

## Contact Information

To report stranded, injured or entangled seals, dolphins, or sea turtles call NOAA Fisheries Service's Stranding Hotline at 978-281-9351 or the closest stranding network member (see list below).

To report entangled large whales (entire East coast) & sea turtles (MA only): 800-900-3622

## Stranding Network Organizations

### MAINE

(Rockland, north)

Allied Whale, College of the Atlantic  
207-288-5644

(Rockland, south)

ME Dept. of Marine Resources, Marine Animal Reporting Hotline:  
800-532-9551

Univ. of New England, Marine Animal Rehab Center  
207-915-0169 (pager)

### NEW HAMPSHIRE & MASSACHUSETTS

New England Aquarium Hotline  
617-973-5247

### MASSACHUSETTS

(Boston, north)

Whale Center of New England  
978-281-6351

(Boston, south)

Cape Cod Stranding Network (marine mammals)  
508-743-9548

National Marine Life Center  
508-743-9888

Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (sea turtles)  
508-349-2615

### RHODE ISLAND & CONNECTICUT

Mystic Aquarium Marine Mammal & Sea Turtle Stranding Program  
860-572-5955

### NEW YORK

Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation  
631-369-9829

### NEW JERSEY

Marine Mammal Stranding Center  
609-266-0538

### DELAWARE

MERR Institute  
302-228-5029

### MARYLAND

National Aquarium in Baltimore, Marine Animal Rescue Program  
410-576-1098

MD Department of Natural Resources Stranding Program  
800-628-9944

### WASHINGTON, DC

Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of Natural History  
202-633-1260

### VIRGINIA

Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program  
757-437-6159

Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Sea Turtle Stranding & Research Program  
(sea turtles) 866-493-1085



# NORTHEAST MARINE MAMMAL & SEA TURTLE PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR RECREATIONAL BOATERS & FISHERMEN



P. Bennett/U. Keuper-Bennett



Whale Center of New England/Stellwagen Bank NMS



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## WHY SHOULD YOU PROTECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

Marine mammals are an important part of the marine ecosystem. Some species are classified as endangered, threatened or depleted. Of particular concern in the Northeast region are the right, humpback, fin, and minke whales, as well as harbor porpoises and bottlenose dolphins.

Sea turtles have existed for over 180 million years and play an important role in the ecosystem. All species of sea turtles are either endangered or threatened. Kemp's ridley, loggerhead, green, leatherback, and hawksbill sea turtles are found in the Northeast region.

## HOW CAN FEEDING AFFECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

- Feeding marine mammals is harmful and illegal under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).
- Feeding sea turtles is harmful and may be considered a "take" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- Feeding encourages marine mammals and sea turtles to approach boats and fishing piers for handouts. This can result in entanglement in gear and/or injury from boat collisions.
- Marine mammals and sea turtles fed by humans may lose their natural predatory instincts and can become ill from spoiled chum, bait or from eating other inappropriate foods.
- Feeding can result in ingestion of foreign objects and debris, such as plastics or hooks.



Joe Flanagan, Houston Zoo, Inc.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its regulations prohibit the "take" of endangered or threatened sea turtles or marine mammals in U.S. waters and on the high seas. **Take** is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect." **Harm** is further defined as any act that actually kills or injures fish or wildlife. This can include the destruction/modification of habitat that significantly impairs breeding, spawning, migrating, feeding, or sheltering which ultimately results in death of an animal.

Violating the ESA may result in civil penalties up to \$25,000 or criminal penalties up to \$50,000 plus imprisonment and/or seizure of vessel and other personal property.



To report potential  
ESA or MMPA  
violations, contact  
NOAA's Office of Law  
Enforcement:  
800-853-1964



Art S. Friedlaender

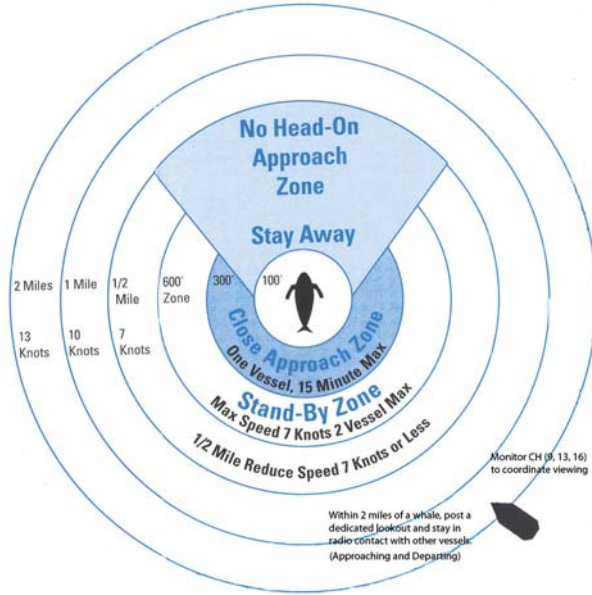
## MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) prohibits the "take" of any marine mammal (whale, dolphin, seal, sea lion, manatee, polar bear, or sea otter) in U.S. waters. **Take** is defined as "to harass, hunt, capture, kill, or feed any marine mammal." **Harassment** includes any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure or disturb a marine mammal by interrupting/changing behavioral patterns such as migration, breathing, nursing, and feeding.

Violating the MMPA may result in civil penalties of up to \$10,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$10,000 or criminal penalties of up to \$20,000 plus imprisonment and/or seizure of vessel and other personal property.

## MINIMUM APPROACH DISTANCES FOR MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES

- Sea turtles: **50 yards (150 ft)**
- Dolphins, porpoises, & seals: **50 yards (150 ft)**
- North Atlantic right whales: **\*500 yards (1500 ft)\***
- Other large whales: **See diagram below for Northeast whale watching guidelines.**



**\* Federal & state regulations prohibit approaching a North Atlantic right whale within a 500 yard buffer zone.\***



NOAA

To request more information on protected species approach limits in the Northeast, call 978-281-9300 x 6505.

## HOW CAN FISHING LINE AFFECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES?

- MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES CAN BECOME ENTANGLED IN FISHING LINE.
- Sea turtles & some marine mammals may try to eat baited hooks which may result in serious injuries.
- Marine mammals & sea turtles may be attracted to bait in trap/pot gear and can be caught in the traps or associated lines.
- Getting line wrapped around a flipper of a marine mammal or sea turtle can result in loss of the flipper, or death from infection &/or weakened health state.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HOOK OR ENTANGLE A SEA TURTLE?

**FOR ALL INTERACTIONS:** contact your local stranding network organization (see back panel) or call the U.S.C.G. via VHF Channel 16.



VA Aquarium Stranding Response Program

### For Hooked Turtles:

- **DO NOT attempt to remove the hook unless the turtle is ONLY lightly hooked and the hook can be removed without inflicting further injury. If uncertain, DO NOT attempt to remove the hook.**
- Gently bring turtle close to you, use dip net or firmly hold front flippers and shell to safely lift the turtle out of the water. **DO NOT pull the fishing line in order to lift turtle out of the water- this will result in further injury.**
- If onshore, or close to land, do not release turtle.
- If offshore and hook is unable to be removed safely, cut the line close to the hook & remove any additional line that has become entangled around the turtle.
- If turtle is too far away or if the turtle is too large, cut the line as short as possible to release turtle.
- To release the turtle, disengage boat engine and release turtle on the side furthest from the engine.

### For Entangled Turtles:

- Call your local stranding network organization, or U.S.C.G via CH-16, for guidance and information from trained disentanglement responders.

**TURTLES WITH SERIOUS CUTS OR INGESTED/DEEPLY EMBEDDED HOOKS NEED VETERINARY CARE. KEEP THE TURTLE IN THE SHADE AND DO NOT TRANSPORT. IMMEDIATELY CALL YOUR LOCAL STRANDING NETWORK ORGANIZATION.**

## MORE TIPS TO HELP YOU PROTECT MARINE MAMMALS & SEA TURTLES

- ALWAYS keep your distance from marine mammals & sea turtles.
- NEVER abandon fishing gear.
- Dispose of trash and fishing gear properly.
- **Throwing plastic into the ocean is illegal.**
- Recycle your monofilament line.
- DO NOT chum or throw fish overboard when marine mammals or sea turtles are near.
- Watch your bait/lines at all times; if you can see marine mammals or sea turtles close to your gear, or if they approach your gear, remove the gear from the water.
- **It is illegal to tamper with fishing gear.** NEVER tie -off to fixed gear (buoys or high flyers) since commercial gear is designed with reduced breaking strength to reduce potential large whale entanglements.
- DO NOT wet store your trap/pot gear.
- ALWAYS retrieve your mooring system (anchor and ball) before returning to port.



Whale Center of New England/Stellwagen Bank NMS



Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies

- NEVER cast your line, set your gear near, or troll your gear over marine mammals or sea turtles
- DO NOT use floating buoy line at the surface.
- Maintain knot-free buoy lines
- DO NOT use balloons while fishing; use reusable floats.
- NEVER entrap, encircle or chase marine mammals or sea turtles.
- When in the presence of a marine mammal, place engine in neutral and allow animal to pass.
- When in the presence of sea turtles, slow down and steer away from their direction of travel.
- Wearing polarized sunglasses can help you to better see marine mammals and sea turtles in the water.
- Approach areas of surface fish activity cautiously- marine mammals might be present.
- Abide by any commercial fishing regulations to protect marine mammals and sea turtles.

### REMINDER:

CHARTER VESSELS are considered commercial fishing vessels under the MMPA and therefore must report all incidental injuries or mortalities to marine mammals that occur during fishing activities to NOAA Fisheries Service.

For information on marine mammal & sea turtle regulations or to request injury/mortality reporting forms, call 978-281-9300 x 6505.