

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The *mission* of the Soundwatch Boater Education Program is to promote responsible stewardship of the marine wildlife inhabiting the Salish Sea by residents, visitors and commercial users.

The overall *goals* of the program are to support orca whale recovery and to reverse ecological degradation resulting from marine wildlife viewing activities that disturb wildlife and intrude upon their habitat. This is implemented through the development and use of voluntary guidelines, public education, vessel monitoring and scientific research.

The *objectives* of the Soundwatch Boater Education Program are to educate boaters before they leave the shore, to reinforce the learning experience in the actual context where disturbances take place, to develop and evaluate community-based voluntary guidelines, and to provide a scientific platform to monitor vessel activities and compliance.

The objectives are accomplished through six different *strategies* that include:

1. Public advertising of official guidelines and ways for the public to report violations.
2. Development and promotion of community-based voluntary guidelines and marine protected areas (MPAs).
3. Assessment of “best practices” with special user groups, regional government, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
4. Operation of educational patrol boats daily during the core vessel tourism season (May- September, and weekends in April and October), with the help of trained interns and community volunteers.
5. Scientific field data collection on boating and wildlife activities (refuge inventories, nesting bird surveys, marine mammal stranding investigations, fishing and MPA monitoring, vessel counts, commercial vessel compliance).
6. Provide feedback on voluntary guideline compliance to stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

The Soundwatch Model

Since 1993, The Whale Museum has officially operated the Soundwatch Boater Education Program. The focus of the program is the development, distribution and evaluation of best boating practices for marine wildlife viewing in the Salish Sea (Puget Sound, Georgia and Juan de Fuca Straits). The primary way this is implemented is through the operation of educational patrol boats in the boundary region of the San Juan Islands. The vessel patrols undertake on-the-water education with boaters and field data collection at marine wildlife viewing areas and MPAs. The Soundwatch boat patrols everyday practicable during the core season, with the mission of counting and contacting all boaters who engage in marine wildlife viewing during peak times. Additionally, the patrol boat keeps independent records on marine wildlife, commercial operator activities, and compliance with the voluntary guidelines of the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC) and the Whale Watch Operators Association Northwest (WWOANW). Boater compliance is also measured around the boundaries of designated MPAs for county, state and federal fish and wildlife agencies. The vessel opportunistically responds to marine mammal strandings through The Whale Museum's stranding network under NMFS and nesting seabird surveys for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Secondary to vessel patrols, the Soundwatch Program strives to annually characterize wildlife-viewing trends in the Salish Sea. Soundwatch field data is compiled and annual reports are given to regional managers and user groups . The annual reports also provide feedback on how well the current commercial guidelines are working overall, and offers recommendations on how to adapt existing guidelines to better reflect current conditions.

Federal Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines Are Not Regulations

Currently there are no marine wildlife viewing or whale watch "regulations" in U. S. or Canadian waters of the Salish Sea. In the U.S., marine mammals are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 and are managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service who have sole jurisdiction (excepting walrus and sea otters) superceding any state or local governments. Fisheries and Oceans Canada manage marine mammals under the Fisheries and Oceans Act of 1978-79, but there is no marine mammal protection act equivalent in Canada. Both the U.S. and Canadian federal agencies have established northwest regional marine mammal viewing *guidelines* to prevent the likelihood of harassment or injury, but at this time there are no laws regulating viewing. Additionally, since it's inception in 1994, the international Whale Watch Operators Association Northwest (WWOANW) has annually adopted a working

set of international guidelines for commercial boat operators that are more explicit. Soundwatch has encouraged the WWOANW to adopt an annual set of commercial guidelines to best meet changing marine wildlife needs. Incorporating suggestions from Soundwatch, commercial drivers, residents and regional scientists, the WWOANW implements a new working set of guidelines each spring, and holds drivers meetings to interpret the changes for the commercial operators who ultimately are responsible for the behavior of the commercial vessel industry as a whole.

Soundwatch Marine Mammal Viewing Guidelines

Soundwatch summarizes existing regional viewing guidelines and other relevant marine wildlife information into Soundwatch brochures and posters targeting private boaters and kayakers. Any new guidelines are incorporated into a seasonal flyer. Soundwatch then promotes the guidelines at regional presentations, posts them at local boating facilities and on the World Wide Web, and distributes them at The Whale Museum and during vessel patrols. As a tool to improve commercial driving practices, Soundwatch provides monthly feedback reports to individual whale watch companies on observations made by Soundwatch of company drivers behaving contrary to the voluntary WWOANW guidelines.

HISTORY OF THE SOUNDWATCH BOATER EDUCATION PROGRAM

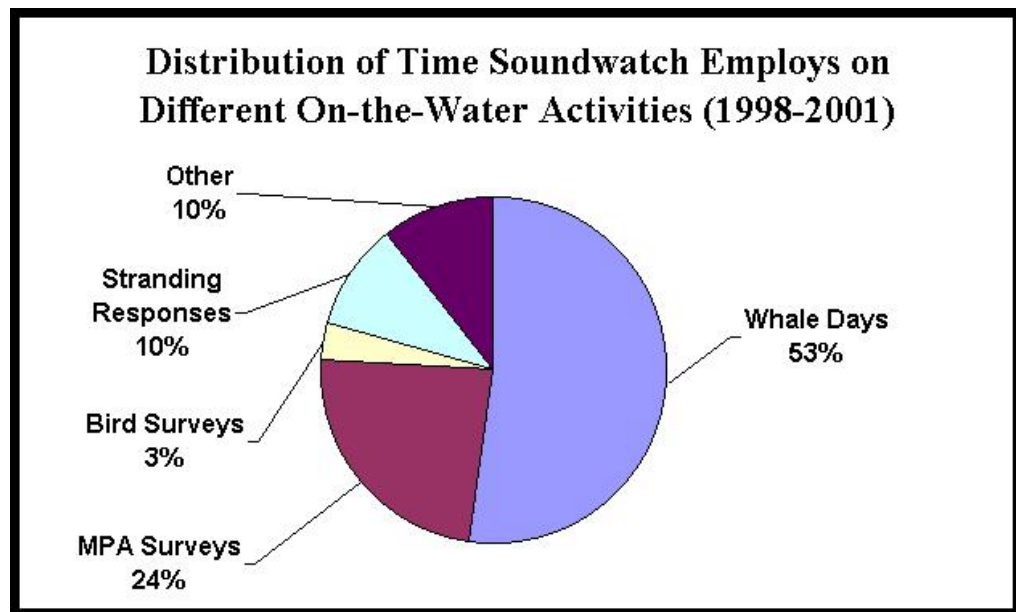
The Soundwatch Boater Education Program is a Stewardship Program of The Whale Museum. The Whale Museum is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit natural history museum located in Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island in Washington State. The museum was founded and opened in 1979 by Ken Balcomb, Mark Anderson and hundreds of volunteers as a project of the Moclips Cetological Society (MCS). In 1981 the boards of MCS and The Whale Museum merged, and in 1988 the museum reincorporated solely as The Whale Museum. In addition to the exhibit facility in Friday Harbor, throughout its history the museum has run multiple volunteer education and stewardship programs, and has participated in scientific research on the marine environment of San Juan County and the Salish Sea.

Soundwatch 2001

In its 10th year of operation, Soundwatch has become a widely recognized model program of *community-based adaptive management* by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the North American Commission For Environmental Cooperation, The Nature Conservancy, Watchable Wildlife Incorporated and several regional NGO's. Soundwatch utilizes an innovative program model that

successfully mitigates the growing impacts of vessel-based wildlife viewing in the region and addresses existing problems with enforceable regulations, lack of funding for enforcement, jurisdictions, and legislative inertia. Built upon a process of collaborative partnership, the Soundwatch Program effectively blends strategies of public education, adaptive voluntary guidelines, compliance monitoring and scientific research. In filling a pivotal leadership role at the juncture where marine wildlife, the public, the marine wildlife viewing industry, scientists and resource managers converge, the Soundwatch Program has brought an international community together to minimize the impact of human wildlife viewing.

In support of its broader mission Soundwatch has also employed its on-the-water education and monitoring efforts in contracts relative to other marine wildlife projects in the study area that do not include whales. Since its inception Soundwatch has supported field response for the San Juan County Marine mammal Stranding Network (NMFS) by investigating remote strandings, and helping transport animals and specimens. In 1996 Soundwatch began its partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service monitoring and inventorying the 83 reserves in the San Juan Islands National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area. In 1998 this expanded into participation in the annual seabird census for the Puget Sound Ambient Monitoring Program. In 2000 Soundwatch also began vessel-activity monitoring for the eight voluntary reserves in San Juan County's Bottomfish Recovery Program and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's restricted fishing zones in San Juan County.



Soundwatch Activities 1998-2001

Soundwatch contacted over 1,000 private boaters over the 2001 season, distributing marine wildlife viewing guidelines.

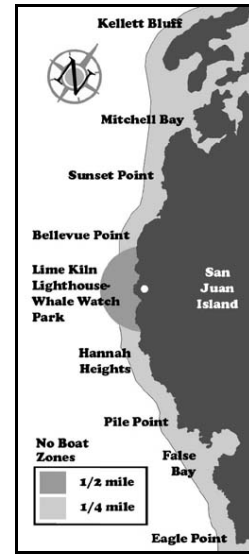
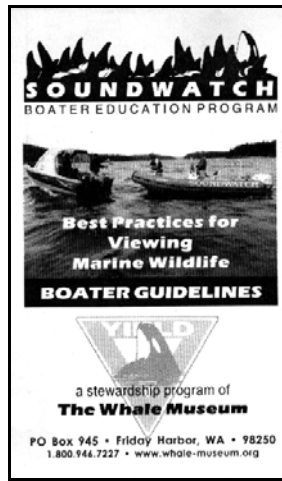
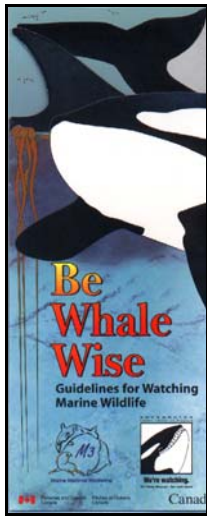
SOUNDWATCH AND THE MARINE MAMMAL MONITORING PROJECT



The Canadian Marine Mammal Monitoring Project (M-3) and the Soundwatch boat sharing duties in Haro Strait.

In 2001 Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC) piloted the Marine Mammal Monitoring Project to assess vessel impacts on marine wildlife in southern British Columbia, focusing on the Haro and Georgia Strait region. Using Soundwatch as a model and a partner, FOC teamed with the Victoria based, non-profit group Veins of Life Watershed Society, to undertake vessel patrols during the 2001 felid season. Soundwatch worked closely with the new M-3 crew to share observation and recording techniques as well as to coordinate daily on-the-water activities. Collaboration efforts also included the standardization of data collection and the creation of a common database. Analyzing post-season data together allowed the opportunity for Soundwatch and M-3 to give joint presentations at regional meetings. Soundwatch and M-3 act as transboundary counter parts, often working in tandem to increase the effectiveness of both team's on-the-water-education and monitoring efforts. M-3 and Soundwatch staff consulted with regional users and managers to develop a single set of voluntary guidelines printed in an international wildlife viewing brochure *Be Whale Wise*. Both FOC and NMFS have signed-off on the brochure as regional guidelines. The *Be Whale Wise* brochure was designed to target private boaters throughout the region on general marine wildlife viewing

etiquette. Any special local conditions warranting additional guidelines are presented through separate handouts or flyers that accompany The Be Whale Wise brochure. The Be Whale Wise brochure is now used throughout the region by various groups as the general information, and can be supplemented with any local information anywhere within the Salish Sea.



The International *Be Whale Wise Brochure*, the San Juan specific *Soundwatch Brochure* and the *No Motor Boat Zone Seasonal Flyer* distributed by Soundwatch.