



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**
CANADA



July 9, 2019

North Atlantic right whale statement on behalf of Oceana Canada, Ecology Action Centre, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, World Wildlife Fund Canada, International Fund for Animal Welfare and Humane Society International/Canada

North Atlantic right whales are one of the most endangered whales on the planet. With approximately 400 of these animals left, and fewer than 100 reproductive females, the death of any right whale is one too many. Since June, there have been six deaths in Canadian waters, four of which were breeding females. The cause of death for three whales has been confirmed as blunt force trauma consistent with ship strikes.

We are pleased that Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Transport Canada announced enhanced management measures to protect right whales. The fatalities in 2019 may be on a similar trajectory to 2017, when 12 whales were found dead in Canadian waters. Continuing along this path will be devastating to right whales' chance of survival. No one wants to see the crisis continue and additional actions are necessary.

We are calling on the Canadian government to avoid any further right whale deaths by implementing the following immediate actions:

- Expand the mandatory speed restriction zone for vessels to include the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Continue the newly announced intensive aerial monitoring of shipping lanes through to November 15, 2019, to identify the presence of right whales in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- Strictly enforce speed restrictions for vessels; issue maximum fines to those who break the speed limit and publish all convictions on the Transport Canada website.
- Create an emergency response task force, comprised of scientists, researchers, environmental organizations, industry groups and government decision-makers to jointly develop adaptive solutions and provide ongoing analysis and response to manage the crisis.
- Invest additional funds, beyond the recent federal investment, to support the emergency marine mammal response network in their work. This will help ensure the best possible outcomes for injured and entangled whales and, through necropsies, provide faster determination of the cause of death to inform protection measures.

In addition to addressing the immediate crisis, the Canadian government must update laws, regulations and policies to provide long-term protection to right whales, including:

- providing long-term funding and capacity-building for research, monitoring and prevention
- collecting and using all relevant data on whale sightings, including boat and ship locations, gear location, changing ocean conditions, food availability and oceanography to better predict and track right whale movements so we are not always reacting to a crisis.

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Key facts

- The results of four necropsies found that three of the whales were killed by blunt force trauma consistent with a ship strike.
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada's recently released Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat document identified that whales in the buffer zone outside of the static shipping zone were at a potentially heightened risk because vessels increased their speeds before entering the slow down zone.
- Transport Canada has reported 111 violations of existing speed restrictions, nine of which remain under review but so far no fines have been issued.

— 30 —

For more information:

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