

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 8704

To require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a grant program to foster enhanced coexistence between ocean users and North Atlantic right whales and other large cetacean species.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 12, 2024

Mr. CARTER of Georgia introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To require the Secretary of Commerce to establish a grant program to foster enhanced coexistence between ocean users and North Atlantic right whales and other large cetacean species.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES AND REGU-**  
4 **LATIONS.**

5 For the period beginning on the date of the enact-  
6 ment of this section and ending on December 31, 2030,  
7 the North Atlantic right whale vessel strike reduction rule

1 contained in section 224.105 of title 50, Code of Federal  
2 Regulations, in effect during the fiscal year ending on Sep-  
3 tember 30, 2022, may not be amended, updated, modified,  
4 or replaced.

5 **SEC. 2. NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE AND OTHER**  
6 **LARGE CETACEAN SPECIES GRANT PRO-**  
7 **GRAM.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the  
9 date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall  
10 establish a competitive grant program to award amounts,  
11 on an annual basis, to eligible entities for the eligible uses  
12 described in subsection (e).

13 (b) ADMINISTRATION.—The Secretary shall enter  
14 into a cooperative agreement with the Foundation pursu-  
15 ant to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Estab-  
16 lishment Act (16 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.) for the Foundation  
17 to manage and administer the Program.

18 (c) APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible for a grant under  
19 the Program, an eligible entity shall submit to the Foun-  
20 dation an application in such form, at such time, and con-  
21 taining such information as the Foundation determines  
22 appropriate.

23 (d) FUNDING.—

1           (1) IN GENERAL.—After the Secretary enters  
2 into a cooperative agreement with the Foundation  
3 under subsection (b)—

4           (A) for each fiscal year, the Secretary shall  
5 provide to the Foundation the amounts made  
6 available under this section to carry out the  
7 Program in an advance payment of the entire  
8 amount on October 1, or as soon as practicable  
9 thereafter, of each such fiscal year; and

10           (B) the Foundation shall invest and rein-  
11 vest excess such amounts for the benefit of the  
12 Program.

13           (2) APPLICATION OF NATIONAL FISH AND  
14 WILDLIFE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHMENT ACT.—  
15 Amounts received by the Foundation under this sec-  
16 tion to carry out the Program shall be subject to the  
17 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establish-  
18 ment Act (16 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.), except for sec-  
19 tion 10(a) of that Act (16 U.S.C. 3709(a)).

20           (e) ELIGIBLE USES.—An eligible entity that is  
21 awarded a grant under the Program may use such grant  
22 to develop, assess, and carry out activities that reduce le-  
23 thal and sub-lethal interactions between ocean users and  
24 North Atlantic right whales and other large cetacean spe-  
25 cies, including—

1           (1) funding research to identify, deploy, or test  
2 innovative avoidance technologies that reduce or  
3 eliminate harmful interactions between ocean users  
4 and North Atlantic right whales and other large ce-  
5 tacean species;

6           (2) efforts to enhance awareness of existing  
7 North Atlantic right whale management measures  
8 and rules;

9           (3) developing on-the-water approaches to sup-  
10 port the coexistence of ocean users and North Atlan-  
11 tic right whales and other large cetacean species;

12           (4) funding the expansion of infrastructure and  
13 capacity to disseminate management and other rel-  
14 evant information that reduces harmful interactions  
15 between ocean users and North Atlantic right whales  
16 and other large cetacean species, especially such  
17 interactions that can lead to lethal or sub-lethal in-  
18 jury; and

19           (5) other uses the Foundation, in consultation  
20 with the Secretary and relevant eligible entities, de-  
21 termines appropriate.

22           (f) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under the Pro-  
23 gram, the Foundation shall give priority to applications—

24           (1) with a substantial likelihood of reducing le-  
25 thal and sub-lethal interactions between ocean users

1 and North Atlantic right whales and other large ce-  
2 tacean species;

3 (2) that include cooperation among ocean users;  
4 and

5 (3) that demonstrate, or have the potential to  
6 provide, economic benefits to small businesses reliant  
7 upon fishing, tourism, and maritime-related activi-  
8 ties based in the United States.

9 (g) PROHIBITED USES.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-  
11 graph (2), an eligible entity that is awarded a grant  
12 under the Program may not use such grant to dis-  
13 tribute resources to an entity or individual that is  
14 not a United States person.

15 (2) EXCEPTION.—An eligible entity that is  
16 awarded a grant under the Program may use such  
17 grant to distribute resources to a partnership that  
18 includes an entity or individual that is not a United  
19 States person if the resources are distributed di-  
20 rectly to a partner in the partnership that is a  
21 United States person.

22 (h) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date  
23 of the enactment of this section, and every 2 years there-  
24 after, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Nat-  
25 ural Resources and the Committee on Transportation and

1 Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the  
2 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of  
3 the Senate a report regarding the results and effectiveness  
4 of projects carried out with a grant awarded under the  
5 Program and work carried out pursuant to section 201  
6 of division JJ of the Consolidated Appropriations Act,  
7 2023 (16 U.S.C. 1393) and section 11303 of the James  
8 M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal  
9 Year 2023 (16 U.S.C. 1391).

10 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

11 (1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be  
12 appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this sec-  
13 tion \$10,000,000, to remain available until ex-  
14 pended.

15 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—Each fiscal  
16 year, of the amounts made available to carry out  
17 this section under paragraph (1), the Foundation  
18 may use not more than 5 percent or \$80,000, which-  
19 ever is greater, of such amounts for the administra-  
20 tive expenses of the Program.

21 (j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-  
23 ty” means—

24 (A) a State, regional, local, or Tribal gov-  
25 ernment;

1           (B) a nonprofit organization or research  
2 institution with expertise in on-the-water tech-  
3 nology for the monitoring or detection of North  
4 Atlantic right whales and other large cetacean  
5 species;

6           (C) any individual or entity the Secretary  
7 and the Foundation jointly determine appro-  
8 priate, including ocean users in the fishing,  
9 tourism, fishing tackle manufacturing, boating,  
10 shipping, marine electronics, ship piloting, ves-  
11 sel towing, and other maritime sectors; and

12           (D) a consortium of 2 or more entities de-  
13 scribed in any of subparagraphs (A) through  
14 (C).

15           (2) FOUNDATION.—The term “Foundation”  
16 means the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

17           (3) PROGRAM.—The term “Program” means  
18 the program established under subsection (a).

19           (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
20 the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the  
21 Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and At-  
22 mosphere.

23           (5) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term  
24 “United States person” has the meaning given the

- 1 term in section 7701(a)(3) of the Internal Revenue
- 2 Code of 1986.

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