

# ALLIANCE OF MARINE MAMMAL PARKS AND AQUARIUMS

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*An international organization dedicated to conservation through public display, education, and research*

**TESTIMONY  
of  
Rae Stone, D.V.M.  
Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums**

**Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife**

**April 27, 2010**

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The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums welcomes the opportunity to discuss the breadth and depth of the education/conservation programs offered by our accredited members and share with you the important and undeniably positive role that marine parks, zoos and aquariums play in connecting people and animals today.

We respectfully ask that this letter be entered into the record for the subcommittee oversight hearing April 27 titled "Marine Mammals in Captivity: What Constitutes Meaningful Public Education."

My name is Dr. Rae Stone. I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in animal husbandry and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree at the University of Missouri's School of Veterinary Medicine in 1980. I pioneered the application of diagnostic ultrasound in dolphins and other marine mammals in human care and in the wild and am a respected international authority in the area of marine mammal ultrasonography. I am a past president of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums.

I co-founded Dolphin Quest, a marine education visitor attraction offering face-to-face dolphin encounters to Hawaii visitors, schoolchildren and residents. Dolphin Quest is a recognized leader in informal science education, preventive marine mammal medicine, dolphin reproduction, and promoting environmental stewardship.

Dolphin Quest principals are committed to the advancement of our scientific understanding of marine mammals in public display and the wild with over 20 publications in the peer reviewed literature and more than 75 scientific conference proceeding publications. I am a member of the International Association of Aquatic Animal Medicine, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine, the International Marine Animal Trainers Association, the Piedmont Environmental Council and the Middleburg Humane Foundation. I participated on behalf of the International Association of Aquatic Animal Medicine on the USDA's negotiated rule-making panel to revise the care and maintenance standards for marine mammals.

The Alliance is an international association of 55 marine life parks, aquariums, zoos, research facilities, and professional organizations dedicated to the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to their conservation in the wild through public education, scientific study, and wildlife presentations. Collectively, the Alliance and its membership represent the greatest body of experience and knowledge about marine mammal husbandry. We are the only international organization representing zoological parks and aquariums dedicated to whales and dolphins and other marine mammals.

More than 40 million people visit Alliance zoos and aquariums each year. For them, zoos and aquariums are a cherished and traditional place for family recreation, a center for discovery, a resource for wildlife education and motivators for environmental stewardship.

More than two million children participate in specially designed school programs, summer camps, and other on-site activities at Alliance facilities. Over 800,000 individuals, mostly children, learn about marine mammals from off-site, outreach programs developed for teachers, school children, and community groups. Alliance members also reach over 150 million people yearly with educational information through computer learning programs, web sites, publications, satellite television, and other such vehicles.

Our guests are partners in the important missions of zoological parks and aquariums. By choosing to visit Alliance accredited facilities, they make it possible to educate the public about the need to protect marine mammals in the wild as well as their ocean environments, to fund and support research that is only possible because of the animals for which we care, and to extend a helping hand to thousands of marine mammals that strand on U.S. beaches every year.

Reports by this subcommittee following debate on the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 2004 and 2005 compliment the missions of zoos, aquariums and marine parks as central to the conservation of marine mammals. The language reads:

"The Committee commends the public display community for its role in the conservation and management of marine mammals. Activities sponsored by public display facilities—research, educational programs, and

presentations, animal husbandry, breeding, and rescue and rehabilitation—are important aspects to the conservation of marine mammals. The rescue and rehabilitation programs run by these facilities are critical to the survival of stranded animals and for many years participating institutions ran these programs using their own funds. In addition, these facilities play an invaluable role for the general public. These public display facilities are the only place for many Americans to view marine mammals and learn about the conservation needs of these animals. The Committee believes the interactions provided at these facilities generate the general public's good will toward marine mammals and develops their support for conservation and management measures for these and many other ocean creatures.”

### About the Alliance

The first meeting of what would become the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums took place 25 years ago. Since that time, Alliance members have worked tirelessly to deserve their reputation as the most progressive and responsible institutions caring for marine mammals. Only facilities that meet our detailed and thorough Standards and Guidelines are welcomed as accredited members. Each member facility is inspected and re-accredited every five years and must meet any revised, enhanced standards.

Alliance member parks, aquariums and zoos have presented well over 700,000 shows featuring killer whales, dolphins, sea lions, seals, and other marine mammals in the professional association's 25 year history. Additionally, more than four million children and adults have participated in the various interactive programs offered by our members with a variety of marine mammals. Our data demonstrate that interactive programs offered by our members to the public have a safety record that exceeds 99.9%

While our public enjoys the fun and excitement of our presentations, they are generally unaware of the hours spent by the dedicated professionals who work at Alliance member zoological parks and aquariums caring for the animals, training husbandry behaviors that keep them healthy, educating the public, undertaking research projects, or staying up 24 hours to literally hold up a dolphin that stranded itself on the beach because it is too sick to swim. These activities and expertise have resulted in notable accomplishments. The dolphins in our facilities live longer than dolphins in the oceans and almost 70 percent of the dolphins in our member institutions were born in a park or aquarium.

One has only to picture a world without marine mammal parks and aquariums to envision the consequences. Grammar and high schools don't teach about marine mammals; we do. Teachers generally don't develop marine mammal curriculum; our educators do. Without aquariums and parks, there would be no facilities and less expertise to care for stranded whales and dolphins. And, without the animals in our facilities, research that cannot be accomplished in the wild, but benefits wild marine mammals, would not be possible.

Marine park experiences inspire children and adults to care about these animals and their environments and to understand the need to help protect them — be it through support for legislation or changes in personal behavior. We have a profound impact on millions of guests annually.

### Inspiration through Education

Polls and studies confirm that seeing living, breathing animals in zoological parks and aquariums inspires children and adults to care about protecting marine mammals and their declining ocean environments. A 2005 Harris Interactive poll commissioned by the Alliance found that the public is nearly unanimous (95%) in its acclaim for the educational impact of marine life parks, zoos and aquariums.

Inspiring children and adults to care about marine mammals in the wild translates into changes in conservation-related behavior, according to a recent study by Dr. Lance Miller. Miller undertook the research while earning an advanced degree at the University of Southern Mississippi. The study confirms that guests viewing dolphin shows demonstrated an increase in conservation-related knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions immediately following their experience and, in a follow-up interview three months later, they reported that they were engaging in more conservation-related behavior than they did before their dolphin show experience. Guests also retained what they learned. According to these research

results, there is a significant relationship between recent conservation-related behavior and the number of dolphin shows attended by visitors, suggesting that the repetition of these types of educational experiences connecting people to wildlife may be important in sustaining involvement in conservation-related behavior.

Research by Dr. Diane Sweeney of Dolphin Quest, “Learning in Human-Dolphin Interactions at Zoological Facilities,” focused on what people learn through interacting with dolphins in zoological facilities. Her data show that human-dolphin interactions are powerful experiences for visitors, spectators, and trainers. Almost all participants learned in multiple categories, enjoyed themselves, and became more aware of and involved with stewardship. The research also indicates that guests’ views were reinforced by participating in these programs with other like-minded people, moving them toward stronger identities as environmentally caring and responsible individuals who take stewardship action. Both of these studies were conducted at accredited Alliance member facilities. Dr. Sweeney’s dissertation is attached.

The vast majority of American families now live in urban settings, their children increasingly withdrawn into an electronic world of computers, satellite media, and video games. We are losing touch with nature and the animal world. Zoos and aquariums are vital links to nature and wildlife, connecting people and animals and fostering conservation behavior never more important as our planet faces the environmental challenges of today.

Richard Louv, author of seven books and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network, has stimulated international conversation about the crucial connections between nature and healthy childhood development. With play limited in urban environments and controlled residential communities, and even on the school playground, Louv believes that zoological parks and aquariums offer children an important opportunity to both learn about animals and get back to nature. His latest book is *Last Child in the Woods*. In 2008, the National Audubon Society awarded Louv the Audubon Medal.

Our members’ presentations, exhibits, and education programs target timely, important conservation issues. The National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland, unveiled in 2009 a new interactive show, Our Ocean Planet, using its dolphins to teach visitors the important connection between human life and life in the oceans.

Vancouver Aquarium opened its new exhibit, Canada’s Arctic – in the Grip of Change, focusing on how climate change is affecting Canada’s Arctic region. The aquarium pioneered cutting-edge exhibit design featuring interactive multi-media displays to stimulate dialogue and understanding.

Shedd Aquarium in Chicago created two new programs for different age groups last year, using its unique animal collection to educate about the environment. Summer camps for children ages 5-14 investigate how climate change affects polar marine mammals cared for by the aquarium. The aquarium’s marine mammalogy undergraduate course explores the life cycles, habitats, and survival strategies of the animals.

Special needs programs are a significant focus of educators. Virginia Aquarium educators have developed a unique program on marine mammal strandings, with which the aquarium is very active, for presentation at the Virginia Beach Juvenile Detention Center. It is part of continuing education for troubled teens.

And, in 2009, Dolphin Research Center was the proud recipient of the Wright Langley Award, which recognized the facility for its past year’s efforts to educate the public about the need to preserve and enhance the marine environment and culture of the Florida Keys.

An overview of the varied and age-targeted education program offered by Alliance members follows:

### ***Preschool Programs***

Programs for children three to five provide an excellent opportunity for preschoolers to gain an appreciation and understanding of other living creatures. Programs emphasize learning through sight, touch, sound, and movement.

### ***Elementary School Programs***

Self-Guided Visit: Alliance member educators provide teachers with worksheets, activities, and educational information that can be used in the classroom before and after the visit.

Personal Group Tour: Teachers can schedule an educational, guided tour of facilities with staff instructors. Programs combine lectures, slide shows, video presentations, hands-on activities, and/or laboratory exercises with a visit to see the marine mammals.

Children and Parents: Families who want to spend quality time together in an educational environment can take advantage of workshops at some Alliance facilities with an education specialist.

Summer Camp: A very popular time for participation in Alliance member education programs is during the summer months. Field studies are supplemented with lectures including the use of stories, crafts, and activities.

### ***Middle and High School Programs***

More challenging curriculums on marine mammals and marine ecosystems are developed for middle and high school students emphasizing ecology, conservation, animal husbandry procedures, and natural behavior, supplemented by complete teachers' guides. Career opportunities are also discussed.

### ***College Offerings***

Most Alliance members offer college courses in cooperation with universities and colleges located near the facilities. The courses are often an adjunct to the school's biology department, focusing on current environmental issues involving the sea and its wildlife with an emphasis on conservation. Other college courses are designed for teacher education credits or recertification units.

### ***Teacher Training***

Elementary and secondary school teachers who are interested in incorporating new, exciting programs into their teaching plans have the opportunity to learn to teach curriculums developed by Alliance members, focusing on the environment and conservation. Courses reflect state frameworks and nationally recognized standards in science and mathematics. A number of courses are designed to help receive academic credits toward recertification.

### ***Outreach Programs and Other Unique Programs***

Internship programs for college and university students pair students with Alliance facility staff for a hands-on learning experience.

Special programs for girl scouts, boy scouts, Camp Fire, and 4H groups are offered, where the children can earn badges and patches upon completion of requirements.

Programs specially designed for gifted and talented students allow these children to investigate marine mammals and their ecosystems.

Classes have also been designed for the hearing impaired, and physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially challenged students. Blind children respond especially well to classes using learning techniques based on sound and touch.

### Entertainment Is Not a Dirty Word

Entertainment enables effective education, a critical point too often overlooked. In the Harris poll, public agreed (95%) it is essential to both promote environmental conservation and to present educational materials in an enjoyable and entertaining manner.

The National Science Teachers Association recognizes the strong educational role of zoos and aquariums and how informal learning experiences spark curiosity and engage interest in the sciences during the school years and throughout a lifetime. Many of the caring professionals who currently work for Alliance member facilities were inspired in their career choice by visiting a zoological park or aquarium.

While some of the media and animal rights extremists claim that the best way to learn about and appreciate the wonders of the animal kingdom is to watch a nature film, the public doesn't see it that way. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the Harris poll respondents agreed that they could learn about animals at marine life parks, aquariums and zoos in a way that can't be replicated by watching a film or television programs.

### Zoological Parks and Aquariums Support Government Education Requirements

Education is the core mission of Alliance member facilities. Therefore, we were very supportive of 1994 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act that require all zoological parks and aquariums exhibiting marine mammals to offer a program for education or conservation purposes that is based on professionally recognized standards of the public display community.

Accreditation and membership in the Alliance requires that member facilities meet our education standards. Five months after the MMPA was amended, the National Marine Fisheries Service published in the Federal Register the education standards of both the Alliance and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Alliance Education Committee created the organization's education standards more than 15 years ago. They are reviewed every five years. The standards recognize that Alliance members are the primary source of marine mammal educational programs for the public. And we take responsibility seriously.

Our standards require members to offer multiple levels of learning opportunities that include information about their animals, the ecosystem and environments, and marine wildlife conservation that is based upon the best current scientific knowledge. Examples of ways members educate the public are extensive. They include opportunities such as shows and presentations to formal education programs, interpretive graphics to narration at exhibits, teacher training to community outreach.

For example, the Virginia Aquarium educators offer four marine mammal programs for Virginia Beach teachers each summer – two for elementary and two for middle and high school. The 5-hour programs help teachers to build their content knowledge about marine mammals and to gain a better understanding of conservation issues.

Public display facilities employ and collaborate with many highly knowledgeable and experienced marine mammal experts, such as animal care specialists, veterinarians, research scientists, and trainers. These professionals are encouraged to serve as marine science resources and share their expertise with interested professional groups and the education community.

The standards urge educators to join professional organizations, attend professional educational conferences, and maintain a library of reference materials on animal species in their facility. Members must develop a written education plan consisting of a mission statement, goals, and an evaluation strategy.

### Research Is an Essential Component of Conservation

In the wild, marine mammals face increasingly harsh conditions that, for some, could threaten their survivability.

A journal article published in 2009 expressed concern about the effects of rising sea temperatures on whales and dolphins. More than 100 of Europe's leading marine scientists released a report during last year's international climate talks warning that the oceans absorption of carbon dioxide can deplete plankton and cause malnutrition in fish and marine mammals.

Alliance member research helps scientists understand the threats to marine mammals in the wild. Study results released by the Georgia Aquarium and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in 2009 underscore the negative effects on the health of wild dolphins as a result of escalating and complex environmental changes. The study confirmed extremely high levels of mercury and other pollutants in their bodies, emerging viral and fungal diseases, and tumors rarely seen in the animals.

The U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program has emphasized scientific research from its inception. It is the single largest contributor to the literature on marine mammals, having published over 800 studies. The research, conducted by both staff and visiting scientists, encompasses a broad spectrum of topics including hydrodynamics, sensory systems, anatomy and physiology, health care, behavior, reproduction, and environmental ecology.

### Field Studies

Alliance members have long been advocates and supporters of field studies designed to benefit marine mammals in the wild.

For over 35 years, the Sarasota Dolphin Research Program has conducted studies of the behavior, population biology, health, and ecological relationships of resident communities of bottlenose dolphins along the central west coast of Florida.

The long-term project has been supported by the Brookfield Zoo/Chicago Zoological Society since 1989. Research with this wild dolphin population also includes studies of environmental contaminants and human interactions, such as boat traffic and the feeding of wild dolphins. This important long-term study is supported by a variety of organizations including Dolphin Quest and the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore is the lead organization in Maryland's annual dolphin count—a project that not only helps scientists gather long-term data about dolphin populations, reproduction rates, and ocean health, but is an excellent educational opportunity to raise public awareness about ocean health issues.

Belugas in the St. Lawrence River have high levels of PCBs, pesticides, mercury, and other mutagenic compounds in their systems. Cooperative research by Shedd Aquarium and the University of Quebec on cancer in these beluga whales helped scientists understand the influence of environmental contaminants on the health of these animals.

Dolphin Quest researched the reflective qualities of nets used in gillnet fishing, which has a high dolphin by-catch, to determine the distance at which dolphins can detect the two types of gillnets currently used. Ocean Park Hong Kong and its Foundation have long supported conservation status studies and developed conservation options for species such as the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, Yangtze River dolphins, coastal small cetaceans, the river dolphins of the Indian Subcontinent and, recently, the dugongs of Southeast Asia and Southern China.

The first ecology and biology study of rough-toothed dolphins was funded by Dolphin Quest, with support from SeaWorld.

Criteria for Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund grants emphasizes support for scientific field studies that include education programs and can demonstrate a marked benefit to in-country participants, habitats, and species by working with local communities. An example is the study of the threatened Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in the waters of Mozambique, an effort that includes the creation of a long-term

community conservation plan. Since its establishment in 1995, the Disney fund has given over \$14 million in grants to projects in 110 countries. The SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund was conceived in 2003 and has already given \$6 million to more than 350 projects in 60 countries.

Vancouver Aquarium conducts population studies of transient killer whales off the coast of Vancouver. Tampereen Sarkanniemi in Finland has helped support research on killer whales in northern Norway for over 15 years, which has resulted in information about migration patterns and the animals' dependency on herring.

The \$100,000 Indianapolis Prize is the largest award given to an individual for extraordinary conservation efforts. It is a visible component of the internationally recognized conservation efforts being undertaken by the Indianapolis Zoo.

### Studies Using Marine Mammals in Aquarium Settings

Many research projects are only possible in our unique settings, and Alliance members make their animals available to qualified researchers for these critical studies.

A reproductive physiologist studies walrus reproduction at Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. Not much is known since the animals live in some of Earth's most remote areas. Six Flags' research could contribute to the species' future survival.

Brookfield Zoo sent sea lions to a research facility in California to "stand in" for Steller sea lions, which are endangered and not commonly exhibited in zoological parks and aquariums. The study focused on the energy requirements sea lions need to survive, especially the needs of pregnant females since they are the first to suffer if there is not enough to eat.

The nutritional stress experienced by Steller sea lions in areas of population decline has been studied at Mystic Aquarium. Researchers determined the animals' metabolic requirements for specific vitamins by relating known dietary intake to blood levels, measuring metabolic clearance rates using stable isotope tracers and vitamin analogs, and examining changes in vitamin status in relation to pregnancy, lactation, and development.

### Teaching Through Science

Science is fashioned into teaching opportunities at member facilities. The decline of the Northern fur seal population prompted long-term studies and scientists hope seal pups hold the key to the puzzle. Fifth-grade students from Alaska assisted cooperating researchers from Vancouver Aquarium and the University of British Columbia last year, helping with the animals' temporary move to the aquarium—a unique educational opportunity provided by the research project.

It is essential that groundbreaking science be shared with the marine mammal community. The Alliance demonstrates its commitment to science by supporting the peer-reviewed *Aquatic Mammals* journal, which celebrated its 35-year anniversary in 2009.

A document, including ongoing research at Alliance member facilities or supported by them, is posted on our Web site that provides the depth and breadth of current studies.

<http://www.ammmpa.org/AMMPA2008ResearchReport.pdf>

### A Helping Hand for Stranded Sick, Injured, and Orphaned Marine Mammals

Because of our expertise and knowledge of marine mammals, Alliance members are important contributors to the National Marine Fisheries Service's Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program. In the last decade, approximately 40,000 marine mammals have stranded, according to the agency. Alliance members are there to assist with staff, resources, and facilities.



A survey of Alliance facilities that participate in NMFS' stranding network indicates that well over \$1.5 million is spent on stranding activities, on average, annually, augmented by 57,000 hours of volunteer time. In one five-year period, members responded to about 2,400 reports of stranded marine mammals. Of these, almost 1,500 were treated for injuries and disease at our facilities.

A number of Alliance members in Florida, the home of the endangered manatee, are experts in the animals' rehabilitation and skilled at returning manatees to their habitats. Miami Seaquarium, Dolphin Research Center, and Florida state officials struggled to find and rescue the manatee whose left pectoral flipper was severely entangled in monofilament fishing line. After a veterinarian painstakingly removed some of the embedded fishing line, the manatee was transported to the Miami Seaquarium for further treatment and recovery before she was deemed fit for release in 2009.

Bock, a manatee that was rescued as an orphan, arrived at The Seas with Nemo and Friends at Disney's Epcot in 2003 weighing just 500 pounds. At The Seas, marine mammal experts weaned him from the bottle and began feeding him a diet of romaine lettuce, fruits, and other vegetables. After extended treatment and therapy, Bock was successfully released in 2009 as well. SeaWorld Orlando also released a manatee last year that had been orphaned in 2001.

A harbor seal that stranded in Bermuda needed long-term care after a fishing line wrapped around his neck and jeopardized his health. The National Aquarium in Baltimore nursed Hamilton back to health and returned him to his home waters.

Alliance members often help out by providing homes for non-releasable marine mammals, including some special needs animals. Gulf World Marine Park (Florida) serves as the area coordinator for the U.S. Southeast Marine Mammal Stranding

Network, and, over the years, its team has come to the aid of hundreds of marine animals. It now has a family of rough-toothed dolphins — unable to survive in the ocean — rarely found in a park or aquarium.

After undergoing four months of rehabilitation at Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration's Seal Rescue Clinic, a blind harp seal was given a home by the Detroit Zoo. While at Mystic, gastroenterologists successfully performed an endoscopy to remove rocks from his stomach.

In 2008, the aquarium became home to Astro, a stranded sea lion rescued just after birth. He was nursed back to health by a California stranding center, but returned to shore the three times he was released.

### Partnering with Government

Alliance members often partner with U.S. government agencies that seek out our professionals because of their expertise and knowledge of marine mammals. Members also support government programs that benefit animals in the wild.

The National Marine Fisheries Services invites professionals from our facilities to participate in its health assessments of marine mammals in our oceans. Recently, Dolphin Quest was asked to join the agency in monitoring, assessing, and mitigating behavior of wild dolphins that were spending time near a Hawaiian aquaculture facility. People were unwittingly habituating the dolphins to stay in the area by feeding them.

Alliance members have provided homes to California sea lions that our government must remove from the Bonneville Dam area in Washington State because they are eating endangered salmon stocks. The alternative is euthanasia. Numbers of these large, adult males are now cared for by Sea World and Shedd Aquarium. The Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, Washington, provides facilities for state veterinarians to evaluate the health of the animals and prepares them for transit.

The feeding of dolphins in the wild is a serious and growing problem in Southeast waters, especially Florida. Swimming with them in the wild can have negative consequences for the animals and is dangerous for humans.

Animals become conditioned to taking food from people, which leads them to change their natural behavior. Approaching boats looking for food makes them vulnerable to injuries from propellers and entanglement in fishing nets. With the help of the Alliance and its members, the National Marine Fisheries Service unveiled last year its creative, animated public service announcement, featuring an engaging dolphin in a rehabilitation facility trying to “kick the habit” of taking food from people.

In addition to providing financial help, SeaWorld funded the satellite time for the PSA download for television stations. Alliance members arranged for a firm to create the PSA pro bono, helped adapt it for radio, promoted it at their facilities and to local television stations, and donated funds for its development.

In 2008 the Sarasota program, NMFS, and the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund produced and distributed the Dolphin Friendly Fishing and Viewing Tips card.

Alliance Standards and Guidelines require that facilities offering interactive programs to the public include an education component explaining the devastating effects of feeding animals in the wild.

Alliance members are not newcomers to this NMFS campaign to protect wild dolphins. In 1998, the agency recognized the Alliance’s substantial contribution to marine mammal conservation and education by presenting the Alliance with a “Certificate of Appreciation” for our members’ education programs and outreach efforts “to protect marine mammals in the wild from feeding and harassment by the public.”

The Alliance posts a guide to responsible wildlife watching guide on our Web site that focuses on marine mammals. It was created with cooperation from NMFS professionals. The agency posts the Alliance guide on their Web site page titled “Responsible Marine Wildlife Viewing.”  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing.htm](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/viewing.htm)

As an international organization, the Alliance and its members work with governments around the world, educating them on the importance of marine species and the need to preserve the environments in which they live. Alliance Standards and Guidelines assure excellent education programming at member facilities around the world. As an international NGO, the Alliance has participated in the last two Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Conference of the Parties (CoP 14 and CoP 15) and participates in working groups for both CITES Standing and Animals Committees. The Alliance is currently a principal resources for CITES regarding the safe and humane transport of marine mammals.

Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alliance experts drafted new worldwide manatee transport methods that are appropriate to the animals’ needs and physiology. They were submitted to and approved by the International Air Transport Association’s Live Animals and Perishables Board in 2009.

### Summary

The professionals who work at Alliance member marine mammal parks, aquariums, and zoos care deeply about the marine mammals with which they interact each day. They are committed to inspiring children and adults to protect these animals in our oceans around the world. Their strong education messages and important research are only possible because of the public’s interest in seeing first hand living dolphins and whales, sea lions and seals, otters, polar bears, manatees, and walrus. Alliance members are uniquely able to share the wonder of their marine mammals with over 40 million visitors each year, igniting the imaginations of young children and coaching adults to adopt conservation behaviors that can make a difference to our oceans and the awe-inspiring animals that live there.