



Pacific Islands Regional Office

Fishery Bulletin

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Wild Dolphin Conservation Program Expands in Hawaii Tour Operator on Oahu Earns Dolphin SMART Recognition

NOAA and its partners announce that Oahu tour business, Hoku Naia, operated by Star of Honolulu Cruises, has earned Dolphin SMART recognition in Hawaii. Dolphin SMART is a program that awards annual recognition to tour operators who responsibly view wild dolphins and educate their patrons on dolphin conservation. Hoku Naia joins Ocean Joy Cruises, Hawaii Nautical and their subsidiary Port Waikiki Cruises on Oahu, and Holoholo Charters on Kauai as Hawaii's newest Dolphin SMART operator. Dolphin SMART originated in Key West, FL, in 2007 and expanded to Alabama and the Southwest coast of Florida before launching in Hawaii last September.

"We are so pleased to have Hoku Naia as a part of Dolphin SMART," said Laura McCue, NOAA Dolphin SMART regional coordinator. "Dolphin SMART tour operators are committed to conserving the health of local dolphin populations, and visitors who book with a Dolphin SMART operator can feel confident that they are participating in responsible tourism.

NOAA encourages visitors to Hawaii to book with a Dolphin SMART operator. Vessels of participating operators carry a Dolphin SMART flag and decal with current calendar year. A list of Dolphin SMART operators is available online at www.dolphinSMART.org.

Viewing dolphins from a responsible distance is a cornerstone of the Dolphin SMART program. Close viewing of wild dolphins may disrupt important natural behaviors such as resting, feeding, and nursing and result in negative impacts to the health of dolphin groups and their young.

The Dolphin SMART program was launched in 2007 by NOAA's Fisheries Service and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), and Dolphin Ecology Project. The "SMART" acronym is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:

- **S**tay at least 50 yards from dolphins,
- **M**ove away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance,
- **A**lways put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near,
- **R**efrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins,
- **T**each others to be Dolphin SMART.

Local businesses and organizations are also showing their solidarity for wild dolphin conservation by becoming *Proud Supporters* of Dolphin SMART. Current organizations that are Proud Supporters of Dolphin SMART in Hawaii include Marriott Ko Olina Beach Club, Hawaii Nautical Marine Life Foundation, the Oahu chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, the Cetacean Society International, and two organizations: Adopt A Beach Hawaii and Save The Sea Turtles International. Dolphin SMART *Proud Supporters* help raise public awareness about the program and educate the public on why it is important to responsibly view wild dolphins.

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On the web:

Dolphin SMART: www.dolphinmart.org

NOAA Fisheries Service: www.fpir.noaa.gov and www.nmfs.noaa.gov

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society: www.wdcs-na.org

Dolphin Ecology Project: <http://www.dolphinecology.org/mission/index.html>