

Paper for Consideration by NIPWG

Speed Restrictions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

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Executive Summary:	Discussion of use cases of speed restrictions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence
Related Documents:	S-127, Notices to Mariners – Monthly Eastern Edition (Edition No. 09/2023)
Related Projects:	

Introduction / Background

The Government of Canada has established several seasonal speed restriction zones in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to reduce the risk of vessels colliding with North Atlantic right whales (NARW).

Information on the speed restriction zones related to the NARW in the Gulf of St. Lawrence can be found in the Notices to Mariners (NOTMARs) – Monthly Eastern Edition (Edition No. 09/2023) published by the Canadian Coast Guard.

The speed restrictions measures are in effect from April 19th to November 15th, 2023.

Some speed restrictions in Static Zones, Dynamic Shipping Zones, and Seasonal Management Areas are only in effect when a NARW is detected. When detected, the speed restriction is in effect for 15 days. If another NARW is detected within the last 7 days of the 15 day period, then an additional 15 days is added to the speed restriction period. This cycle continues until no NARW are detected.

Analysis/Discussion

Speed Restriction	Attribute category
<p>Static Zones From April 19th to November 15th 2023, all vessels above 13 m in length overall (LOA) must proceed at a speed of not more than 10.0 knots over the ground in the Static Zones.</p> <p>Air cushion vessels operated by or on behalf of the Government of Canada that are engaged in ice-clearing activities from April to June in and around Chaleur Bay are exempted when in operation.</p> <p>Vessels engaged in any commercial fishing activity may proceed at a safe operational speed in waters not more than 36.57 m (20 fathom) deep. When a NARW is detected in a static zone this exemption no longer applies, and the speed restriction will remain in effect following the 15 day rule described above.</p>	<p>Geography (defined area) Seasonal limitation Size limitation Type of vessel Activity vessel is engaging in Geography (bay) Water level</p>
<p>Dynamic Shipping Zones When a NARW is detected in a dynamic shipping zone all vessels will be notified via a NAVWARN and those above 13 m in LOA must proceed at a speed of not more than 10.0 knots over the ground. The speed restriction will remain in effect following the 15 day rule described above.</p>	<p>Geography (defined area) Size limitation Seasonal limitation</p>
<p>Seasonal Management Areas From April 19th to June 27th, 2023 vessels above 13 m in LOA must proceed at a speed of not more than 10.0 knots over the ground in the Seasonal Management Areas.</p>	<p>Geography (defined area) Seasonal limitation Size limitation</p>

From June 28th to November 15th, 2023 the speed restriction is lifted unless a NARW is detected, and will be in effect following the 15 day rule described above.	
<p>Restricted Area When in effect vessels above 13 m in length (LOA) will be required to avoid the area.</p> <p>The restriction will take effect when 80% of the restricted area is closed to fishing for the season and will be lifted when NARW detections decrease in the area.</p> <p>Specific vessels engaging in specific activities (listed in the NOTMARs) can enter the restricted area and travel through at not more than 8.0 knots over the ground.</p> <p>Peace officers and vessels being used by an employee of the Government of Canada can travel above 8.0 knots, but below 10.0 knots over the ground.</p>	<p>Geography (defined area) Seasonal limitation Size limitation Type of vessel Activity vessel is engaging in</p>
<p>Voluntary Seasonal Slowdown in Cabot Strait From April 19th to June 27th, 2023 and from September 27th to November 15th, 2023, vessels above 13 m in length (LOA) are requested to voluntarily reduce their speed as to not exceed 10.0 knots over the ground.</p>	<p>Recommended speed Geography (defined area) Seasonal limitation Size limitation</p>
<p>Area to be Avoided – Roseway Basin From June 1st to December 31st, 2023 it is recommended that vessels of 300 gross tonnages and more avoid the Roseway Basin area. Smaller vessels are also encouraged to avoid this area.</p> <p>In cases where passage is necessary it is recommended that all mariners decrease their vessel speed to no more than 10 knots over the ground.</p>	<p>Recommended speed Geography (defined area) Seasonal limitation</p>

The seasonal speed restrictions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence demonstrate a need for differentiating between mandatory and recommended speed restrictions. Static Zones, Dynamic Shipping Zones, Seasonal Management Areas, and the Restricted Area have mandatory speed restrictions, while the Voluntary Seasonal Slowdown in Cabot Strait and the Area to be Avoided (Roseway Basin) have recommended speeds.

The application of the speed restrictions depend on vessel size, vessel type, and the activity the vessel is engaging with. In all cases, excluding Roseway Basin, the speed restriction applies to vessels more than 13m in LOA, but in a few cases the vessel type or the activity the vessel is engaging in exempts them from the speed restriction.

In most cases vessel type or the activity the vessel is engaging with can also determine the applicability of the restriction, specifically whether a vessel is exempt or not. Vessels in distress, and government vessels being used by law enforcement, for search and rescue operations, or to ensure competency of crew or operational readiness with respect to such activities and operations are exempt from all speed restrictions related to NARW in the Gulf in general. Additional, exemptions based on vessel type and vessel activity apply to Static Zones and the Restricted Area.

The speed measures in general are seasonally limited from April 19th to November 15th, 2023. Additionally, more precise date ranges are described for each zone (see Seasonal Management Areas, Voluntary Seasonal Slowdown in Cabot Strait, and the Area to be Avoided (Roseway Basin)). In multiple cases the speed restriction may only come into effect when a NARW is detected and may cease when NARW are no longer detected.

Additional cases that effect the applicability of a speed restriction include water level (see Static Zones) and more specific geography within a zone (see Static Zones).

We wish to ensure that S-127 can capture the speed restrictions related to NARW in the Gulf of St Lawrence from the NOTMARs. Canada requires speed restrictions in S-127 to differentiate between mandatory and recommended speed restrictions, capture seasonal limitations/date ranges, and include applicability based on vessel size, type, or the activity the vessel is engaging with.