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Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC)

Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns about the vessel speed reduction rule that has been proposed by NOAA. While other speakers may have focused on the economic impacts that will arise if high speed ferry service is suspended and traditional ferry service is reduced between November 1 and May 1, I am going to focus on other impacts.

Many people think of Nantucket as a swanky enclave of seasonal residents and visitors, however, Nantucket is very much a year-round working class community. Our year-round population of about 15,000, is primarily made of people who work in the building trades and in retail and services. Our community has a very diverse population, however, we rely on the hundreds of laborers who commute between Nantucket and the mainland everyday to supplement our workforce. Without this commuter workforce, the number one year round employment sector, construction and trades, would not be adequately supported, and further, with reduced traditional ferry service the goods and materials needed to support these, and other industries, may not be available when needed.

The ferries serve as the lifeline to Nantucket Island. Our geographic isolation of being 30 miles out to sea presents many challenges, and the vessel speed reduction would have far reaching impacts for those of us who live here. All of the goods we need to live are brought to Nantucket by ferry. The ferry schedule is extremely important to ensuring that all these goods arrive in a timely manner. Delays or cancellations, which we experience on occasion, are extremely impactful and will be even more so if the number of trips is reduced. The shelves at the grocery store are bare, packages are delayed, supplies run out. Much needed off-island medical appointments are missed, school children miss sports events, family events are cancelled. Living on an island is very challenging and can be very isolating. The removal of high speed ferry service, particularly during the winter months, would likely have a negative impact on mental health. Not having the ability to easily get to the mainland would weigh heavily on many residents. It's probably hard for someone to understand who doesn't live on an island, but we plan our lives by the ferry schedule.

I urge you to remove Nantucket and Vineyard Sound from the proposed rule. It is my understanding that no confirmed sightings of right whales have been documented, therefore the intended protection is misplaced in this particular location. The unintended

impacts which would affect all Nantucket residents need to be carefully considered. Letters of opposition submitted by the Town of Nantucket Select Board, Nantucket Cottage Hospital/Massachusetts General Hospital, the Steamship Authority, the Nantucket Island Chamber of Commerce, and others support the position of the Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission on this important issue.

Thank you.