A NEW SPANISH REGULATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CETACEANS

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In January 2008 a Royal Decree for the establishment of protection measures for cetaceans has enter into force in Spain. The regulation applies to all waters under national jurisdiction. The Decree introduces the figure of "Mobile Area for the Protection of cetaceans" defined as a cylinder with a radius of 500 m, 500 m high and 60 m deep, counted from a cetacean or groups of cetaceans. The mobile area distinguishes 5 different sub areas:

1. An Area of Exclusion; with a radius of at least 60 m from the cetacean.
2. An Area of Restricted Stay; with a surface that cover an area from 60 m to 300 m.
3. An Area of Approximation; with a surface that cover an area from 300 m to 500 m.
4. An Aerial Area; an air cylinder 500 m height above the cetacean and a radio of 500 m from the cetacean.
5. A Submarine Area; a water cylinder 60 m below the cetacean and a radio of 500 m from the cetacean.

Within the Mobile Area for the Protection of Cetaceans several rules of conduct have to be followed in order to minimize the negative impacts of human activities. Special attention is given to impacts coming from whale watching activities, for which the Royal Decree provides a specific code of conduct.

Electronic copies of the original Decree can be provided on request.