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MEDIA ADVISORY

NOAA and Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute address harmful dolphin entanglements in Indian River Lagoon

New educational placards to be installed along the sea wall and boat ramp at Kelly Park

Merritt Island, FL – According to biologists with NOAA Fisheries and Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, human and fishery interactions with bottlenose dolphins put them at risk of serious injury or death from entanglement in fishing gear. Illegal feeding of dolphins increases this risk of injury or death from gear interactions. Reports of illegal feeding are prevalent throughout the Southeastern U.S., including in the Indian River Lagoon. Dolphins that are fed by people learn to associate people with food and put themselves in dangerous situations when they approach people, boats, and fishing gear looking for food. Dolphins will even remove bait and catch directly from fishing gear and teach these behaviors to their young.

In the last year, there have been five documented cases of dolphins becoming entangled in fishing gear and two dolphins struck by vessels in the Indian River Lagoon. These entanglements and vessel strikes can lead to life-altering injuries and even death. Often dolphins become entangled around their mouths, flippers and tails making it difficult to swim and/or eat. (Below are several photos of an entangled dolphin, photo credit: Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute)

To address this growing problem locally, biologists will be installing new educational placards along piers, docks, sea walls, and boat ramps throughout the Indian River Lagoon, starting at Kelly Park East. There have been reports of illegal feeding of wild dolphins at this location.

The installations will begin on Wednesday, **August 16 at 9:00am**. Approximately 25 placards will line the sea wall and boat ramp with the hope that people seeing them will stop feeding wild dolphins and safely recycle monofilament fishing line. Below are several depictions of the placards. Kelly Park East is located at 2550 N. Banana River Drive, Merritt Island, FL 32952

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. www.noaa.gov

Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute is a non-profit scientific research organization committed to conserving and renewing marine life to ensure a healthier planet. Their team of experts provides innovative and objective scientific solutions to challenges threatening ocean health and marine life in our rapidly changing world. www.discoverfloridasoceans.com



DO NOT FEED,
attempt to feed, tease or harass
WILD DOLPHINS.

IT'S ILLEGAL.
Fines up to \$100,000!

Report Violations:
1-800-853-1964

A red circle with a diagonal slash through it, superimposed over a blue silhouette of a hand holding a fish above a dolphin's head.

Help prevent
entanglement.
Recycle
fishing line!

Report injured and entangled
sea turtles and dolphins to:
1-877-942-5343

