



# NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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## **NOAA FISHERIES SPEARHEADS AQUARIUM DOLPHIN RESCUE NEAR MISSISSIPPI**

### ***Hurricane Katrina Washes Trained Dolphins into Sound***

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the Marine Life Aquarium of Gulfport, Miss., are planning to rescue eight aquarium dolphins from the Mississippi Sound in the next few days. The eight bottlenose dolphins were swept out of an aquarium tank by an estimated 40-foot wave during Hurricane Katrina. This is the first large marine mammal rescue effort since Hurricane Katrina.

NOAA Fisheries Service scientists spotted the dolphins swimming on Saturday while conducting an aerial survey of natural resource damage. Because these dolphins are from a captive facility they do not forage for food or necessarily have the survival skills necessary to avoid predators or boat traffic. Marine Life Aquarium trainers and NOAA Fisheries Service biologists have been feeding the dolphins several times a day from the NOAA vessel. The group includes two mother dolphins with two young in tow.

"We are so pleased to have found these dolphins and that they are all together," said NOAA Fisheries Service lead veterinarian Dr. Teri Rowles. "Our biologists and the trainers say all of them appear significantly underweight and have severe to minor wounds. These animals have been swimming in water, where we are unsure of the conditions, and have been nutritionally stressed for two weeks. We remain cautiously optimistic that they will recover from this ordeal."

Due to the condition of the water and the difficulty of the rescue, biologists will capture the dolphins in stages. They plan to transport the dolphins to nearby salt-water pools, provided by the U.S. Navy, to give them medical care and to evaluate them for contagious disease. Rowles said the dolphins would be kept in quarantine while scientists assess their overall health.

"Three of these eight dolphins were born at the facility, and had never been in the wild, compounding our concern for their well being," said Moby Solangi, owner and director for the Marine Life Aquarium. "Once we realized the dolphins had been swept out to sea during the hurricane, we feared that they had died. We are just thrilled that they have stayed together during the past couple of weeks."

The effort to rescue the eight dolphins now involves various partners including the U.S. Navy, the Air National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute.

Days before the hurricane, workers at the Aquarium were able to move another group of dolphins into a pool that survived Hurricane Camille in 1969. These animals survived and were moved to the Gulfarium in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. This eight dolphins being rescued had to be left in their original pool at Marine Life Aquarium.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat 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 dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and 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 and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

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