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Conservation Tips from the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

(Virginia Beach, Va., 2009) - The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center offers conservation tips for people of all ages to follow. For more information, please visit www.virginiaaquarium.com.

Enjoy the marine animals - from a distance! For their protection and yours, it's best to not approach whales and dolphins closer than 100 yards. Give seals and sea turtles a wide berth, and don't try to follow, touch, feed or catch them. If a marine animal seems to be in distress, if they are tangled, diseased or stranded on the beach, call the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team at 757-437-6159.

Eat seafood - sensibly. The Aquarium's Sensible Seafood program can help you make wise decisions about enjoying your seafood and protecting the environment at the same time. Visit www.VirginiaAquarium.com for the Sensible Seafood guide and a list of participating restaurants.

Let go of helium balloons. When they float away, they often end up in the ocean and get mistaken for jellyfish by hungry sea turtles. These indigestible products eventually kill the turtles. Consider bubbles, fresh or paper flowers and other reusable or recyclable decorations to add a festive touch.

Scoop the Poop. We love dogs, but their waste gets washed into the Chesapeake Bay. This contributes to the growth of algae, which uses up oxygen and nutrients needed by other plants and animals, including crabs, oysters, grasses and fish. Take a bag every time you walk Fido, and deposit it in a trash container. (Most of it will be incinerated in an environmentally-safe way.)

Recycle. Separating your plastic, paper and glass not only keeps harmful items out of the water, but means less waste in local landfills. The result: more and safer habitat area for the animals, and humans, in Virginia's watershed.

Check that bilge! If you're a boater, make sure your boat's head is in good working order and that you're pumping waste tanks in accordance with Virginia law. Learn more at www.VirginiaAquarium.com.

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