



Vessel Strike Avoidance Fund

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ABOUT NFWF

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF has grown to become the nation's largest conservation foundation. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,300 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of \$11.3 billion. NFWF is an equal opportunity provider.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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North Atlantic Right Whale

BACKGROUND

NFWF's Vessel Strike Avoidance Fund (VSAF) supports the development of innovative technology solutions that provide mariners with tools and information to more effectively avoid collisions (vessel strikes) with large whales. The fund was launched in 2024 to benefit the conservation of critically endangered North Atlantic right whales (right whales) and other cetacean species. The program's first slate of grants seeks to drive adoption and improvement of whale detection and mariner communication tools to address vessel strike risk.

NFWF has a history of supporting the development and voluntary incorporation of new practices and technologies that address on-the-water conservation challenges in cooperation with coastal communities. In its first year, the fund awarded nearly \$3.9 million to support eight projects. These awards were leveraged by more than \$700,000 in matching contributions from grantees, for a total conservation impact of \$4.6 million.

The VSAF is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

(continued)



Fishing boat

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Building upon the voluntary, balanced approach NFWF has developed with other fisheries and marine grant programs, VSAF works closely with mariners and other stakeholders to address vessel strikes of right whales and other cetacean species. The right whale is a critically endangered species, and vessel strikes are one of the major human-induced threats to their continued health and ability to recover. The whales' habitat and migration routes are dynamic but overlap with major ports, shipping lanes and areas of heavy recreational use along the Atlantic coastline, making right whales vulnerable to collisions with vessels that are often fatal. Already existing, in development, or future

technologies can aid right whale conservation by better informing vessel captains and other mariners of whale presence and decreasing the risk of collision when whales and vessels are both present in an area.

NFWF established the VSAF as a catalyst to foster promising technologies from development to implementation while engaging with mariners across the right whale's range. Through timely and accurate knowledge about whale distribution and enhanced communication of whale presence, all mariners can have the tools to better avoid large whales in their path to safely share the water with right whales and other species.



North Atlantic right whale