I. Introduction

On June 25, 1990, notice was published in the *Federal Register* that an application for a permit to approach, harass and feed Atlantic bottlenose dolphins in the wild for public display was denied. Denial was based on a finding that the proposed taking is not consistent with the purposes and policy of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

II. Objective

To publish the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS’) conclusion that the issuance of a permit authorizing activities intended to directly or indirectly alter the natural and feeding behavior of groups of wild animals for public display purposes is not consistent with the purposes and policy of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

III. Authorities and Responsibilities

The attached *Federal Register* Notice is NMFS’ official policy. That Notice should be cited when referencing this policy.

IV. Measuring Effectiveness

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the NMFS Policy Directives System procedures.
V. References

Policy Regarding Applications for Permits to Approach, Harass, and Feed Bottlenose Dolphins for Public Display (55 FR 35336; August 29, 1990)

Signed ____________________________ 4/8/2019
Chris Oliver Date
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
Policy Regarding Applications for Permits to Approach, Harass and Feed
Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) for Public Display


ACTION: Notice of policy.

SUMMARY: On June 25, 1990, notice was published in the Federal Register (55 FR 25859) that an application for a permit to approach, harass and feed
Atlantic bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) for public display was
denied. Denial was based on a finding that the proposed taking is not
consistent with the purposes and policy of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

During the public comment period on that application, individuals and
organizations supportive of feeding cruises and those opposed commented that
groups of wild animals routinely exposed to feeding activities regularly
approach people for the purposes of interaction even if the fish available
represent only a small percentage of the animals’ daily requirements, and
even if no fish are offered. This increased interaction with people can have
detrimental effects on dolphins.

The Service concludes that the potential adverse impacts on the population
stocks of Atlantic bottlenose dolphin and the marine ecosystem outweigh the
potential benefit of the proposed activities. The Service concluded that the
issuance of a permit authorizing activities intended to directly or
indirectly after the natural and feeding behavior of groups of wild animals
is not consistent with the purposes and policy of the Marine Mammal
Protection Act. Therefore, all other applications requesting a public display
permit for these types of activities will not be accepted for review and will
be returned. Proposed regulations which clarify that NMFS considers
activities that involve the feeding of marine mammals in the wild are takings
and, therefore, prohibited under the MMPA are published elsewhere in this
issue.

The agency has existing guidelines for conducting observations of marine
mammals in the wild without harassment that are applicable to various regions
of the U.S. and is developing national regulations that will cover marine
mammal observational activities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ann Terbush, Chief, Permit Division,
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William W. Fox, Jr.,

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries.