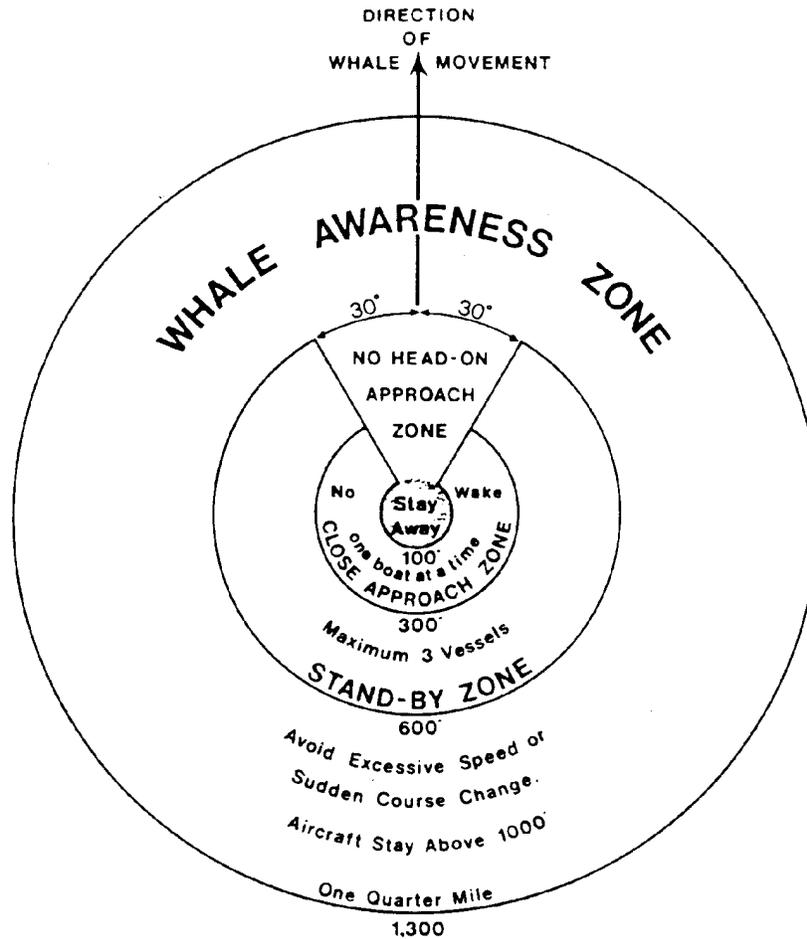


# Whale Watch Guidelines



To protect whales and their habitat, and promote public awareness of the need to avoid harassment of whales, NOAA Fisheries provides the following guidelines for vessels in the vicinity of endangered whales in the Gulf of Maine.

## A. WHEN IN SIGHT OF WHALES (LESS THAN 1,500 FEET AWAY):

- Avoid excessive speed or sudden changes in speed or direction.
- Aircraft observe the FAA minimum altitude regulation of 1,000 feet over water.

## B. CLOSE APPROACH PROCEDURE (LESS THAN 600 FEET AWAY):

- Approach stationary whales at no more than idle or "no wake" speed.
- Parallel the course and speed of moving whales.
- Do not attempt a head-on approach to moving or resting whales.

**C. MULTIVESSEL APPROACH (LESS THAN 300 FEET AWAY):**

- All vessels in close approach stay to the side or behind the whales so they do not box in the whales or cut off their path.
- When one vessel is within 300 feet, other vessels stand off at least 300 feet from the whale.
- The vessel within 300 feet should limit its time to 75 minutes in close approach to whales.

**D. NO INTENTIONAL APPROACH (LESS THAN 100 FEET AWAY):**

- Do not approach within 100 feet of whales.
- If whales approach within 100 feet of your vessel, put engine in neutral and do not re-engage props until whales are observed at the surface, clear of the vessel.

**Active whales require ample space.** Breaching, lobtailing, and flipper-slapping whales may endanger people and/or vessels. Feeding whales often emit subsurface bubbles before rising to feed at the surface. Stand clear of light green bubble patches. **In all cases**, do not restrict normal movement or behavior of whales, or take actions that may evoke a reaction from whales or result in physical contact with a whale.

**Diving** on whales is considered to be an intentional approach of whales and may be considered a violation of federal law.