



Participation Checklist

- 1. Conduct Educational Briefing Onboard Vessel**

Prior to viewing whales, conduct an educational onboard briefing about the Whale SENSE program. The briefing should include what the program is, why it is important, why the company has chosen to participate, the criteria participants agree to follow, as well as where additional information can be obtained. Participants are provided with a “script” to guide the introduction to the program, but participants are responsible for providing in-depth explanations regarding the program. For those companies operating near Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary: prior to entering the Sanctuary, participants must also give a description of the Sanctuary’s significance.
- 2. Provide SENSE and Whale Watching Outreach Materials to Customers.**

Participants are supplied with outreach materials at no charge, as they are developed. Participants must provide passengers with Whale SENSE brochures at the end of the tour (or make brochure available at their ticket booths). Participants must also provide additional outreach materials upon request for passengers following the tour (i.e. viewing guideline brochures, fact sheets, etc.)
- 3. Comply with Applicable Laws and report right whale sightings or whale problems (strandings, injuries, entanglements, or violations)**

Participants agree to comply with all applicable resource protection regulations (e.g. Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Federal & State North Atlantic right whale approach &/or speed protection regulations). Participants are also asked to report any injured, ship struck, stranded, or entangled animals to 1-866-755-NOAA(6622) or USCG; any right whale sightings to the Right Whale Sightings hotline 978-585-8473 (pager); and federal violations to the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement hotline: 1-800-853-1964.
- 4. Follow Established Policies, Guidelines, and Recommendations to Prevent Harassment**
 - Participants agree to follow the 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.”
 - Participants agree to follow NMFS Northeast Regional Office’s Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines as listed below to the best of their operational ability:
 - ✓ Do not approach marine mammals within the minimum recommended or regulated* distances:
 - Whales (other than North Atlantic right whales) = 33 yards (100 feet)
 - North Atlantic right whales = 500 yards (1500 feet)*
 - Dolphins, porpoises, and seals = 50 yards (150 feet)
 - ✓ Post a dedicated lookout to assist vessel operator in monitoring the location of all marine mammals.
 - ✓ Avoid sudden changes in speed and direction.
 - ✓ If more than one vessel is within 600ft, a vessel within 300ft should limit its time to 15 minutes in close approach to whales.
 - ✓ Approach whales using caution and safe speeds.
 - ✓ Parallel whale’s direction and do not cut off whale’s path.
 - ✓ Do not approach whales head on.
 - ✓ Coordinate viewing with other vessels.
 - ✓ Take into account obstacles. Vessels in close approach must stay to the side or behind the whales so they do not box in the whales or cut off their paths.
 - ✓ If approached by a marine mammal within 100ft put the vessel’s engine in neutral and do not re-engage until whale is observed clear of harm’s way from the vessel.
 - ✓ Cease whale watching and begin return to port 15 minutes before sunset.

- ✓ Never feed or attempt to feed marine mammals.
- ✓ Avoid engaging in viewing activities or associated activities that have the potential to cause disturbance to whales, such as approaching the animal within 100 feet, cutting off the animal's path, etc.
- ✓ Avoid negligent vessel operations that separate mothers and calves or other animals traveling together.
- ✓ Do not transit through bubble clouds or groups of feeding whales.
- ✓ Slowly depart area if whale displays signs of disturbance as vessel approaches, such as repeated avoidance behavior, or erratic changes in speed or direction.
- ✓ Reference NOAA's Northeast whale watching guidelines for more details.
- If a vessel suspects a right whale is entangled, the vessel may request special permission from NOAA to approach the animal carefully within the 500 yard restricted zone to further investigate. The vessel must call NOAA's Stranding & Disentanglement Hotline 1-866-755-NOAA(6622) and speak with a NOAA representative to obtain a temporary authorization number. Approaching a North Atlantic right whale within 500 yards should not be attempted before receiving the temporary authorization number.

5. *Voluntarily Promote Ocean Stewardship through an Ocean Stewardship Project.*

Participants must identify an "ocean stewardship" project that they have created or participate in that shows a commitment to ocean or marine mammal conservation. The project must have a conservation benefit and be communicated to passengers during the whale watching excursion. Examples of stewardship project include (though are not limited to):

- Participation in marine debris or beach cleanups, recycling, or vessel waste water pump-out.
- Participation in humpback cataloguing program.
- Establishment of internship program.
- Participation in data collection that contributes to a better understanding of marine mammal distribution.

6. *Participate in Training*

- Participate in training provided by the program partners to a minimum knowledge standard on whale watching etiquette, behavior, research and natural history.
- Ensure all operators and naturalists are trained according to program standards. Whale SENSE will provide participants with necessary materials to ensure that employees are trained according to the program standards.
- After receiving the training, all naturalists must register on the Naturalist Email List Serv: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Whale_Naturalists in order for all Whale SENSE naturalists to share ideas, information, and training opportunities.

7. *Engage in Responsible Advertising*

(Note: advertising includes direct or indirect print advertisements that mention the business's name or those linked to the business, search engine listings, and any posted photos. These also include, but are not limited to, pitch sheets, print, web, visual, and radio.)

- Engage in responsible advertising that promotes responsible viewing practices
- Follow NMFS "Recommendations for Marine Mammal Watching Advertisements" (contained in participant handbook):
 - Do not depict people touching, pursuing, chasing, attempting to swim with, or closely interacting with marine mammals. Do not use wording that implies these events will occur.
 - Caption "close approach" pictures with caption referring to responsible whale watching behavior and Northeast Regional whale watching guidelines (to be provided by Whale SENSE partners).
 - Do not show close approach pictures where vessel is in transit (i.e. there is a wake)
- Advertise a prepared statement about responsible whale watching or the Northeast whale watching guidelines, which will be included in all advertisements showing vessels & whales in the same picture or that use the Whale SENSE logo.

8. *Display current year Whale SENSE decal on vessel, ticket booth, websites, and advertisements (when possible).*