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Dana Point Is Candidate For First Whale Heritage Site In USA

Teamwork led Dana Point, the Dolphin & Whale Watching Capital of the World, to be up for a major honor by the World Cetacean Alliance.

By Ashley Ludwig, Patch Staff 

Nov 18, 2020 10:30 am PT | Updated Nov 18, 2020 12:27 pm PT

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Teamwork led Dana Point, the Dolphin & Whale Watching Capital of the World, to be up for a major honor by

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DANA POINT, CA — Teamwork between Dana Point's two largest whale watching businesses has brought the city to another significant honor. Dana Point Whale Watching is now a candidate for becoming a Whale Heritage Site, as established by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA), they announced Wednesday.

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According to Donna Kalez and Gisele Anderson, Co-Directors, of the [Dana Point Whale Watching Company](#), the organization began its application process early in 2020 after successfully trademarking Dana Point as the Dolphin & Whale Capital of the World in 2019.

Kalez is the general manager of Dana Wharf Whale Watching, and Anderson manages Captain Dave's Dolphin and Whale Watching Safari, both out of Dana Point. There is plenty of room for both whale-watching companies at Dana Point's harbor. Now work in concert with one another, much like a pod of whales or dolphins out at sea. In Dana Point, there are more dolphins per square mile than anywhere else in the world, according to their website. Every year, visitors can see blue whales, fin whales, gray whales, humpback whales, and minke whales, depending on the season. The location and the ability to work together has led them on the precipice of something never accomplished before in this country: becoming a whale heritage site.

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"A Whale Heritage Site is an outstanding location where cetaceans (whales, dolphins, and porpoises) are embraced through the cultural, economic, social, and political lives [>](#)

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authentic and respectful way," Kalez explained. "To have Dana Point recognized by the World as a Whale Heritage Site is a dream and has been a goal of mine for some time."

Dana Point has long been a travel destination to watch and learn about whales and dolphins, and now we want the world to know.

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According to Anderson, "being the first Whale Heritage Site in North America would be an amazing accomplishment. It would serve to further bring Dana Point and the whales and dolphins that live and visit here the recognition they deserve as well send a message to the world that Dana Point is also a place that protects and responsibly watches cetaceans."

The criteria for acceptance are incredibly challenging, focusing on protection, sustainability, education, research, public access, and awareness and requiring a community effort that seeks to further the purpose of a Whale Heritage Site.

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Kalez explained why this was important and thanked those who helped them get to this point.

"We have reached out to some of the people who had been supportive to us as we pursued the trademarking process and invited them to be part of our steering committee that is comprised of community leaders, academia, government representatives, and local non-profits.

Currently, there are eight candidate destinations from around the world, Dana Point being one of them.

The [World Cetacean Alliance](#) states that "Each site is unique, providing and contributing in different ways to the criteria for becoming certified. During this process, the sites have been receiving a wealth of tailored support from the WCA to help them achieve their goal of certification as a world-class whale or dolphin watching destination!"

The International Committee that reviews each site's extensive application will be meeting later this month and decisions are expected to be reached by the end of 2020.

Whale Heritage Sites give tourists a transparent and easy way to select responsible whale and dolphin watching destinations, encouraging them to experience these incredible animals in their natural habitat authentically and respectfully.

To learn more about Whale Heritage Sites, visit: whaleheritagesites.org and more about the World Cetacean Alliance, visit worldcetaceanalliance.org.

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