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**36 Pilot Whales and Dolphins Strand on Cape Cod**  
***More Necropsies Today***

**Buzzards Bay, Mass.** -- Since Saturday, the Cape Cod Stranding Network (CCSN) has responded to reports of 36 stranded marine mammals around Cape Cod Bay from Wellfleet to Barnstable. Strandings of 21 common dolphins and 15 pilot whales have been preliminarily confirmed. Of these, 35 are dead. One common dolphin swam away on the high tide Saturday after stranding at least three times. It has not been resighted.

“We’ve not had any new stranding reports since yesterday,” said Kristen Patchett of the CCSN. “We think these animals likely became disoriented during the storm event on Friday. However, we are taking samples from all to look for other causes,” she said. A dozen common dolphins and nine pilot whales stranded dead. Eight dolphins and six of the pilot whales stranded severely injured and dying, and were euthanized at the scene.

“We plan to necropsy four pilot whale and as many as six dolphin carcasses in Dennis today,” said Patchett. The CCSN staff will be assisted by necropsy teams from Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration, The Riverhead Foundation, and the New England Aquarium. On Sunday, three animals (one pilot whale and two dolphins) were fully necropsied at facilities on the campus of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Responses to marine mammal strandings are conducted under the authority of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service, which manages this effort nationwide through its National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Network. CCSN and all organizations participating in the necropsies are partners in the Network.

“We’ve collected basic descriptive information and some biological samples from almost all of the animals, and we are working with the towns to make sure the carcasses are disposed of properly,” said Patchett.

The CCSN is a private, nonprofit organization that provides rapid response, assessment and humane care for stranded marine mammals; effects appropriate release, and conducts research and education to reduce suffering and prevent avoidable deaths.

<b>December 2005 Cape Cod Mass Stranding*</b>		
Sighting Location	Common Dolphin	Pilot Whale
Barnstable	11	0
Dennis	9	2
Brewster	0	11
Truro	0	1
Eastham	0	1
Yarmouth	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>
Dead at stranding	12	9
Euthanized	8	6
Swam Away	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>*Preliminary Data 12/13/2005</b>		

Mass stranding responses are always challenging, but this weekend's was particularly so owing to the effects of Friday's storm. Much of the lower Cape was still without power and communities were busy clearing debris and assessing damage when the response effort started.

"Even though they were busy with many emergencies, all of the Cape towns were very supportive of our efforts and did what they could," said Patchett. The Brewster Police Department helped move animals into the CCSN trailer for evaluation and transport. The Dennis Department of Natural Resources assisted with placing identifying markers on animals, and the town is providing support for today's necropsies. Live response efforts by CCSN were also assisted by staff and volunteers from the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the National Marine Life Center, the New England Aquarium, and the International Wildlife Coalition.

Common dolphins and pilot whales are not listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, but are protected under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act. Cape Cod Bay is a well-known area for mass strandings of some marine mammal species and of sea turtles. Mass strandings most typically occur here during and after storm events, or sudden ocean temperature drops.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

Cape Cod Stranding Network: [www.capecodstranding.net](http://www.capecodstranding.net)

NOAA Fisheries Service: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

NOAA: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)