



**May 22, 2014**

***Empty the Tanks Day* Misguided in Attacking Marine Parks and Aquariums; Animals Thrive in Marine Parks, Inspire Public Conservation**

The May 24 “*Empty the Tanks Day*” is a misguided publicity stunt by anti-marine park and aquarium protestors designed to discredit mammal parks and aquariums and call into question the dedication and high quality of care zoological institutions provide for marine mammals. This campaign is based on false allegations about the animals’ quality of life and longevity made by individuals with little to no scientific knowledge of the animals.

The “*Empty the Tanks*” campaign deliberately ignores peer-reviewed science that proves animals thrive in our accredited parks. The statistics, and the stories of actual animals, tell the facts:

- Because of the exceptional care provided the animals, dolphins in Alliance member parks and aquariums live longer than those in the wild; for example, Nellie, a bottlenose dolphin born in 1953 at Florida’s Marineland Dolphin Adventure, recently passed away at the age of 61 - more than four times the average life expectancy of wild bottlenose dolphins.
- Nearly 70 percent of the dolphins in Alliance-accredited facilities were born in a zoological park or aquarium.
- The average life expectancy of sea lions, depending on gender, is more than twice as long as those in the wild.

These protestors admit that they seek to deny the public the opportunity to see and learn about marine mammals and other aquatic animals in our respected and admired zoological facilities. The ill-conceived “*Empty the Tanks*” campaign focuses on a relatively small number of animals that receive extraordinary human care in accredited member facilities, but ignores the plights of threatened wild populations.

This campaign aims to deprive people of the opportunity to see and connect with these animals up close in our member facilities, the educational value of which is clearly supported by the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act. The importance and positive impact of education programs at accredited zoological institutions is well documented:

- The majority of Americans support accredited zoos and aquariums and understand that if it were not for these facilities, children as well as adults would have no viable

way to see, experience and learn to care about marine mammals. (2012 Harris poll conducted by Harris Interactive®)

- The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) recognizes the strong educational role of accredited zoos and aquariums and references a growing body of research that documents how informal learning experiences spark curiosity and engage interest in the sciences during the school years and throughout a lifetime.
- The April 2010 issue of the journal Nature included an article titled “Learning in the Wild: Much of What People Know about Science Is Learned Informally. Education Policy-Makers Should Take Note,” which cites evidence suggesting that most of what the general public knows about science is learned outside school through visits to zoos and museums, Web sites, and magazine articles.

Accredited Alliance members – and the hundreds of animal care professionals affiliated with those members – are the true animal advocates. Possessing an extraordinary collective body of knowledge and data, they know firsthand the educational and inspirational experiences children and adults have when they see live whales, dolphins and other marine mammals at our facilities, and they understand the positive impact to animal awareness and conservation that these small but important interactions have on people of all ages.

###