

# SPECIES SPECIFIC GUIDELINE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Supporting document to the Pacific  
responsible marine wildlife viewing guidelines



The Pacific BioScapes Programme is a European Union (EU) funded action, managed and implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It includes 30 focused activities taking place across a diversity of ecosystems in 11 Pacific island countries that are addressing critical issues concerning coastal and marine biodiversity, and ecosystem-based responses to climate change adaptation.

The Pacific Marine Tourism Guidelines have been prepared by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in partnership with the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) as part of the Pacific BioScapes Programme to support implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022–2026 and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework 2030. Feedback on the usefulness and applicability of the guidelines will help shape future updates. Queries regarding this document should be directed to SPREP.

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## Whale and Dolphin Guidelines

### NOTES

- Desktop research has identified that Tonga, Niue and French Polynesia have whale watching regulations. French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Timor Leste have guidelines for whale watching.

### SOURCES

- General Principles for Whale Watching, International Whaling Commission, IWC68 (2022) Revision Of General Principles for Whale Watching
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife Unep/Cms/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2

- Lewis, S. & Walker, D. (2018). Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching: Tourism activities involving wild cetaceans. A guide by the World Cetacean Alliance with support from ClubMed. Brighton, UK.
- Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines For Whale And Dolphin Watching, 2008
- Australian National Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2017, Commonwealth of Australia 2017
- Niue Reg 2016-03 Whale Watching Regulations
- Tonga Whale Watching and Swimming Regulations 2013
- Guidelines for Observing Dolphins Whales in French Polynesia - pt 1/pt 2
- Timor-Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines

**Table 1.** Guideline Summary for Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
<b>General Considerations</b>									
Operators should have a sound understanding of species - and location-specific behaviour of the cetaceans and be aware of behavioural changes that may indicate disturbance.	X								
Operators should not enter restricted zones or areas protected from boats or swimmers as designated by local, national, or international law, conventions or agreements.			X					No whale watching in places where traditional fishing is carried out on a vaka or fono is observed.	



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Whale and dolphin watch tour operators should meet or exceed the standards required by locally agreed guidelines or national regulations at all times.			X						
Always stop any interactions with the cetacean at any sign of the animal becoming disturbed or alarmed.				Stop contact with any whale at any sign of the animal becoming disturbed or alarmed.	If avoidance by the animal is observed, stop the observation. At any time, back off or interrupt the observation if you notice a change in behaviour or the presence of a calf that is too young (white or very light).	X		A person or vessel must immediately abandon contact with a marine mammal if the mammal becomes or shows signs of becoming disturbed or alarmed, for example if the mammal exhibits prolonged diving or evasive swimming patterns or rapidly changes direction or speed or exhibits peduncle tail throwing behaviour.	X
Do not touch a cetacean.					X	X		No person may touch a marine mammal unless authorised under a permit.	X
Do not feed a cetacean.			Food provisioning of wild cetaceans should be strictly prohibited.	No person shall touch or feed any whale.	X	X		X	X
Do not make any loud or sudden noises.					X	X		X	X
No person shall make excessive loud, disturbing or continuous noise audible to a cetacean.			X			Don't scream or make other noises.			X
Boats must switch off echo			X		X				

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sounders within 300 metres of a cetacean, if it is safe to do so.									
No person shall use artificial light sources around cetaceans, including flash photography.			X	X		Underwater flash photography or lighted filming should not be allowed.		X	X
Do not make sudden or repeated changes in direction, speed.	X (or noise)			No sudden or repeated change in the speed or direction of the vessel in except in an emergency. A person shall use their best endeavours to operate vessels and aircraft so as not to disrupt the normal movement or behaviour any whale.		X		A person who operates a vessel must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use his or her best endeavours to operate the vessel so as not to disrupt the normal movement or behaviour of a marine mammal.</li> <li>– Not make any sudden or repeated change in the speed or direction of the vessel in except in an emergency.</li> </ul>	X
No rubbish or food shall be thrown overboard.			X	X				X	
Leave boat engine on and in idle when watching cetaceans.				If a vessel stops to enable the passengers to watch a whale, the engine	Never stop your engine even when stationary (stay in neutral to indicate your location to the	X		If a vessel stops to enable the passengers to watch a marine mammal, the person operating the vessel must ensure that the engine is	

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				shall be placed in neutral or be switched off within a minute of the vessel stopping.	animal and remain manoeuvrable).			placed in neutral.	
Operators should have at least one guide on each boat with excellent knowledge of the behaviours of all targeted cetaceans. They should be able to recognise behaviours from the boat and be able to act accordingly.			X						
Dedicated observers should be on duty in addition to the captain of the vessel.						X			X
The use of jet skis or motorized swimming aids (e.g., underwater scooters) is not permitted.		X	No person shall use motorised swimming aids for cetacean watching or swimming. No personal motorised boat that is designed to be operated by sitting, standing or kneeling on rather than inside the boat (e.g. jet skis.	No person shall use jet skis or motorised swimming aids for cetacean watching or swimming. No person shall use a jet ski to approach closer than 2000 metres of any whale.		Certain vessels should not be used for dolphin and whale watching. These include all personal motorized motorcraft (e.g. jet skis and similar crafts and underwater vessels) parasail, remotely operated craft, wing in ground effect craft, hovercraft, windsurfers, kite		The following items must not be used for while watching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motorised watercraft such as jet skis, motorised swimming aids, and vessel tenders (dinghies).</li> <li>Unmotorised watercraft such as kayaks and paddle boards.</li> </ul>	

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						surfers.			
Vessels recommended for use in whale and dolphin watching include all other motorised and/or sail craft (e.g. motorboats, yachts, inflatable craft as well as aircrafts and helicopters.						X			
No whale watching on Sundays.								X	
<b>Vessel Management /Approach</b>									
Conduct a preliminary analysis of the situation (presence of calf? animal behaviour: movement, rest, games, courtship, breastfeeding, etc.)					X				
Position at reef level: if the distance is sufficient (> 100 m between whale and reef) we must position ourselves on the reef side. Otherwise observation impossible (stay within the 300 m zone).					X				
Never push animals to the bottom of a bay or into a pass.					X				
Observation prohibited in bays, passes and lagoons.					X				
Stop the observation if the whales enter or are in the lagoon (if present in the lagoon, notify the Environment Department or Mata Tohora).					X				

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The boat should approach from a direction that is parallel and slightly to the rear of a cetacean, and never in the area directly in front of or behind a cetacean.			X	A vessel shall approach a whale from a direction that is parallel to the whale and slightly to the rear of the whale and never in the area directly in front or behind a whale.	Approach by following a 30° angle relative to the group's heading. ¾ rear approach: never head-on or from the rear. Adapt to behaviour (follow a path parallel to the movement of the animals at 100 m with or without a calf; stay at least 100 m in the event of a jump or repeated strike of the caudal fin).	The most appropriate method for approaching a whale or a dolphin is from the side and slightly to the rear of the animal. Avoid approaches from head on or directly from behind.		May approach a whale only from a direction that is parallel to the whale and slightly to the rear of the whale and Vessels must not approach marine mammals from directly behind or head on in the area marked as the exclusion zone in schedule one.  Must not approach within 50 metres of a whale unless authorised by the Director.	
The caution zone is the area within 100-300m from a whale and 50-300m from a dolphin.						X		No more than two vessels may be in the caution zone at any one time.	The caution zone is the area within 100m - 300m from a whale and 50m – 300m from a dolphin.
Prohibited vessels should not enter the caution zone.						X			X
If a vessel accidentally approaches cetaceans closer than the recommended distance, it must move away from the no-approach zone at slower speed.						X		If a vessel is less than 200 metres from a marine mammal, the person operating the vessel must use his or her best endeavours to move the vessel at idle or no	X



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								wake speed.	
For vessels, the no approach zone is 100m from a whale and 50m from a dolphin including the area directly in front and behind a pod.						X		No person or vessel may approach within 100 metres of any female balleen or sperm whale that is accompanied by a calf.	X
No vessel or aircraft may approach within 300 metres of any whale for the purpose of enabling passengers to watch the whale if the number of vessels or aircraft, or both, already positioned to enable passengers to watch the whale is 3 or more.					Observe by respecting a caution area of 300 metres. Stay grouped: each new boat in the area must ensure that it joins the boats already present, grouped together and on the same side of the whale (no encirclement).			X	
Once within 300 metres of a cetacean, boats must slow to a no wake speed. Avoid gear changes and any sudden changes of speed or direction except in cases of emergency.			X	Any vessel within 10 metres of a whale shall move at a constant slow speed no faster than the slowest whale in the vicinity, or at idle or no	Reduce speed to 3 knots within a 300m radius. No sudden changes in speed or direction.			Vessels must slow to a no wake speed of four knots within a 200 metre caution zone.	

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wake speed									
Cetaceans should not be approached within 300 metres if resting or nursing behaviour is evident.									
If two or more vessels or aircraft approach an unaccompanied whale, the master's concerned must coordinate their approach and manoeuvres and the pilots concerned must coordinate their approach and manoeuvres.			If a second service provider arrives, the approaching vessel shall make contact by VHF radio and stay outside 100 metres.		The order of arrival of boats defines the order of launchings to limit the number of people in the water at the same time.			X	
Only boats participating in swim-with activities may approach closer than 100 metres, if it is appropriate to do so, but no boats should approach a cetacean closer than 50 metres. When within 100 metres, boats should travel with extreme caution and at a no-wake speed.			X						
No boat should be positioned up wind of, or in a position where it will drift into, the direction of travel of any cetacean when in neutral.			X	No person shall place a vessel up wind of, or in a position where it will drift into, the direction of travel of any whale.		Do not place a vessel up wind of or in a position where it will drift into the no approach zone.			Do not place a vessel up wind of or in a position where it will drift into the no approach zone.
Only one boat is permitted			X						No more than 3

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between 100 metres and 50 metres of a cetacean.									vessels should be in the caution zone of a whale or a dolphin at a time.
If there is already a boat approaching and/ or involved in a swim-with attempt with a cetacean, additional boats must stay at least 300 metres from that cetacean.			X					Only one vessel at a time may conduct swimming encounters. Other vessels must keep at least 100 metres from the swimmers' vessel.	
Do not attempt to approach a cetacean immediately after another boat has attempted a swim-with encounter. If you see a boat involved in an encounter with a cetacean, move away and attempt to find different individuals to approach. As a minimum, you must wait for at least one hour after the previous encounter has finished before attempting an encounter.			X						
If a cetacean unexpectedly appears within 50 metres of the boat, the boat should be put in neutral and remain in neutral until the cetacean is clearly on the surface at a minimum distance of 50 metres from the boat.			If a cetacean approaches closer than 100m to a boat, engines should be put in neutral. The boat should remain in neutral and not leave the sighting area before clearly seeing the	If an animal voluntarily comes close to the boat, put the engine in neutral, but don't stop the engine in order to keep the boat ready to move and for the animals to be able to hear where the boat is.		If cetaceans approach a vessel, slow down gradually and put engines in idle.		If a whale approaches a vessel the master of the vessel must wherever practical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Manoeuvre the vessel so as to keep out of the path of the whale, and</li> <li>– Maintain a minimum distance of 50 metres from the whale.</li> </ul>	If cetaceans approach a vessel, slow down gradually and put engines in idle.

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			cetacean on the surface at a minimum distance of 50 metres from the boat.		Put the engine in neutral if the animal voluntarily approaches the boat.				
Always operate vessels and aircrafts so as not to disrupt the normal movement or behaviour of whales and dolphins.						X			
No person or boat shall cause any cetacean to become separated from a group or cause any members of such a group to be scattered.			X	X		Do not disperse or separate a group of cetaceans.		X	
Do not instigate or encourage direct interaction with a vessel.	X								
No deliberate chasing of cetaceans by boats. Boats must ensure that cetaceans have right of way, either choosing to engage with or to ignore the presence of the boat.			X						
Travel at slow speeds, less than 10 knots in areas of known cetacean presence whenever possible.	X				Reduce speed to 3 knots within a 300 m radius.				Approach cetaceans slowly and cautiously; - Observe cetaceans at a speed not exceeding the speed of the animals.
In approaching or accompanying	X								

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cetaceans, maximum vessel speed should be determined relative to that of the cetacean, and should not exceed it once the vessel is actively 'watching' cetaceans.									
When vessels are within the caution zone of whales and dolphins: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approach cetacean slowly and cautiously.</li> <li>Observe cetaceans at a speed not exceeding the speed of the animals.</li> </ul>						X			
The practice of corraling is prohibited (corraling is the term used to explain the act of taking a motor-powered boat and driving in circles around dolphins in order to encourage them to bow ride.)			X						
The practice of leap-frogging is prohibited (leap-frogging is defined as the repeated act of manoeuvring ahead of a cetacean and stopping in its path in an attempt to intercept and solicit an interaction).			X	X					
Use appropriate angles and distances of approach; species may react differently, and most existing guidelines preclude head-on approaches.	X								
If cetaceans approach a vessel to bow ride, maintain a slow and						X			If cetaceans approach a



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steady speed to avoid sudden changes in course.									vessel to bow-ride, maintain a slow and steady speed and avoid sudden changes in course.
Do not alter vessel speed or direction to counteract avoidance behaviour by cetaceans.	X				Always keep the same heading or speed. Avoid any fast changes of direction or engine speed.				
Do not chase (as opposed to follow), causing the whale to change its course or speed, head off, or encircle cetaceans or cause groups to separate or split apart.	X			A vessel should not chase, encircle, block the direction of travel of cetaceans or position itself in the middle of a pod of whales.		A vessel should not chase, encircle, block the direction of travel of cetaceans or position itself in the middle of a pod. Don't encircle the animals or separate any members of the group. All boats have to stay on the same side of the animals. Don't surprise the animals and be careful of the topography. For example, don't block the animals			A vessel should not chase, encircle, block the direction of travel of cetaceans, or position itself in the middle of a pod.

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						in between the reef and the boats.			
Approaches to mother/calf pairs and solitary calves and juveniles should be undertaken with special care. There may be an increased risk of disturbance to these animals, or risk of injury if vessels are approached by calves.	X		Extra caution needs to be taken by the operator when calves are present. These are especially vulnerable and sensitive individuals and should therefore be approached with increased care and sensitivity  Do not approach closer than 300 metres to a lone cetacean calf.	At any time, back off or interrupt the observation if you notice a change in behaviour or the presence of a calf that is too young (white or very light).				A swimmer or vessel must not approach within 100 metres of any whale that is accompanied by a calf that is light grey or silver in colour and has a foetal fold in the dorsal fin.	Exercise extreme caution with pods containing calves. Specific restrictions on length of encounter and distance of approach should be considered for pods of species of conservation concern.
Departing boats should ensure that all animals are visible on the surface at least 50 metres away from the boat before proceeding slowly at no wake speed until the boat is at least 300 metres from the nearest animal.			X	Vessels departing from the vicinity of any whale shall proceed slowly at idle or no wake speed until the vessel is at least 300 metres from the nearest whale.	At the end of the observation: Move away at reduced speed (3 knots over 300 meters).	When departing from watching cetaceans, determine where the animals are relative to the vessel to avoid collisions or coming too close to the animals, and increase speed gradually while		If the vessel is departing from the vicinity of a marine mammal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The person operating the vessel must proceed slowly at idle or no wake speed until the vessel is at least 200 metres from the nearest marine mammal.</li> <li>In the case of a dolphin the vessel may interact with the dolphin in any</li> </ul>	When departing from watching cetaceans, determine where the animals are relative to the vessel to avoid collisions or coming too close to the animals, and increase speed gradually

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						exiting the caution zone.		way that the vessel is permitted to interact with a whale, except that when a dolphin approaches to bow ride the vessel must maintain its speed and direction.	while exiting the caution zone.
<b>Activity Limits</b>									
No more than three boats should be between 300 metres and the minimum approach distance of a cetacean at any one time.			X			No more than three vessels should be in the caution zone of a whale or a dolphin at any time.	No more than two vessels may be in the caution zone at any one time.		No more than 3 vessels should be in the caution zone of a whale or a dolphin at a time.
If a fourth boat arrives, this boat should first attempt to locate another individual or group of cetaceans to view. If this is not possible, the fourth boat must wait at least 300m from the closest cetacean and all boats should reduce their viewing time to 10 minutes to reduce cumulative pressure on the animals. If the first three boats have been there for 10 minutes or more when the fourth boat arrives they must halt their activity immediately, move away and allow the fourth boat to move into position.									
If the number of boats within 300 metres of a cetacean remains three									

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<p>or less, viewing time should be kept to a maximum of 30 minutes per boat.</p> <p>When more than one boat is within 300 metres of a cetacean, all boats must stay on the same side of the cetacean so that movement is less restricted. Special care must be taken to ensure that cetaceans are not trapped between boats and other physical barriers such as islands.</p>									
The operator should not return to the same cetaceans during the same trip to sea.									
The operator must attempt to visit different cetaceans on each trip to sea during one day.									
<b>In Water Interactions (Swim With Guidelines)</b>									
<p>A swimmer must not interact with a whale unless the interaction is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Authorised under a licence or permit; and</li> <li>– Supervised at all times by an approved guide in the water.</li> </ul>								X	
When a boat stops for swimmers to enter the water, the engines must be placed in neutral and remain so			X						

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until the swimmers exit the water, with the exception of an emergency.									
When readying to place swimmers in the water, boats should not position themselves any closer than 50 metres to a cetacean whilst following the boat approach guidelines at all times.			X						
Swimmers should never be placed directly in a cetacean's line of travel or on top of the animals.			X						
Do not launch if there are rough seas, murky water, nervous animals, calf too young (white, light and soft fins).					X				
Once swimmers are in the water, the boat should raise the alpha flag or a location specific alternative.			X			Vessels with swimmers in the water shall fly the alpha flag.			
Boats must allow enough space for swimmers and cetaceans without risk of injury, but close enough to react in an emergency.			X						
Prohibit interactions with: — <b>surface-active groups of whales, or groups engaged in energetic behaviours or displays at the surface for communication or agonistic purposes, which</b>		X	No swimming when there is a whale calf present. No swimming with a nursery group of dolphins		Don't try to get between a mother and her calf.	Particularly sensitive animals e.g. mothers with calves and critical habitats (carving grounds) should be provided additional		Vessels must take extra care when observing pods of marine mammals containing calves.	



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<p><b>may make interaction unlikely and pose a threat to human participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>mother and calf pairs and groups including them, and especially when i) calves are newborn, ii) animals are resting, or/and iii) display an evasive behaviour when people or boats approach</b></li> <li>– <b>solitary dolphins</b></li> <li>– <b>individuals displaying aggressive or agonistic behaviour, including fluke thrashes, breaching, jaw claps, S-shaped postures</b></li> <li>– special interest cetaceans (e.g. white humpbacks) or injured, entangled cetaceans at any time.</li> </ul>			(a group of dolphins consisting of 50% or more calves.			protection.			
Operators must have one crew member on board that is fully trained in aquatic rescue and able to recognise swimmers in distress and therefore act accordingly. It is recommended that this crew member is additional to the swim-with guide and can therefore stay on board the boat to monitor the situation. Each boat must carry an approved first aid kit and at least			X						

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one member of the crew on board must have a current first aid certificate.									
Operators must ensure that swimmers disclose any health conditions not conducive to a swim-with activity and should not permit those swimmers to participate.			X						
Operators must ensure that all swimmers have a good level of fitness to enable them to swim for a sustained amount of time in open ocean conditions and to enter and exit the water by the method employed by the operator.			X						
Operators must complete a practice swim with swimmers before any attempt to swim with a wild cetacean. It is recommended, where possible, that this is conducted in the same environment that the swim-with activity will take place. This is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enable swimmers to practice the procedures that will occur when the activity begins</li> <li>– Allow the guide to assess swimming ability</li> </ul>			X						
Swimmers must be given an explanation of cetacean behaviours and how to recognise specific			X						

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
behavioural signals, particularly relating to avoidance, disturbance and aggression.									
There should be no water entry if the following behaviours are evident: - Feeding - Resting - Avoidance			X						
Maintain a minimum distance of 30m or a greater distance established according to national legislations.	X		Whale watch providers may approach an adult whale no closer than 10 metres and any pod containing a calf no closer than 50 metres	Enter the water 30m away or greater. In the water, stay 30 m away: Calm swimming, no jumping, sudden movements, or shouting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A swimmer must not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approach a whale closer than 20 metres.</li> <li>Free dive towards the whale.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>				
No touch, no dive and no chase policy ensures that cetaceans have right of way, either choosing to engage with or to ignore the presence of swimmers.	X		No person may disturb or harass any marine mammal.	Minimise free diving underwater. Do not touch or try to feed the animal.	No person may touch a marine animal unless authorised under a permit. No person may disturb or harass any marine mammal.				
Participants must swim or snorkel calmly at the surface and do not free dive on the wildlife. Scuba diving is not allowed.	X		No person shall use Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) for diving or swimming with cetaceans.	No person shall use (SCUBA) for diving or swimming with whales.	Get slowly into the water (don't jump. Swim quietly without making bubbles or foam.	Swimming with the use of underwater breathing apparatus should not be allowed.	No person may use SCUBA for swimming with whales.		

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
Operators must limit the number of swimmers in the water with a cetacean at any one time. This is for the safety of the swimmers and to minimise disturbance to the targeted cetacean.			X		Maximum group of 6 people. The group of snorkellers must remain together and on the same side of the animals as the boat.			No more than six people plus the guide per vessel may swim with anyone group of marine mammals at a time.	
For swim-with wild dolphin activities: operators should permit no more than eight swimmers in the water at one time. All swimmers should enter and leave the water together to decrease disturbance.			X						
Swimmers must be under constant supervision by an experienced guide and be ready to follow instructions at all times.			X			All persons in the water with whales or dolphins should be accompanied by an appropriately trained local guide.		All swim-with operations must be accompanied by an approved guide while in the water and on the attending vessel.	
A surface rope should be used to aid swimmers in the water. Exceptions to the use of surface ropes apply only when conditions are unsafe.			X						
The guide should enter the water first, assess the behavioural state of cetaceans, and deploy the surface rope (assuming conditions are safe to do so). Only when the guide has confirmed that the situation is safe for both swimmers and cetaceans,			X						

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should swimmers be allowed to enter the water. The guide must have final say.									
<p>The guide must monitor the behaviour of the cetaceans and swimmers at all times. A swim-with attempt must be stopped if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— A cetacean displays signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feeding - nursing - disturbance - aggression - behaviours that pose a physical risk to swimmers</li> </ul> </li> <li>— Weather conditions present a risk to swimmer safety</li> <li>— Swimmers do not comply with the guidelines (applies only to the swimmer/ swimmers that do not comply)</li> <li>— Another boat arrives and places swimmers in the water</li> <li>— Any unacceptable practice takes place.</li> </ul>			X						
<p>In-water time must be limited to a total of 20 minutes with a cetacean. There must be no return to that cetacean during the same day even if the encounter lasts less than 20 minutes.</p>			X						Not exceed 30 minutes when there are two boats, and one hour if there is one boat conducting a swimming encounter with any one group of marine mammals.
Only one successful swim-with attempt should be allowed during each trip (or each day for multi-day			X						



Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
trips). If two failed swim-with attempts occur, where no cetacean is visible under water, all swimmers should cease swim-with attempts and exit the water (a swim-with attempt is defined as the point at which swimmers enter the water with the intention of having an in-water encounter with a cetacean).									
Swimmers should remove rings, piercings and any other sharp object which may cause harm to a cetacean during accidental contact.			X						
No foreign objects shall be taken into the water, with the exception of cameras and floatation devices. This includes selfie sticks, which may cause injury to cetaceans or other swimmers.			X						
Swimmers should enter the water gently, attempting to make as little splashing as possible.			X						
When a surface rope is being used, swimmers must hold on to the rope at all times during an encounter provided that conditions are safe to do so. Swimmers must position themselves so as to avoid bumping into one another.			X						
If not using a surface rope, swimmers must keep their arms by their sides, across their chest or			X						

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
behind their back and swim in a calm and predictable manner. Swimmers should position themselves in a line.									
If a cetacean chooses to approach swimmers, the swimmers should remain as still as possible whilst holding on to the surface rope. If not using a surface rope, a calm and predictable swimming pattern should be maintained and swimmers should position themselves in a line.			X					If a marine mammal approaches a swimmer the swimmer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Must remain still or move away slowly to avoid startling it; and</li> <li>– Must not try to touch it, free dive or swim towards it.</li> </ul>	
No towing of swimmers during a swim-with activity.			X						
Use surface ropes, platforms and/or buoyant devices to control the movement of participants and for their safety. The choice of device and its arrangement is based on a dedicated assessment of the local conditions to minimize entanglement and safety risks for both the wildlife and human participants.		X							
If launching from a boat, place swimmers/snorkellers at least 100m away from a whale and 50m from a dolphin.		X							
If launching from a boat, place participants parallel to the path of		X							

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
the moving cetaceans, entering the water calmly and with minimal noises. Swimmers must not block the path of any cetacean.									
Aircraft									
Helicopters or gyrocopters must not get closer (in height or distance) than 500m to a whale or dolphin. Other planes must not get closer (in height or distance) than 300m to a whale or dolphin.				A helicopter shall not get closer (in height or distance) than 500 metres to a whale. A plane must not get closer (in height or distance) than 300 metres to a whale.		X			
A person who operates an aircraft must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Not make any sudden or repeated change in the speed or direction of the aircraft except in the case of an emergency.</li><li>Not fly the aircraft below 150 metres above sea level unless taking off or landing.</li><li>Use his or her best endeavours to operate the aircraft in such a manner that without compromising safety the aircraft's shadow is not</li></ul>								X	

Management of Encounters with Whales and Dolphins	IWC General Principles for Whale Watching	CMS Guidelines for In Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife	World Cetacean Alliance Global Best Practice Guidance for Responsible Whale and Dolphin Watching	Tonga Whale Watching & Swimming Regulations 2013	French Polynesia	Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (2008)	New Caledonia Whale Watch Charter	Niue Whale Watching Regulations 2016	Timor Leste Cetacean Watching Guidelines
<p>imposed directly on any marine mammal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure when operating at an altitude of less than 600 metres above sea level that the aircraft is not: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Closer than 150 metres horizontally from a point directly above a marine mammal; or</li> <li>– Closer than a distance approved by the director by public notice based on the best available scientific evidence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>									
<b>Communicating these Guidelines/Interpretation</b>									
All guidelines should be clearly displayed and available to customers at all times and actively referenced both before and during each tour.			X						
These guidelines or regulations should be communicated to all customers and made visible and accessible to customers throughout the duration of all tours.			X						
Customers must be provided with information on the threats to cetaceans and their environment.			X						
Customers should be well briefed in advance, using materials that			X						





## Visual Guideline Samples

Source: Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching 2008

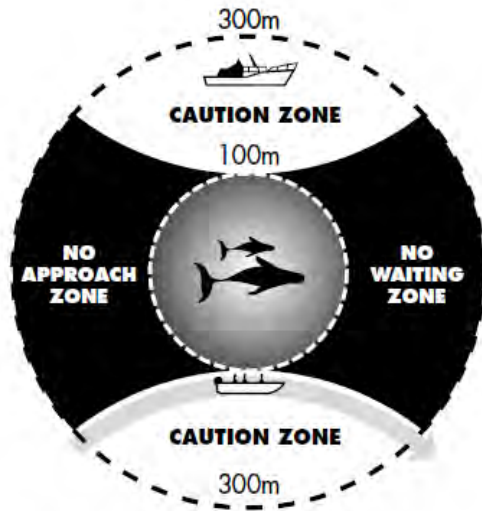


Figure 1: Approach distances for whales.

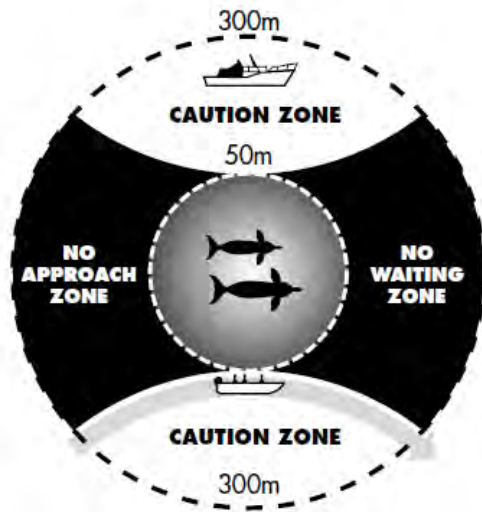


Figure 2: Approach distances for dolphins.

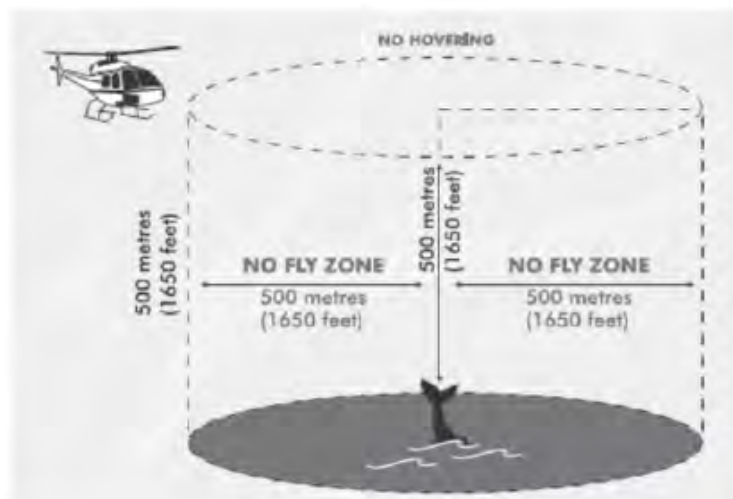


Figure 3: Approach distances for helicopters

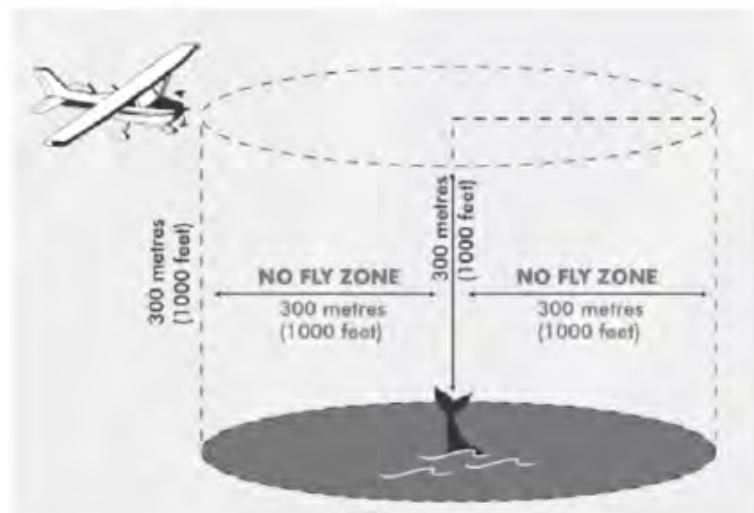
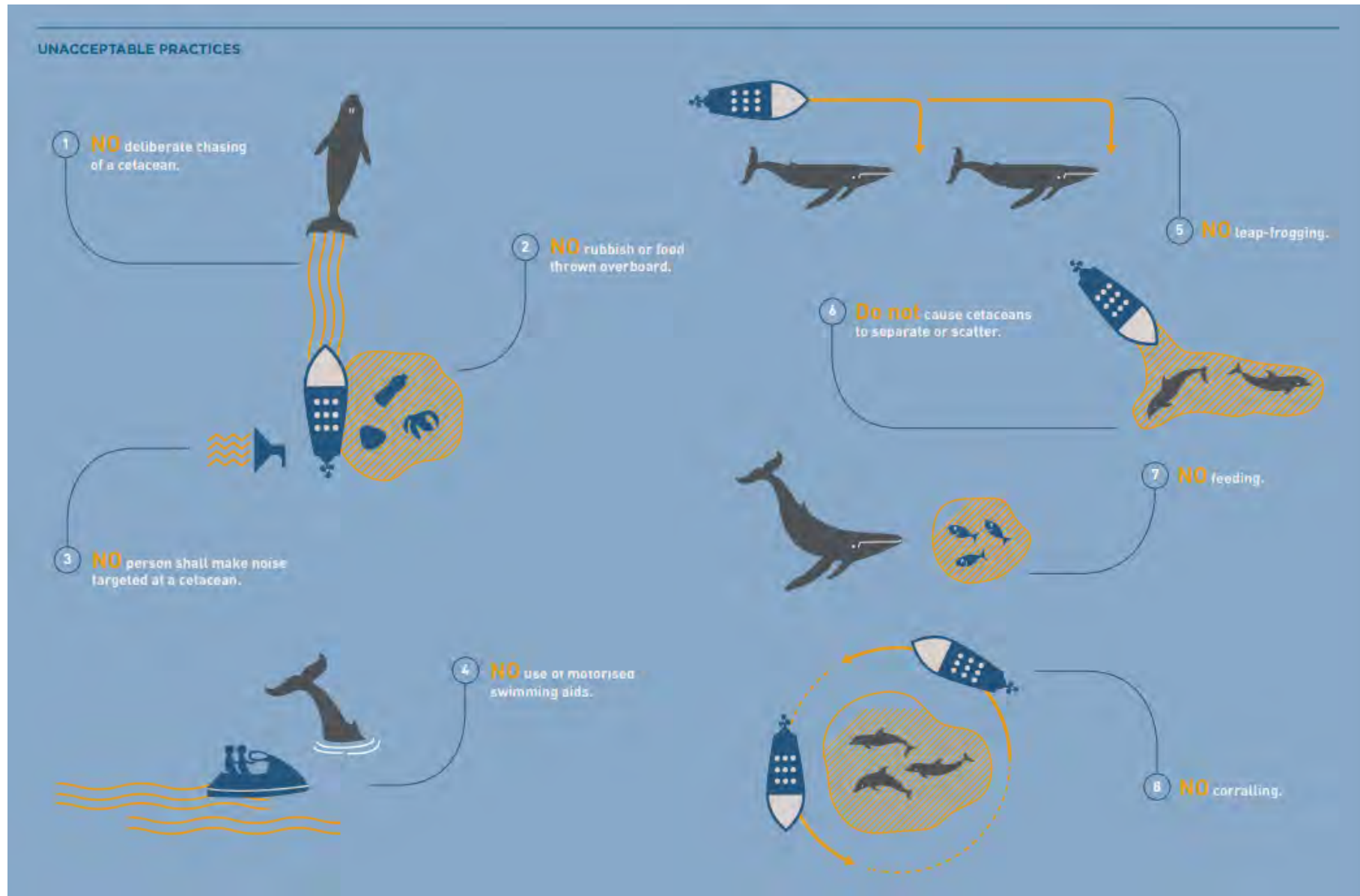


Figure 4: Approach distances for aircraft



## BEST PRACTICE

- 1 Tourists should be well briefed in advance on the potential impacts of the tour on cetaceans.



Health & Safety



Sustainability & Conservation



Guidelines & Managing Customer Expectations

- 2 Operators must ensure that each vessel has a knowledgeable guide on board.



- 3 The vessel should approach from a direction that is parallel and slightly to the rear of the cetacean.



- 4 If dolphins bow-ride, the vessel should remain at a constant speed with no sudden change in direction.



- 5 Vessels should not approach a whale closer than 100m and a dolphin closer than 50m.

CAUTION ZONE

NO APPROACH ZONE

100m

300m

- 6 Once within 300m of a cetacean, vessels should:



slow down



identify behaviour



turn off sonar

- 7 Stay at 300m if a lone calf is present or resting or nursing behaviour is evident.



- 8 No more than three vessels should be between 300m and the minimum approach distance.

- 9 All vessels must ensure they stay on the same side as one another.

10

max 30 mins each

max 10 mins each





## UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICES

- 1 **NO** touch, no dive and no chase policy. Ensure that cetaceans have right of way.



- 2 **NO** swimming when there is a whale calf present.



- 3 **NO** swimming with a nursery group of dolphins (a group made up of 50% calves or more).



- 6 **NO** towing of swimmers during a swim-with activity.



- 5 **NO** person shall use artificial light sources around cetaceans, including flash photography.



- 7 **NO** foreign objects shall be taken into the water, with the exception of cameras and floatation devices.



- 4 **NO** person shall use Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) for diving or swimming with cetaceans.



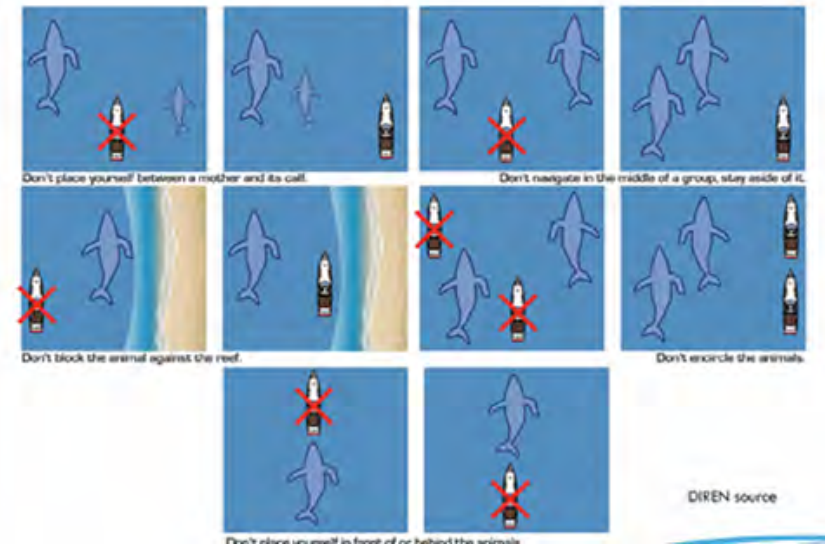
- 8 **NO** water entry if feeding or resting are evident.



Source: Tongan whale watching regulations. Reproduced from <https://www.whale-encounters.com/whale-swim-regulations-guidelines>



Source: French Polynesia Whale Watch Guidelines



## Dugong Guidelines

### NOTES

- Desktop research has only revealed guidelines related to dugongs in Vanuatu.
- Vanuatu has incorporated their dugong guidelines into their national Tourism Product Operator Minimum Standards. These are sets of minimum requirements that any tourism operator in Vanuatu MUST meet before getting a tourism business license.

### SOURCES

- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife Unep/Cms/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2
- Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Code of Conduct for Tourism Operators Interacting with Dugongs
- Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs
- Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia

**Table 2.** Guideline Summary for Management of Encounters with Dugongs

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
<b>General Considerations</b>				
Do not feed or attempt to feed dugongs or throw any object in the water near them.	X		X	X
No littering, food dumping of food scraps or sewerage from vessels operating in dugong marine turtle habitats.			X	X
Do not touch or attempt to touch a dugong during any interaction.	X		X	X
Do not enter the water during an interaction with dugongs.	X		VESS have specific guidelines for in water interactions (see specific related section)	X
Where defined, adhere to specified maximum interaction time and maximum number of interactions in an area per vessel per day.				X
If an animal in distress (e.g entangled) is encountered notify the relevant authority and help the animal using advice from the relevant authorities or using common sense if this advice is not available notify the relevant authorities within 72 hours of the incident and of any action taken.				X
<b>Tourism Operator Specific</b>				

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
Make sure you and your staff follow the recommendations in the “Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs”. These guidelines form the basis of this code of conduct but as a tourism operator you have additional responsibilities.			X	
You should display or provide the “Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs” to all customers.			X	
It is your responsibility to ensure that all the tourists adhere to these guidelines. This includes tourists who enter the water from the shore on your property as well as those who are on watercraft or in-water tours.			X	
If the purpose of your tour is viewing or watching dugongs or other marine mammals you should hold a permit under the Fisheries Act (2014).			X	
If you use a watercraft with an engine either on your tours or to transport tourists from place to place, know the recommendations in the guideline and make sure you adhere to them. This applies to banana boats, water taxis, fishing boats, sailing boats, other boats, jetskis, zegos, jetboats etc.			X	
If you use a watercraft without an engine either on your tours or if you provide them for the tourist to use by themselves (boats, kayaks, canoes, sailing dinghies, stand up paddleboards etc.) know the recommendations in the guideline and make sure you, your staff, your customers and, in particular, your guides adhere to them.			X	
<p>If your tourists enter the water with dugongs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Give a brief to your customers before they enter the water on how to behave when a dugong is present and ensure all the customers are familiar with the “Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs”. Remember it is your responsibility to ensure that all the tourists adhere to these guidelines.</li> <li>– Know the recommendations in the guideline and make sure you, your staff and, in particular, your guides adhere to them.</li> <li>– Instruct your tourists NOT to swim towards the dugong and wait until the dugong comes to them if it wants to.</li> <li>– On tours there should always be a trained guide in the water whenever there are tourists in the water with dugongs.</li> <li>– There should be no more than 4 tourists and one guide within 10m of a dugong. If you come across a dugong and there are already 5 people within 10 metres, stay back, at least 20 metres</li> </ul>			X	



Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
<p>away.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Take extra precautions to ensure the tourists stay away from the tail and away from mothers with calves for their safety.</li> <li>– If a dugong shows any signs of distress or disturbance (such as repeatedly swimming away from the people) make sure the tourists stop and move at least 50 metres away from the dugong.</li> <li>– Discourage tourists from touching the dugong.</li> <li>– Do not attempt to feed dugongs or allow tourists to attempt to feed a dugong.</li> <li>– When tourists have encounters with a dugong they often want to have photos or footage to remind them of their amazing experience. Please make sure that when they are taking photos or filming the dugongs they don't forget about the guideline and get too close or annoy the dugong when trying to get the perfect "selfie". Protecting the dugongs and your customers from harm is more important than getting the perfect image.</li> </ul>				
Dedicated dugong tour operators should assist dugong research and monitoring programmes.				Researchers should collect data and give timely feedback on results to operators and resource managers.
<b>In Water Interactions (Swim With Guidelines)</b>				
Ensure that the minimum distance is respected to avoid any physical contact (touching, poking, prodding and standing on wildlife). Body length of the animal or 3m, whichever is greater, and at least 5m for a mother-calf pair.		X		
To minimize disturbance to feeding animals, allow interactions only on the surface. Participants must only swim or snorkel calmly at the surface and not free dive on the wildlife. Scuba diving is not allowed.		X		
To avoid overcrowding, the number of people allowed to interact with the wildlife at any given time is restricted to five. In commercial settings, a 5:1 participant/guide ratio is recommended. There should be no more than five people within 10m of a dugong.		X		
Do not corner, surround, or restrict the animal as they breathe at the surface.		X	Swimming: Never get between a dugong and the surface of the water. They need to come to the surface to breathe and anything that gets in the way of them surfacing can cause distress.	

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
			Boats: Never drive over the top of a dugong even if you think it is deep under the water. They need to surface to breathe so there is a chance you can injure them by hitting them with the boat or propeller when they are surfacing. Anything that impedes dugongs from surfacing can cause distress.	
The use of surface ropes and other deployed devices with lines is not recommended as dugongs can be highly tactile, chew and manipulate lines.		X (For manatees specifically, but a note states applicability to all sirenians.		
When entering the water or at first sighting of the dugong DO NOT swim towards it. It is likely to swim away. Allow the dugong to come to you if it wants to.			X	
Do not swim towards the animal when you see one, stay where you are and let them come to you if they want to. If they approach you, stay at least 2m away from the tail.		X		
Swim calmly, slowly and minimise excess noise and splashing.			X	
Do not touch dugongs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Never try to touch a dugong on the head.</li> <li>– Stay away from the tail and never hold onto or touch the flippers.</li> <li>– Never attempt to “ride” a dugong.</li> <li>– Never prod or poke a dugong.</li> <li>– Do not touch calves (baby dugongs). Remember to keep at least 5 metres away from mothers and calves.</li> <li>– Never attempt to “ride” a dugong</li> <li>– Never prod or poke a dugong.</li> </ul>			X	
There should be no more than 5 people within 10m of a dugong.			X	
If you come across a dugong and there are already 5 people within 10 metres, stay back, at least 20 metres away.			X	
If you see a mother with her calf keep at least 5 metres away. This is for their benefit as well as your safety. If the mother dugong or the calf approaches you, move away and keep 5 metres between you and the dugongs.			X	
Make sure no person or watercraft gets between a mother and her calf			X	

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
at any point.				
When swimming with a dugong that has approached you, stay at least 2 metres away from the tail. Dugong tails are very powerful and you could get hurt if it hits you.			X	
If a dugong shows any signs of distress or disturbance (such as repeatedly swimming away from you) stop and move at least 50 metres away from the dugong.			X	
Please make sure that when you are taking photos or filming the dugongs you don't forget about these guidelines and adhere to the distances. Protecting the dugongs and yourself from harm is more important than getting the perfect image or "selfie".			X	
Do not disturb feeding dugongs.			X	
Boat operators and tour guides should avoid excess noise or splashing when in proximity to dugongs.	X			
At first sign of stress, the boat operator should gently move away from the animal.	X			
Dedicated dugong watching operators should have a person acting as a marine animal lookout at all times when operating in areas of important habitat for dugongs. This person may be the skipper of the vessel and must have sufficient field of vision including the ability to see any animals in the vessel's path.	X		Keep a watch out for dugongs when travelling near seagrass meadows.	X
<b>Method of Approach</b>				
When travelling through dugong/marine turtle habitat, reduce the likelihood of collision by using wide and deep channels away from shallow areas, seagrass beds and coral reefs. Channels that are narrow at a low tide should be avoided wherever possible.				X
The boat operator should reduce speed in areas with high probability of finding dugongs – e.g seagrass beds, coral reefs or near turtle breeding sites or nesting beaches, keeping a lookout for dugongs/turtles to avoid collision	X < 5 knots		Keep to "no wake" speed or a maximum of 5 knots whenever you are travelling over a seagrass meadow where dugongs often occur.	X No wake speed
Keep to "no wake" speed or a maximum of 5 knots whenever you are within 100 metres of a dugong to avoid hitting the dugong with the boat or cutting the dugong with the propeller.			X	Vessel speed should be reduced to no wake speed immediately when a dugong is seen within 100 metres of the vessel.
Keep the boat at least 10 metres away from dugongs at all times. If there				Vessels should not intentionally

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
<p>is a mother with her calf stay at least 20 metres away. If the dugong approaches your boat within 10 metres, do not engage the engine and wait until the dugongs have moved away from the boat before putting the engine in gear (unless there is a risk to the boat and passengers in which case the engines can be engaged but with extreme care not to harm the dugongs. It is best to anticipate if there might be a risk and avoid any situations that might put you close to a dugong when there is a risk to the boat e.g. close to the reef or rocks).</p> <p>If you are within 50 metres of a dugong make sure your engines are in neutral. Only engage the engine to move away from the dugong after you are sure where the dugong is and you have checked carefully that there are no other dugongs close by.</p>				<p>approach a dugong closer than 40 metres.</p> <p>If a dugong approaches the vessel closer than 40 metres the vessel need not move away.</p>
Anchoring on seagrass areas should be prohibited.	X		Be careful where you anchor to avoid damaging seagrass meadows.	No anchoring in seagrass beds or on coral. Motor towards anchor when hauling in.
Where possible, boating over seagrass and shallow areas should be prohibited.	X		Be careful when travelling over seagrass meadows to make sure you don't damage them with your propeller.	
If an animal approaches the boat, the operator should engage in neutral gear and allow the animal to pass.	X			
Be aware of any other vessels in the area and communicate to avoid collision disturbance or entrapment of animals in an area.			X	X
If observing marine wildlife in seagrass beds or on coral reefs, allowing the vessel to drift with the engine in neutral using is best practice.				X
Observe the specified minimum distance between vessels interacting with dugongs in the same area the maximum number of vessels interacting with a group of dugongs includes any research and recreational vessels present at that time.				X
If dugongs display any signs of avoidance behaviour or flee the area to avoid contact, do not pursue them, intercept their path of travel or chase them.			If a dugong shows any signs of distress or disturbance (such as repeatedly swimming away) stop and move at least 100 metres away from the dugong.	X
A caution zone should be set around an individual or group of dugongs.	From 15 or 50 to 100 metres			
When in the caution zone, boat operators should approach the animal/s from the side at a low speed.	< 5 knots			

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
In the caution zone, the boat operator should maintain constant and predictable direction at low speed.	< 5 knots			
Do not separate a group of dugongs or come between a dugong mother and calf by drifting deliberately through a group of animals.				X
Approaching mothers with calves should always be prohibited.	X		Make sure no watercraft gets between a mother and her calf at any point.	
Separating a mother and calf or a group of dugongs should always be prohibited.	X			
Trapping an animal or a group of dugongs should be prohibited. Boat operators should position their vessels so as to leave enough space for the animal/s to swim away and/or surfacing.	X		Never corner or harass a dugong trying to swim away from a vessel.	
Chasing, pursuing and trying to approach animal/s showing early signs of disturbance or not interested in interacting with the vessel should be forbidden.	X			
Disturbing, chasing, harassing or herding animals should be prohibited.	X		Never chase a dugong.	
<b>NON MOTORISED VESSELS (boat, kayak, canoe, sailing dingy, stand up paddleboard, surf board etc)</b>				
Stay at least 5 metres away from a dugong. This is for your safety as well as the dugong's.			X	
Approach dugongs from the side and travel parallel with their bodies. Try not to approach from the front or behind.			X	
Never chase a dugong.			X	
Never corner or harass a dugong trying to swim away from you.			X	
There should never be more than 3 watercraft within 10 metres of a dugong. If you come across a dugong and there are already 3 watercraft within 10 metres, stay back, at least 50 metres away.			X	
Make sure no watercraft gets between a mother and her calf at any point.			X	
If a dugong shows any signs of distress or disturbance (such as repeatedly swimming away from you) stop and move at least 50 metres away from the dugong.			X	
<b>Level of Activity</b>				

Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
The maximum number of vessels allowed in the caution zone and interacting simultaneously with an individual or a group of dugongs should be limited.	1-3		There should never be more than 3 motorised vessels within 50 m of a dugong. If you come across a dugong and there are already 3 boats within 50 metres, stay back, at least 200 metres away.	
The maximum duration of interaction for each vessel should be limited.	15 – 30 minutes			
Boat-based watching tours targeting dugongs should be conducted only during determined hours.	Daytime, up to a maximum of 6 hours per day.			
A waiting zone should be set around the caution zone to allow for other vessels to wait for their turn to interact with an individual or a group of dugongs.	In open waters: 200 to 500 metres			
When an individual or a group of dugongs are engaged in interaction, other vessels should wait in the waiting zone.	X			
Where considered necessary, operators should be required to coordinate their activities so that target species are not continuously disturbed throughout the day.	X			
On departing, the boat operator should wait until animals are away from the vessel. The boat operator should check bow and stern before engaging the propeller.	40 m – 300 m			Further than 40 metres from the vessel before accelerating gradually to no wake speed check bow and stern before engaging propeller and maintain a lookout around the boat while underway.
When terminating an interaction do not accelerate to speeds greater than no wake speed until the vessel is more than 100 metres from dugongs.				It is recommended that vessel speed should remain at no wake speed or below whenever dugongs are visible even at distances greater than 100 metres as other dugongs maybe nearby but not visible. If dugongs are no longer visible remain at no wake speed or below until at least 100 metres away from the location of last sighting.
While departing the caution zone, the boat operator should keep a slow	< 5 knots			

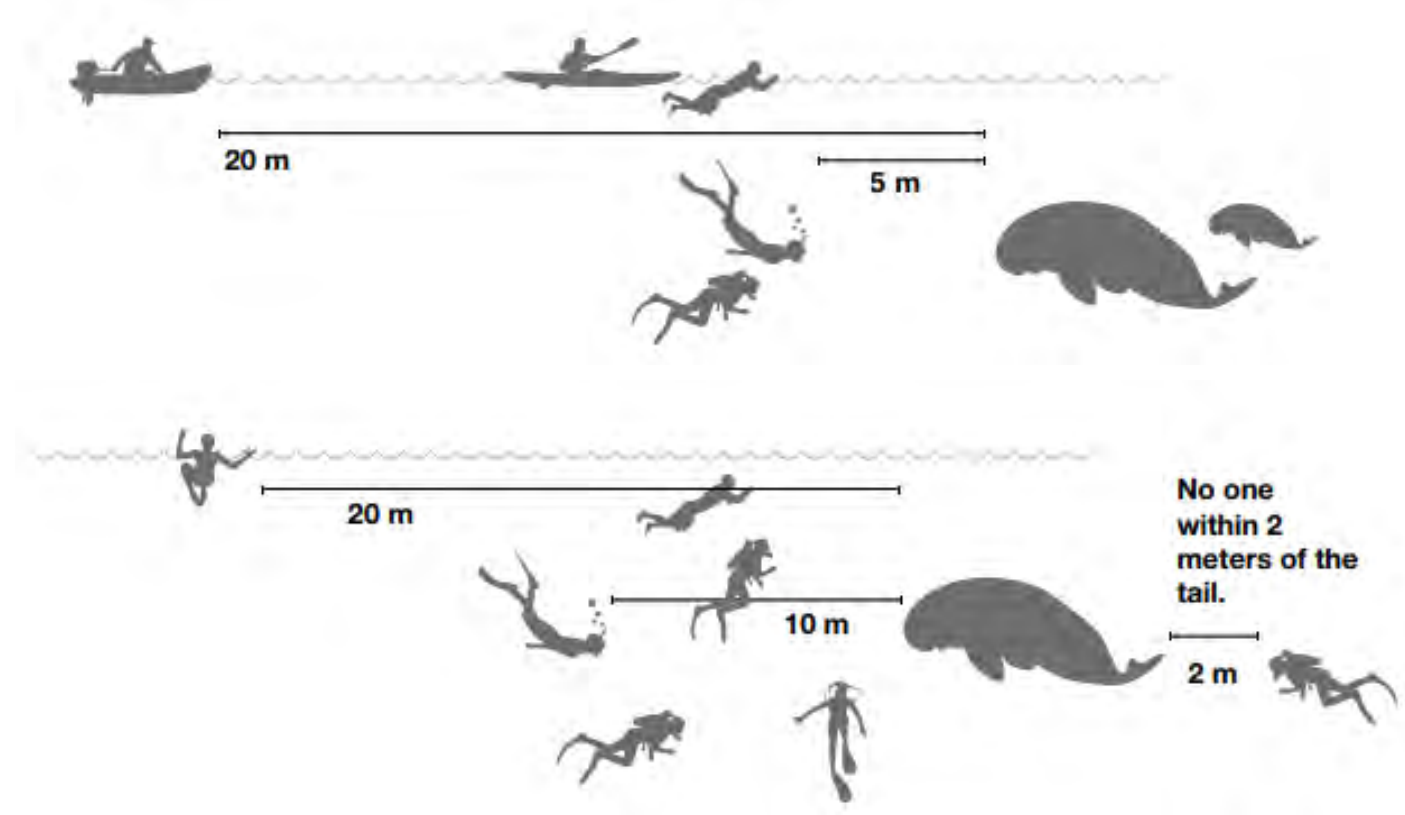
Management of Encounters with Dugongs	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	VESS (Guidelines and CoC)	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)
speed and should not be allowed to accelerate until the waiting zone is reached.				
<b>Aircraft</b>				
<p>If you see dugongs from the air:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If you are flying a fixed-wing aircraft or a helicopter you should fly at a minimum 300 metres above dugongs.</li> <li>– If you are flying a helicopter do not hover over them.</li> <li>– If you are flying a drone it should fly at least 50m above dugongs. Remember you need a permit to fly a drone in Vanuatu (please contact the Vanuatu Civil Aviation Authority or the Vanuatu Cultural Centre for details).</li> </ul>			X	
If you are flying a drone it should fly at least 50m above dugongs. A permit may be needed to fly a drone. Contact the relevant Civil Aviation Authority for details.			X	
A minimum approach distance of 300 metres altitude within a 300 metre horizontal radius of dugongs is recommended for all aircraft.				X

#### SOURCES

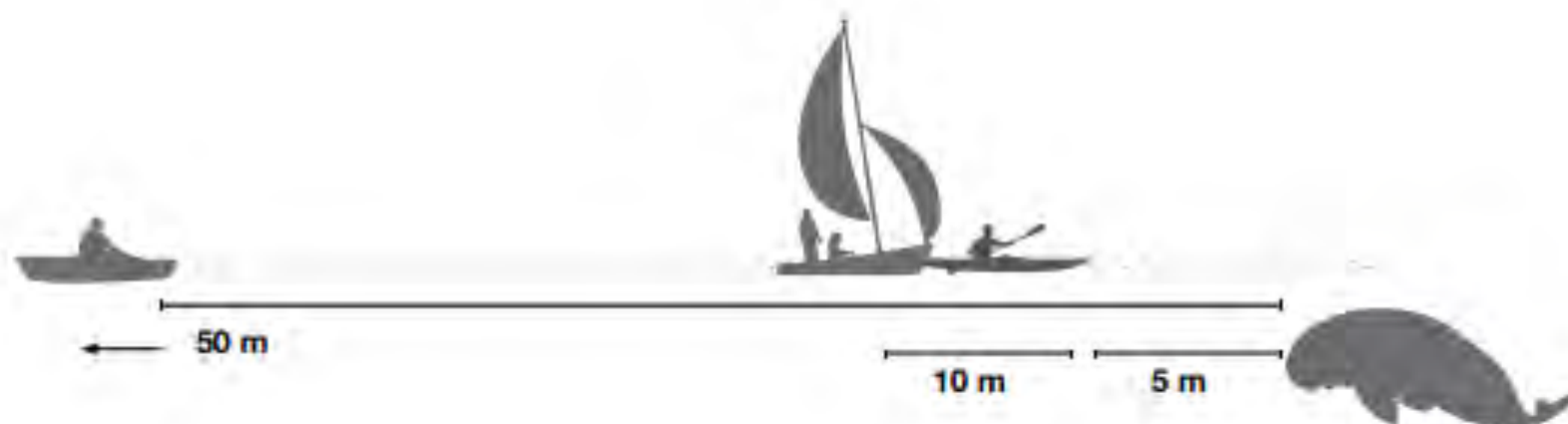
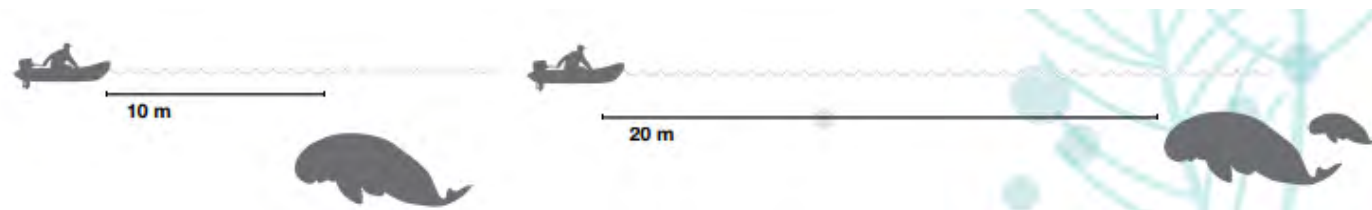
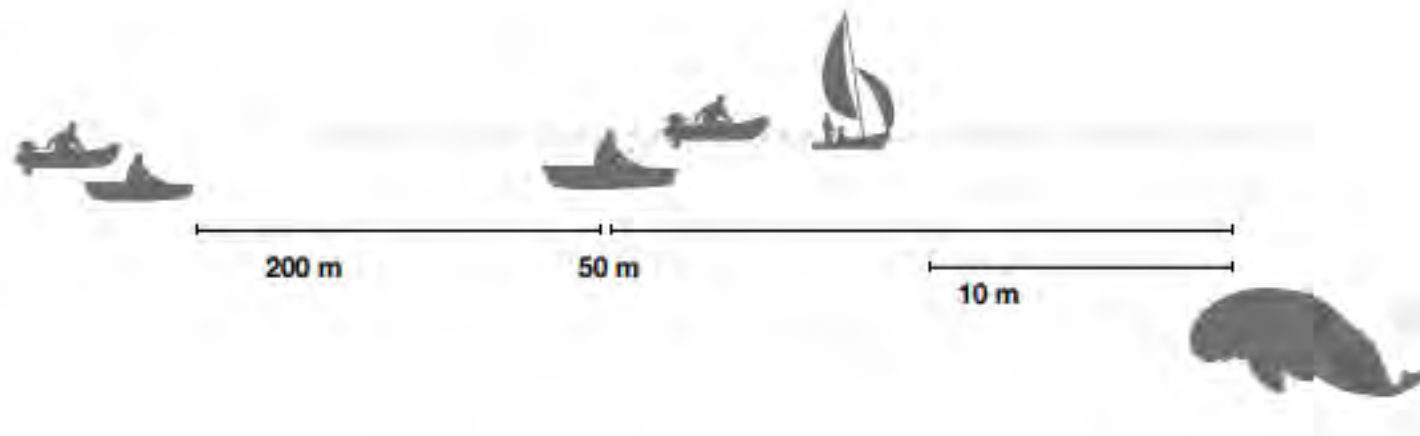
- [Dugong | Dugong \(cms.int\)](#)
- Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs and
- [Home - The Dugong & Seagrass Conservation Project \(dugongconservation.org\)](#)
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching
- Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia

## Visual Guideline Samples

- Source: Vanuatu Environmental Science Society (VESS) Guidelines for Interacting with Dugongs







## Shark and Ray Guidelines

### NOTES

Desktop research revealed no guidelines related to sharks and rays in the Pacific region.

### SOURCES

- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife Unep/Cms/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2
- Lawrence, A.J., Budziak, A., Campbell, I., Cornish, A., Ender, I., Jeffries, B., Kanstinger, P., Macdonald, C., Marston, J., Stevens, G., Ward-Paige, C. A. (2016). Responsible Shark & Ray Tourism: A Guide to Best Practice. Gland, Switzerland: WWF, and Rancho Santa Margarita, USA: Project AWARE and Dorset, UK: Manta Trust.
- Manta Trust Code of Conduct

**Table 3.** Guideline Summary for Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
<b>Level of Activity</b>				
The maximum number of vessels allowed in the caution zone and interacting simultaneously with an individual or a group of elasmobranchs should be limited.	X - 1-2			
The maximum duration of interaction for each vessel should be limited.	30 – 90 minutes			
Boat-based watching tours targeting elasmobranchs should be conducted only during daytime, for a limited number of hours per day.	X			
A waiting zone should be set around the caution zone to allow for other vessels to wait for their turn to interact with an individual or a group of elasmobranchs.	250 – 500 m			
When an individual or a group of elasmobranchs are engaged in interaction with the maximum allowed number of vessels, other vessels should wait in the waiting zone.	X			
Where considered necessary, operators should be required to coordinate their activities so that target species are not continuously disturbed throughout the day.	X			
<b>Interactions</b>				
Do not chase, harass, interrupt swimming path or attempt to trap.	Disturbing, chasing, or harassing animals should be prohibited.		X	

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
Chasing, pursuing and trying to approach animal/s showing early signs of disturbance or not interested in interacting with the vessel should be forbidden.	X			
In the caution zone, boat operators should maintain constant and predictable direction at low speed.	X			
At first sign of stress, boat operators should gently move away from the animal.	X			
If an animal approaches the boat, the operator should engage in neutral gear and allow the animal to pass.	X			
On departing, the boat operator should wait until animals are away from the vessel. Boat operators should check bow and stern before engaging the propeller.	X			
While departing the caution zone, boat operators should keep a slow speed and should not be allowed to accelerate until the waiting zone is reached.	X < 5 – 8 knots			
<b>Approach</b>				
The boat operator should reduce the speed when approaching areas with high probability of finding elasmobranchs in the water.	< 5-8 knots			
A caution zone should be set around an individual or a group of elasmobranchs.	20-300m			
In the caution zone, the boat operator should reduce the speed.	< 3 – 8 knots			
When in the caution zone, the boat operator should approach the animal/s from the side at a low speed.	X			
Trapping or cornering an animal or a group of elasmobranchs should be forbidden. Boat operators should position their vessels in a way that allow elasmobranchs to swim away.	X			
<b>Sharks</b>				
Favour static, still diving that avoids large and/or sudden movements and sounds.		X		
Do not turn sharks on their back or stimulate sensory pores to induce tonic immobility.		X	Do not touch, ride or induce 'tonic immobility'	
Do not block the path, escape routes or entrance to caves where sharks rest.		X		
Do not swim, surf or dive alone to reduce the chance of inquisitive approaches from wildlife and for safety.		X		
Promote the use of tethers, benthic or pelagic holding structures at cleaning stations to reduce disturbance caused by the presence and movements of participants.		X		
To avoid unintentionally attracting animals, do not carry speared fish or collected marine animals.		X		
For precaution, ensure that no other activity (fishing, spearfishing, swimming, etc.) is practised on the site, especially at locations and times when shark attracting occurs.		X		

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
It is recommended that individuals refrain from wearing reflective objects, such as jewellery or shiny equipment, while participating in shark diving activities. Such objects may be confused with prey fish by predatory sharks, potentially leading to dangerous situations.		X		
Ban swimming, surfing or diving in the vicinity of pinniped haul-outs or rookeries, as they are prey of large sharks.		X		
Divers should have an adequate diving qualification (e.g. N2, Advance Open Water Diver) with a significant number of dives (>50).		X		
Provisioning of any kind is discouraged in line with the precautionary principle. Natural encounters are to be favoured over those using an attractant source. Where attracting occurs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– it can only be carried out by a professional in possession of a dedicated licence;</li> <li>– minimize and regulate the amount of chum and bait used;</li> <li>– avoid shark consumption of baits;</li> <li>– use only natural and local prey of the species targeted;</li> <li>– minimize the use of chum and bait once sharks have been attracted;</li> <li>– ensure there are periods when animals are not attracted by food to avoid altering the target species' distribution, occurrence and behaviour through association and learning.</li> </ul>	Feeding elasmobranchs in the wild should be forbidden, unless stated otherwise.	X	Do not feed unless authorised provisioning activity.	
The use of decoys (i.e. artificial models mimicking prey) in neoprene or plastic material is prohibited.		X		
The number of co-occurring participants to in-water interactions is limited depending on the site, target species, and guide-tourist ratio.		X		
Dives should be performed in the daytime and in waters clear enough for a line-of-sight distance of at least 10m.		X		
For the safety of the human participants and to avoid disturbing shark hunting activities, dives and swimming on sites with sharks in darkness or twilight hours, should be forbidden.		X		
Tourists should be guided out of the water when one or several sharks are too inquisitive. In case of an imminent close encounter, the shark should be firmly pushed back with a billy stick, but without violence (relevant only to inquisitive sharks). It is forbidden to hit the sharks with fins or with throws of bubbles fusing from the octopus regulators.		X		
Photographers should not use flashlights (flashes are likely to provoke escape or defiance reactions).		X		
Do not spend more than 90 minutes in proximity.		X	X	
Maximum group size should be no more than 10 people, including photographer/videographer.		X	X	
Do not conduct night dives in sites identified as critical habitat (i.e. for Thresher shark and Grey Nurse Sharks). Do not block the entrance of or enter caves where sharks rest.		X	X	
Do not wear or use of mechanical apparatus or any apparatus that produces noise or that could disturb the sharks (i.e. electronic shark repelling devices), scooters and horns.			X	

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
<b>Manta Rays</b>				
<b>Approach</b>				
Vessels entering and leaving the manta dive or snorkel aggregation site must reduce their speed and have a staff member at the front of the vessel looking out for animals and/or swimmers on the surface. Should mantas be spotted, the vessel must keep a safe distance away from animals and people. A recommended vessel speed is 8 knots within 100m of the animals and 5 knots within 30m of the manta aggregation site.				X
There should be absolutely no vessel traffic directly above the aggregation site where mantas are expected to be seen. Divers and snorkelers need to enter and exit the water at a safe distance away from the aggregation site. A safe distance can be considered 10 meters away from any animal and/or the manta aggregation site.				X
If there is a current, the vessel should drop off guests at a safe distance upstream from the animals and pick up guests downstream from the animals and/or the manta aggregation site. There should be absolutely no towing of snorkelers on ropes behind the vessel through the manta aggregation site.				X
<b>On Board</b>				
A pre-encounter briefing should always be conducted by the crew/guide. Crew/guides should highlight entry and exit procedures specific to the vessel, and any environmental and safety conditions to be aware of; such as currents, boat traffic, etc.				X
Whenever possible, briefings should also include additional information on manta ray biology, behaviour and threats.				X
<b>In-Water</b>				
Manta interactions at cleaning stations are predominantly best conducted via SCUBA diving, while interactions with feeding manta rays are best conducted via snorkelling. An exception to this rule is when the manta cleaning station is shallower than 3m, or if there are government regulations preventing scuba diving activity.				X
An in-water guide or supervisor should always accompany the divers/snorkellers during the interactions in order to ensure safety and compliance to the Code of Conduct. There should be a maximum ratio of tourists to each guide, which should be defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed upon by all operators visiting the site, or through government legislation.				X
Enter the water quietly and calmly, no closer than 10 meters from the manta ray.		Enter the water calmly and approach the animals slowly, avoiding noises and splashing with fins.		X

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
Approach from the side, leaving the ray a clear path ahead.		X		
Do not station directly above or below the animals in order to leave the open water column unobstructed for manoeuvring.		X		
Do not swim over cleaning stations, and promote the use of tethers, benthic or pelagic holding structures at cleaning stations to reduce disturbance caused by the presence and movements of participants.		X		
Divers keep still, to the side, possibly on or near the bottom, and at distance to avoid disturbing the animals or altering the feeding conditions.		X		
Interactions with mating chains (one female followed by two or more males) should be treated with extra caution: fewer than five participants, shorter duration and at least 10m distance.		X		
For interactions occurring in darkness, the 'campfire method' whereby human participants (divers, snorkellers, or both) coordinate their lighting to create a central lighted area (campfire) of the water column, is recommended for the safety of both manta ray and participants.		X		
Keep your fins below the water's surface when swimming. Splashing and noise can scare mantas away, so you want to approach as quietly as possible.				X
Do NOT approach closer than 3 meters. Instead, remain still and let the manta come to you.				X
You should approach the manta from their side, giving them a clear path ahead.				X
As the manta swims past you, do NOT chase after it! You will never catch up to a manta anyway, and will likely scare it away in the process.				X
Do NOT touch a manta ray. You will ruin the encounter, and may receive a fine depending on local laws.				X
For scuba divers only -if you are diving with mantas, you will most likely be encountering them on a cleaning station. These are important sites for manta rays.				X
During the encounter, remain at the side of the cleaning station. Do NOT swim onto the main cleaning area.				X
For scuba divers only - keep low and hover close to the seabed, but be careful not to damage the reef beneath you. Depending on the dive site, you may need to stay in an area designated for divers.				X
For scuba divers only - when a manta swims towards you, do NOT block their path as they swim overhead. Stay low, and stay where you are.				
<b>Training</b>				

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
Crew and staff can greatly contribute towards enhancing the manta experience and providing additional value to the interaction. However, it is important that boat crew and guides are appropriately trained, aware of the Code of Conduct, and how to supervise and enforce proper in-water behaviour amongst their guests.				X
<b>Other ray species (stingrays)</b>				
> 30m from the ray aggregation.				X
< 6 knots when approaching area.				X
Maximum 90 minutes in proximity.				X
1 vessel only per ray aggregation.				X
Maximum 10 people, including the guide and videographer/photographer.				X
Stay > 2m away from the animal				X
Do not touch or stand on the rays.		Do not touch, handle or lift out of the water. Do not stand on the rays.		X
Do not turn rays to induce tonic immobility.		X		
Do not block escape routes.				
Do not swim over cleaning stations, and promote the use of tethers, benthic or pelagic holding structures at cleaning stations to reduce disturbance caused by the presence and movements of participants.		X		
Prohibit the direct feeding, and allow other forms of attracting, such as olfactory attractants, and provisioning only if part of a monitored programme and carried out by professionals in possession of relevant licences.		X		
Minimize the use and, in all cases, strictly regulate the consumption of baits in provisioning operations: use only local and natural food, minimize the use once the rays have been attracted, and ensure non-provisioning times to prevent insurgence of conditioning.		X		
No flash photography. No selfies.				X
No scuba.				X
Do not wear sharp pieces of equipment including snorkels or jewellery.				X
Do not wear or use any apparatus that produces noise or that could disturb the rays.				X

Management of Encounters with Sharks and Rays	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In Water Interactions	WWF Shark and Ray Guidelines	Manta Trust Code of Conduct
Ranger or staff to educate visitors about the rays at known feeding sites to control amount of feeding and monitor tourist interaction, especially in peak season.				X
Inform customers that non-compliance will not be tolerated. Use a two-strike system: one warning followed by a swimming ban. Have a member of staff on board to monitor compliance.				X



## Visual Guideline Samples

Source: <https://birdsheadseascape.com/diving/diving-manta-sandy-heres-need-know-meidiarti-kasmidi-nikka-amandra-gunadharma/>

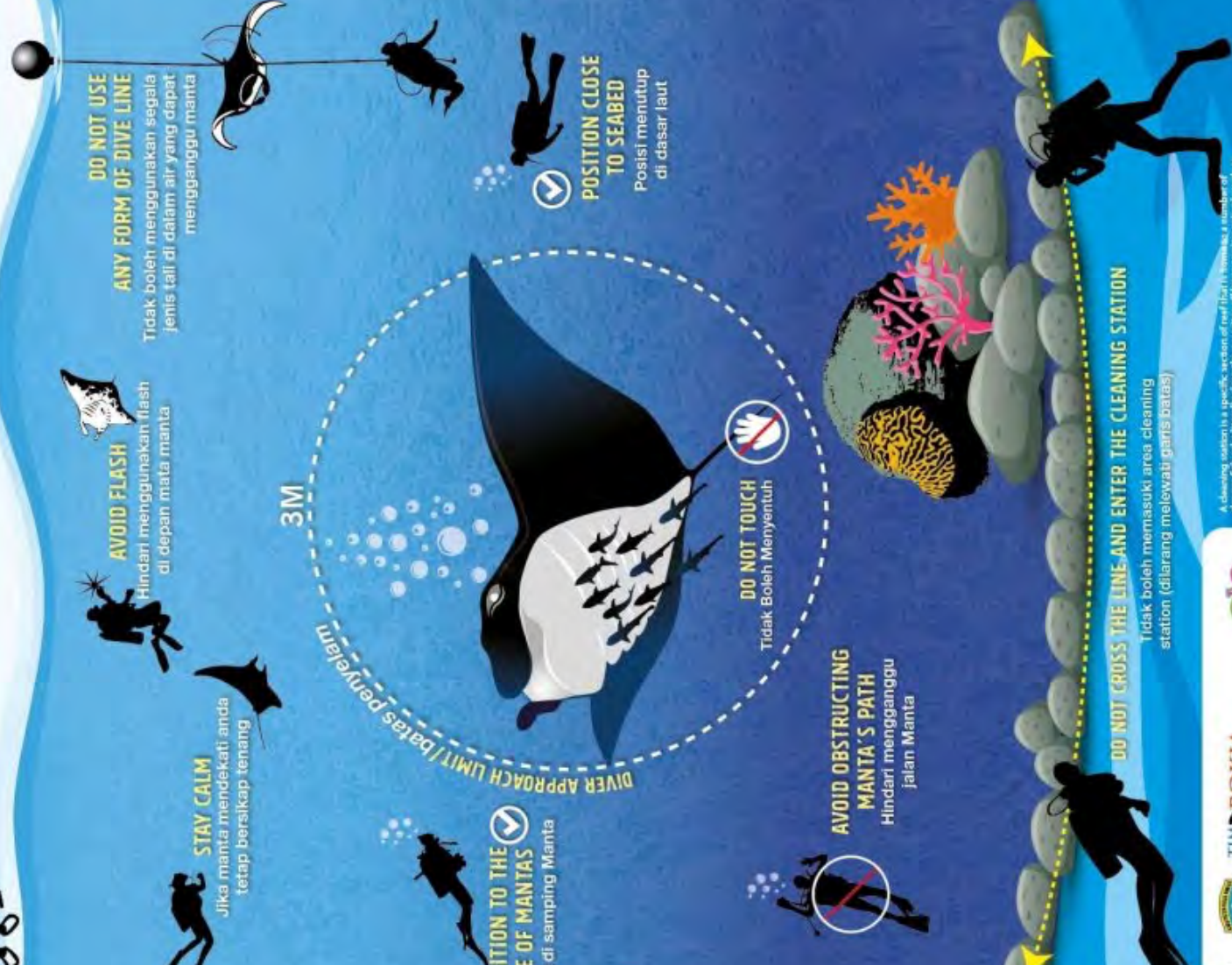
## STANDARD OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE





# DI MANTA SANDY PENYELAM

## Code of Conduct for Divers at Manta Sandy



A cleaning station is a specific section of reef flat it's home to a number of cleaner fish, who literally clean the parasites off large marine animals such as sharks, rays and larger bony fish.  
Bukan merupakan lokasi tertentu yang sudah rumah bagi ikan pembersih, yang membersihkan parasit dari hewan-hewan besar seperti hiu, pari dan ikan bony.

**Source: Manta Trust**



# HOW TO SWIM WITH MANTA RAYS

By following this Tourism Code of Conduct, you will avoid disturbing the mantas you encounter. At the same time you will increase your chance of having a life-changing experience with these gentle giants.



## STEP 1

**Enter the water quietly and calmly**, no closer than 10 meters / 33 feet from the manta ray.

## STEP 2

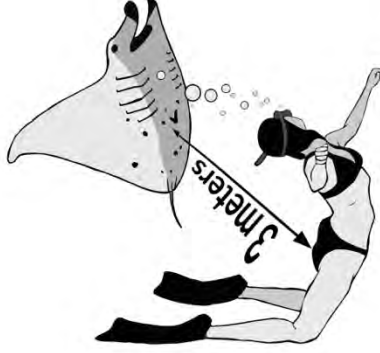
Keep your **fins below the water's surface** when swimming. Splashing and noise can scare mantas away, so you want to approach as quietly as possible.

## STEP 3

**Do NOT approach closer than 3 meters / 10 feet.** Instead, remain still and let the manta come to you.

## STEP 4

You should **approach the manta from their side**, giving them a clear path ahead.



## STEP 5

As the manta swims past you, **do NOT chase after it!** You will never catch up to a manta anyway, and will likely scare it away in the process.



## STEP 6

**Do NOT touch a manta ray.** You will ruin the encounter, and may receive a fine depending on local laws.

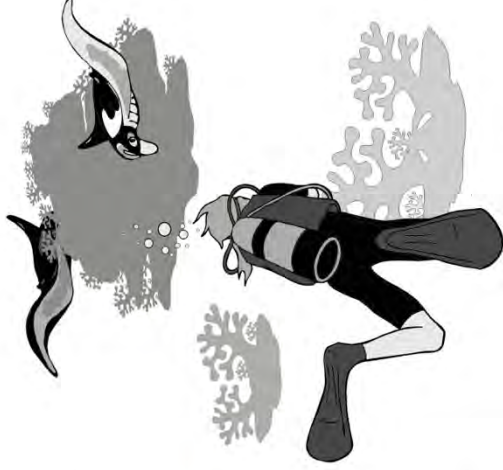


ENGLISH

## STEP 7

*For scuba divers only.*

If you are diving with mantas, you will most likely be encountering them on a cleaning station. These are important sites for manta rays.

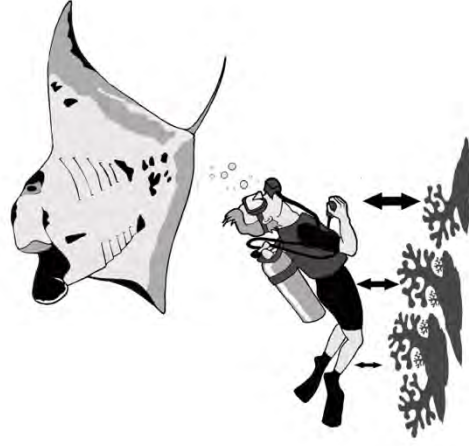


During the encounter, **remain at the side of the cleaning station. Do NOT swim onto the main cleaning area.**

## STEP 8

*For scuba divers only.*

**Keep low** and hover close to the seabed, but **be careful not to damage the reef** beneath you. Depending on the dive site, you may need to stay in an area designated for divers.



## STEP 9

*For scuba divers only.*

When a manta swims towards you, **do NOT block their path as they swim overhead.** Stay low, and stay where you are.

## STEP 10

Be sure to **follow any extra rules**, laws and regulations that may be specific to the manta site you're visiting.

To watch a film version of this guide, and learn more about sustainable manta tourism, visit:

[www.SwimWithMantas.org](http://www.SwimWithMantas.org)

This guide was created by:



[www.mantatrust.org](http://www.mantatrust.org)

    / mantatrust

# STINGRAY INTERACTION GUIDELINES

The following code of conduct is based on data and studies of wild stingray populations and how to best minimize tourist-related impacts<sup>63</sup>



CODE OF  
CONDUCT



DISPLAY  
SIGNAGE



INTRODUCTORY  
BRIEF



ENFORCEMENT



NUMBER OF  
VESSELS



NO SCUBA



EXCLUSIVE  
CONTACT



NO ACCESSORIES



SPEED



NO FEEDING



NO TOUCHING  
OR RIDING



NO SUNSCREEN



TIME IN  
PROXIMITY



NO FLASH  
PHOTOGRAPHY



NO SELFIES  
WITH ANIMALS



Source: WWF - Responsible Shark and Ray Tourism – A Guide to Best Practice



# MOBULID RAYS (MANTA AND DEVIL RAYS) INTERACTION GUIDELINES

The following code of conduct is based on the Manta Interaction Guidelines by the Manta Trust. It also reflects recent research studies<sup>24</sup>



CODE OF  
CONDUCT



DISPLAY  
SIGNAGE



INTRODUCTORY  
BRIEF



ENFORCEMENT



NUMBER OF  
VESSELS



NO SCUBA



EXCLUSIVE  
CONTACT



NO ACCESSORIES



SPEED



SPEED



NO TOWING



NO SUNSCREEN



TIME IN  
PROXIMITY



NO TOUCHING  
OR RIDING



NO FEEDING



MAX GROUP  
SIZE 10



## Seabird Guidelines

- Desktop research has not revealed any guidelines related to seabirds in the Pacific region.
- The guidelines for onshore management of seabird interactions relate to the resort industry, day-visitor operators, camping tour operators, boat tour operators, commercial and recreational fishers.
- The guidelines relating to light pollution are particularly relevant to tourism developments in both the design and operational phases.

## SOURCES

- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Annex to Resolution 11.29 (Rev. COP12) Species-Specific Guidelines for Boat-Based Wildlife Watching
- International Association Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) Guidelines for Birdwatching
- Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands, WBM Oceanics Australia and Gordon Claridge for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Environment Australia-Biodiversity Group
- Resolution 13.5/Annex – Australian Government National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds, January 2020
- DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra
- BirdLife Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines
- BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics

**Table 4.** Guideline Summary for Management of Encounters with Seabirds

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
<b>General Considerations</b>						
Never feed wild birds.		X				
Disturbing, chasing, or harassing animals should be prohibited.	X				Do not flush birds.	
Never use fish guts or oil (chumming) to attract birds.		X				
Develop interpretation material and conduct public education activities to target groups of recreational visitors to seabird breeding islands. Brochures, videos, talks and other awareness tools can help make visitors aware of the potential for disturbance.			X			

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
When visiting popular birding locations, share the best views with other birders and avoid any behaviour that may disrupt birds or distract other birders. Keep conversation to a minimum, turn off mobile phones and avoid using flash photography that may disturb birds or birders.					X	
Birdwatchers, volunteers, commercial tour operators, environmental consultants and volunteer guides are encouraged to contribute their observations to bird databases e.g. birddata <relevant to Pacific?>					X	
<b>Tourism Specific</b>						
Commercial tour operators and bird guides must follow all local and state and territory-based tourism regulations to protect guest safety, business and birdwatching reputation and bird and habitat welfare. This includes obtaining and maintaining all correct commercial vehicle licenses, insurances, accreditations and permits to operate in the areas you operate in.					X	
<p>Commercial and volunteer tour leaders should promote ethical birding and educate participants on bird conservation.</p> <p>Aim to impart accurate information to participants that enhances appreciation and respect for the places visited and areas that matter most for birds and wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Educate participants on the importance of following ethical birding principles</li> <li>– Promote an understanding of the area visited and the issues which affect the management and long-term protection of the area;</li> <li>– Help participants understand the factors that led to the small populations and ranges of endangered species and what can be done to ensure their long-term survival.</li> </ul>					X	

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
Group leaders and tour operators bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of someone's birding aspirations or a company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to bird databases. Limit group sizes to reduce the impact on the environment and do not interfere with others using the same area.					X	
Before setting out on an excursion, find out the level of knowledge and experience within the group you are leading. This will provide a good platform to promote the principles of ethical birding and to publicise the issues pertaining to bird conservation at the right level for your group.					X	
When the opportunity arises, the tour operator or volunteer leader should also seek to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Involve participants in activities which have a positive impact on the location being visited (e.g. voluntary conservation work)</li> <li>– Encourage participants to record observations in bird data etc., which may contribute to the overall understanding of the area being visited;</li> <li>– Use local businesses to provide services for the tour group to give local communities an additional incentive to conserve their natural environment.</li> </ul>					X	
<b>Method of Approach - Marine</b>						
The boat operator should reduce speed in areas with high probability of finding seabirds.	< 6 knots					
When seabirds are observed in the <b>water</b> , a caution zone should be set around the bird aggregation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The caution zone represents the minimum distance between an animal and a vessel.</li> <li>– The caution zone varies according to the type of vessel, method of propulsion and manoeuvrability.</li> </ul>	30 – 100 metres according to vessel size					

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
When seabirds on <b>land</b> are observed, a caution zone should be set around the bird aggregation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The caution zone represents the minimum distance between an animal and a vessel.</li> <li>– The caution zone varies according to the type of vessel, method of propulsion and manoeuvrability.</li> </ul>	30 – 100 metres according to vessel size					
When in the caution zone, boat operators should keep a low speed.	< 6 knots					
In the caution zone, boat operators should maintain constant and predictable direction at low speed.	< 6 knots					
Chasing, pursuing and trying to approach animal/s showing early signs of disturbance or not interested in interacting with the vessel should be prohibited.						
At first sign of stress, boat operators should gently move away from the animal.	X					
If an animal approaches the boat, the operator should engage in neutral gear and allow the animal to pass.	X					
On departing, the boat operator should wait until animals are away from the vessel. Boat operators should check bow and stern before engaging the propeller.	X					
While departing the caution zone, boat operators should keep a slow speed and should not be allowed to accelerate until the waiting zone is reached.	< 6 knots					
Avoid boat operations in waters where birds enter and exit, are bathing, or are feeding close to colonies. This is particularly important if birds are moulting near the shore.		X				
<b>Method of Approach – Terrestrial</b>						
Approach or depart a landing site or colony slowly to minimize any disturbance.		X				
Staff/crew should assess the best landing point – ideally as far from groups of birds as possible.		X				

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Once onshore, walk slowly and encourage passengers to simply pause and watch the animals. Avoid blocking 'highways' in colonies and water entry and exit points. Do not delay the return of parent birds to their nests by blocking access routes. Blocking access can increase predation of eggs and chicks.		X				
Take care in grassy areas where birds may be nesting, including in burrows under bare earth.		X			Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist.	
If seabirds start dive-bombing, retreat in the direction you approached from without walking backwards. They may be protecting nests or young that you cannot see.		X				
<b>Level of Activity - Marine</b>						
Wherever necessary, a maximum number of vessels allowed in the caution zone and interacting simultaneously with an aggregation of seabirds should be set.	X					
Wherever possible, the maximum duration of interaction for each vessel should be limited.	X					
Boat-based watching tours targeting seabirds should be conducted only during day time, for a limited number of hours per day to avoid disrupting resting behaviour. <i>The cumulative daily impact of tours in an area should be considered when establishing a maximum time for interaction.</i> <i>The maximum cumulative interaction time should be kept to a minimum when tours occur in feeding and mating areas.</i>	X					
Where considered necessary, operators should be required to coordinate their activities so that target species are not continuously disturbed throughout the day.	X					
<b>Seabird Interactions – Marine</b>						
When in the vicinity of seabird concentrations at sea, stay on the fringes of these concentrations; ships and small vessels should keep a distance of at least 100 metres, small boats and human powered watercraft at least 30 metres.		X				

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
Boat operators and tour guides should avoid excessive noise in proximity of seabirds.	X					
Feeding seabirds in the wild should always be prohibited, unless studies have shown that no negative effect results from this activity.	X Under no circumstances should 'chumming' occur to attract birds south of 60°					
<b>Seabird Interactions - Onshore</b>						
Seabird-watching activities at breeding sites should be strictly managed and restricted to only a small section of a colony.	X		Establish activity zones to limit the movement of visitors to the least sensitive parts of seabird breeding islands and designate these with fences, markers, signs etc.			
Limit numbers of people in onshore environments after sunset and before sunrise.			X			
Erect educational signs on seabird breeding islands informing visitors of the ways in which they can avoid affecting breeding seabirds.			X			
Restrict daytrip visits so that people do not arrive less than two hours after sunrise and do depart at least two hours before sunset.			X			
Ensure that all waste, including any discarded fishing line and tackle is removed off the island on departure.			X			
<b>Resorts and Coastal Properties</b>						
Confine activities to designated areas, including camping grounds, pathways and boardwalks, boat landing sites, moorings and fishing areas.			X			
Provide appropriate waste bins and educate guests about carelessly disposing of cigarette butts.			X			

Management of Encounters with Seabirds	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	IAATO Guidelines for Birdwatching	Guidelines for Managing Visitation to Seabird Breeding Islands in Australia (GBRMPA)	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	BirdLife Australia Australia Ethical Birdwatching Guidelines	BirdLife Australia Photography Code of Ethics
Provide appropriate facilities to protect breeding areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Construction of hard surface pathways or boardwalks through colony areas to prevent trampling of burrows for burrow nesting species</li> <li>– Erecting screening fences to avoid disturbance of birds</li> <li>– Installing appropriate viewing facilities to reduce random access to the breeding area</li> <li>– Restricting human presence to the beach so that this is not visible to the nesting birds.</li> </ul>			X			
Erect educational signs on seabird breeding islands informing visitors of the ways in which they can avoid affecting breeding seabirds.			X			
Provide clear instructions to island visitors to keep to pathways and to avoid handling or disturbing any birds on the ground.			X			
Work with commercial operators (e.g. tour operators, resort managers) to ensure that their patrons do not adversely affect seabird breeding activity.			X			
Establish fixed offshore boating zones around sensitive islands, including a boat-free zone for a distance of 200 metres from the high water mark around the island (if small) or from high water mark where colonies occur close to shore (if larger).			X			
Locate moorings (if and where they are provided) sufficiently far from any seabird colony to ensure that disturbance of seabirds by or from boats does not occur.						
Birders should keep an appropriate distance from all birds they observe, noting that some species are more disturbance prone than others.					X	



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Stay at least 5 metres away from nesting seabirds.		X			Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas and important feeding sites.	
Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist, keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.					X	
If laser pointers are used to indicate the location of a bird, only indicate the tree or branch a bird is sitting on and never point it at the bird itself.					X	
Call playback for the purposes of recreational bird observation is not recommended. If playback is used, use playback for < 5min per site, for < 30 seconds at a time followed by a 1 minute break and at volumes below the bird's natural call volume.					X	
Touching or attempting to touch seabirds in the wild should be prohibited.	X					
Do not use drones.					X	
<b>Aircraft</b>						
No aircraft should fly across a seabird breeding island at less than 1500 feet altitude.			X			
No aircraft should fly across a seabird breeding island at less than 1500 feet altitude.			X			
Unless on a specific reconnaissance of the island for coastal surveillance or as part of an approved research project, no aircraft should fly within 1000 metres laterally of a seabird breeding island.			X			
breeding island no more than once within any 3 minutes within any 30-minute period with minimal circling or other such manoeuvres.			X			

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Where flights over breeding colonies are permitted, research or coastal surveillance planes should fly over a seabird breeding island no more than once within any 3 minutes within any 30-minute period with minimal circling or other such manoeuvres.			X			
Where burrow-nesting species occur, helicopter landings and take-offs should only occur only between sunrise and sunset.			X			
Helicopter landings and take-offs should only occur on the edge of an island, with the approach being over the sea and the landing site screened from and located at least 300 metres from any surface-nesting seabirds.			X			
Helicopters should not be permitted to land on a seabird breeding island with surface- or tree-nesting species other than noddies, and then only where a formalised program for monitoring of impacts is undertaken.			X			
Where it is essential for helicopters to land on seabird breeding islands or for seaplanes to land offshore from such islands (e.g. for emergency medical evacuation or for emergency servicing of navigational aids), use should be made of topography and vegetation to screen aircraft movements from the breeding area and in the case of servicing navigational aids, a staff member from the island management agency should accompany the first visit to brief the repair crew.			X			
<b>Photography</b>						
The welfare of birds, and their habitat, must always come before the capture of the photograph.						X
Photographers should keep an appropriate distance from birds at all times, keep well back from sensitive areas, avoid harassing, flushing or pursuing birds in the pursuit of photographic opportunities, and should not alter the environment to clear the path for the photograph.						X
All relevant regulations and local signs should be obeyed.						X

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Photographers must take great care to avoid disturbing birds in, at or near nests.						X
<p>In relation to nesting birds, photographers must NOT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– handle the nest or the young birds</li> <li>– damage, trample or otherwise modify vegetation that results in exposing a nest</li> <li>– startle a bird as that may cause it to accidentally break or eject the eggs or cause the premature eruption of young from the nest</li> <li>– be in the vicinity of nests in early mornings, dusk or inclement weather when any desertion by a parent may result in the eggs/young becoming cold</li> <li>– use flash on a nesting bird</li> <li>– show undue attention to an otherwise well-camouflaged nest (e.g. birds nesting on the beach or in dense foliage), which may attract predators or human interest.</li> </ul>						X
Do not use bird call playback for attracting birds for observation or photography.						X
Do not engage in photographing birds that have been attracted by a third-party using call playback.						X
Do not encourage third parties to use call playback to attract birds.						X
If playing calls for the purpose of identification, this should be brief, undertaken at low volumes, and if possible take place at a location where it will not impact the bird in question. If convenient, earphones should be used in the field.						X
Use flash sparingly in general bird photography, whether as a fill flash or as a primary light source. The behaviour of the bird should be observed and the photographer should move on if the bird shows signs of being startled or distressed.						X
Do not use drones for capturing photographs of birds.						X

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<b>Minimising Light Pollution</b>						
Tourism operations around seabird colonies should manage torch usage so birds are not disturbed.				X		
Consider installing educational signage around seabird colonies where tourism visitation is generally unsupervised.				X		
Vessels working in seabird foraging areas during breeding season should implement a seabird management plan to prevent seabird landings on the ship, manage birds appropriately and report the interaction.				X		
Implement lighting management actions during the breeding season, particularly during the nesting and fledgling periods.				X		
Maintain a dark zone between seabird rookery and any light sources - avoid installing lights or manage all outdoor lighting within three kilometres of a seabird rookery.				X		
Turn off lights during fledgling season. If not possible to extinguish lights, consider curfews, dimming options, or changes on light spectra (preferably towards lights with low blue emissions). Fledglings can be attracted back towards lights on land as they fly out to sea.				X		
Use curfews to manage lighting. Extinguish lights around seabird rookery during the fledgling period by 7 pm as fledglings leave their nest early in the evening.				X		
Aim lights downwards and direct them away from nesting areas. Aim light onto only the surface area requiring illumination. Use shielding to prevent light spill into the air and outside the footprint of the target area.				X		
Use flashing/intermittent lights instead of fixed beam, e.g. small red flashing lights can be used to identify an entrance or delineate a pathway.				X		
Use motion sensors to turn lights on only when needed.				X		

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Prevent indoor lighting reaching outdoor environment. Use fixed window screens or window tinting on fixed windows and skylights to contain light inside buildings.				X		
Manage artificial light on jetties, wharves, marinas, etc. Fledglings and adults may be attracted to lights on marine facilities and become grounded or collide with infrastructure.				X		
Reduce unnecessary outdoor, deck lighting on all vessels in known seabird foraging areas at sea. Extinguishing outdoor/deck lights when not necessary for human safety and restrict lighting at night to navigation lights.				X		
Use block-out blinds on all portholes and windows.				X		
Avoid lights containing short wavelength violet/blue light and avoid white LEDs.				X		

## Marine Turtle Guidelines

### NOTES

Desktop research revealed only Cook Islands has in place management arrangements related to turtle watching in the Pacific region. Guidelines for turtle tour operators are communicated through a MOU between Cook Islands Tourism and operators.

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife Unep/Cms/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2
- DCCEEW 2023, National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra
- Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards - A project of the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network (WFEN)
- Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia
- Coral Reef Alliance Turtle Watching Good Practice Guide

### SOURCES

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Species-specific Guidelines for Boat-based Wildlife Watching, Resolution 11.29 (Rev.COP12)/Annex

**Table 5.** Guideline Summary for Management of Encounters with Marine Turtles

Management of Encounters with Marine Turtles	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards, Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)	Coral Reef Alliance	Cook Islands MOU
<b>General Conditions</b>							
Living specimens of protected wildlife species must only be kept by authorized or licensed facilities that are equipped with trained staff to house and care for them humanely.			X				
Boats, personalised water craft and/or non-motorized craft must respect closed areas designated as “turtle refuges” or closed marine reserves where all water traffic is prohibited.			X				
Operators using motorised vessels agree to engage with and abide by							X

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Ministry of Transport (Maritime Safety) rules and guidelines to ensure their safe operation.							
The parties agree to operate in an environmentally responsible manner and to promote and support environmentally sustainable principles and practices.							X
Turtle tour operators agree to place high priority on the wellbeing of the turtles, rays and other marine life when conducting their operations, with human safety being the only component superseding this.							X
Turtle tour operators agree to operate in a manner that minimises damage or other adverse effects to coral and/or other important components of the marine ecosystem.							X
Feeding marine turtles in the wild should be forbidden.	X		Turtles (and other wildlife species) must not be provisioned or otherwise offered food.		Do not feed or attempt to feed marine turtles or throw any object in the water near them.	Do not touch or feed turtles.	
Touching or attempting to touch or catch marine turtles in the wild should be prohibited.	X	Prohibit physical interaction, including to take, touch, handle, ride, step on, hold on to, hold or move the turtles.	Guests/customers must not be permitted to touch eggs, nor to touch, chase, catch or ride hatchlings or adult turtles.		Do not touch or attempt to touch a marine turtle during any interaction.	Do not touch or feed turtles. Never try to spear, harass, catch, or ride turtles.	X
Take all litter home with you; rubbish can kill, especially when it is mistaken for food.			Plastic bottles and bags should not be brought on, or distributed during, sea turtle		No littering, food scraps or sewage from vessels operating in marine	X	

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			encounters. All trash – including food waste – must be secured and properly disposed of at the end of the encounter. Any trash, fishing line, or other debris found floating in the water must be removed and properly disposed of.		turtle habitats.		
Motorized craft should use four stroke rather than two stroke engines in areas where marine turtles forage.			X				
Propeller guards should be used.			X				
Boat engines must be switched off once the boat is secured.			X				
Guests/customers must be advised not to use insect repellents containing DEET prior to or during on land or in water marine turtle encounter.			X				
Guests/customers must be advised not to use sunscreens containing oxybenzone and octinoxate prior to or during any in-water marine turtle encounter.			X				
Do not utilize, offer for sale (directly or via third party) any marine turtle parts, meat, eggs, shell or by products.			X			Do not buy or sell turtle products— turtles are strictly protected under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and most	



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national laws.							
<b>Health and Safety</b>							
Boat operators must comply with local regulations for the safe number of passengers for the size of boat and provision of life jackets.			X				
All parties will work together to promote effective water safety protocols and practices, encouraging and supporting best-practice.							X
Turtle tour operators agree to provide appropriate care and/or medical attention required by either customers or staff while under their duty of care. In the event of an emergency situation, all parties agree to work collaboratively to help coordinate effective rescue procedures.							X
Turtle tour operators will conduct a thorough safety assessment of operating conditions before all tours, consulting with other operators whenever possible. If unsure, have an experienced guide physically assess conditions in the passage.							X
Turtle tour operators will provide appropriate safety information and conduct a robust in-person safety briefing for all customers prior to their tour commencing.							X
Turtle tour operators will ensure an assessment of customer swimming ability is conducted at an appropriate							X

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stage within their individual operating models, with the ability to tailor the turtle tour experience to reflect this ability.							
Turtle tour operators will maintain close proximity, supervision, and potential assistance to all customers while in the water, with appropriate SOP's in place to ensure their continued safety.							X
Turtle tour operators will ensure that rescue tubes, first aid kits, and life jackets are readily available for every tour. Guests may opt for life jackets.							X
<b>Customer Service</b>							
The parties acknowledge their responsibility both individually and collectively in ensuring a high standard of customer service.							X
The parties agree to deliver what is promised to the customer in a high-quality, professional and timely manner.							X
Turtle tour operators acknowledge the high duty of care they have for their customers and agree to run their operations in a manner that strives to exceed customer needs/expectations throughout all components of their turtle tour experience.							X
All parties agree to provide the opportunity for customers to give feedback on the level of service							X

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provided, with any complaints acknowledged and dealt with either through formal internal procedures, or (if needed) through the official complaints processes facilitated by either CIT, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs.							
<p>The parties agree to operate their businesses in a manner that demonstrates consideration for the community in which they operate within, with appropriate respect given to the Aronga Mana, landowners, and wider community.</p> <p>The parties also agree to act in good faith towards each other at all times, and to strive for a unified and cooperative culture from both an operational and public-facing perspective.</p>							X
<b>Approach – Marine Environment</b>							
When travelling through marine turtle habitat, reduce the likelihood of collision by using wide and deep channels away from shallow areas, seagrass beds and coral reefs. Channels that are narrow at a low tide should be avoided wherever possible.					X		
The boat operator should reduce speed in areas with high probability of finding marine turtles.	< 3 - 5 knots	Vessel speeds may not exceed 5 knots within 500m of a turtle foraging area, or if a turtle is sighted from the vessel.			In high risk areas, vessels should travel at no wake speed. Vessel speed should be reduced to no wake speed immediately when a turtle is seen	Watch for turtles while boating—boat strikes can kill.	

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					within 30m of the vessel.		
Wherever possible, outboard motors on vessels in important habitats should be able to tilt up in the event of a collision (i.e. not locked down) to reduce the force of impact.					X		
If watching turtles, put the engine in neutral and allow animal(s) to continue their normal behaviour without disturbance.					X		
A caution zone should be set around an individual or group of marine turtles.	From 20 metres to 100 m		Turtles must be viewed from a distance of at least 10 metres (32 feet) at all times while the vessel is underway. The only time this distance may be less is when a turtle chooses to approach the boat.				
In the caution zone, boat operators should maintain constant and predictable direction at low speed.	< 5 knots						
When in the caution zone, boat operators should approach the animal/s from the side at a low speed.	< 5 knots					Approach turtles slowly and calmly and move away if they show signs of distress.	
Boats, personal water crafts and/or non-motorized craft waiting to observe a turtle must maintain a distance of at least 45 metres.			X				
Trapping an animal or a group of marine turtles should be forbidden.	X		Turtles must always have a clear route to leave the area		Be aware of any other vessels in the area and		Ensure that turtles are given a means of escape (i.e., not

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Boat operators should position their vessels to leave enough space for the animal/s to swim away and/or for surfacing.			if they choose. Boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized vessels must not approach the turtle from the front, blocking its direction of swimming.		communicate to avoid collision, disturbance or entrapment of an animal in the area.		completely surrounded), and that their ability to surface is not compromised whenever possible.
Disturbing, chasing, harassing or herding animals should be prohibited.	X		Turtles must never be circled, chased or harassed by boats, PWCs and/or nonmotorized craft in any way.			When in the water, keep your distance and avoid startling turtles. Do not disturb resting, sleeping or feeding turtles.	
Chasing, pursuing and trying to approach animal/s showing early signs of disturbance or not interested in interacting with the vessel should be forbidden.	X				If marine turtles display any signs of avoidance behaviour, or flee the area to avoid contact, do not pursue them.		
At first sign of stress, boat operators should gently move away from the animal.	X						
Where possible, boating over seagrass and shallow areas should be prohibited.	X						
Anchoring on seagrass or coral reef areas should be prohibited.	X		Damage to coral must be avoided. Collecting pieces of coral, bumping into it with boats or standing on it are all prohibited. In shallow areas where sea grass is growing, boats must lift their motors and drift, or pole the boat to avoid damaging the plants.		No anchoring in seagrass beds or on coral. If observing turtles in these areas, allowing the vessel to drift (with engine in neutral) or using a permanent mooring is best.		
Avoid overnight anchoring/mooring in					X		

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the vicinity of turtle nesting beaches during nesting/hatchling season. If vessel is anchored at night in the vicinity of a nesting beach during these periods, minimise externally visible lighting to avoid disturbing nesting turtles or attracting hatchlings Anchor at least 1 nautical mile from nesting location if possible.							
If an animal approaches the boat, the operator should engage in neutral gear and allow the animal to pass.							
On departing, the boat operator should wait until animals are away from the vessel. Boat operators should check bow and stern before engaging the propeller.	min 30m				When terminating an interaction, allow vessel to drift or idle away to a safe distance before accelerating gradually to appropriate speed (no wake speed). Keep a lookout and check the bow and stern before engaging propeller.		
While departing the caution zone, boat operators should keep a slow speed and should not be allowed to accelerate until the waiting zone is reached.	< 5 knots						
<b>Level of Activity – Vessel Management</b>							
The maximum number of vessels allowed in the caution zone and interacting simultaneously with an individual or a group of marine turtles should be limited.	2		No more than two boats, PWCs and/or non-motorized craft must be close to a single turtle at any one time.				
The maximum duration of interaction	30 minutes						

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for each vessel should be limited.							
Boat-based watching tours targeting marine turtles should be conducted only during daytime.	Daytime, up to a maximum of 8 hours per day.						
No boat-based activity should be allowed in front of a nesting beach during the nesting season.	X						
A waiting zone should be set around the caution zone to allow for other vessels to wait for their turn to interact with marine turtles.	100 to 500 m						
When an individual or a group of marine turtles are engaged in interaction, other vessels should wait in the waiting zone.	X						
Where considered necessary, operators should be required to coordinate their activities so that target species are not continuously disturbed throughout the day.	X						
<b>Marina management/hire of personal watercraft</b>							
For enterprises that utilize or manage a marine area, a vessel free zone (for both motored and non-motorized craft) should be demarcated as part of the conservation plan for the enterprise.			X				
Signs must be posted explaining the restrictions on the use of boats, personalised water craft and nonmotorized craft and the reasons for			X				

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these.							
Guests must sign a form to say they understand the risks that personalised water craft can cause to turtles and that they will meet the restrictions on personalised water craft before they are permitted to use them.			X				
<b>In Water Interactions (Swim With Guidelines)</b>							
The ratio of guests/customers to guides must be appropriate in relation to the type of activity involved and the local context and be agreed with the partner marine turtle conservation organization			X				Maintain a safety ratio of (minimum) 1 guide for every 4 guests in the water. This means that the number of guides considered for this ratio are those that are actively supervising turtle tours in the water. Guides who are not physically in the water are considered additional support.
Guides must ensure that they have control of their group and are able to keep everyone together behind them.			X				
An attending adult must take responsibility for any minor under the age of 18.			X				
Guests must sign a form to say they will meet the standards on appropriate behaviour when a marine turtle is encountered before they are permitted to swim, snorkel or scuba dive.			X				
Snorkelling and diving vessels operated by the certified enterprise must fly the			X				



Management of Encounters with Marine Turtles	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards, Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)	Coral Reef Alliance	Cook Islands MOU
universally recognized dive flag to notify nearby vessels that there are people in the water.							
Group leaders for organized in-water activities must be easily recognized (e.g. This could be by wearing coloured bandanas or t-shirts.)			X				
Create no-interaction zones off nesting beaches during the nesting season to prevent disturbance of turtles approaching or leaving the beach.		X					
In the case of 'swim-with' activities, the implementation of separate swim only and boat only zones should be considered in addition to the caution and no approach zones.	X						
Maximum 5 people at the minimum distance, body length of the animal or 3m, whichever is greater.		X			Don't approach a turtle closer than arm's length.		Maintain a minimum 3-metre distance from turtles and rays whenever possible.
Snorkellers and divers to approach from one side and avoid 'enclosing' the turtle from above as it inhibits the turtle's ability to surface and breathe.		X			When there are several divers present, avoid crowding or surrounding turtles.		
Prohibit scuba diving interactions in core feeding and resting areas to minimise disturbances to animals in these sensitive states.		X					
To avoid confusion and possible return to the beach, do not illuminate hatchlings in the water.		X					
Swimmers, snorkellers and scuba divers must minimize noise and splash when entering the water.			X		Swim slowly and calmly.		

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Improve in water encounters with marine turtles by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swimming slowly and calmly.</li> <li>Approaching turtles from side-on to a distance which does not cause the turtle to change its behaviour.</li> </ul>					X		
Enterprises must carry out random checks on guests that are carrying out unsupervised swimming, snorkelling or scuba diving in all areas utilized by marine turtles to ensure they are abiding by these standards.			X				
When night diving, minimise disturbance to resting or sleeping turtles by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimising use of light near turtles.</li> <li>Shining light on the turtle's shell only, not the head.</li> <li>Avoiding the use of flashes/strobes near the turtle's head and eyes.</li> </ul>					X		
During turtle breeding season find alternate dive sites to those near main nesting beaches for night dives.					X		
Guests must follow the instructions of swimming guides, dive masters or other supervisors of water activities involving turtles.			X				
Diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs) are prohibited.			X		Do not use underwater scooters.		
If guests encounter turtles when swimming, snorkelling or scuba diving			X				

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they must maintain a minimum distance of at least two human body lengths.							
Swimmers, snorkelers or scuba divers must not swim on top or position themselves above turtles especially when the turtle is swimming to the surface to breathe.			X				X
Do not obstruct the turtle path to, and permanence at, the surface.		X	X				
If there is more than one person in the water, they must all approach the turtle from one side to avoid enclosing it. There must be one direction that the turtle can use to leave the area without being trapped between swimmers, snorkelers, scuba divers, vessels, or other obstacles.			X				
If night swimming, snorkelling or scuba diving takes place, flashlights must never be pointed directly at turtles.			X				
Swimmers, snorkelers or scuba divers must not enter areas that are designated as vessel-free and recreation-free zones.			X				
Inappropriate behaviour of other guests must be reported to the swimming or snorkelling guide, dive master, park ranger or other supervisor, or if none of these are available, the resort.			X				
<b>Encounters on land</b>							
Guests must be discouraged from going			X				

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onto the beach at night on their own during the nesting and hatching season and instead, if they wish to view marine turtles, they must be encouraged to sign up for organized tours or encounters.							
Guests should be encouraged to wear dark clothing to minimize any disturbance of turtles.			X				
Before the marine turtle watch or encounter begins, the guide must familiarize the guests on the entire nesting process, and clearly explain the rules for guests.			X				
Guides must keep guests in an organized formation behind them to ensure their group does not surprise or frighten a female emerging from the sea or hatchlings heading to the sea.			X				
Groups should be kept off the beach until another guide or turtle spotter indicates that there is an opportunity to view egg laying or hatchling emergence.			X				
Guests must not be allowed to block the movement of hatchlings or adult turtles.			X				
Mobile phones must be switched to silent and remain in pockets during turtle encounters.			X				
Flash photography must not be used. Mobile phones may be used to take non-flash pictures only when the guide indicates that it is appropriate to do so.			X				Operators will not use flash photography.

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Flashlights must use true wavelength red LED bulbs.			X				
Flashlights must not be shone so that they illuminate the head of the turtle.			X				
Only one flashlight per group, held by the guide, should be used once the group has reached a turtle.			X				
Noise must be kept to a minimum – guests/customers must be instructed to speak quietly.			X				
Movement around the turtles and hatchlings must be minimized – guests/customers must be instructed to move slowly.			X				
<b>Nesting Season</b>							
<b>Pre-Nesting Phase:</b>					X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– On sighting a turtle emerging from water. All movements should stop, lights out.</li> <li>– Allow turtle to move unimpeded.</li> <li>– Do not use a torch before egg laying.</li> <li>– Flash photography not allowed.</li> </ul>							
During the nesting and hatching season pet dogs must only be permitted on marine turtle nesting beaches when they are under control and on a lead.			X		X	Keep pets, especially dogs, away as they can endanger eggs and hatchlings.	
<b>Nest Building Phase:</b>					X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Remain behind nesting turtle at all times.</li> <li>– Do not use a torch before egg</li> </ul>							

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laying begins. – Flash photography not allowed during this phase. – Do not touch turtle.							
<b>Egg laying phase:</b> – Minimise use of lights – Flash photography not allowed until it is established that the turtle has settled into laying. Once this is established, keep flash photographs to an absolute minimum and only from behind the egg-laying turtle, or off to one side – not in front. – No lights near the turtle's head.					X		
<b>Nest Covering and return to sea:</b> – Stand back from turtle during nest covering. – Observe minimum approach distance to a nesting turtle. – Minimal use of flash photography – only from behind or side. – Allow turtle to move unimpeded. – No lights or flash photography when turtle returns to the sea.					Between 1 – 10 metres.		
If turtle walks to view nesting adults or emerging hatchlings, or organized trips to swim or dive with marine turtles are offered, participating guests must be accompanied by trained local experts or guides during the entire activity.			X				
Turtles are very vulnerable on land and			Guides must not allow			X	

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<p>if startled, a turtle may return to the sea before her eggs can be successfully laid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stay quiet and move slowly.</li> <li>– Do not approach or photograph any turtles that have not yet laid their eggs.</li> <li>– Make minimal use of flashlights and never shine lights directly into a turtle's face.</li> <li>– Approach from behind and keep low to the ground.</li> <li>– Move away if the turtle shows signs of distress.</li> <li>– Never disturb turtle eggs or hatchlings.</li> </ul> <p>Limit viewing to 30 minutes at a time.</p>			<p>guests/customers to approach a turtle until she has started laying eggs and is less likely to be disturbed by the presence of people.</p>				
<p>Guests/customers must be kept at least 1.5 metres away from the turtle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– When the turtle starts to dig the nest guests/customers must be kept behind the front flippers of a nesting turtle and away from her head.</li> <li>– Once a turtle has begun camouflaging the nest, guests/customers must be instructed to keep further back.</li> </ul>			X				
<b>Hatchlings</b>							
Manage guests to ensure they do not touch hatchlings.			X			Do not touch or handle hatchlings.	

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Nests must not be excavated for the purpose of allowing tourists to see hatchlings: Hatchlings must be allowed to emerge naturally.			X		Do not disturb nest or assist emerging hatchlings.		
Hatchlings must be allowed to crawl to the sea without being disturbed.			X		Allow hatchlings to tun to the sea without disturbance or assistance.	Do not interfere with their crawl to the sea.	
Guests must be organized so they stand behind the nest and away from the hatchlings’ path to the sea. If needed, guests should be positioned so as to shield the hatchlings from the light so they can orientate themselves to find the sea.			X		Stand still when hatchlings are running down the beach to avoid stepping on them.		
Once hatchlings enter the sea, guests must stay back from the water and must not assist or “right” any hatchlings that are washed back onto shore, with the exception of misdirected hatchlings impacted by light pollution.			X				
Never photograph hatchlings—they are very sensitive to light.					Minimal use of camera flash and only when hatchlings are emerging from nest. No flash photography of hatchlings as they move down the beach. Do not illuminate hatchlings in the water.	X	

Beach Management – Nesting Season



Management of Encounters with Marine Turtles	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards, Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)	Coral Reef Alliance	Cook Islands MOU
Create no-interaction zones off nesting beaches during the nesting season to prevent disturbance of turtles approaching or leaving the beach.		X					
Sites where marine turtles nest and forage must be protected from poachers through surveillance and reporting to the relevant authorities any evidence of poaching.			X				
Beaches must be regularly cleaned and litter and debris collected and removed.			X		Do not leave litter on nesting beaches.		
Wildlife proof trash/litter bins must be provided and placed for convenient disposal of garbage.			X				
Trash/litter bins must be emptied regularly.			X				
Guests must be reminded to place trash in bins or take it with them when leaving the beach or resort.			X				
Support should be given to community or conservation group efforts to carry out beach clean-ups.			X				
Beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects should be placed away from turtle nesting zones or removed from the beach before nightfall.			X		Avoid leaving chairs, beach umbrellas or other obstructions in the sand on nesting beaches at night time. Avoid placing deep buried objects in the sand above the high tide mark.	Do not leave large items (such as chairs, umbrellas or vehicles) on nesting beaches at night. These can obstruct a turtle's path and prevent egg-laying.	

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If beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects in or close to marine turtle nesting zones, cannot be completely removed from the beach they must be stacked at the end of the day during the nesting/hatching season with the shortest side facing the water.			X				
Beach furniture, recreational equipment and other large objects must be removed manually whenever possible.			X				
Beach umbrellas must either be attached to other furniture or placed in permanent holders. Umbrellas must never be thrust directly into the sand.			X				
Nest locations must be physically marked and signed to ensure beachgoers keep chairs and umbrellas at least 2 metres (6 feet.) away from the nests.			X				
If poaching is a threat, nest locations must not be physically marked, unless they are monitored 24 hours a day until the nest hatches.			X				
If poaching is a threat, nesting crawl marks must be erased with palm frond or rake before the beach starts to be used each day.			X				

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<p>Motorized vehicles, other than authorized patrol or emergency vehicles, must not drive on sandy beaches except at authorized boat haul-out sites.</p> <p>Do not drive vehicles above the high tide mark on beaches during breeding season.</p> <p>Avoid driving on beaches at night.</p>			X				
<b>Conservation Initiatives</b>							
Turtle tour operators acknowledge their responsibility as guardians of the area in which they are operating, and agree to care for and protect the land, beach/coastline, and marine environment.							X
Hotels, resorts and tour operators should collaborate with and/or support the activities of local marine turtle conservation groups.			X				
<p>Tourism enterprises must be able to work effectively to ensure a positive impact on marine turtle conservation a by having in place one of the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Employment of suitably qualified staff biologists or conservation experts; or</li> <li>— Long term partnerships with a local or regional marine turtle conservation group, marine protected area manager; or</li> </ul>			X				

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with a relevant government agency.</li> </ul>							
Guests should be encouraged to participate in citizen science opportunities managed by expert partners, such as the monitoring of biodiversity and wildlife behaviour.			X				
<p>The enterprise should have a conservation plan which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A map of the area managed by the enterprise</li> <li>A list of direct and indirect effects on marine turtles and their environment</li> <li>An assessment of habitat important to marine turtles and the habitat quality</li> <li>How any disturbance of natural ecosystems that may occur from the operations of the enterprise will be avoided, minimized and/or mitigated for.</li> <li>The plan should also include a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scope, and which addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.</li> </ul> <p>The plan should be developed with the appropriate local or regional marine turtle conservation organization, government agency, university, or experienced in-house marine turtle conservation expert,</p>			X				

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regularly reviewed and communicated to all relevant staff.							
The enterprise must appoint a member of staff to act as a Sea Turtle Steward to be responsible for management of any activities and training that could impact on sea turtles. The Sea Turtle Steward must work in collaboration with any partner sea turtle conservation agency or relevant government agency.			X				
<b>Training</b>							
All employees must receive training on these standards including the enterprise's conservation plan, to ensure they not only have seen/read these but understand them and their part in ensuring that these are met.			X				
Ensure staff are appropriately skilled/trained in safety procedures, including water safety, first aid and emergency response.							X
Ensure staff maintain a clear understanding of emergency procedures relative to their individual operations.							X
Employee training must emphasize that tourist satisfaction must not be given priority over turtle wellbeing and conservation.			X				
Training must include the potential positive and negative impacts of marine turtle tourism.			X				The parties agree to educate their guests and staff about how they can mitigate/minimise damaging

Management of Encounters with Marine Turtles	CMS Boat-based marine wildlife watching	CMS In water interactions	Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism Standards, Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network	National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, Australian Government	Code of Practice (turtle/dugong AUS)	Coral Reef Alliance	Cook Islands MOU
							effects on the turtles and surrounding environment, and the importance of marine conservation and responsible tourism practices.
Training for employees must include their roles and responsibilities with respect to environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.			X				
Employee training should include basic marine turtle biology and behaviour.			X				
All employees must be trained to identify the following and who to report it to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Suspicious human behaviour relating to marine turtles (e.g., poaching, harvesting of eggs)</li> <li>– Distressed or injured turtles</li> </ul>			X				
<b>Guest Communication</b>							
Information describing the enterprise's turtle friendly policies must be available to guests/customers either on paper or online.							
Guests should be encouraged to report marine turtle sightings (via a logbook, app, or other means) to help provide up-to-date information to scientists and government agencies.			X				
Guests/customers must be provided with information on the various species of marine turtles, their life stages, what			X				

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foods they eat, threats affecting their survival, and other relevant information.							
Guests must be notified at times of year when marine turtles and hatchlings may be present.			X				
Guests must sign a form to show that they have read information provided by the resort describing appropriate and inappropriate behaviour around turtles and hatchlings.			X				
There must be signage to direct foot traffic away from sensitive areas and alert tourists to regulations protecting marine turtles and their nesting grounds.			X				
<b>Photography</b>							
Flash photography of nesting turtles is illegal in some places. Use a camera flash very sparingly if at all and take photos only from behind to avoid blinding the turtle.						X	
Flash photography of turtles in the water is prohibited.			X				
<b>Minimising Light Pollution</b>							
Minimize beach lighting; artificial lights disorient turtles.						X	
Enterprises with beachfront areas should survey direct and indirect light sources visible from the beach and develop a plan for continuous improvement of lighting that considers			X				

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seasonal change, (for example time restrictions on lights visible from the beach during nesting and hatching seasons). During nesting and hatching season no lights should be visible from the nesting beach. Any green or cool-toned light filters should be replaced with either low pressure sodium lights, or true wavelength amber/red LED lights.							
Implement light management actions during the nesting and hatching season.				X	Minimal use of small torches/lights. on beaches.		
Avoid direct light shining onto a nesting beach or out into the ocean adjacent to a nesting beach.			X	X		Shield or switch off lighting that is visible from the beach.	
Maintain a dune and/or vegetation screen between the nesting habitat and inland sources of light.				X			
Maintain a dark zone between the turtle nesting beach and industrial infrastructure.				X			
Install light fixtures as close to the ground as practicable.			Lights are mounted as low as possible. Lights are directional. Lights are shielded.	X			
Use curfews to manage lighting.				X			
Aim lights downwards and direct them away from nesting beaches.				X			
Use flashing/intermittent lights instead of fixed beam.				X			



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Use motion sensors to turn on lights only when needed.			Motion sensitive lights are used.	X			
Prevent indoor lighting reaching the beach.			<p>Light from windows must be minimized.</p> <p>If reduction of light from windows when interior lights are on involves the guests closing curtains, shades or drapes, they must be reminded to do this (for example using stickers on light switches or informational door hangers) with explanations as to why such action is necessary.</p> <p>If the hotel has a turn down service, this must include closing the curtains, shades or drapes of beach facing windows.</p> <p>Lights should not up-light vegetation or buildings.</p> <p>Lights must not illuminate the water including in locations where there is no beach present.</p>	X			
During marine turtle nesting and hatching season fires must not be lit by the enterprise or their guests on the beach nor at any location where they are clearly visible from the beach or nearshore waters.			X		No campfires on turtle nesting beaches during breeding season.	Do not light campfires on turtle nesting beaches.	
Parking lots and roadways (including any paved or unpaved areas where vehicles will operate) should be			X			Restrict light spill from vehicle headlights by	

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positioned or screened from the beach so that headlights from approaching vehicles do not cast light onto the beach at night.						shielding the upper and lower part of the beam, producing a slit in the middle of the headlights.	
Limit the number of beach access areas or construct beach access such that artificial light is not visible through the access point.				X			
Work collectively with surrounding industry/private landholders to address the cumulative effect of artificial lights.				X			
Manage artificial light at sea, including on vessels, jetties, marinas and offshore infrastructure.				X			
Reduce unnecessary lighting at sea.				X			
Avoid lights containing short-wavelength violet/blue light/ and white LEDs.				X			
<b>Tagging &amp; Monitoring</b>							
Tagging and any other physical interactions (e.g., measuring) must only be carried out by or under the supervision of staff of approved conservation organizations, government entities, research institutions, or experienced in-house marine turtle conservation experts.			X				
Permits must be acquired from the appropriate government agencies prior to tagging and any other physical interactions with turtles.			X				

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Complete information on any tagged turtles must be submitted to the appropriate national marine turtle database.			X				
Enterprises should collaborate with scientists and research groups (e.g., universities, NGOs) to collect and share data on marine turtle behaviour and ecology and other biodiversity.			X				
Enterprises must collect standardized data on the dates and number of sightings of the following on their properties and (where possible) in surrounding waters. This information must be shared with relevant partner marine turtle conservation organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Marine turtle tracks (including width of the track leading to the pit or nest site, to help identify the species of turtle)</li> <li>– Nests (with witnessed egg-laying) including GPS coordinates</li> <li>– In-water sightings.</li> </ul>			X				

**Source:** Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species Guidelines For Recreational In-Water Interactions With Marine Wildlife Unep/Cms/Cop14/Doc.27.3.1/Annex 2


**Source:** Code of Practice for Sustainable Management of Dugong and Marine Turtle Tourism in Australia




– **Cook Islands is the only identified country with turtle specific management actions**

## Visual Guideline Samples





Source: Olive Ridley Project Sea Turtle Code of Conduct

### How to act around nesting turtles




- 1 Pay attention.** When you see a turtle coming up the beach, keep your distance, turn off any lights you are using and crouch down low. Do NOT walk closer!
- 2 Avoid loud noises.**
- 3 Do NOT take pictures of the turtle with flash.** 
- 4 Do NOT walk or stand in front of the turtle.** Only approach the turtle carefully from behind after she has started laying eggs.
- 5 Do NOT shine a flashlight in a turtle's face.** 
- 6 Do NOT touch the turtle.** If the turtle appears to be in distress or is stuck, help the turtle find its way back to the ocean or seek professional help. 

### How to act around hatching turtles


- 1 Turn off bright lights.** Lights may distract the turtles from finding their way into the water.
- 2 No flash photography.** 
- 3 Watch your step.** Be careful not to step on hatchlings on the beach. 
- 4 Do NOT handle hatchlings** unless advised otherwise by a qualified person. 
- 5** If you find hatchlings that appear disoriented or have gone inland, gently rotate the hatchlings to face the ocean and seek professional help if necessary. 

[www.oliveridleyproject.org](http://www.oliveridleyproject.org)



## Sea Turtle Code of Conduct

By following our simple code of conduct, you avoid disturbing these beautiful creatures. It will also give you the chance to experience a unique wildlife encounter.

 **OLIVE RIDLEY PROJECT**

## How to swim with turtles

- 1 Be quiet.** When swimming up to a turtle, do so as quietly as possible because loud noises may scare them away. Snorkelers should minimize splashing and talking.



- 2 Do NOT disrupt the turtle's natural behaviour.** Watch and enjoy!



- 3 Always approach turtles from the side.** This gives them a clear view of you and a clear path ahead of them if they want to swim away.



- 4 Do NOT chase after the turtle!** This can cause severe stress to the turtle.

- 5 Do NOT touch the turtle!** They can feel your touch and do not enjoy being petted.



- 6 Do NOT swim directly above the turtle.** They are reptiles and need to come to the surface to breathe.

- 7 Do not get too close!** Turtles can deliver a very strong bite.



- 8 Do NOT try to feed turtles!** They do not need your help to find food and could accidentally bite you.

## For Divers only

- 1 Pay attention.** When encountering a turtle while diving, observe them closely to see what they are doing. **Do NOT disturb resting turtles.** Always keep a distance of 1.5 meters (do not approach closer).



1.5m



- 2 Be still.** If a turtle is swimming towards you, keep still and avoid sudden movements.

- 3 Give them space.** When encountering turtles resting in caves or under overhangs, be careful to give them enough room so they can surface to breathe.



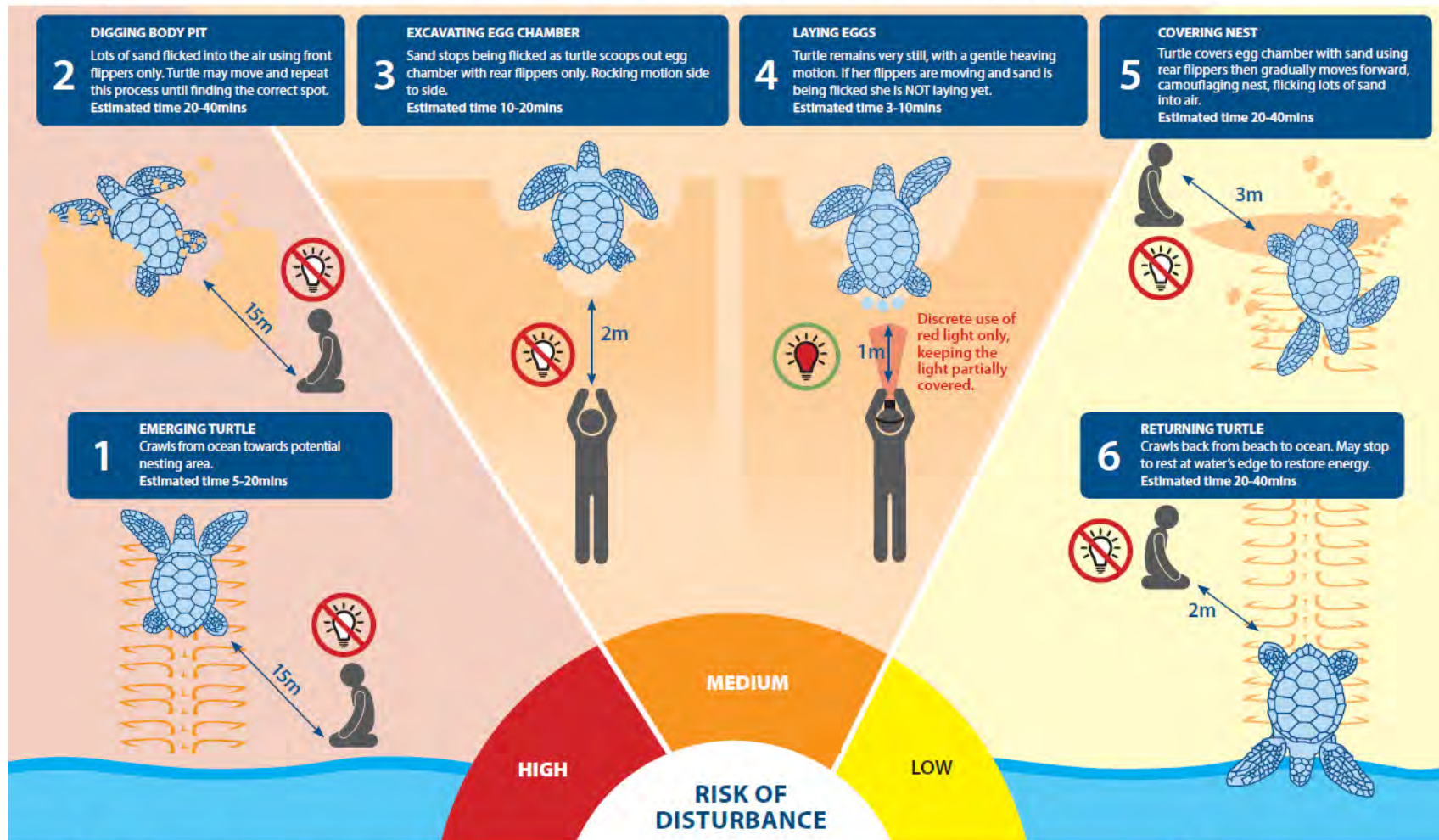




Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions



## Turtle Watching Code of Conduct



**NO GLOW:** turtles are easily disturbed by lights, use the moon to light your way.

**MOVE SLOW:** at all times to avoid disturbing turtles, walk along the water's edge and slowly follow an emerging track.

**STAY LOW:** out of sight of nesting turtles - sit, crouch or lie in the sand.



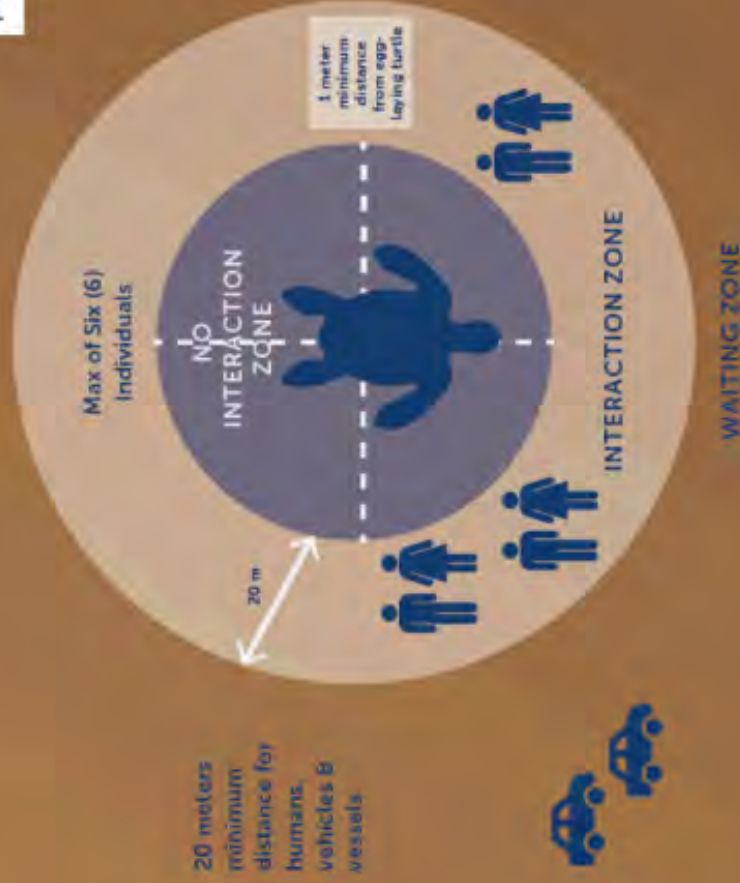
No flash  
photography  
at any time

**Source:** Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines

# Land-Based Observer Zoning for Marine Turtles



30 min (MAX)  
per interaction



- Interaction should be done between sunrise and sunset, maximum of 8 hours per day
- Touching and handling of marine turtle hatchlings is prohibited
- Interaction stops when nesting turtle returns to sea
- No interaction before egg-laying

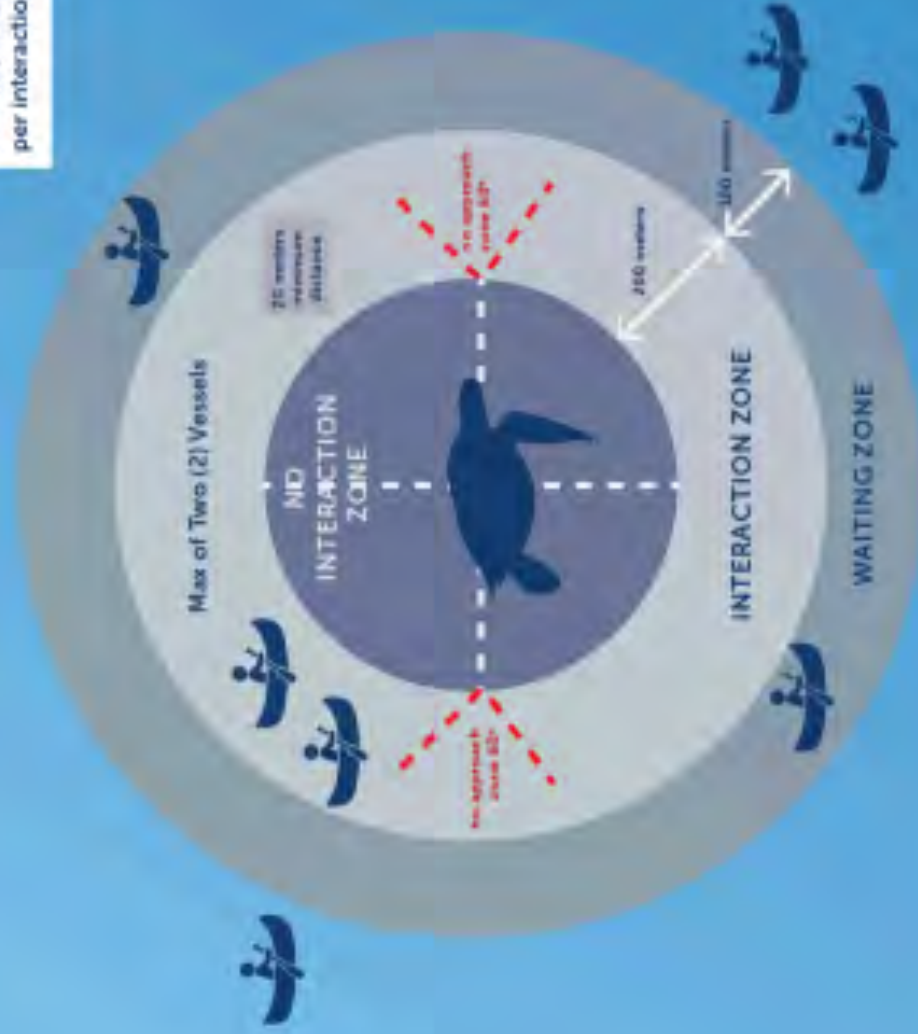






# Sea Vessel Zoning for Marine Turtles

30 min (MAX)  
per interaction



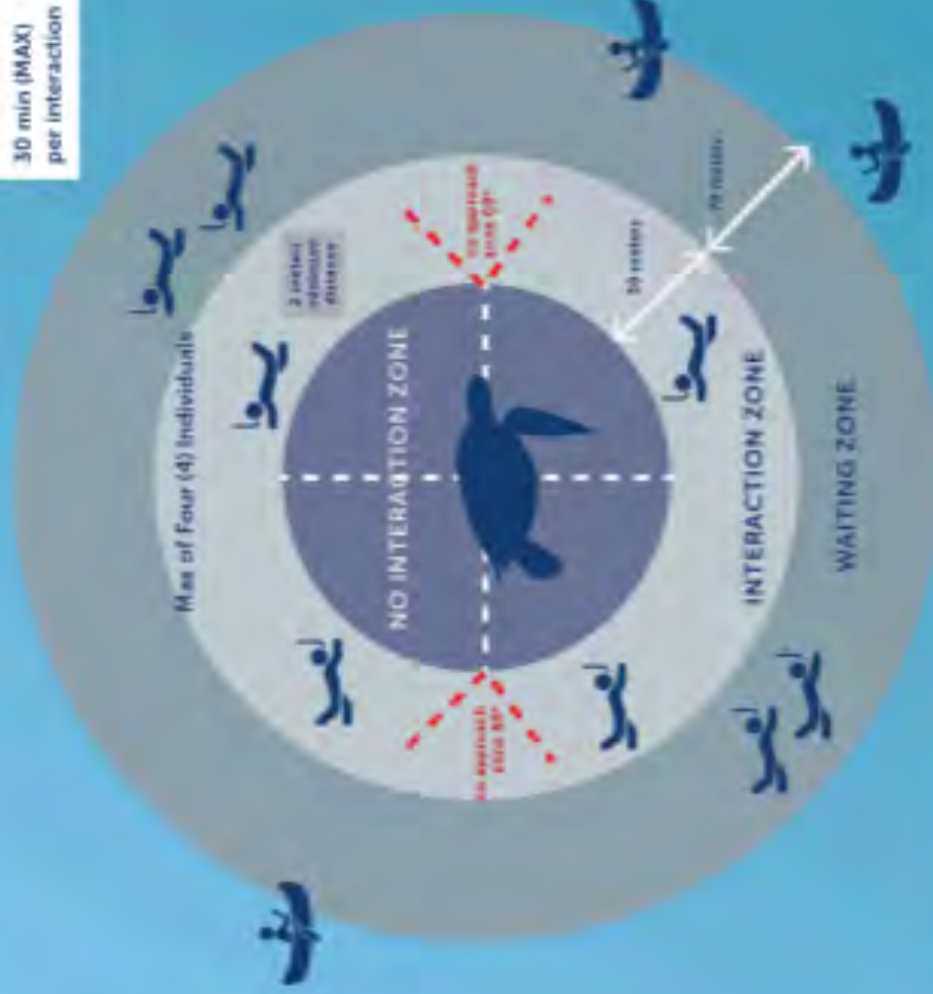
- Interaction should be done from sunrise to sunset, maximum of 8 hours per day
- If approached by a marine wildlife, slowly move away to maintain min. distance
- For groups of the marine wildlife, the outermost animal should be used as reference
- Max speed of 5 kph (3 knots) within interaction zone (no wake created)
- Max speed of 15 kph (8 knots) within waiting zone
- Maintain constant speed in interaction zone





## Snorkeler and Scuba Diver Zoning for Marine Turtles

30 min (MAX)  
per interaction



- Interaction should be done from sunrise to sunset, maximum of 8 hours per day
- If approached by a marine wildlife, slowly move away to maintain minimum distance





## Habitat Protection

Coral reefs provide food and livelihoods for nearly one billion people, with many being from vulnerable communities. They act as barriers against the worst impacts of storms, therefore protecting the shoreline, infrastructure, and millions of people who live along coasts. Tourists come specifically to snorkel and dive the reefs, or for tropical beach vacations which include water and boating activities that are made possible because of the coral reef. The pre-COVID-19 economic contribution of coral reefs to global and local economies was around US\$36 billion/year ([Spalding et al. 2017](#)), with some revenue being directed by governments into conservation of reef sites. Protecting coral reefs is therefore not just ecologically important, it is also important to the economy of countries.

Coral reefs face multiple global and local threats. The combination of global climate change and local threats has resulted in major declines in coral reef ecosystems worldwide. Over 50% of corals may have been lost in the last 30 years, and corals are now listed as “most at risk of extinction” by the Convention on Biological Diversity. ref

Tourist behaviours can negatively impact the local environment and communities. Direct negative impacts from tourists at reef sites can include trampling of corals and dunes, increased pollution, boat-related damage including anchor damage, vessel groundings, or collisions with marine species, and the introduction of invasive species. Changing tourist behaviour and eventually shifting social norms at sites can minimize the negative environmental impacts of tourism and optimize benefits for reefs and local communities.

Recreation is an important use of many coral reef areas. Recreational uses can be extractive (e.g., fishing) or non-extractive (e.g., diving, snorkelling, boating, and catch-and-release fishing). Such uses are a source of pressure on coral reefs and a source of income for the community. Recreational users and commercial tourism operators play an important role in reef conservation and management and are often key partners with reef management agencies in efforts to protect coral reefs.

Through a balanced approach focusing on sustainable use, recreational uses can be managed to minimize their impacts on coral reefs while strengthening the contributions of recreational users to reef management and the economy. Key approaches for managing recreation include setting limits, managing reef activities, and encouraging best practices.

Source : <https://reefresilience.org/management-strategies/managing-local-threats/managing-recreational-use/>

Recreational activities can harm coral reefs by 1) breakage of coral skeletons and tissue from direct human contact such as walking, touching, or dragging gear; and 2) breakage of coral skeletons and tissue from boat anchors; 3) alteration in the behavior of marine life from feeding or harassment; 4) water pollution, and 5) potential transfer of invasive species.

In many popular coastal destinations, near-shore marine ecosystems are beginning to show signs of damage as a result of the snorkelling and diving industry. The consistent presence of small and large groups of people in shallow coral reefs and other habitats can lead to significant degradation of an eco system over time. Irresponsible or inexperienced snorkelers and divers regularly crush and break corals and other reef dwelling organisms with fins, equipment and body parts. This damage usually comes as a result of people who are unable to maintain control in the water, stand or walk in a shallow area, fight a current, or get a closer look at, photograph, handle, touch and feed wildlife. While a great deal of contact with coral reefs is inadvertent, many snorkelers and divers knowingly engage in practices that are detrimental to reefs. All these impacts can lead to a decline in living corals and other reef-dwelling organisms, increases in sedimentation, and disturbance to wildlife. Moreover, impacts from snorkelers and divers compound damage to reefs and other habitats that are already suffering from other forms of environmental stress.

**WHY SHOULD I CARE? I DISRUPTED SEA BOTTOM HABITATS** Contact from fins, equipment or body parts crushes and kills bottom dwelling organisms and their habitats. In heavily used areas, the cumulative effects of many snorkelers and divers can lead to increased levels of degradation in the ecosystem and a decrease in the quality of the visitor experience. **I INCREASE IN SEDIMENTATION** Stirred up sediment can disrupt sea bottom communities, smothering and choking coral colonies and causing broader impacts in the ecosystem. **I DISTURBANCE OF MARINE WILDLIFE** Excessive disturbance can cause animals to leave primary feeding and reproductive areas, which can lead to an overall decline in habitat health and a decrease in the primary features that attract tourists. When animals become habituated to being fed by divers or snorkelers, they may lose some of their ability to find food on their own, which can affect population size and change natural behaviors. **I REMOVAL OF CORAL MUCUS** Repeated contact between divers and snorkelers and coral removes the coral's mucus covering and causes physical damage to coral tissue. This can increase the susceptibility of corals to pathogens, diseases and other competitive organisms.

**WHAT CAN I DO? I ESTABLISH A NO-CONTACT POLICY** Promote a voluntary no-contact policy for recreational snorkelers and divers. These policies can be supported by encouraging the use of flotation vests for inexperienced snorkelers and discouraging the use of gloves by divers. **I CONDUCT ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS BRIEFINGS FOR TOURISTS AND OTHER MARINE ENTHUSIASTS** Educate tourists, photographers, videographers and others about the sensitive nature of near-shore marine and reef ecosystems and the potential impacts that can result from irresponsible snorkelling and diving. **I CONDUCT BUOYANCY REFRESHERS** Offer buoyancy refreshers and other basic dive skills training for inexperienced, out-of-practice or infrequent divers, addressing the importance of issues such as proper weighting and streamlining of gear. **I DISCOURAGE FEEDING AND HARASSMENT OF SHARKS, REEF FISH AND OTHER MARINE WILDLIFE** The level of wildlife disturbance caused by snorkelers and divers can be significantly reduced with a voluntary policy of “take only pictures, leave only memories” that discourages fish feeding and harassment of wildlife. **I SUPPORT MOORING BUOY PROJECTS** The establishment of permanent mooring buoys at popular snorkel and dive sites significantly reduces anchor damage to near-shore marine environments, particularly coral reefs. Use drift dives to avoid anchoring when no mooring buoy is available. **I SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs)** Designation of MPAs often results in an increase of protective measures in an area, including the reduction or elimination of anchoring, fishing, harvesting of corals and other species, and harassment of wildlife. These protections often enhance the economic and ecological value of an area and create market advantages for businesses operating in them. **I ADDRESS DIVER CARRYING CAPACITY** Work with other marine recreation providers and the local government on issues of diver carrying capacity, in order to avoid overcrowding at popular sites, thus diminishing the threat to these sites while at the same time enhancing the visitor experience.

Source: [https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/from-crm/a\\_practical\\_guide\\_to\\_good\\_practice\\_managing\\_environmental\\_impacts\\_in\\_the\\_marine\\_recreation\\_sector.pdf](https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sites/default/files/from-crm/a_practical_guide_to_good_practice_managing_environmental_impacts_in_the_marine_recreation_sector.pdf)

## CORAL REEFS

### IMPACT MINIMISATION

- Waste management
- Plastic reduction
- Toxins (sunscreen etc)
- Vessel discharge

### SOURCES

- Coral Reef Alliance Reef Safe Travel Guide
- Marine Litter guidelines for tourists and operators (Northwest Pacific Action Plan)

### GUIDELINES

Source: <https://reefresilience.org/management-strategies/managing-local-threats/managing-recreational-use/>