

From: Aimee Bright <aimee@baychamberfl.com>
Sent: Friday, June 23, 2023 7:53 AM
To: Ms. Aimee Bright
Subject: Governmental Affairs Action Alert! Protect the Gulf of Mexico!

BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
ACTION ALERT

ADVOCACY. ACCOUNTABILITY. ACTION.

Last week, the Bay County Chamber Board of Directors approved a letter of opposition regarding a proposed vessel speed limit rule that would drastically impact Florida's Joint Gulf Training Range Complex, port operations, as well as commercial and recreational fishing.

It is crucial for our community to [submit concerns](#) to NOAA during the formal commenting period.

Background:

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is considering a petition that would establish a year-round 10-knot vessel speed restriction (about 11.5 mph) and other vessel-related mitigation measures for all vessels within waters between 100 meters and 400 meters deep from approximately Pensacola, Florida to just south of Tampa, to protect Rice's Whales from collisions and noise pollution. Formal comments can be submitted [here](#) by July 6, 2023.

Talking Points:

- Florida's Joint Gulf Training Range Complex is the largest military training range in the continental United States. Threats to this unique military testing and training area on, above and below the surface of the water, would jeopardize Florida's appeal to retain or attract military installations, missions, training and defense contractors. Loss of such activities would negatively affect the \$96.9 billion defense related economic impact in the State.
- Much of the Gulf of Mexico fishing grounds used by recreational and commercial fisherman would fall under the 10-knot rule. Maritime activities in Florida account for nearly 13% of the state's GDP and contributes \$4.2 billion in state and local taxes. Requiring a vessel to operate at a maximum speed of 10-knots and halting nighttime vessel transits, would greatly reduce the significant impact of these activities on the state's economy.
- Florida's 16 seaports that support cargo and cruise activities contribute \$117.6 billion in economic value to the state as well as support 900,000 direct and indirect jobs would be adversely impacted.

- Protecting endangered species is important; restricting marine activity is not an effective or reasonable option. Instead of limiting marine activity, encourage NOAA to conduct real-time monitoring of Rice's whales through tagging, acoustic detection and pushing location information to operators.
- Urge NOAA to focus on the development of avoidance technology, outreach/education and increasing compliance with existing regulations to develop effective conservation strategies for Rice's whales.

Best,
Aimee Bright
VP Governmental & Military Affairs
Bay County Chamber of Commerce
Florida Chamber of the Year
2004.2010.2016.2019.2022

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