



Whale SENSE Program Informational Packet

Is your company committed to responsible wildlife viewing practices, education, and conservation? This packet to learn about the Whale SENSE program, what it means to be a participant, enrollment requirements, and how to get started!

About the Whale SENSE Program

The Whale SENSE program promotes responsible stewardship of whales by recognizing commercial whale watching companies that engage in best viewing practices to minimize impacts on wildlife, onboard education and conservation efforts.

This program is offered in the U.S. Atlantic and Alaska regions, is voluntary, and is offered to participating companies at no charge.

Whale SENSE is sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation. In the Atlantic region, the program is also sponsored by NOAA's Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and the New Bedford Whaling Museum.



NOAA
FISHERIES



STELLWAGEN BANK
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



new bedford
whaling museum



Audubon Society
of Rhode Island

SENSE-ible Whale Watches:

- S** Stick to the whale watching guidelines
- E** Educate passengers and crew
- N** Notify officials of whales in distress
- S** Set an example for other boaters
- E** Encourage ocean stewardship



Whale SENSE Atlantic Enrollment Requirements



To be considered a Whale SENSE participant, companies must agree to adhere to certain standards each whale watching season. In return, companies are provided with a current year Whale SENSE logo for use in their advertisements, and are recognized as members of the Whale SENSE program.

Enrollment for the Atlantic program typically opens for companies Maine - Delaware in February and for Virginia in November. Interested companies can reach out any time of year for more information to the regional Whale SENSE coordinator.

Prior to program enrollment:



Determine a Point of Contact (POC): this person will be responsible for corresponding with Whale SENSE Program partners before, during, and after enrollment or renewal. We suggest also having an alternate POC.



Compose a List of Operators and Naturalists: staff 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 to keep track of staff that have received training.



Identify a Stewardship Project that meets NOAA's Ocean Literacy Standards (https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/literacy/ocean_literacy.pdf)



Ensure Advertising Follows Responsible Viewing Practices by checking that all brochures or online advertisements for whale watching does not depict illegal behavior & informs viewers of responsible viewing practices, and NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region whale watching guidelines

Ready to enroll?

- Scan the QR code to go directly to enrollment form on Jotform
- Email Whale SENSE program staff at whalesenseww@gmail.com for the form to be directly sent to you. Please also reach out if you have any additional questions!



Whale SENSE Atlantic Participation Criteria Checklist



Companies are considered an active participant in the Whale SENSE Atlantic program, by annually enrolling in the program and meeting the following criteria:

COMPLETE ANNUAL TRAINING

All incoming staff complete Whale SENSE training within a month of starting work

ADHERE TO PROGRAM CRITERIA

A Whale SENSE briefing has been adopted at the beginning of each whale watching tour to educate passengers about whale protection laws and guidelines

The company POC ensures that all staff understand how to report sightings of entangled, ship struck, dead, or stranded marine mammals and ALL North Atlantic right whale sightings to the Greater Atlantic Marine Mammal Stranding & Disentanglement Hotline: (866) 755-6622. Companies have also agreed to have their vessels stand-by entangled animals when possible.

IDENTIFY A STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

An ocean stewardship project is selected that meets NOAA's Ocean Literacy Standards (https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/literacy/ocean_literacy.pdf)

The company POC determines a plan for sharing the project with passengers and a plan for providing updates and results of the project to Whale SENSE staff.

ENSURE ADVERTISING FOLLOWS RESPONSIBLE VIEWING PRACTICES

The company POC ensures that all brochures or online advertisements for whale watching does not depict illegal behavior & informs viewers of responsible viewing practices and [NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region whale watching guidelines](#)

POST WHALE SENSE MATERIALS

Current year Whale SENSE Atlantic placard or decal is displayed on-board all vessels

Current year Whale SENSE Atlantic logo is posted to company websites and linked to Whale SENSE website

NOAA Whale SENSE Approach Guidelines are posted on-board each vessel

(optional) Whale SENSE Passenger Survey sign and Creed are posted onboard vessels



Participation in the Whale SENSE Atlantic Program

Companies who annually enroll and complete program requirements:

- ★ Are recognized as a SENSE-ible company on the Whale SENSE website
- ★ Receive annual training for operators and captains, naturalists, and other interested staff.
 - Topics include how to minimize the potential harassment of whales that may result from commercial viewing activities and whale protection and conservation measures, including laws, regulations, and guidelines applicable to responsible whale watching.
- ★ Are provided materials to post on their vessel and provide to passengers.
- ★ Are given the opportunity to regularly connect with a program staff member, as well as other companies in the program.
- ★ May use the Whale SENSE logo in their advertisements
- ★ Agree to be evaluated to ensure all requirements are being met.

