



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
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Wild dolphin conservation program welcomes two new participants on the West Coast of Florida

Snorkel with Manatees and Native Vacations in Crystal River are recognized as Dolphin SMART® businesses

NOAA Fisheries and its partners welcome two more businesses to Dolphin SMART - a unique wild dolphin conservation program. Dolphin SMART is a program that awards annual recognition to tour businesses who responsibly view wild dolphins and educate their patrons on dolphin conservation. Snorkel with Manatees and Native Vacations, in Crystal River, Florida, have both demonstrated responsible viewing and advertising of wild dolphins.

“We are pleased to have these two businesses as part of the Dolphin SMART program, especially since they are the first participants in the Crystal River area,” said Grant Craig, NOAA’s Southwest Florida Dolphin SMART coordinator. “Snorkel with Manatees and Native Vacations are excited to educate their guests about how responsible viewing of wild dolphins is essential to conservation.”

Viewing dolphins safely and responsibly is a cornerstone of the Dolphin SMART program. According to scientists, unsafe viewing of wild dolphins may disrupt important behaviors causing negative impacts to the health of dolphins and their young. Visitors viewing dolphins with Dolphin SMART businesses not only enjoy a respectful tour but also learn about dolphin biology and conservation.

“After my involvement with manatee encounters and seeing dolphins, I fell in love with these amazing marine mammals,” said Gene Parker, captain with Snorkel with Manatees, “Once I was introduced to the Dolphin SMART program, I had a whole different outlook toward dolphins.” Captain Traci Wood with Native Vacations said, “I am very excited and proud to belong to the Dolphin SMART Program, I have loved and respected dolphins and all marine life since before I can even remember.”

There are now 14 recognized businesses in Florida, Alabama, and Hawaii in the steadily growing Dolphin SMART program. NOAA encourages visitors to these areas to “look before you book” and support wild dolphin conservation by patronizing a Dolphin SMART business. Vessels of participating businesses carry a Dolphin SMART flag and decal with the current calendar year. Each year, participants are evaluated to ensure they continue to voluntarily meet program standards. A list of Dolphin SMART businesses is available online at <http://www.dolphinSMART.org>.

The Dolphin SMART program was developed by NOAA's Fisheries Service and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, and Dolphin Ecology Project. The acronym "SMART" is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:

- **S**tay at least 50 yards from dolphins,
- **M**ove away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance,
- **A**lways put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near,
- **R**efrain from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins,
- **T**each others to be Dolphin SMART.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

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On the web:

Dolphin SMART: www.dolphinSMART.org

NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/mm/dolphins/bdconservation.htm>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society: www.wdcs-na.org

Dolphin Ecology Project: <http://www.dolphinecology.org>

Don't Feed Wild Dolphins: www.dontfeedwilddolphins.org