SEP - 4 2007

Mr. Jeff Ruch  
Executive Director  
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility  
2000 P Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  

Dear Mr. Ruch:  

Thank you for your letter regarding the status of the draft final rule to restrict vessel speeds in certain areas along the U.S. east coast to protect North Atlantic right whales from the threat of collisions with vessels.  

The draft final rule is still in review. As I indicated in testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee on July 31, 2007, this is an important issue for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service. Vessel collisions are the primary threat to the recovery of this highly endangered species. At the time of my Committee testimony, I was optimistic review of the rule would be completed in short order. However, the review is ongoing.  

I appreciate your interest in this important matter.  

Sincerely,

[Signature]

William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.