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Standard Requirements for Recreational Shoreline Activities Such as Tidepooling and Swimming in Hawaiian Waters

Prepared by:
Members of West Hawaii's Community
with assistance of the Coral Reef Alliance.

Abstract

This voluntary standard specifies standards for environmental performance, conservation practices, and operational safety that enhance shoreline marine recreational activities while minimizing environmental impact of such activities, such as tidepooling and swimming, on fragile marine ecosystems, fish and whales in the waters of West Hawaii particularly near coral reefs, related coastal environments and impacts on marine species such as cetaceans, turtles, monk seals and other animals.

This standard was developed by community members within West Hawaii that represented key interest groups with the assistance of the Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) and the West Hawaii Standards Taskforce (WHST). WHST and CORAL disclaim all liability for its use, application, or adaptation. This standard is subject to revision at any time and must be reviewed every five years and if not revised either reaffirmed or withdrawn.

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FOREWORD

*(This Foreword is not an official part of this standard,
and is included for information purposes only.)*

This voluntary consensus standard is the product of a (number)-member taskforce representing four interest groups:

Supplier: People who provide services such as shop owners or guides (diving, snorkeling, kayaking, wildlife viewing etc);

Purchasers/Consumer: Hotels, concierge or others who actively book clients on tours or environmental associations such as dive clubs or photography clubs;

Local Communities: State, Federal, or Non-Government Organizations employees

General Interests: Local community members with knowledge and interest to assist in creating marine recreational standards with no particular affiliation with the above categories.

The widely recognized due process practices defined in the Standards Engineering Society's standard SES-2, Model Standards Development Procedure, were followed in developing this standard.

Suggestions for improvements to this standard are welcome. They should be sent to the Chairman of the West Hawaii Standards Taskforce, c/o CORAL, 351 California Street, Suite 650, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA, or standards@coral.org.

Voluntary Standard for Recreational Shoreline Activities in West Hawaii Waters

1. Scope

This West Hawaii voluntary standard specifies requirements for marine recreation providers of recreational shoreline activities such as tidepooling and swimming in vulnerable marine ecosystems and related coastal environments to minimize impacts on marine species such as cetaceans, turtles, monk seals and other animals. The standard addresses four critical areas:

- Minimization of impact to the marine environment, particularly coral reefs, and related coastal environments, and the organisms that live completely or partially within these environments;
- Environmental education of staff and clients on best practices;
- Best practices for conducting sustainable shoreline activity and recreational excursions; and
- Safety and operational practices not already specified in existing regulations.

The standard does not specify curricula or practices for certifications, qualifications of instructors, or related subjects.

2 Referenced documents

The following documents are referenced in this standard:

West Hawaii Voluntary Standard 4 - *Standard requirements for recreational scuba diving and snorkeling operations in Hawaiian waters*¹

West Hawaii Voluntary Standard 1 - *Voluntary Standard requirements for wildlife interactions in Hawaiian waters*²

West Hawaii Voluntary Standard 2 - *Voluntary Standard requirements for general boating activities in Hawaiian waters*³

^{1,2,3} Available online at <http://www.coral.organization/>_____, or from CORAL, 351 California St, Suite 650, San Francisco, CA, 94104, USA.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the following definitions apply:

3.1 Cetaceans

Any of various aquatic, chiefly marine mammals of the order Cetacea, including the whales, dolphins, and porpoises, characterized by a nearly hairless body, anterior limbs modified into broad flippers, vestigial posterior limbs, and a flat notched tail.

3.2 Coral reef conservation

The act of preserving and protecting coral reefs, related near-shore ecosystems and coastal environments from degradation.

3.3 Coral reef ecology

The study of organisms in their coral reef environment that includes the interactions within this environment.

3.4 Environmental briefing

Information on ways and reasons to minimize impact on coral reefs and related coastal environments while engaging in recreational activities by a guide, captain or naturalist prior to engaging in the activity.

3.5 Harassment (Marine Mammal Protection Act official definition)

Any act of pursuit, torment or annoyance that:

- (a) injures or has the potential to injure a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild; or
- (b) disturbs or has the potential to disturb a marine mammal or marine mammal stock in the wild by causing disruption of natural behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, surface breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding or sheltering.

3.6 Independent swimming

Swimming activities not organized by a marine recreational provider or led by an employee of the provider but where an individual has rented equipment by a provider.

3.7 Independent tidepooling and beaching

Tidepooling or beaching activities not organized by a marine recreational provider or led by an employee of the provider but where an individual has rented equipment by a provider.

3.8 Marine Protected Area (MPA)

An area of the marine environment that has been reserved by federal or state laws and/or regulations to provide protection and conservation of all the marine, terrestrial and cultural resources within its boundaries.

3.9 Marine recreation provider:

Entity (business, individual or organization), including any individual acting on behalf of such entity, which offers one or more of the following services to individuals as for hire.

- (a) Training, education or information sharing on SCUBA, snorkeling, kayaking, surfing or other marine recreational activity.
- (b) Guided operations of SCUBA diving, snorkeling, surfing, kayaking, marine wildlife viewing, sightseeing or the rental of powered or unpowered boats with or without crew or other recreational activity
- (c) Rental of recreational snorkeling, SCUBA diving, kayaking, surfing or other marine recreational activity.
- (d) Environmental education prior to or during guided activities or prior to the rental of equipment to persons participating in marine recreational activities.
- (e) Entities such as bus drivers and tour guide operations providing a tour that includes shoreline activities. This shall not include entities that are hired only to transport customers to a specific destination.

3.10 Marine Park

An area typically protected by state or federal regulation for recreational use, but more often set aside to preserve a specific habitat and ensure the ecosystem is sustained for the organisms that exist there.

3.12 Tidepooling

Viewing organisms within the intertidal zone.

4.1 Requirements

4.1.1 Marine recreation providers shall comply with all applicable local, national and international laws, regulations, and possess requisite licenses and permits;

4.1.2 All recreational boating operations involving SCUBA diving and snorkeling shall fully comply with the West Hawaii Voluntary Standard for SCUBA Diving and Snorkeling Activities, WHVS 4. Those involving wildlife interactions or viewing whales, dolphins and other marine animals shall fully comply with West Hawaii Voluntary Standard for Wildlife Interactions, WHVS 2, and any activities that include a boat, including surf boards or kayaks, shall fully comply with West Hawaii Voluntary Standard for General Boating Activities, WHVS 2.

4.1.3 Marine recreation providers taking visitors to marine parks or marine protected areas where they will be conducting activities from the shoreline shall verbally brief the clients or passengers with information in Annex A. In addition a minimum of one of the following methods shall be utilized:

(a) Handout a laminated flier reproducing the contents of Annex A in their language (collected at the end of the excursion);

(b) Post Annex A on the backs of seats in primary language of clients and bring to the clients' attention during the ride;

(c) Show a multi-language slide show or video that illustrates the topics addressed in Annex A

(d) Utilize trained volunteer docents in areas where they are stationed, such as County and State Beach Parks or National Parks, who can provide additional information.

(e) Offer marine bag tags for a donation to Big Island Reef Fund.

4.1.2 Marine recreation providers shall verbally brief clients on how to enter the water and describe site hazards and boundaries. When at a marine protected area, inform clients of the ecological, economic and cultural value the MPA provides.

4.1.3 Marine recreation providers and their assistants shall be educated in coral reef ecology and conservation, including information on threatened, endangered and rare species that are unique to the local environment. Staff shall stay current with latest environmental trends and information, through formal or continuing education or review courses, self study and seminars such as those supported through the CORAL Reef Leadership Network, SeaGrant West Hawaii, The Kohala Center or other local entities free of charge.

The best practices for safety good environmental behavior specified here are a mandatory part of West Hawaii Voluntary Standard WHVS 4 - *Standard requirements for Recreational Shoreline Activities Such as Tidepooling and Swimming Hawaiian Waters*

SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL BEST PRACTICES WHEN SWIMMING AND TIDEPOOLING

VISTING COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS

Keep the shoreline clean and litter-free.

Bring beverages in non-breakable containers like plastic bottles instead of glass containers.

Dispose of trash in designated containers - recycling items as possible.

Be particularly careful of lightweight items such as plastic bags, bottles and cups that readily blow in the water as turtles mistake them for their regular diet of jellyfish.

Clean up trash in and around the water when ever you can and dispose of it properly.

Never drive on the beach or on fragile tidepool areas.

Dogs must be on leashes. All dog waste must be picked up and disposed of into designated trash containers

SWIMMING

With or without gear such as mask and snorkel

Save the coral! When you touch, walk, stand on, or break it you kill LIVE coral animals. If needed, use a flotation device to ensure you do not touch, walk or stand on the coral.

Never feed any marine creatures including fish.

Try not to kick up sand or sediment.

Enjoy what you see on the reef and leave it for others to see.

Take nothing but pictures and memories.

Use a rashguard or long-sleeve shirt for sun protection, or environmentally friendly sunscreens such as those using titanium or zinc oxide as the active ingredients.

Always apply sunscreens a minimum 15 minutes before entering the water.

Remember that while foot-wear, fins and gloves protect you, they do not protect coral and other animals you may come into contact with.

Be mindful of this and use extra caution when wearing foot-wear or gloves.

EXPLORING TIDEPOOLS

Tidepools are very special and fragile environments. Observe them from the edges avoiding walking through tidepools.

Some animals in tidepools can sting, stab, bite or hurt you in many ways.

Do not remove animals from a tidepool – you or the animal maybe harmed. By law the collection of marine animals can be done only by those with a permit

For your safety as well as the reef animals, please be mindful of ocean and weather conditions when you are enjoying Hawaii's marine environment.

For more information on guidelines and regulations contact the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources Kona office at 808-327-6226

ENCOUNTERING MARINE LIFE

When observing marine turtles and mammals, be careful not to encircle or entrap, touch, feed, chase, harm or disrupt their behavior in any way.

Sea turtles are protected! Observe turtles from a respectful distance (recommended one car length) but greater if the turtle shows any signs of distress.

In the water never swim under, over or in front of a turtle, observe them from the side, remember they are air breathers. Never surround a turtle.

Monk seals are endangered marine protected animals and close to extinction! When viewing a monk seal on the beach, observe from a respectable distance (the recommended distance is 150 feet away) and limit your observation time to one-half hour. Never attempt to swim with, touch or feed a Hawaiian monk seal. They are wild animals and have been known to be aggressive and bite humans. If a monk seal approaches you while you are in the water, exit the water as soon as safely possible.