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DOLPHIN SMART PROGRAM RECOGNIZES SECOND PARTICIPANT
Key West's Sunny Days Catamarans Commits to Promote Responsible Viewing

NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and its partners today recognized the second charter operator under a new program designed to protect wild dolphins. Key West's Sunny Days Catamarans officially joined the Dolphin SMART program after successfully meeting standards that promote responsible viewing of wild dolphins.

"We're pleased to welcome Sunny Days as the second participant in what we hope will become a popular and successful program to promote sustainable dolphin watch tourism," said sanctuary superintendent Cmdr. Dave Score. "Dolphin SMART represents a positive approach to protecting wild dolphins by working in partnership with the businesses that depend on them."

Staff from NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program worked with NOAA Fisheries Service, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and the Dolphin Ecology Project (DEP) to establish the program, which is funded by NOAA Fisheries and the "Protect Wild Dolphins" license plate funds through Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution. The acronym "SMART" is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:
- Stay at least 50 yards from dolphins
- Move away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance
- Always put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near
- Refrain from feeding, touching or swimming with wild dolphins
- Teach others to be Dolphin SMART.

"We are excited to support a program that is ecologically responsible and promotes safety for the local dolphin and education for the visitors," said Kathy Eymann, owner of Sunny Days Catamarans. "It wasn't even a question of if we would participate. With all of our trips, we have always tried to be as environmentally conscious as we can. And we believe that it is extremely important for us to continue to educate our crew so that they in turn can educate our passengers."

Upon acceptance into the voluntary program, Dolphin SMART charters receive flags and stickers and permission to use the Dolphin SMART logo in their advertising. Each year, participants are evaluated to ensure they're continuing to meet program standards. By looking for the current year on flags and logos and checking the updated participant list, visitors to the Florida Keys seeking the thrill of seeing dolphins in the wild can ensure the tour operator they select is Dolphin SMART. For more information, visit http://www.dolphinsmart.org or call program coordinator Celeste Weimer at (305) 743-2437, ext. 22.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,896 square nautical miles of important marine habitat, including maritime heritage resources, as well as coral reef, hard bottom, seagrass meadows, mangrove communities and sand flats. NOAA and the state of Florida manage the sanctuary.

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program seeks to increase the public awareness of America's marine resources and maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, the sanctuary program manages 13

national marine sanctuaries and one marine national monument that together encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society is an international charity dedicated to the conservation and welfare of whales, dolphins and porpoises worldwide. Established in 1987, and with offices in the United States, Great Britain, Argentina, Germany, and Australia, WDCS works to reduce and ultimately eliminate the continuing threats to cetaceans and their habitats, while striving to raise awareness of these remarkable animals and the need to protect them in their natural environment. WDCS achieves these objectives through a mix of research, education and awareness raising initiatives.

The Dolphin Ecology Project is a non-profit whose mission is to support research and education on the interactions between dolphins and the environment and to promote restoration and conservation of marine and estuarine ecosystems.

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On the Web:
NOAA: http://www.noaa.gov/
NOAA National Ocean Service: http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program: http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary: http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society: www.whales.org and www.wdcs.org
Dolphin Ecology Project: www.dolphinecology.org