

Whale SENSE Alaska Pre-Season Checklist



Prior to Whale SENSE program enrollment or renewal, each company should:

POINT OF CONTACT

Determine person who will act as the company's Whale SENSE Alaska Point of Contact and Alternate Point of Contact.

STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

Design your company's Whale SENSE Stewardship Project and identify:

- Which of NOAA's Ocean Literacy Principles apply to your project (http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/literacy/ocean_literacy.pdf)
- The project's objectives/goals, how the project will be implemented & monitored.
- What the take home message for passengers will be and how you know if your message is being heard.

STAFF LIST

Compose a list of operators and naturalists that you expect to employ during the whale watching season. Lists can be updated during the season as new employees are hired. This list will help you keep track of staff that have received training.

ADVERTISING

Engage in responsible advertising that does not depict illegal or irresponsible behavior & informs viewers of responsible viewing practices, and NOAA Fisheries Alaska Humpback Whale Approach Regulations, and whale watching guidelines.

POST ALASKA HUMPBACK WHALE APPROACH REGULATIONS

Display NOAA Fisheries Alaska Humpback Whale Approach Regulations onboard vessel (may use poster, brochures, or placard).

After company is enrolled in the Whale SENSE Alaska Program:

Post Whale SENSE Alaska placards on each vessel and in each ticket booth.

Post Whale SENSE Alaska logo to company websites.

Link company website to Whale SENSE Alaska website.

Make sure all incoming staff receive Whale SENSE Alaska training & complete training evaluation.

When the whale watching season begins, make sure all staff adhere to the program criteria outlined in the Whale SENSE Alaska Participation Checklist.

www.whalesense.org

Alaska Humpback Whale Viewing Guidelines

Special Considerations for Mother Calf Pairs & Bubble-netters

- Be extra vigilant
- Strive to communicate intentions with many vessels in a concentrated area
- Pay attention to whales' direction of movement
- No head-on approach or positioning in path of whales
- Be especially sensitive to limit time spent with mom-calf pairs

DO YOUR BEST TO FOLLOW THE 30 MIN. VIEWING LIMIT IN THESE SITUATIONS

When in transit, stay as far as practicable from whales.
When viewing whales, start slowing speed at 1 mile.

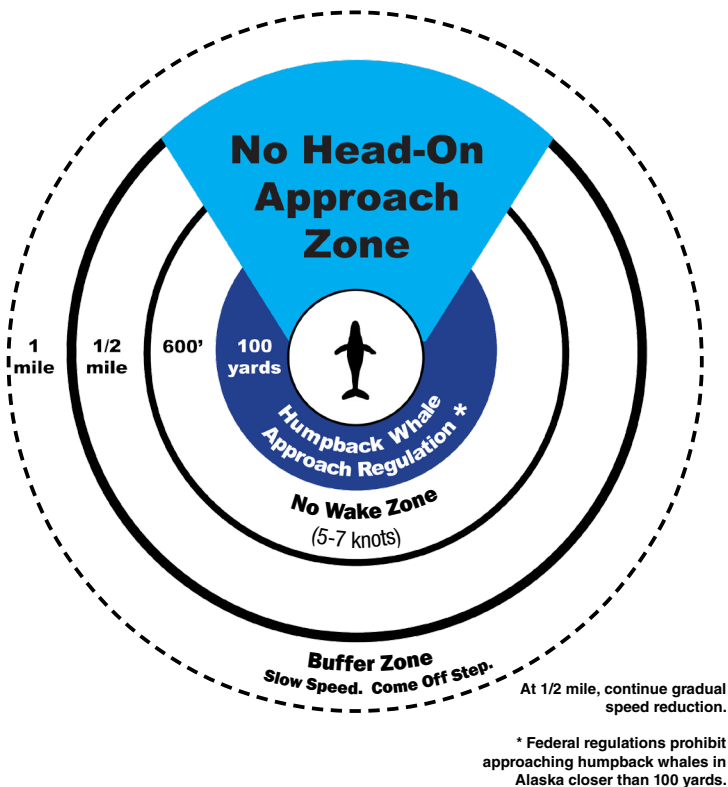
Alaska Humpback Whale Approach Regulations

Federal regulations require that you:

- Not approach within 100 yards of a humpback whale.
- Not place your vessel in the path of oncoming humpback whales causing them to surface within 100 yards of your vessel
- Operate your vessel at a slow, safe speed when near a humpback whale.

Additional Viewing Guidelines

- Use reduced vessel speed as you approach and depart whales.
- Limit viewing time around any individual or group to 30 minutes. Be aware of the amount of vessel pressure on the animals.
- Minimize noise. Be aware of potential cumulative acoustic impacts to whales from engine noise all season long.
- Minimize use of reverse. Use of propellers in reverse creates a different level and type of noise which is more disruptive to whales.
- Avoid sudden changes in speed & direction.
- If whale approaches vessel within 100 yards, put engines in neutral & do not re-engage propulsion until whales are observed clear of harm's way from your vessel.
- Disperse vessel presence among groups of whales.
- Do not attempt head-on approaches.
- Parallel course of whale.
- Do not separate whales within a group.
- Communicate locations and coordinate viewing time with other vessels.
- Consider installing AIS or other tracking system for operator coordination to disperse vessels among limited whales.



Whale SENSE Alaska Coordinator

Aleria Jensen, NOAA Fisheries.

Phone: 907-586-7248.

Email: aleria.jensen@noaa.gov