

Contact Information

To report stranded, injured, ship struck, dead or entangled marine mammals and sea turtles call NOAA Fisheries Service's Stranding & Disentanglement Hotline: **1-866-755-NOAA(6622)** or the closest stranding network hotline listed below.

Stranding & Disentanglement Network Reporting Hotlines

MAINE

Maine Strandings Collaborative Marine Animal Reporting Hotline
800-532-9551

NEW HAMPSHIRE & MASSACHUSETTS

New England Aquarium (strandings) 617-973-5247
Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (whale & sea turtle entanglements only) 800-900-3622

MASSACHUSETTS

North Shore

Whale Center of New England (marine mammals) 978-281-6351

Cape Cod

International Fund for Animal Welfare (marine mammals)
508-743-9548

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

MD Department of Natural Resources Stranding Program (dead animals only) 800-628-9944
National Aquarium in Baltimore, Marine Animal Rescue (live animals only) 410-373-0083

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 Fishermen & Boaters from Maine Through Virginia



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 eating other inappropriate foods.
- Feeding can result in ingestion of foreign objects and debris, such as plastics or hooks.



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, or attempt to engage in any such activity." **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 the NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement: **800-853-1964**

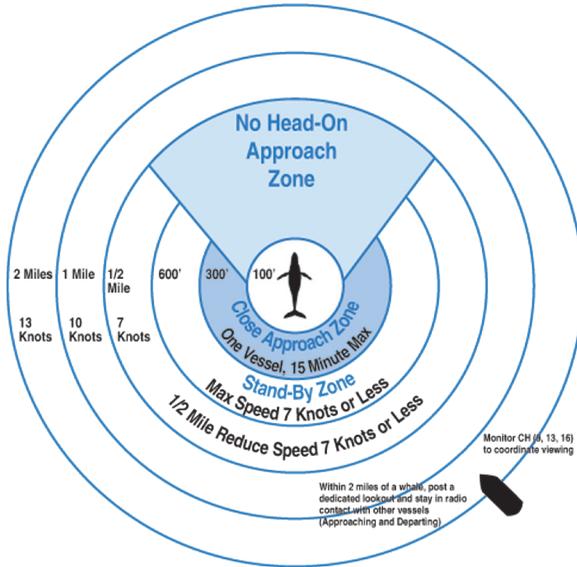


MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT

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 that 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 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 feet)**
- Dolphins, porpoises, & seals: **50 yards (150 feet)**
- North Atlantic right whales: ***500 yards (1500 feet)***
- Other large whales: No intentional approach within 100 feet. **For additional whale watching guidelines see diagram below or visit www.nero.noaa.gov/whalewatch.**



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



To request more information on protected species approach limits in the northeast, call the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office: 978-281-9328

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. They also 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 and/or weakened health state; therefore, special care must be taken if an entangled or hooked animal is found.



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

FOR ALL INTERACTIONS:

Call NOAA Fisheries Service's Stranding & Disentanglement Hotline, stranding network organization (see back panel), or U.S.C.G. on VHF Channel 16. Do not attempt the following disentanglement procedures unless directed by NOAA or the stranding network.

For Hooked Turtle:

- 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 the turtle close to you, use a 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 the 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 the turtle is too far away or if the turtle is too large, cut the line as short as possible to release the turtle.
- To release the turtle, disengage boat engine and release turtle on the side furthest from the engine.

For Entangled Turtle:

Call NOAA Fisheries Service's Stranding & Disentanglement Hotline, local stranding network organization, or U.S.C.G. on VHF Channel 16, for guidance and information from trained disentanglement responders. See back panel for contact information.



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 and 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.



Plastic debris pose an entanglement and ingestion threat. Photo: NOAA



- 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 marine mammals, 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 the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Office: 978-281-9328.

