

NEWS RELEASE

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Stranding Response Team and Other Authorities Work Together for Live Whale's Welfare

(VIRGINIA BEACH, VA) – The Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team has been monitoring a live whale daily since last Thursday, August 14. The 40 ft. whale was originally spotted by the US Coast Guard (USCG) in the James River between the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and the Monitor Merrimac Tunnel. It was immediately noted there were no obvious signs of entanglement or injury. Since then the whale has been seen actively swimming in circles and laps in various Elizabeth River locations, most recently in the river's Southern Branch near the Jordan Bridge and Paradise Creek.

The Stranding Response Team has observed that the whale is thin and obviously disoriented. This morning the Stranding Response Team is going out with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission- (VMRC) Marine Police and NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement to locate the whale and continue to monitor its behavior.

Without a full view of the whale's body, it is challenging to positively identify its species. The team suspects it could be a sei whale. These whales are located worldwide but usually live in pelagic waters offshore.

The USCG Hampton Roads continues to broadcast a warning to mariners to reduce speed and report any sightings of the whale to the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response 24 hour hotline 385-7575 or on the VHF to USCG who will inform the Aquarium. The media has been advised of this messaging as well and they are communicating this to their audiences. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, it is illegal to harass or approach marine mammals such as whales. To report someone harassing a marine mammal, please contact NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement Hotline at 1 800 853-1964.

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