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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Dolphin SMART Program Expands in Florida and Recognizes First Participant in St. Petersburg**

*Adventure Cruises Commits To Help Protect Wild Dolphins*

**St. Pete, FL**-To help protect wild dolphins along Florida's southwest coast, NOAA's Fisheries Service and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and their partners expand the Dolphin SMART program to Ft. Myers, Sarasota, and the St. Petersburg/Tampa areas. Today, the program accepts its first participant in the St. Petersburg area – Adventure Cruises. Adventure Cruises officially joined the Dolphin SMART program after successfully meeting standards that promote responsible advertising and viewing of wild dolphins, as well as providing education to their guests.

"We are pleased to welcome Adventure Cruises as the first Dolphin SMART participant in the St. Petersburg area," said Jessica Powell, Dolphin SMART Program Coordinator. "We are also very excited to bring the program to Florida's southwest coast to benefit both the dolphins and businesses that participate."

The Dolphin SMART program was developed by WDCS in partnership with NOAA's Fisheries Service and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, and the Dolphin Ecology Project. The acronym "SMART" is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:

- **S**tay at least 50 yards from dolphins,
- **M**ove away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance,
- **A**lways put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near,
- **R**efrain from feeding, touching or swimming with wild dolphins,
- **T**each others to be Dolphin SMART.

"Everyone enjoys seeing wild dolphins, but not everyone understands the importance of respecting these animals in their natural habitat," said Ian Henderson, owner of Adventure Cruises. "The Dolphin SMART program provides me with additional information and materials to use when educating my guests about the importance of dolphin conservation."

Dolphin SMART-recognized businesses receive flags and decals featuring the program logo and the current calendar year, and permission to use the Dolphin SMART logo in their advertising. Each year, participants are evaluated to ensure they continue to meet program standards. Visitors to Florida's southwest coast seeking the thrill of seeing dolphins in the wild, can ensure the tour operator they select is helping to protect wild dolphins by looking for the current year on Dolphin SMART flags and decals or checking updated participant lists on the Web site. For more information, visit [www.dolphinSMART.org](http://www.dolphinSMART.org), or contact the program coordinator at [contact@dolphinSMART.org](mailto:contact@dolphinSMART.org).

"We remain optimistic about the value of this program to dolphin conservation, and are entirely committed to supporting Dolphin SMART as it continues to expand to coastal areas in Florida and elsewhere," added Courtney Vail, campaigns officer for WDCS.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society is an international charity dedicated to the conservation and welfare of whales, dolphins and porpoises worldwide. Established in 1987, and with offices in the United States, Great Britain, Argentina, Germany, and Australia, WDCS works to reduce and ultimately eliminate the continuing threats to cetaceans and their habitats, while striving to raise awareness of these remarkable animals and the need to protect them in their natural environment. WDCS achieves these objectives through a mix of research, education and awareness raising initiatives.

***On the web:***

Dolphin SMART: [www.dolphinSMART.org](http://www.dolphinSMART.org)

NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office:

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/mm/dolphins/bdconservation.htm>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society: [www.wdcs-na.org](http://www.wdcs-na.org)

Dolphin Ecology Project: <http://www.dolphinecology.org/mission/index.html>