

# PHOTO-IDENTIFICATION TRAINING MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 4/25/2012

Hand out sighting sheets, beach survey info

In attendance: Jackie Orsulak, Barbara Helms, Amy Etherington, David Jones, Darlene Jones, Dennis Silveri, Kaye Lyerly, Karen McPherson, Liah McPherson, Jessica Taylor, Jay Taylor

- I. Bottlenose dolphin Photo-Id Abundance Surveys
  - A. Why are we conducting these surveys
    1. MMPA protection/Strategic Stock
    2. OBXCDR General Authorization Research Permit
    3. Importance of dolphins to marine conservation in the Outer Banks
    4. Purpose is to determine abundance estimates over a period of at least 3 years by season in Roanoke Sound
  - B. How do we conduct these surveys
    1. Surveys aboard a 17' outboard vessel (Moose & Squirrel)
    2. 3 person minimum per survey (PI, boat operator, data recorder)
      - a. PI – name listed on GA permit (Jess, Jay, or Rich)
      - b. Boat operator – responsible for operating the vessel during dolphin sightings; review how to approach/maneuver around dolphins
      - c. Data recorder – responsible for recording sighting data on datasheet; review sighting sheet, everyone gets a copy; writing must be legible! (good handwriting)
      - d. Everyone is responsible for scanning/keeping track of dolphin groups
    3. Scanning
      - a. Searching for dolphins
        - i. Look for dark dorsal fins at the surface
        - ii. Crab pot floats may look like dolphins
        - iii. Diving birds may also look like dolphins
        - iv. Boat is divided into quadrants (4 people) or thirds (3 people)
        - v. Binoculars available; should bring hat and polarized sunglasses for better visibility
      - b. Sighting dolphins
        - i. Let everyone know as soon as you think you see dolphins; we will stop to watch the area to get a location on them

4. Transects in Roanoke Sound ( 4-6 hours dependent upon season)
    - a. Purpose of transects are to effectively cover the entire study area
  5. Photo-Identification
    - a. Non-invasive technique
    - b. Photograph markings on the dorsal fins of dolphins to distinguish individuals
    - c. We will attempt to photograph every dolphin's dorsal fin in the group
    - d. Sighting will end when either every dolphin has been photographed or dolphins exhibit adverse behavior towards the boat
  6. Environmental Measurement Equipment (orange box)
    - a. Water temperature
    - b. Salinity
    - c. Wind Speed and direction
  7. Survey schedule
    - a. 3 surveys during the months of April, July, October, January
      - i. Surveys completed within a timeframe of 2 weeks
    - b. Monthly surveys conducted during the rest of the months
    - c. Weather dependent (rain/wind)
- C. What happens to the data we collect?
- a. Photos are downloaded and integrated into FinBase, a MS Access database for organizing photo-id data
  - b. In order to upload to our FinBase catalog, all photos are sorted (organized), graded for photo quality, and matched to existing dolphins in the catalog
  - c. All matched dolphins are verified by another researcher
  - d. Sighting data is entered into FinBase and linked to photos from that sighting
  - e. Photo-id data is contributed to the Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin Catalog and OBIS-SEAMAP for use by environmental managers
  - f. Data may also be shared with the North Carolina Maritime Museum and NMFS
  - g. Plans to publish data in peer-reviewed journals and present at scientific conferences

## II. Beach Surveys

- A. Review info and datasheet (how to enter online)

B. Purpose is to get a baseline for dolphin sightings in the ocean for when we are able to expand our study area

### III. Volunteers

A. Go to website for OBXCDR ([obxdolphins.org](http://obxdolphins.org)). Click on link to become a volunteer. Complete updated contact information.

B. Other opportunities available to participate in outreach and education

a. Outreach festivals (Coastal Gardening, May 19<sup>th</sup>; Dare Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>)

b. Outreach for local organizations (Children at Play Museum, KDH Library, Dare County Schools)

C. Fundraisers this year will include:

a. T-shirt sales (\$18 adults/\$15 kids and toddlers)

b. Salty Paws dolphin dog cookies (\$1 each)

c. Bumper stickers (\$2 each)

d. Adopt a Dolphin (\$50) (through website and brochure)

i. Includes adoption certificate for your dolphin (choose from 8 on brochure), bottlenose dolphin fact sheet, and OBXCDR t-shirt