

Conservation society honors L.A. Watersports

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and its partners recognized L.A. Watersports, which operates out of Orange Beach, as the first charter operator in Alabama to be accepted into a new program designed to protect wild dolphins.

L.A. Watersports officially joined the Dolphin SMART program after successfully meeting standards that promote responsible viewing of wild dolphins.

Staff from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service worked with the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration's National Marine Sanctuary Program, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the Dolphin Ecology Project to establish the program in Key West, Fla., through support from NOAA Fisheries and "Protect

Wild Dolphins" license plate funds through Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution.

The program is made possible in Alabama through the support of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Coastal Section), the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center.

L.A. Watersports can be identified as Dolphin SMART by displaying a flag and/or decals on their vessel featuring the Dolphin SMART logo and current calendar year, as well as the use of the Dolphin SMART logo in their advertising. Each year, the charter will be evaluated to ensure it is continuing to meet program standards.

The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society is an international charity dedicated to the conservation and welfare of whales, dolphins and porpoises worldwide. NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement.

For more information, visit www.noaa.gov, or call program coordinator Kelly Brinkman at 251-621-1216, ext. 232.