

Be Whale Wise

Marine Wildlife Laws & Guidelines for Boaters, Paddlers and Viewers

(Revised 2020)

www.bewhalewise.org



THE WHALE WARNING FLAG INDICATES THAT WHALES ARE IN THE AREA. VESSELS SHOULD SLOW DOWN AND INCREASE VIGILANCE.

REGULATIONS FOR KILLER WHALES IN US AND CANADIAN WATERS

What do the regulations require (except for specific exemptions)?

In the US, it is unlawful to:

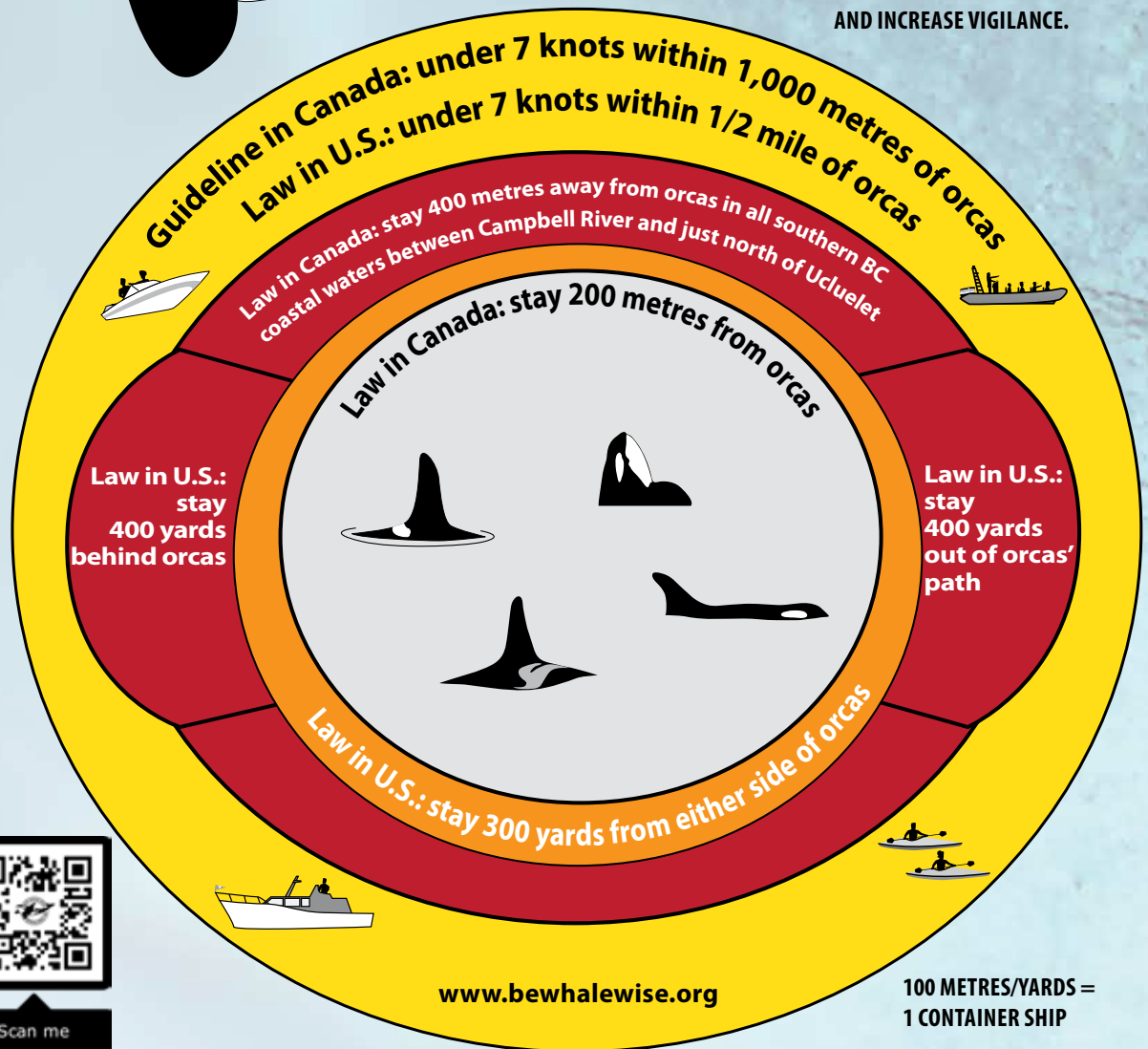
- Cause a vessel to approach, in any manner, within 300 yards (274.3 metres) of Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) and 200 yards from transients.
- Position a vessel to be in the path of or behind any killer whale at any point located within 400 yards (365.8 metres) of the whale.
- Travel faster than 7 knots within 1/2 mile of any killer whale or fail to disengage engine within 300 yards.

In Canada (British Columbia):

- Vessels are required to maintain a minimum approach distance of 400 metres from all killer whales in all southern BC coastal waters between Campbell River and just north of Ucluelet; 200 metres from all killer whales in B.C. waters year-round.
- Avoid boating or fishing in Interim Sanctuary Zones.

Who do the regulations apply to? All motorized and non-motorized vessels (including kayaks and paddleboards), with exceptions to maintain safe navigation and for certain types of vessels

Additional information, specific details on exceptions and more can be found on the website: <http://bewhalewise.org>



www.bewhalewise.org

100 METRES/YARDS = 1 CONTAINER SHIP

100 metres/yards no approach zone for all other marine mammals in US & Canada; and keep 200 metres away from whales, dolphins or porpoises if they are resting or with their calf.

TRANS-BOUNDARY LAWS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE U.S. AND CANADA APPLY TO ALL MARINE MAMMALS AND BIRDS

LAWS:

- **DO NOT** disturb, swim with, move, feed or touch any marine wildlife. If you are concerned about a potentially sick, stranded or entangled animal, contact your local stranding or response network.
- In Canada, **keep 100 metres away** from all whales, dolphins and porpoises or **200 metres away** if they are resting or with a calf and abide by specific approach distances for killer whales.

GUIDELINES:

1. **DO NOT APPROACH** or get closer than 100 metres/yards to any other marine mammals or birds.
2. **BE CAUTIOUS, COURTEOUS and QUIET** around areas of known or suspected marine wildlife activity, in the water or at haul-outs and bird colonies. When safe to do so, turn off fish finders and echo sounders.
3. **LOOK** in all directions before planning your approach or departure from viewing wildlife. Be vigilant for signs of marine mammal presence. Whales may change direction or surface unpredictably.
4. **SLOW DOWN.** Reduce speed to less than 7 knots when within a half mile or 1000 metres of the nearest marine mammal to reduce your engine's noise and vessel's wake.
5. **ALWAYS** approach and depart from the side, moving parallel to the animal's direction of travel. If the animal(s) are approaching you, cautiously move out of the way and avoid abrupt course changes. **DO NOT** approach from the front or from behind.
6. **PLACE ENGINE IN NEUTRAL OR SHUTDOWN** and allow animals to pass if your vessel is not in compliance with regulations.
7. **PAY ATTENTION** and move away, slowly and cautiously, at the first sign of disturbance or agitation.
8. **STAY** on the **OFFSHORE** side of whales as they are traveling close to shore.
9. **ALWAYS** avoid going through groups of porpoises or dolphins. Hold course and reduce speed gradually to discourage bow or stern-riding.
10. **LIMIT** your viewing time to 30 minutes or less. Consider number of vessels present to reduce the cumulative impact of all vessels and give consideration to other viewers

Drones/Unmanned Aircraft Vehicle or System (UAV/UAS) Guidance

The noise and close proximity of drones can disturb wildlife. When viewing marine mammals from the air using a drone: (1) Maintain a 1,000-foot minimum horizontal distance and do not fly directly over marine mammals; and (2) avoid vehicle maneuvers around marine mammals (on land or in the water), as these actions may alter animal behavior. Know and follow all local regulations.

Marine Protected Areas, Wildlife Refuges, Ecological Reserves, Parks, and Sanctuaries:

1. **CHECK** your nautical charts for the location of various protected areas.
2. **ABIDE** by posted restrictions or contact a local authority for further information. Avoid voluntary No-Go Zone on the westside of San Juan Island. Be aware of critical habitat areas and Canadian Interim Sanctuary Zones (www.tc.gc.ca).

CANADA

To report marine mammal disturbance, or injured, distressed, dead, stranded or entangled marine mammals or sea turtles:
Fisheries & Oceans Canada/B.C. Marine Mammal Incident Reporting 24/7 Hot-line: 1-800-465-4336

REPORT SIGHTINGS (MARINE MAMMAL & SEA TURTLE):
B.C. Cetacean Sightings Network www.wildwhales.org
1-866-472-9663

WhaleReport app available on iTunes and Google Play

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Fisheries & Oceans Canada:
www.canada.ca/en/fisheries-oceans.html
Transport Canada TC.SRKW-ERS.TC@tc.gc.ca
Robson Bight (Michael Bigg) Ecological Reserve:
www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/robsonb_er.html
Straitwatch: www.straitwatch.org or 1-250-590-7723
North Island Marine Mammal Stewardship Association
www.nimmsa.org
MERS www.seeablowgoslow.org

UNITED STATES

To report a marine mammal harassment, entanglement or stranding:
NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement:
1-800-853-1964
Entanglements: 1-877-707-9425
Strandings: 1-866-767-6114
Download the Dolphin and Whale 911 app

REPORT MARINE MAMMAL SIGHTINGS:

The Whale Museum Hotline (U.S. and Canada):
hotline@whalemuseum.org or 1-800-562-8832
Orca Network (WA State):
info@orcانetwork.org or 1-866-672-2638

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Soundwatch Boater Education Program
www.whalemuseum.org or 1-360-378-4710 ext. 33
NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region:
<http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>

