National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Glacier Bay National Park
and Preserve

P.O. Box 140
Gustavus, AK 99826

907 697-2230 phone
907 697-2654 fax
www.nps.gov/glba

National Park Service News Release

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Contacts: Gus Martinez, Acting Chief Ranger, GLBA_Administration@nps.gov, 907-697-2230
Chris Gabriele, Whale Biologist, Chris_Gabriele@nps.gov, 907-697-2664

Whale Waters Update for Glacier Bay Effective June 10, 2014

BARTLETT COVE, ALASKA – Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve Acting Superintendent Tom VandenBerg announced today that a vessel speed limit of 13 knots through the water for all vessels is being implemented in lower Glacier Bay to protect numerous humpback whales that have been sighted in this area. In addition, vessels greater than 18 feet in length passing through this area are restricted to a mid-channel course or 1 nautical mile offshore. Over the past several days, at least 14 different humpback whales have been observed feeding in this area. These operating restrictions are effective from 5 AM Tuesday June 10 until further notice.

As shown on the attached map, the designated lower Glacier Bay whale waters include the waters extending from the mouth of Glacier Bay to a line drawn between the northern tip of Strawberry Island and the northern tip of Lars Island. This boundary is shown on NOAA nautical charts of Glacier Bay.

Boaters should proceed cautiously in all areas where whales may be present because whales may surface in unexpected locations, posing a hazard to both the vessel and the whale. Vessels are prohibited from operating within ¼ nautical mile of a humpback whale in Park waters, including those Park waters outside Glacier Bay proper. In addition, vessel operators positioned within ½ nautical mile of a humpback whale are prohibited from altering their course or speed in a manner that results in decreasing the distance between the whale and the vessel. Speed and course restrictions in whale waters are intended to reduce the disruption of feeding humpback whales and to lower the risk of whale/vessel collisions, as authorized by Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart N, 13.1174.

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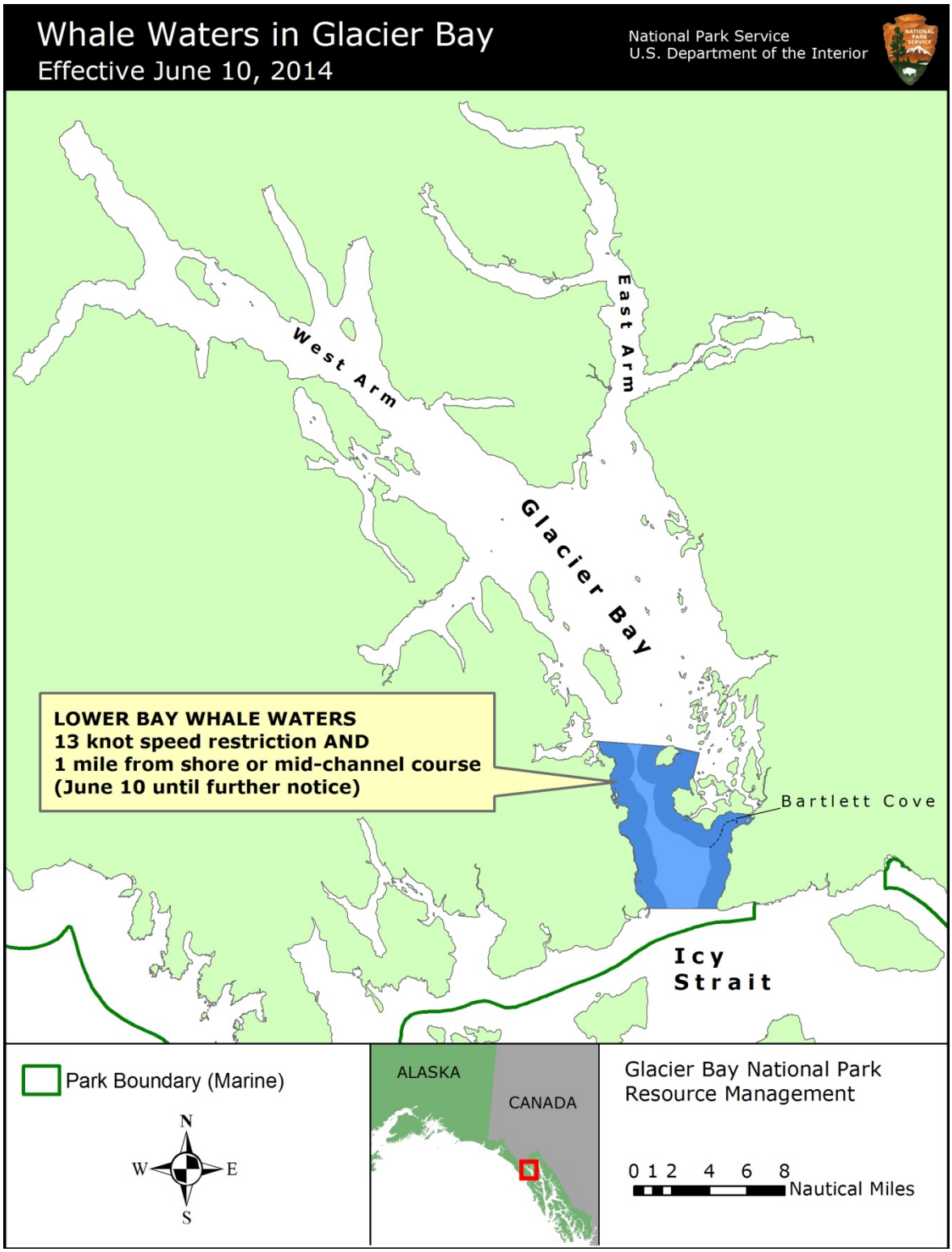
Boaters are advised to verify whale waters designations prior to entering Glacier Bay by telephoning (907) 697-2627 or by contacting KWM20 Bartlett Cove on marine VHF radio.