

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

A division of NOAA/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

San Francisco CA

www.farallones.noaa.gov

Superintendent's Statement

A Message from Maria Brown, Superintendent, NOAA Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
July 9, 2015

Farallones marine sanctuary warns boaters: keep distance from whales; asks San Francisco area ship traffic to slow down

Recently, on July 4, 115 endangered whales were documented during a one-hour survey near the Farallon Islands, in and near the shipping lanes in NOAA's **Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary** off San Francisco. Others are concentrating in mainland nearshore waters. We are therefore alerting small boaters and large vessel operators to be on the alert for endangered whales, and to maintain minimum distances from them to prevent harassment or even life-threatening collisions. The Farallones and Cordell Bank national marine sanctuaries, working in collaboration with the U.S. Coast Guard, have already requested that large ships (300 gross tons or more) slow to at least 10 knots in the vessel traffic lanes approaching San Francisco, to reduce the threat of ship strikes on endangered blue and humpback whales. The U.S. Coast Guard broadcast is in effect for the area from Point Reyes to the Farallon Islands to Point Año Nuevo.

In addition, the Farallones sanctuary has received reports of small vessels approaching whales nearer than 300 ft. – the federal minimum distance guidelines for whale approach - off Pacifica, Pillar Point, and the Golden Gate Straits, potentially causing disturbance to them. All whales are legally protected against harassment under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and blue, fin, and humpback whales are also listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). NOAA Fisheries has regulatory responsibility for implementing the MMPA and ESA. Whales in a national marine sanctuary are further protected under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

The public should report any collisions with whales or any observed injured or dead whales to NOAA at 877-SOS-WHALE ([877-767-9425](tel:877-767-9425)) or to the U.S. Coast Guard on Channel 16. Live sightings can be reported using the free Spotter Pro App (<http://westcoast.whalealert.org/index.php?page=download-spotter>), designed to alert managing agencies and conservation research groups of the number and locations of whales in the area.

For more information, visit "Office of the National Marine Sanctuaries – Reducing Ship Strike Threat to Whales:" <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/protect/welcome.html>

Sincerely,

Maria Brown, Superintendent
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

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