PUBLIC NOTICE
VESSEL PRECAUTIONS IN THE VICINITY OF MANATEES

September 15, 2012

As part of its Section 10 Permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) is required to notify fishermen of precautions to take in the presence of manatees. In fulfillment of that requirement the following guidelines are issued:

1. Fishermen are informed that manatees may be present in the area, and that they need to avoid causing any harm to these endangered mammals. Fishermen should know the general appearance of the species and their habit of moving about completely or partially submerged in shallow water. All fishermen are responsible for observing water-related activities for the presence of manatees.

2. All fishermen are advised that there are civil and criminal penalties for harming, harassing, or killing manatees, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, as amended.

3. If a manatee is seen within 300 ft of the active vessel movement, all appropriate precautions shall be implemented to ensure protection of the manatee. The precautions shall include the operation of all moving vessels no closer than 50 ft of a manatee. Operation of any vessels closer than 50 ft to a manatee shall necessitate immediately placing any motors in neutral or shutting them off. Activities will not resume until the manatee has departed the project area on its own volition. Manatees should not be herded away or harassed into leaving.

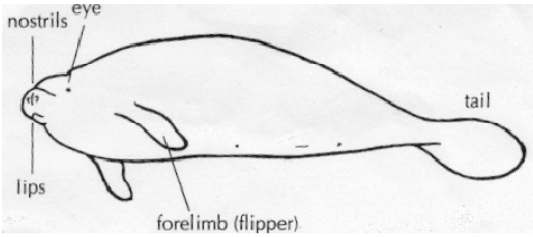
4. For help with an entangled, injured, or stranded manatee, please contact:

   Vicky Thayer
   NCDMF Headquarters
   3441 Arendell St.
   Morehead City, NC 28557
   252-222-6371 (office)

5. Any boat collision or fishing gear interaction with and/or injury to a manatee will be reported immediately. The report must be made to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), and fishing should be postponed until cause of injury or mortality can be determined and a revised fishing and/or monitoring plan is produced and approved. The contact at the USFWS is:

   U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
   P.O. Box 33726
   Raleigh, NC 27636-3726
   919-856-4520 x 16 (office)
   919-856-4556 (fax)

6. This Notice should be posted in all fish houses associated with the fishery where it is clearly visible, and will be distributed, as appropriate, to vessel operators to post in vessels.

   CAUTION: The endangered manatee may occur in these waters during the warmer months, primarily from June through October. Idle speed is required if operating this vessel in shallow water during these months. All motors must be shut down or placed in neutral if a manatee comes within 50 ft of the fishing vessel. A collision with and/or injury to a manatee will be reported immediately to the USFWS and NCWRC.

7. All vessels associated with the fishing activities will operate at “no wake/idle” speeds at all times while in water where the draft of the vessel provides less than four-feet clearance from the bottom. All vessels will follow routes of deep water whenever possible.