

SUMMARY OF WHALE WATCHING TOUR OPERATORS' EFFORTS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF WHALE WATCH TOURS

Over the past 27 years, whale watching tour operators have developed and agree to follow thirteen TBMP guidelines regarding their operations on the water as summarized below:

1. **Impacts to coastal zones:** Whale watching tour operators will take all available and reasonable steps to minimize impacts to coastal residents and other vessel operators. Vessel operators will strive to minimize the impacts of their wakes on other watercraft, docks, and beaches throughout the CBJ coastal waterways.
 - a. **Honor and abide by** a voluntary "no wake zone" in the Smugglers Cove/Spuhn Island/Swedula Island vicinity.
 - b. **Will not utilize** the Indian Island passage as a shortcut into and out of Auke Bay at cruising speed.
 - c. **Be diligent in monitoring** their own wakes, vessel traffic, and recreational use of the Coghlan Cut area and adjust their speed and/or routing as necessary to promote a safe environment for all users.
2. **Minimize wake damage to adjacent property owners in Auke Bay:** Operators agree to voluntarily navigate along the centerline of the bay. The centerline is approximate to a line from the white speed buoy to the south end of Coughlin Island.
3. **Monitor the volume and use** of their onboard PA systems and outside speakers in a manner which reduces the impact on residents and recreational boaters. Also, **when transiting through CBJ waters**, operators agree to maintain (whenever possible) a 200-yard distance from boats that are actively fishing to reduce the impact of wake on those vessels.
4. **Operators** will follow all applicable federal (NOAA) regulations regarding marine mammal viewing.
 - a. **Time spent by operators** observing a specific whale or group of whales should not exceed 30 minutes within a 2-hour time span on any one tour or charter.
5. **Vessel engine idling:** Operators agree to minimize engine idling at every reasonable opportunity including loading and unloading of passengers and/or when standing-by in the various vessel loading zones throughout the CBJ.

The majority of whale watching tour operators also belong to Whale SENSE, a voluntary education and recognition program offered to commercial whale watching companies in the U.S. Atlantic and Alaska Regions. Some of Whale SENSE recommendations include:

1. **Do not intentionally approach** whales within 100 yards.
2. **Do not place your vessel** in the path of oncoming humpback whales causing them to surface within 100 yards of your vessel.
3. **Operate your vessel** at a slow, safe speed when near a humpback whale.
4. **Limit time spent** with mom-calf pairs and cooperative feeding groups.

Recently a focus group of whale watching operators met several times to discuss and make recommendations to the fleet for potential new TBMP guidelines. These include:

1. **Eliminate** "whales guaranteed" marketing between April 1-May 15 and September 15-October 31.
2. **Inspected vessels** agree to navigate Coghlin Cut at 5-7 knots when other vessels or people are present, 10-knot maximum speed when no vessels or people present **OR** go around Coghlin Island at full speed.
3. **Inspected vessels** agree to come off step at the imaginary straight line between the two Derby orange markers in Auke Bay and to reduce speed to 5 knots *prior to* reaching the white buoy.
4. **Operators agree:**
 - In open water
 - 100-200 yards, 8 vessels
 - 200+ yards, 8 more vessels
 - Vessels would move in and out of the inner circle in 15-minute cycles with a total of 30 minutes for any one vessel.
 - Shoreline
 - 100-200 yards, 4 vessels
 - 200+ yards, 12 more vessels
 - Vessels would move in and out of the inner circle in 15-minute cycles with a total of 30 minutes for any one vessel.

With a strong commitment to responsible practices, tour operators adhere to NOAA regulations and have agreed to voluntarily follow Whale SENSE and TBMP guidelines. Operators will continue to agree to voluntarily follow Whale SENSE and TBM guidelines. Operators take every precaution to value and protect the well-being of our whales.