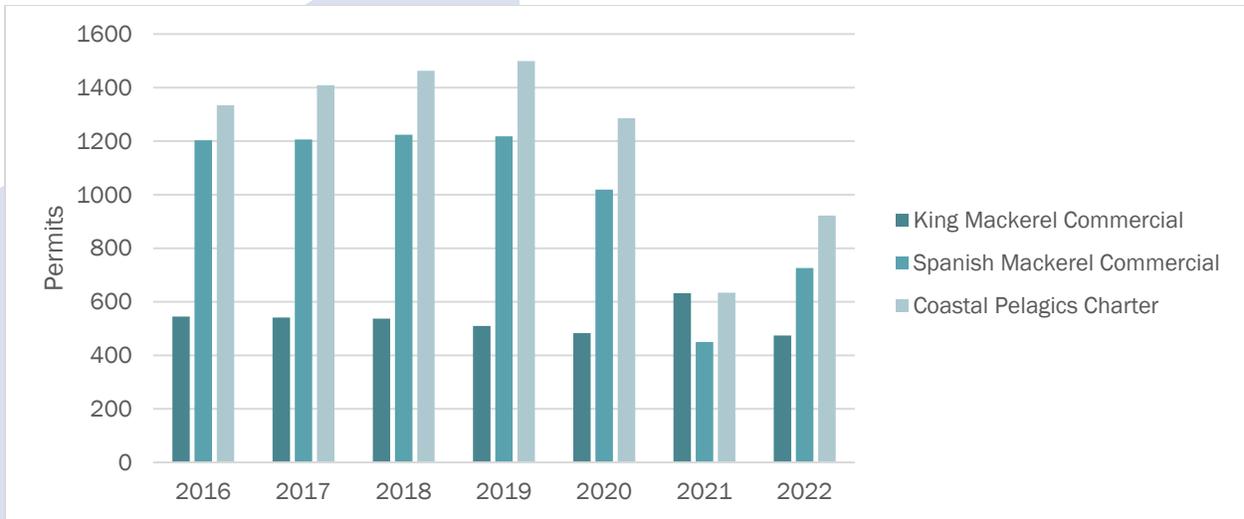


Figure 3. Vessels holding a coastal pelagics charter permit, king mackerel permit, and/or Spanish mackerel permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

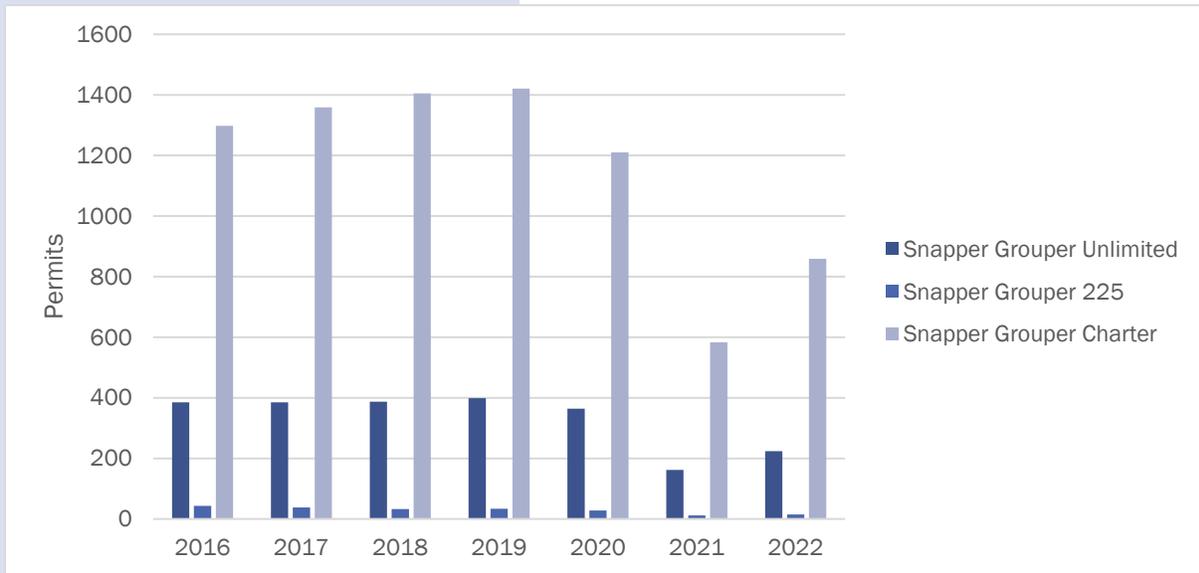


Figure 4. Vessels holding a snapper grouper charter permit, snapper grouper unlimited permit and/or a snapper grouper 225 permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).

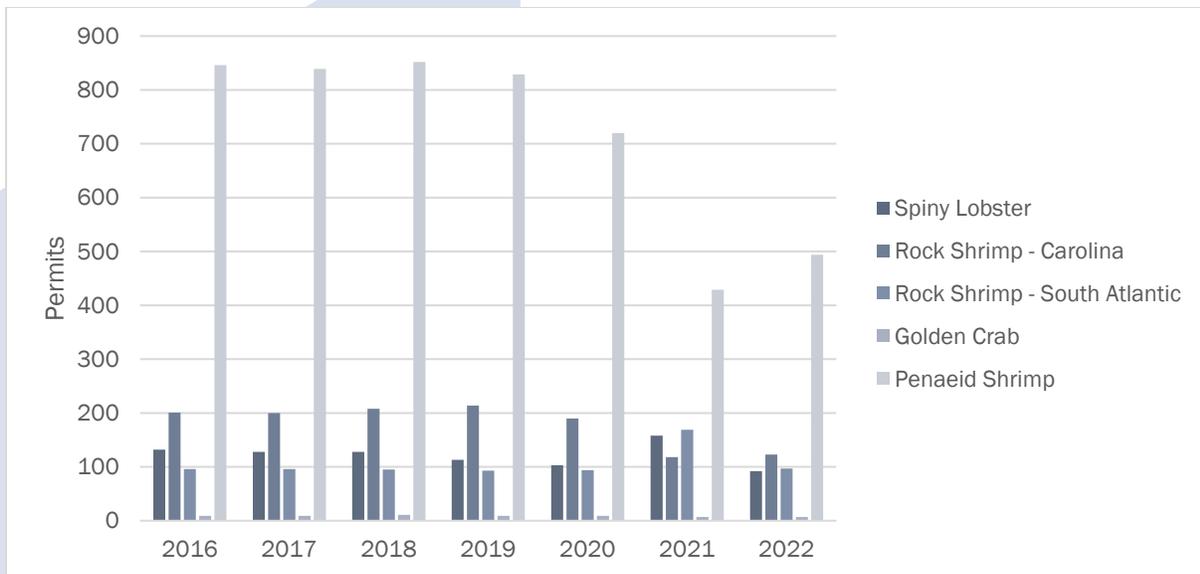


Figure 5. Vessels holding a spiny lobster permit, rock shrimp permit, golden crab permit, and/or a penaeid shrimp permit that are greater than or equal to 35-feet in length (2016-2022).