

**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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RECREATIONAL IN-WATER INTERACTION WITH AQUATIC MAMMALS

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its 12th Meeting (Manila, October 2017)

Concerned that recreational in-water interaction with aquatic mammals is a fast-growing tourism and recreational activity which may cause disturbance to aquatic mammals in many different situations and habitats, with potentially serious conservation consequences,

Noting that many of the aquatic mammal species affected by in-water interactions are listed on the CMS Appendices, and that impacts on species of other taxonomic groups listed on the Appendices are also occurring,

Conscious that a large number of aquatic mammal species are sensitive to the disturbances caused by in-water interactions, and that in addition they carry a risk of direct physical impacts, that can lead to injuries and even death,

Concerned that in-water interactions with aquatic mammals put not only the animals at risk, but can also compromise the safety of human participants,

Aware that the global growth of the in-water interaction phenomenon has outpaced the advancement of relevant science and the provision of timely and site-specific impact assessments to inform management,

Concerned that in many cases effects may only be detected once they have already reached biologically significant levels, hence providing information to decision-makers only when impacts are already occurring,

Recognizing the work carried out on whale watching by the International Whaling Commission,

Recognizing that CMS can contribute to regulation and sustainable management of the in-water interaction phenomenon,

*The Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals*

1. *Urges* Parties, in whose areas of jurisdiction recreational in-water interactions with aquatic mammals take place, to adopt appropriate measures, such as national guidelines, codes of conduct, and if necessary, national legislation, binding regulations or other regulatory tools, to address the consequences of, and carefully regulate, all such activities;
2. *Encourages* Parties to ensure that these activities do not have negative effects on the long-term survival of populations and habitats and have minimal impact on the behaviour of the exposed animals;
3. *Recommends* that, insofar as they are applicable, measures adopted by the Parties also cover opportunistic in-water encounters with aquatic mammals;

4. *Also recommends* that when vessel-based and in-water activities occur concurrently, measures adopted by the Parties ensure the safety of marine wildlife and human participants;
5. *Encourages* Parties to facilitate research allowing an assessment of the long-term effects and biological significance of disturbances, noting that this requires information on the biology, behaviour and ecology of the species, adequate historical data, and suitable modelling techniques that use behavioural observation collected over shorter time frames to predict potential long-term effects on populations, and use these predictions to inform management decisions; and
6. *Strongly encourages* Parties to review any measures periodically to enable any impacts detected through research and monitoring of the populations to be taken into account as necessary.