Marine Mammal Carcass or Stranding Response
Policy & Procedure

Background

Whales, dolphins and seals (Marine Mammals) are common along the South Coast of Western Australia, and strandings or carcasses washing up on beaches can occur at any time of the year.

State and Territory governments are responsible for the conservation and protection of whales in coastal waters (out to the 3 nautical mile limit). This includes responding to strandings and entangled whales.

However, when a marine mammal carcass or injured animal washes up on a beach under the management of the City of Albany (City), City staff will be involved in the response.

Marine mammal carcasses have the potential to attract sharks which pose a significant threat to beach users. They also pose a health issue as they are known to carry Zoonotic agents that are potential pathogens to humans.

Objective

To inform City staff of their responsibilities when responding to marine strandings or carcasses on beaches managed by the City.

Scope

This procedure relates to marine mammal strandings or carcasses on beaches under the management of the City. However, it can also provide guidance when the City receives notification from the public of similar issues on beaches under the authority of other land managers.

This procedure can also be applied to mass fish kills or the management of large individual fish such as a marlin or shark.

Responsibility

Primary responsibility for responding to reports of strandings or carcasses on City managed beaches will rest with the Manager City Reserves and the Reserves Management Team.

Legislative and Strategic Context

All fauna is protected under the *Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016* (*BC Act*) including migratory species that occasionally visit our shores.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) administers the *BC Act*.

Review Position and Date

This policy and procedure will be reviewed by the document owner annually.

Associated Documents

Documents that have a bearing on this policy and that may be useful reference material for users of this policy, follow:
- Beach Closure Policy & Procedure (City)

Definitions

Key terms and acronyms used in the policy, and their definitions:

> **Zoonotic:** Pertaining to a zoonosis: a disease that can be transmitted from animals to people or, more specifically, a disease that normally exists in animals but that can infect humans.

PROCEDURE

STEP ONE (1):

Staff member receiving notification of the stranding/carcass to request and record as much information as possible including, but not limited to:

- **(A)** Location – as specific as possible (i.e. map and coordinates)
- **(B)** Number of animals involved.
- **(C)** If the animal/s are alive or dead.
- **(D)** Species of animal if known.
- **(E)** Approximate size of largest animal.
- **(F)** Name and contact details of person making report.
- **(G)** Date and time.
- **(H)** Any obvious cause of injuries.

STEP TWO (2):

If the animal/s are alive, provide the following advice to the person making the report.

What NOT to do:
- DO NOT put the safety of yourself or others at risk.
- DO NOT stand close to the tail or head.
- DO NOT attempt to push the animal back out to sea – this will only add to its suffering.
- DO NOT apply sunscreen even if the animal's skin is burnt.

What to do:
- Put your safety first. *Use appropriate PPE, in particular disposable latex gloves and face mask to stop water being injected in mouth or inhaled through nose.*
- Be extra vigilant if animal is in water, due to associated predators and the potential for animal to roll on people. Large whales should never be approached if still floating or being moved by swell.
- While waiting, try to be quiet.
- Keep the animal's skin moist with buckets of water if possible, avoiding the blow hole.

STEP THREE (3):

Determine responsible agency. Notify essential people and organisations about the situation so relevant alerts and information can be sent out to the public, and to determine the best course of action for managing the situation.

- If the animal/s are alive call the:
  - Wildcare Helpline on (08) 9474 9055.
- Confirm which agency is responsible for the management of the situation based on where the animal/s are located (it is generally accepted that this falls with the adjacent landowner/manager of the beach upon which the animals are located). If the City is responsible, follow the below procedures. Otherwise, notify the relevant agency (see Contact List below) of the situation on land or water for which they are responsible.
- Notify the following positions at the City of Albany:
  - The Manager City Reserves (0419 192 481); or
  - The most senior member of the Reserves Management Team available who will in turn:
- Organise for members of the City's Reserves Team to attend the stranding/carcass to determine the appropriate on-ground actions to address the issue.
- Report incident to the DBCA South Coast Office (out-of-hours): (08) 9842 4500. Request Jon Pridham (0427 811 588) or Stephen Toole (0427 778 741).

- If just bone with no fresh flesh (i.e. been dead for a long time), remove the material after notifying DBCA, with no requirement to notify any other below mentioned organisations or City teams.
- Report the incident to Water Police and Shark Watch on (09) 9442 8600.
  Report to Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD):
    - Supervising District Fisheries & Marine Officer (Rob Bogumil): 0427 216 800
    - Shark Operations Manager (Graeme Meinema): 0418 918 735 or (08) 6163 0935
- Notify the City's Ranger Team:
    - (08) 6820 3999 to implement the City's Beach Closure Policy and Procedure.
- Notify the City's Communications Team: (08) 6820 3007.

STEP FOUR (4):
Contribute information on animal/s to research and education.

- City staff are to photograph and measure the animal/s as a minimum. Completion of the Cetacean Data Record form provided by DBCA is also desirable if possible.
- If a whale or dolphin, notify South Coast Cetaceans (Kirsty Alexander 0447 770 207) in case an inspection of the animal is wanted.
- If a fish, the DPIRD may be interested in inspecting and collecting information on the animal/s.

STEP FIVE (5):
Disposal method of carcass to be approved by DBCA.

- If a whale or dolphin carcass, contact Whale World (Katelyn Weinert 9844 4021) to determine if they would like the carcass for their museum display. DBCA must confirm that this is an appropriate method of disposing of the carcass.
- If animal/s is not required for museum purposes, carcass/s must be removed to an approved disposal site (Hanrahan Tip). Contact City Waste Management Operations Coordinator (0426 074 344) to notify them of incoming dead animals for burial.

Note: Burial on the beach, towing out to sea and use of explosives are not approved methods of disposal, and must not be implemented by City staff.

- In some cases, the best course of action might be to leave the carcass on the beach. Assessment based on:
    - Location and risk to humans (i.e. proximity to popular sites; remote);
    - Accessibility (i.e. access being limited and able to be cordoned off or warning signs used); or
    - Size and numbers.

STEP SIX (6):
Prepare a file note on the incident and register on Synergy file EM.ANW.2.

Contact List

Department of Transport - 08 92168520 - then select option 2 or 0472843250 which is the out-of-hours number

Southern Ports (Albany) – 9892 9000

Department of Planning Lands and Heritage - proposals@dplh.wa.gov.au

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Reserves Officer (RO) | Manager City Reserves	Executive Director Infrastructure & Environment

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