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*An international organization dedicated to conservation through public display, education, and research*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 20, 2016**

**AMMPA STATEMENT ON DUBIOUS NEW LIST ATTACKING NORTH AMERICAN FACILITIES WITH WHALES AND DOLPHINS**

**List Attacking North American Aquariums and Marine Parks Lacks Credibility, Not Based on Science, and Motivated By Anti-Zoo and Aquarium Agenda**

*Background: As a summer publicity stunt and fundraising opportunity to advance its anti-zoo and aquarium agenda, the animal rights group In Defense of Animals (IDA) today released a list of what it claims are the “10 worst” aquariums and marine parks for dolphins and whales in North America. The list includes a number of AMMPA-accredited facilities and some of the finest zoological institutions in the world. Kathleen Dezio, president and CEO of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks & Aquariums (AMMPA) issued this statement about the list:*

“This list, which includes a number of AMMPA-accredited facilities and some of the finest zoological institutions in the world, is unscientific and completely lacking in credibility. Its authors are not in a position to assess factors such as animal health and mortality rates, safety, shade, water quality, facility management, animal transfers and a host of other factors it claims were considered to create the list. The list was compiled by an animal rights organization that opposes zoos and aquariums and wants to end the public display of dolphins and whales. It should be viewed through that lens.

The majority of the facilities on this list are accredited by AMMPA and/or other zoological accrediting bodies. Animals in AMMPA-accredited facilities receive high quality, nutritious food and preventative veterinary care supervised by licensed professionals. They exercise and play in ways that are mentally and physically beneficial, and voluntarily engage in training done through positive reinforcement methods based on mutual respect.

Contrary to the false claims made by IDA, because of the exceptional care and behavioral enrichment we provide animals, current research indicates that whales and dolphins in our care live as long as or longer than their counterparts in the wild. Bottlenose dolphins in our facilities live almost twice as long as those in the wild. Sea lions, depending on their gender, live twice as long or longer in our facilities as they do in the wild. Beluga whales in human care live as long as or longer than those in the wild, and recent studies show that orcas in human care are living as long as their counterparts in the wild.

Rather than using its resources to attack distinguished zoological institutions that provide exceptional animal care and are dedicated to public education and conservation work, the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured animals in the wild, and important scientific research, IDA should roll up its sleeves and use its funds to actually do something to help the thousands of marine mammals in the wild that are imperiled by pollution, food shortage, entanglement in fishing gear and other marine debris, ship strikes, disease, predation, and a host of other threats.”

#### About AMMPA

The Alliance is an international association of zoos, aquariums, marine parks and research institution dedicated to the highest standards of care for marine mammals and to their conservation in the wild through public education and scientific research. With accredited member facilities in the U.S. Mexico, Canada, Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean, Alliance members collectively possess the largest body of marine mammal expertise and experience in the world.

AMMPA-accredited facilities must meet or exceed AMMPA's Standards and Guidelines in a dozen different areas, including animal husbandry, animal training and enrichment, water and environmental quality, breeding, transportation, scientific research and conservation, and education. Based on the expertise and experience of thousands of veterinarians, trainers and animal care specialists throughout the world, these standards optimize the health and welfare of and environmental conditions for marine mammals in our care and maximize their educational and scientific value.

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