NEWS RELEASE

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Executive Order Adds Momentum to Vessel Speed Effort

New Gretna, N.J., Sept. 21, 2026 – Viking Yacht Company welcomed the recent executive order directing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to use marine mammal avoidance technology and work with the private sector. Viking sees the action as an important step that adds momentum to the marine industry's effort to modernize the 2008 North Atlantic right whale vessel speed rule.

Signed by President Donald Trump on Sept. 17, the order gives NOAA clear direction from the administration but does not repeal or suspend the existing vessel speed rule. The current 10-knot limit remains in effect for most vessels 65 feet or longer in designated Seasonal Management Areas along the East Coast.

"The executive order makes clear that this is a priority, and we need to use that momentum to keep the rulemaking process moving forward," said John DePersenaire, Viking's Director of Government Affairs and Sustainability. "NOAA has the comments, and we expect a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking from the agency by December. Technology has emerged as a way to address this important conservation issue without unnecessarily restricting boaters. We have made great progress since the rule took effect 18 years ago, and it's time to acknowledge that progress and modernize the rule accordingly."

In a Sept. 18 letter to NOAA Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs, Viking urged NOAA to prioritize the 2008 rule and move promptly toward a proposed rule that would modernize the current regulatory framework. The letter cited the executive order's direction that federal agencies take steps to initiate action within 30 days. The letter also asked NOAA to work directly with the companies developing and testing marine mammal avoidance technology.

NOAA opened an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on March 4, seeking information on possible changes to the 2008 rule. The comment period closed June 2. NOAA said it is considering replacing current seasonal speed restrictions with alternative management areas and technology-based strike-avoidance measures. Any Notice of Proposed Rulemaking would then be opened for public comment before NOAA could issue a final rule.

“We have been working on this since 2022 because technology has to be part of the solution,” said Viking President and CEO Pat Healey. “We want to protect the whales, we want to make boating safer and we want a rule that reflects how today’s recreational boats operate. The Whale and Vessel Safety Taskforce (WAVS) has put technology on the water and gathered real-world data. The executive order gives NOAA direction to use that technology. Now we need to keep the process moving.”

The executive order also directs the Secretary of Commerce and other federal officials, within 30 days and consistent with applicable law, to take steps to initiate action to suspend, revise or rescind regulations that overly burden boaters, anglers and outdoor businesses.

Viking formed WAVS in late 2022. It utilizes a 24-foot Contender research vessel equipped with detection systems, radar and artificial intelligence classification software. The task force works with marine manufacturers, electronics companies and technology developers on real-time whale detection, data sharing and vessel alerts.

About Viking Yacht Company

Founded in 1964 by brothers Bill and Bob Healey, Viking Yacht Company grew from humble New Jersey boatbuilding roots into a world leader in semi-custom fiberglass sportfishing yachts. Today, with more than 6,000 boats delivered, Viking builds premium sportfishing yachts, while Valhalla Boatworks carries the Viking bloodline into high-performance outboard-powered center consoles and sport yachts.

With nearly 1 million square feet of manufacturing space between its New Gretna and Mullica, New Jersey, facilities, Viking continues its family-owned mission: building a better boat every day.

Viking Yachts is part of the Viking Marine Group, a vertically integrated family of seven companies: Viking Yachts, Valhalla Boatworks, Valhalla Yacht Sales, Atlantic Marine Electronics, Viking Yacht Service Center, Palm Beach Towers and Viking Yachting Center.

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