

Watching Whales in Juneau, AK: Are existing practices sustainable?



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Hawaii DPS Humpback Whales

(Data: SPLASH - Basin Wide Study: 2004-2006)

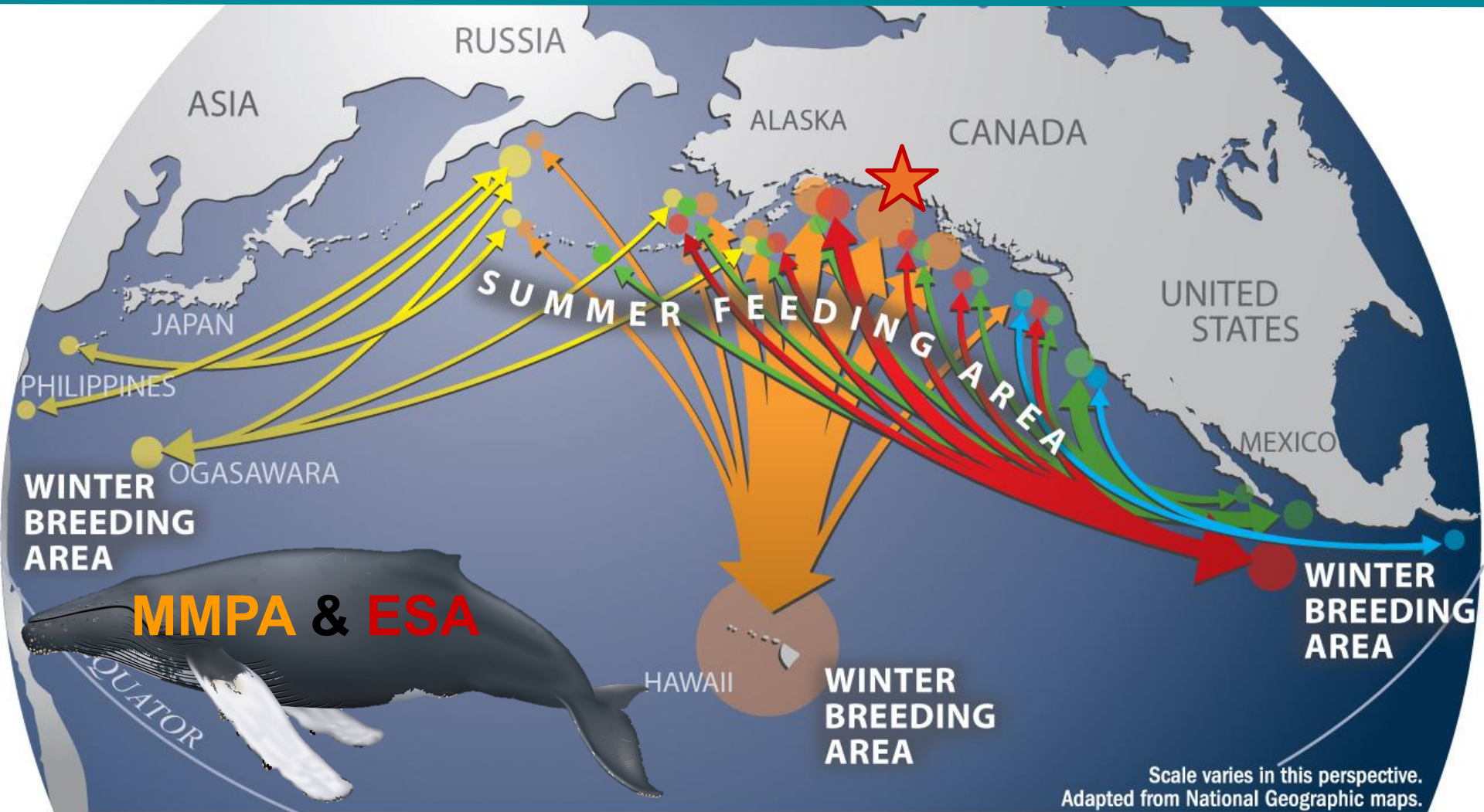


Scale varies in this perspective.
Adapted from National Geographic maps.



North Pacific Humpback Whales

(Data: SPLASH - Basin Wide Study: 2004-2006)



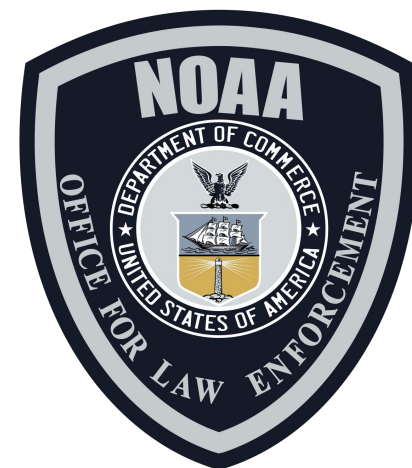
MMPA & ESA

Scale varies in this perspective.
Adapted from National Geographic maps.

US Regulations

- **MMPA**
 - Alaska only:
100-yard Approach Regulation
- **ESA**
 - Applies to humpbacks in AK

Prohibit
take



Take:

To **harass**, hunt, capture, or kill, or **attempt to harass**, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal



Harassment:

Any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which has the potential to injure or disturb a marine mammal causing disruption of behavioral patterns



Popular Whale Watching Destinations



Boats in WW Fleet

72

Juneau, AK

10

Friday Harbor, WA

45

Maui, HI

12

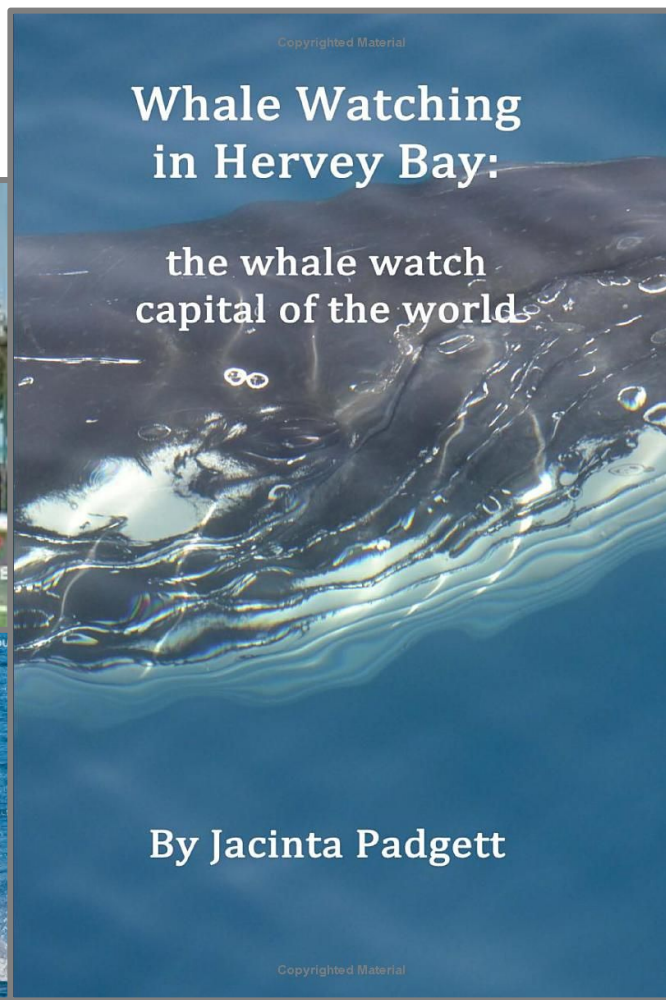
Monterey, CA

14

Stellwagen Bank

Hervey Bay, Australia - The Whale Watching Capital of the World

- 12 whale watching boats (reduced from 18)
- 1,200 whales over the season



- 72 boats (and ↑)
- 20 Companies
- \$ back guarantee



ID# 1879
"Sasha"



ID# 1538
"Flame"

Champions of Responsible Whale Watching

What does it mean to have Whale **SENSE**?

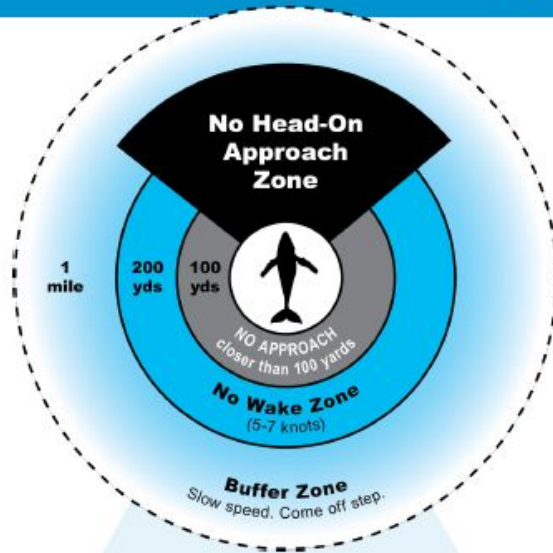
Stick to NOAA's guidelines, laws, and regulations to not disturb marine mammals.

Educate staff and passengers on whale protections and marine conservation.

Notify authorities of entangled and injured marine mammals.

Set an example for other boaters on the water.

Encourage ocean stewardship and ocean literacy.



It is illegal to approach humpback whales in Alaska within 100 yards. All marine mammals are protected and your presence should never change their behavior.



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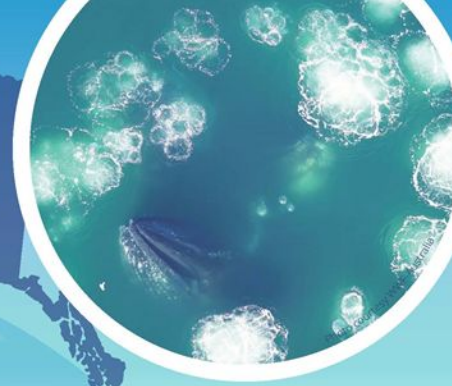
www.whaleSENSE.org

TBMP

Tourism Best Management Practices

Making Tourism Work for Juneau

Give whales BUBBLE room

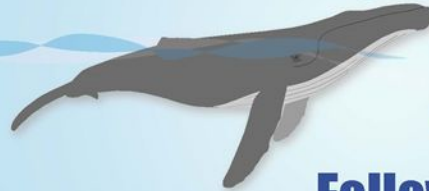


In Alaska,

Federal humpback whale approach regulations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act 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
- ✗ Not disrupt the normal behavior or prior activity of a humpback whale
- ✓ Operate your vessel at a slow, safe speed when near a humpback whale

Please don't burst my bubble!



I give whales personal "bubble" space for their safety and mine



Follow these tips:



Don't let your vessel's presence bubble over

Limit your viewing time to 30 minutes



A whale could pop up at any time!

Use a wide berth in areas that you see whale watching vessels idling or traveling slowly



Don't be in your own bubble

Use VHF radio to coordinate with other boaters to reduce crowding and to avoid ship strike



Reduce your spray

Go slow when approaching and departing whales



Expand your bubble

Give more space when watching groups or mother-calf pairs



Choose Whale SENSE operators when booking whale watching tours



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Report violations in Alaska to
NOAA Enforcement at 1-800-853-1964



NOAA
FISHERIES
Alaska Region

Is 'TAKE' occurring in Juneau?

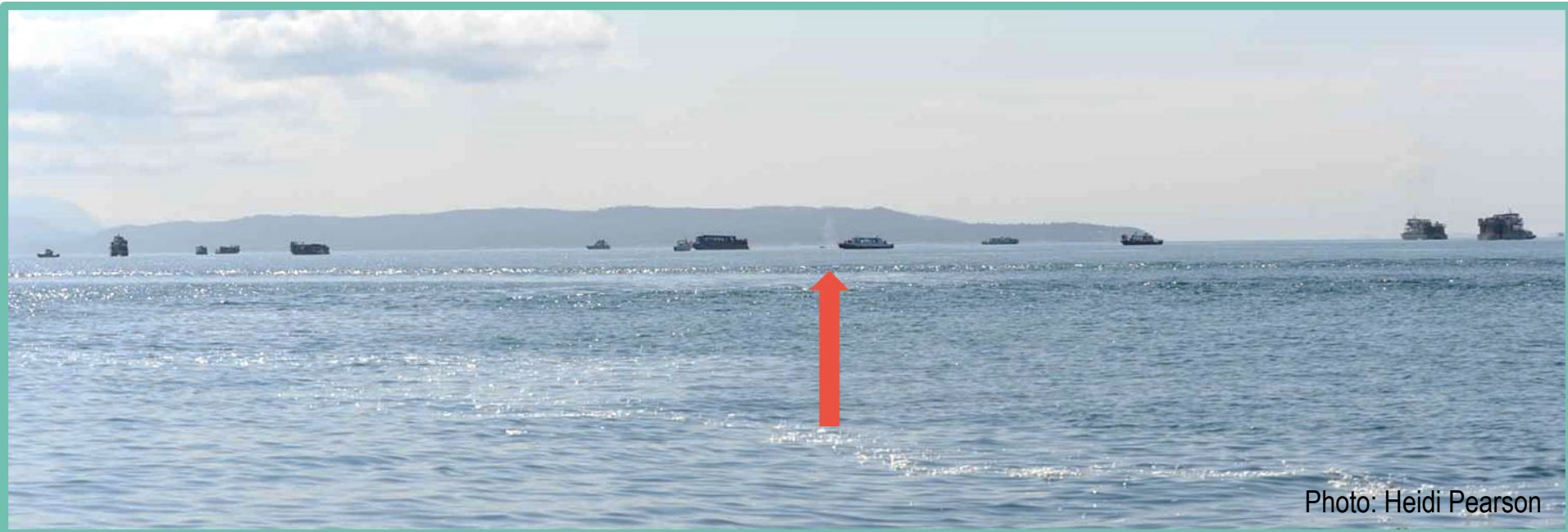
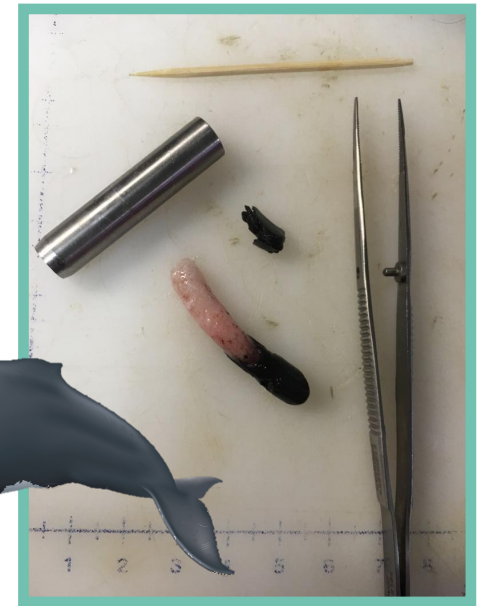


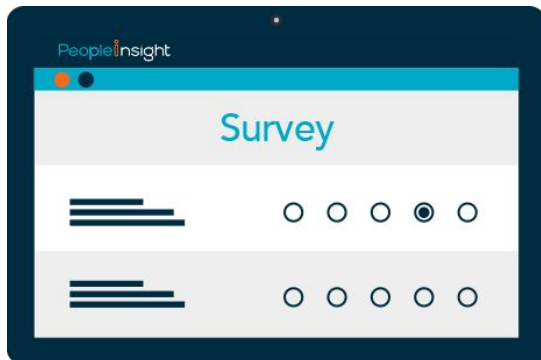
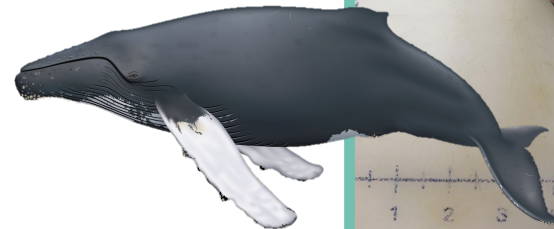
Photo: Heidi Pearson



Land-based Theodolite Studies
(Vessel disturbance)



Blubber hormone analysis
(stress response)



Human Perceptions
(both passenger and community)

- Short-term responses
- Long-term impacts are complicated
- High community concern
- Passengers want to be **CLOSE**

Potential NOAA Management Tools

- Jurisdiction related to protected species: *e.g.*
 - Distance to whales
 - Vessel speed restrictions near whales
 - Underwater sound limitations
 - # boats near whales





Thank you!

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