



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 16, 2012

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***Public Confirms Overwhelming Support for
Important Conservation Education Missions of
Marine Parks, Aquariums and Zoos***
**National Poll Finds Marine Parks, Aquariums and Zoos Best Places for
Children to Learn About, Connect with Marine Mammals**

CHICAGO - A new review of data from two separate national opinion polls demonstrates there is consistent and overwhelming public support for marine mammal facilities and their role in conservation education.

Ninety-seven percent of people agree that marine life parks, aquariums and zoos are important because they educate children about marine mammals – animals that children might not have the opportunity to see in the wild.

The [Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums](#) commissioned Harris Interactive® to conduct online polls released in 2005 and 2012 that evaluated public attitudes toward marine mammals in public display facilities. The overwhelmingly high percentage of support – 97 percent – remained consistent in both polls.

In addition, many continue to feel that people are more likely to be concerned about animals if they learn about them at marine life parks, aquariums and zoos. In both 2012 and 2005, 93 percent agreed with this statement.

“People feel that being able to connect with dolphins, killer whales, beluga whales and other marine mammals in facilities is important for education and conservation,” said Marilee Menard, executive director of the Alliance. “This is clear not only from the consistent support over time, as demonstrated by the two polls, but by the 45 million people who visit Alliance-accredited marine life parks, aquariums and zoos every year.”

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Data from the [2012 poll](#) shows that 94 percent of those polled agree that children are more likely to be concerned about animals if they learn about them at marine life parks, aquariums and zoos, and that visiting these facilities can inspire conservation action that can help marine mammals and their ocean environments.

The 2012 poll also found that 94 percent of people agree that zoological parks and aquariums offer valuable information about the importance of oceans, ocean environments and the animals that live there.

Additionally, the latest poll found that 89 percent agree that children learn more about marine mammals at an aquarium or zoo than in a school classroom, and 88 percent agree that you can learn about animals at marine parks in a way that can't be replicated by watching film or TV programs. Some 91 percent agree that seeing a marine mammal at these facilities fosters a connection to the animal.

“When children – and adults – see and experience the excitement of being close to marine mammals such as whales, dolphins, and sea lions, it resonates in ways that even the most vividly illustrated book or video cannot. It is an emotionally enriching experience that fosters a sense of caring for these animals and their ocean environments,” said Menard, whose Alliance membership represents 55 accredited facilities that account for the greatest body of experience and knowledge about marine mammal care and husbandry in the world.

Other findings from the latest public attitude survey include:

- 94 percent believe the people who care for the animals at marine life parks, aquariums and zoos are committed to the welfare of the animals.
- 97 percent (ages 18-24) would be interested in swimming with dolphins.
- 93 percent believe that many of the successes to save endangered or declining species are at least in part a result of work done in marine life parks, aquariums and zoos.
- 90 percent agree that species in the wild benefit when their biology and physiology is studied in marine life parks, aquariums and zoos.
- 40 percent of Americans (about 125 million people) have visited a marine park, aquarium or zoo in the last 12 months, including 56 percent of households with children (about 20 million households).
- 90 percent believe that interacting with dolphins in a marine life park, aquarium or zoo offers people a deeper understanding and appreciation of this mammal.

“We pride ourselves on providing an educational and enjoyable experience for families,” Menard said. “Professionals at Alliance member institutions work every day to inspire guests of all ages to share their commitment to marine mammals, the need to protect them in the wild and to conserve ocean habitats.”

Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the studies online within the United States on behalf of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums among adults age 18 and older. The 2004 study was conducted between Sept. 15-21, 2004 among 1,102 qualified respondents, and the 2011 study was conducted between August 29 and September 6, 2011 among 1,011 qualified respondents. The data were weighted where necessary to be representative of the total U.S. adult population on the basis of age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. The propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

The Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums is an international association of marine life parks, aquariums, zoos, research facilities, and professional organizations dedicated to the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to their conservation in the wild through public education, scientific study, and wildlife presentations.

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*** EDITOR’S NOTE: View a summary of the latest Harris poll at http://www.ammpa.org/_docs/120209HarrisReportData.pdf