



Proud Supporter Checklist

Viewing wild dolphins in their natural habitat can be a thrilling experience. However, we can disturb dolphins' natural behaviors, such as migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, and sheltering by approaching wild dolphins too closely in vessels; moving vessels too quickly, or making too much noise. The Dolphin SMART program is a voluntary education program that encourages responsible advertising and viewing of wild dolphins; thereby, minimizing the risk of disrupting their natural behaviors. You are a steward for wild dolphin conservation by being a *Proud Supporter* of Dolphin SMART!

How do I Know if My Business/Company is Eligible to be a Proud Supporter of Dolphin SMART?

Proud Supporters can be any company or organization that promotes wild dolphin conservation but is not eligible to participate in the Dolphin SMART program as an operator (i.e. commercial businesses that solely or opportunistically view wild dolphins). Examples of potential *Proud Supporters* include concierge, travel agents, welcome centers, marinas, fishing piers, and non-motorized rental crafts/ vessels (i.e., kayaks, paddle boards).

The following checklist is to assist companies and organizations interested in becoming *Proud Supporters* of Dolphin SMART. If you feel your company or organization agrees with the following statements, and would like to be a *Proud Supporter* of the Dolphin SMART program, please email this checklist to your local Dolphin SMART coordinator (contact@dolphinSMART.org) to obtain a *Proud Supporter* package with additional information on how you can help promote wild dolphin conservation.

1. Support the Mission and Purpose of the Dolphin SMART Program

The mission of Dolphin SMART is to promote responsible stewardship of wild dolphins in coastal waterways. The Dolphin SMART program purposes:

- ◆ Minimize the potential of wild dolphin harassment caused by commercial viewing activities.
- ◆ Reduce expectations of close interaction with wild dolphins in a manner that may cause harassment.
- ◆ Eliminate advertising that creates expectations of engaging in activities that may cause harassment.
- ◆ Promote stewardship of local coastal waterways.

2. Understand What It Means to be Dolphin SMART

Dolphin SMART operators follow program criteria, including legal requirements, policies, and guidelines, as well as additional best viewing and advertising practices to prevent harassment of wild dolphins. Operators participate in an initial training workshop and yearly online refresher training to ensure voluntary adherence to the program criteria and help determine the program's effectiveness. Dolphin SMART operators offer an enhanced tour experience by providing customers:

- ◆ Detailed knowledge about the laws protecting wild dolphins.
- ◆ Information on how to responsibly view wild dolphins and recognize signs of harassment.
- ◆ Fun and informative outreach materials.
- ◆ Details about local dolphin populations and research.
- ◆ Up-to-date knowledge about wild dolphin conservation.

S: Stay back 50 yards from dolphins

M: Move away cautiously if dolphins show signs of disturbance

A: Always put your engine in neutral when dolphins are near

R: Refrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins

T: Teach others to be Dolphin SMART

3. Promote Established Policies, Guidelines, and Recommendations to Prevent Harassment including:

a. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) policy statement on harassment activities:

“Interacting with wild marine mammals should not be attempted, and viewing marine mammals must be conducted in a manner that does not harass the animals. NMFS cannot support, condone, approve or authorize activities that involve closely approaching, interacting or attempting to interact with whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals or sea lions in the wild. This includes attempting to swim with, pet, touch, or elicit a reaction from the animals.”

- b. Promote NMFS Southeast Regional Office's Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines:
 - ◆ Remain a respectful distance from marine mammals and sea turtles. The minimum recommended distances are:
 - i. dolphins, porpoises, seals = 50 yds
 - ii. whales = 100 yds
 - ◆ Limit time spent observing marine mammals to 30 minutes per group of dolphins.
 - ◆ Marine mammals should not be encircled or trapped between watercraft, or watercraft and shore.
 - ◆ If approached by a marine mammal, put the watercraft's engine in neutral and allow the animal to pass. Any vessel movement should be from the rear of the animal.
 - ◆ Never feed or attempt to feed marine mammals.
- c. Avoid making loud or sudden noises near dolphins.
- d. Approach and depart dolphin(s) at a slow "no wake" speed.
- e. Do not operate or maneuver vessel in a manner that may intentionally encourage or force dolphins to change their current behaviors. Specifically, do not direct vessel or accelerate toward dolphin(s) with the intent of creating a pressure wake causing them to bow or wake-ride.
- f. Limit the number of vessels within 50 yards of each group of dolphins to one, with a second vessel waiting in the distance until the first departs. The maximum number of vessels within 50 yards of a group of dolphins at any time should be no more than two and only when vessels are unable to locate other groups of dolphins.
- g. Participate in marine debris and beach clean-ups, recycling, and vessel wastewater pump-out.

4. **Engage in Responsible Advertising**

Engage in responsible advertising that promotes responsible wildlife viewing.

Follow NMFS' "Recommendations for Marine Mammal Watching Advertisements":

- ◆ Do not depict people feeding or attempting to feed wild marine mammals, which includes people reaching out to dolphins.
- ◆ Do not depict people touching, pursuing, chasing, attempting to swim with, or closely interacting with wild marine mammals.
- ◆ Do not depict people in close proximity to wild marine mammals.
- ◆ Do not depict begging dolphins in advertisements that promote viewing wild dolphins. Typical dolphin begging behavior generally entails an animal that approaches people in a begging pose, with its head fully out of the water.
- ◆ Do not depict dolphins engaging in wake or bow riding behaviors; particularly do not use photos of dolphins leaping in a wake behind a vessel. Additionally, avoid wording that advertises intentional wake or bow riding of dolphins as part of the viewing experience.
- ◆ Do not depict dolphins photographed or videoed under the water or otherwise imply photographer was in the water.
- ◆ Do not use wording that conveys physical or intentional contact with a wild dolphin while viewing, such as, but not limited to, "interaction," "swim-with," or "snorkel-with." Additionally, avoid using other words or phrases that may raise the public's expectation to closely interact with dolphins in wild. Some examples of words that may suggest close interactions include but are not limited to, "encounter" and "communicate."

5. **Promote the Dolphin SMART Program by encouraging the public to book Dolphin SMART**

- a. Promote the Dolphin SMART program by including the Dolphin SMART logo and prepared *Proud Supporter* statement on your business website, promotions, and advertisements, where feasible. Include a link from your business website, if applicable, to the Dolphin SMART program website.
- b. Display *Proud Supporter* posters in highly visible locations in and around your business, such as store front windows, booths, and displays.
- c. Answer the public's questions about the Dolphin SMART program and the importance and value of booking Dolphin SMART.
- d. Encourage the public to look for current year Dolphin SMART flags and decals before booking dolphin viewing tours.
- e. Provide customers with Dolphin SMART brochures and other outreach materials that promote the program objectives. *Proud Supporters* are supplied with additional outreach materials at no charge and by request.

**For more information about the *Proud Supporter* program
visit www.dolphinSMART.org or email contact@dolphinSMART.org.**