NEWS RELEASE

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Viking Presses for Timely Action on 2008 Vessel Speed Rule

Washington outreach, media work and WAVS demonstrations continue while NOAA reviews public input.

New Gretna, N.J. (June 2026) – Viking is pressing NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), federal policymakers and other stakeholders to move quickly on potential changes to the 2008 North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Speed Rule.

The rule limits vessels 65 feet or larger to 10 knots in designated seasonal areas along the East Coast. With the June 2 public comment period closed, Viking is continuing its Washington outreach, media efforts and WAVS demonstrations to support a practical, technology-based approach that protects whales and reflects today's boats, equipment and operating conditions.

Earlier this year, NOAA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to gather input on potential changes. Viking's message to lawmakers, administration officials and White House contacts is direct: Keep the review a priority and do not let it stall in the regulatory process.

"NOAA has the opportunity to update an 18-year-old rule using the tools and operating information available today," said Viking President and CEO Pat Healey. "We are going to keep making that case in Washington and wherever this discussion is taking place."

Viking is focused on media outreach. Coverage by NBC News and The Press of Atlantic City has brought attention to the issue. Viking is also distributing an op-ed to media showing how detection technology, predictive mapping, onboard alerts, vessel safety, access and vessel-specific risk support modernizing the 2008 rule without weakening whale protection. It explains how existing tools can work together to give captains better information before a whale interaction occurs.

That work is central to NOAA's review. The agency is evaluating possible changes, including alternative management areas and technology-based strike-avoidance measures. Viking supports protecting the North

Atlantic right whale and believes any future rule should account for vessel-specific risk, onboard technology, safety, access and the operating profile of modern recreational boats.

“The risk now is delay,” DePersenaire said. “The rule should not remain frozen while detection, mapping and alert systems continue to improve. NOAA needs to evaluate those tools and act.”

Viking continues on-water work through its Whale and Vessel Safety Taskforce, known as WAVS. For more than a year, WAVS has used a 24-foot Contender as a research and demonstration boat equipped with real-time detection, predictive risk mapping, information sharing and onboard alert systems.

The WAVS boat is scheduled to return to Plymouth, Massachusetts, this summer for additional work with technology developers, artificial intelligence specialists, researchers and stakeholders. NOAA has expressed interest in using the platform to help develop a method for evaluating detection and avoidance tools. Working with the state’s Department of National Resources and Yamaha Motor Corporation, USA, the WAVS team is planning to demonstrate the boat in testing off the state’s coast.

Since 2022, Viking has worked with the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), the National Marine Electronics Association and other stakeholders to raise concerns about broad speed restrictions, including safety, access, enforcement, economic impact and the lack of distinction between large ships and modern recreational boats.

The rule carries enforcement consequences. NOAA assessed $950,306 in civil penalties across 56 vessel-speed cases in 2022 and 2023.

In 2022, NOAA proposed expanding speed restrictions to boats 35 to 64 feet. The agency withdrew that proposal in January 2025. Viking believes updating the 2008 rule can help prevent similar broad restrictions from returning.

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