Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area

Criteria 3: Responsible Cetacean Tourism

Indicators:

3.1 The community has strategies in place to identify and raise awareness about exploitative, extractive or consumptive captive or wild cetacean tourism attractions.

- Evidence of the promotion of responsible cetacean tourism experiences as an alternative to existing exploitative, extractive, captive or wild cetacean tourism within or outside the WHA
    - Home page of Santa Barbara Channel Whale Heritage Area, where its mentions, 'The Santa Barbara Channel is one of earth's premier whale watching destination. Come experience these amazing animals in the wild.
      Uploaded screen grab
      https://www.sbwhaleheritage.org/

- Evidence of advocacy work to encourage local people and visitors to only visit responsible cetacean experiences
    - Whale watching opportunities in the Santa Barbara Channel
      https://www.sbwhaleheritage.org/whale-watching-tours/
    - Love Letters to the Sea with Art Educator, Sondra Weiss
      Uploaded pictures
      http://www.143figureit.com/love-letters-to-the-sea

3.2 The community promotes responsible wild whale and dolphin watching experiences

- Evidence that a changing tourism demand, combined with sustainable, animals friendly tourist offerings, is having a positive impact on cetaceans/wildlife, the local community, and the tourism industry.
    - Support letter from Kathy Janega-Dykes, President/CEO of Visit Santa Barbara
      Uploaded letter
    - Support letter from Marlyss Auster, President/CEO of Visit Ventura
      Uploaded letter

- Reference in accessible materials to specific international, national and local laws, standards and guidelines that apply to cetacean tourism and focus on animals welfare and nature conservation.
    - Brochure "Protecting Your Channel Islands" with details on 'How to Enjoy Your Sanctuary' with Watching Guidelines.
      https://channelislands.noaa.gov/manage/resource/responsible-boating.html
      Uploaded brochure as a pdf

3.3 Responsible whale and dolphin watching guidelines are adopted within the Whale Heritage Area and regularly updated to follow expert or science-based best practices. These guidelines conform to international, national, or local legislation where it exists.

- Regular scientific input and output, with scientific knowledge contributing to the evolution of guidelines/regulations
    - NOAA's information on 'how your actions can impact marine wildlife'
      https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/viewing-marine-life
      Uploaded screen grab

- NOAA's Marine Life Viewing Guidelines
  https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/viewing-marine-life
  Uploaded screen grab
- Channel Islands National Marine Sanctiuary Regulations
  (7) Disturbing marine mammals or seabirds by flying motorized aircraft at less than 1,000 feet over the waters within one nautical mile of any Island
  (9) Taking any marine mammal, sea turtle, or seabird within or above the Sanctuary, except as authorized by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, as amended, (MMPA), 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq., Endangered Species Act, as amended, (ESA), 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq., Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, (MBTA), 16 U.S.C. 703 et seq., or any regulation, as amended, promulgated under the MMPA, ESA, or MBTA.
  Uploaded screen grab

- Results of research projects designed in influence the use or adaption of guidelines/regulations
  - New protection for endangered whales along the CA coast adopted-Jan 2023
    Screen grab uploaded
    https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/new-protections-for-endangered-whales-along-california-coast-adopted
  - Channel Islands National Marine Sanctiuary-Vessel Impacts
    https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/sentinel-site-program/channel-islands/vessel-impacts.html

3.4 Efforts are made to enforce responsible whale and dolphin watching guidelines and international, national, or local legislation where it exists.

- Evidence of a system in place for anyone to report irresponsible practices.
  - CA.gov Division of Boating and Waterways 'Sharing the road with whales and all marine animals'
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://dbw.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=29214
  - What does harassment mean under the Marine Mammal Protection Act?
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/node/8091
  - Important contact information on brochure 'Protecting Your Channel Islands'
    Uploaded brochure-pdf
    https://nmschannelislands.blob.core.windows.net/channelislands-prod/media/docs/2018-protecting-your-channel-islands.pdf

- Evidence of regular guide training or sharing of best practice between guides with variable experience is documented. Training could be through an official training course or through a more information sharing of best practice concepts between guides, staff, and other stakeholders with local expertise.
  - Webinar: Whale Conservation in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
    Screen grab uploaded
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MLK28EeXpo&t=1s
  - Channel Islands National Park's From Shore to Sea lecture videos
    Cascadia Research senior biologist John Calambokidis discussed his work examining the trends of populations of blue, fin, humpback, and gray whales in southern California during July 2017
    https://www.nps.gov/chis/learn/photosmultimedia/2017sts.htm
  - Sean Hastings, Policy, Information and Management Officer at Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary- his SB TEDX talk: "Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies"
    https://tedxsantabarbara.com/2021/sean-hastings-protecting-blue-whales-and-blues-skies/

- Channel Islands Natural Corps- 5 week training course to volunteer on Whale Watching Boats
  Updated screen grab
  https://channelislands.noaa.gov/involved/apply.html

3.5 Tourism and the behavior of tourists are well managed to reduce negative impacts on cetaceans and habitats.

- Actions are taken to manage visitor flows and impacts
  - Channel Islands National Park's Law and Policies
    https://www.nps.gov/chis/learn/management/lawsandpolicies.htm
  - Channel Islands National Park's Superintendent's Compendium- August 2021 Listing the maximum island day use arriving with concessioners.
    https://www.nps.gov/chis/learn/management/upload/Superintendent-s-Compendium-March-2022-Channel-Islands-NP.pdf

- Guidelines for visitor behavior at natural sites are made available to visitor, tour operators, and guides before and at the time of the visit.
  - Channel Islands National Park's app
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://www.nps.gov/chis/planyourvisit/app.htm

3.6 The community plays a key role in designing and operating responsible whale and dolphin watching experiences, which provide direct social and economic benefits.

- Evidence exists that people living within the Whale Heritage Area take priority when it comes to designing, managing, and operating cetacean experiences and relevant training or support is in place where necessary
  - Support letter from Sea Grant Program at the University of Southern California:
    'A World Cetacean Area distinguishes locations around the world that are sustainable travel destinations where whales and dolphins (cetaceans) are embraced in the local culture, economics, politics and social fabric of the community. These are areas where people and cetaceans coexist respectfully. Our research program at USC Sea Grant examines how protective designations benefit not only natural resource ecosystems, but also the people and economies that depend upon those resources.'
    Uploaded letter of support

- Regular feedback mechanism and surveys document unbiased public attitudes towards cetacean experiences and related tourism.
  - Island Packer's feedback card
    Uploaded picture
  - Island Packer's Comment page
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://islandpackers.com/contact-us/complaints-compliments/
  - Island Packer's Trip Advisor page
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g60769-d1510055-Reviews-Island_Packers-Ventura_California.html
  - Condor Express' Trip Advisor page
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g33045-d1091762-Reviews-Condor_Express_Whale_Watching-Santa_Barbara_California.html

3.7 The community monitors the impacts on tourism on targeted species and habitats and regularly acts to reduce those impacts based on latest evidence.

- Evidence of on-going science-based monitoring of the positive or negative impacts of tourism on cetaceans and the habitats they depend on.
  - Santa Barbara Channelkeepers Crusise Ship Monitoring
    https://www.sbck.org/our-work/field-work/cruise-ship-monitoring/
  - News article: 'Public invited to share opinions on cruise ship program'
    https://www.edhat.com/news/public-invited-to-share-opinions-on-cruise-ship-program

- Evidence of citizen-science focused projects to assess the positive or negative impacts of tourism on cetaceans.
  - Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park's Naturalist Corps volunteers collecting valuable data and educating whale watchers at the same time.
    Uploaded screen grab
    https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/apr19/citizen-science-volunteers-in-national-marine-sanctuaries.html
  - Support letter from Ralph Clevenger
    Uploaded letter
    Since my retirement I've acted as a volunteer naturalist for the Channel Islands National Park and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, taking hundreds of tourists on whale watching trips into our Channel. These trips reflect the growing popularity of educational tourism in the world and when people understand why certain areas are so rich in life it encourages them to protect these places as well as the animals that live and visit.