

2006-Award Summaries

A total of \$302,830 will be distributed for the 2006 Protect Wild Dolphin competition. Four (4) awards were made; 23 proposals were received.

Principal Investigators and Co-PI's: Kim Bassos-Hull (kbhull@mote.org) and Co-PI- Randall Wells (rwells@mote.org), Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, FL

Subcontractors/Collaborators: Jason Allen, Aaron Barleycorn, Christine Shepard, Sue Hofmann (www.sarasotadolphin.org)

Award No. 2006-03 (\$59,879), August 1, 2006-July 31, 2007 to Mote Marine Laboratory

Title: Investigating potential hurricane and red tide related impacts on bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) abundance, reproductive rates, distribution, and site fidelity in Charlotte Harbor and Pine Island Sound.

Summary: A boat-based photographic identification survey of bottlenose dolphin will be conducted within Charlotte Harbor and Pine Island Sound during September 2006. Abundance estimates will be based on established mark-recapture techniques and compared to 2001-2004 surveys in this west coast Florida ecosystem. All of these data provide a critical baseline to test the null hypothesis that abundance, distribution, reproductive rates or site fidelity of these marine mammals are not altered by large-scale environmental disturbances (hurricanes and red tides).

Principal Investigators and Co-PI's: Randall Wells (rwells@mote.org), Mote Marine Laboratory, Sarasota, FL

Subcontractors: Martha Wells (Conservation Communications, Inc.), Tinsley Advertising, Fitz Productions.

Collaborators: Florida Wild Dolphin Consortium (Mote Marine Laboratory, National Marine Fisheries Service, Dolphin Research Center, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution)

Award No. 2006-05 (\$100,000), August 1, 2006-July 31, 2007 to Mote Marine Laboratory.

Title: "Don't Feed Wild Dolphins" Television Commercial (Public Service Announcement)

Summary: Feeding wild dolphin in Florida is becoming a serious people-management issue. In an effort to reduce this activity, a Public Service Announcement (PSA) will be developed and distributed to educate the public that feeding dolphins in natural environments is harmful to these marine mammals, dangerous to people and illegal under federal law. The PSA will support long-standing efforts by the federal government, concerned scientists, public display communities, and wildlife conservation groups to promote the “Protect Dolphin Campaign.” In addition, a website “www.Don'tFeedWildDolphins.org” will be created to help the public learn more about the perils of feeding and harassing wild dolphins. This project anticipates that about 2.5 million people in Florida will view the PSA on a sustained basis.

Principal Investigators and Co-PI's: Courtney Vail (courtney@wdcs.org) and Laura Engleby (Laura.Engleby@noaa.gov), Amy Samuels (asamuels@whoi.edu)

Award No. 2006-11 (\$72,410), August 1, 2006-July 31, 2007 to the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

Title: DolphinSMART: dolphin tour operator education and recognition program in the Florida Keys.

Summary: The objective of the Dolphin SMART Program to implement a voluntary code of conduct that will promote responsible wild dolphin viewing practices and dolphin conservation and stewardship in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). Education and training components of this Program will be organized to minimize wild dolphin harassment due to commercial viewing activities, eliminate advertising that encourages illegal activities that constitute harassment, and reduce harassment to a resident group of wild dolphins in the FKNMS. Field research in the FKNMS will identify dolphin population structure, the magnitude of anthropogenic threats, and overall Program success in mitigating human disturbance of dolphin.

Principal Investigators and Co-PI's: Douglas Nowacek (nowacek@ocean.fsu.edu) and Peter Dobbins (peter.dobbins@sea.co.uk)

Award No. 2006-14 (\$70,541), August 1, 2006-July 31, 2007 to Florida State University.

Title: ‘Pod-Track’ – a long range passive acoustic detection, localization and tracking system for wild dolphins.

Summary: This project will test a prototype, passive acoustic device designed for long-range tracking of wild dolphins. A proof-of-concept field trial will use a vertical line array of hydrophones to record communication whistles of dolphin.

Statistical analyses of these bio-acoustic data have the potential to examine the locations, movement patterns and feeding activities of individual dolphin as well as to determine how anthropogenic noise may alter their behaviors.