

Marine Mammal Viewing Program Research Needs & Priorities

**NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division**

The Marine Mammal Viewing Program seeks to ensure that all viewing activities are done responsibly and in accordance with NOAA Fisheries Service’s northeast viewing guidelines and regulations. To ensure this, NOAA Fisheries NERO has established several outreach and educational programs in order to educate the public and viewing industries. To monitor the effectiveness of these programs, and to make sure that these activities do not harass or cause behavioral disturbances to viewed marine mammals, there are several areas in which research is necessary. For more information on marine mammal viewing management in the Northeast Region, please visit: www.nero.noaa.gov/whalewatch or call 978-282-8462.

Research Topic	Research Objective	Research Need	Priority
<i>Behavioral Disturbance</i>	Evaluate, analyze and quantify behavioral disturbance of large whale species due to viewing activities- commercial and recreational vessels.	To evaluate current whale watching guidelines.	1
	Evaluate and monitor signs of stress and behavioral disturbance of hauled out seals viewing activities- beach viewing and vessel.	To evaluate current seal watching guidelines.	4
<i>Management</i>	Evaluate compliance of commercial and recreational vessels with whale & seal watching guidelines.	To evaluate current whale watching guidelines and educational programs.	2
	Comparative analysis of compliance rates with distance restrictions under varying management regimes for wildlife tourism- regulations, MPAs, guidelines, and outreach programs.	To evaluate current management of marine mammal viewing compared to other management options.	5
<i>Outreach</i>	Analysis of how current marine mammal outreach is perceived and interpreted by user groups. Identify gaps in marine mammal viewing outreach. Identify opportunities for expanding Agency messages.	To determine messaging effectiveness for current marine mammal viewing educational programs.	3