

Hawaiian Monk Seal Visitor Education Programming Focus Group

Focus Group Questions

Instructions:

Before starting the focus group session, the participants will be informed that that the group session will be recorded to assist the facilitators in collecting and analyzing data from the focus groups. Prior to recording,

1. The participants will be given a release form to sign; and
2. The facilitators will explain to the participants that after they are finished with analyzing the focus group data, the recordings will be erased and/or destroyed.

Focus group participants will then be given a brief summary about the needs assessment for visitor educational programming for the Hawaiian monk seal that the focus group will help inform. The participants will then be asked the series of questions as listed below.

Script/Questions:

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary and responses are anonymous and confidential under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Section 402 (b). Any material that might identify you will be destroyed at the end of the study. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average two hours, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Notwithstanding any other provisions of the law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subjected to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number.

- Do you ever see Hawaiian monk seals while on the job with clients? What are common reactions to seeing the seals?
- What do you think your clients know about the Hawaiian monk seal?
- Do you ever offer information to your clients general information about Hawaiian monk seals?
 - If yes, when do you offer the information?
 - If yes, what do you share with them?
 - If no, why don't you offer information?
- Do you ever offer information to your clients about what they should do if they encounter a Hawaiian monk seal?

- o If yes, when do you offer the information?
- o If yes, what information do you offer?
- o If no, why don't you offer information?
- Where do you get the information that you offer your clients about the Hawaiian monk seals or environmental topics in general?
- Would you and your staff or co-workers be interested in learning more about the Hawaiian monk seal that you could then pass on to your clients?
- I am going to list methods that NOAA Fisheries currently uses to offer information about the Hawaiian monk seal to stakeholders. Please write them down and then rank them from 1-6 – “1” being the most effective way of learning for yourself and your staff or colleagues and “6” being the least effective way of learning for yourself and your staff or co-workers.
 - Training
 - Brochure / Printed materials
 - Video
 - Website
 - Listserv / email message
 - Targeted events to access visitor tour and lodging operators such as conferences and meetings
- Please suggest any other methods that would be effective.

BREAK

The term “incidental eco-tourist” was coined by some researchers that followed around visitors and tour guides at an archeological site in Belize. The researchers noticed that although the visitors were being well informed about the archeological site, they were not being informed about the endangered Howler monkeys that also roamed the area. As a result, they unintentionally disturbed some of the Howler monkey habitat and approached the Howler monkeys too closely.

- Describe situations where visitors that come to Hawaii could be considered “incidental eco-tourists.”
- What are some ideas you have for getting appropriate information to “incidental eco-tourists” before they unexpectedly encounter a Hawaiian monk seal?

Tourists, as you know, are a unique target audience. From an educational perspective they can be included in the category of what are called “free-choice” learners. This term is used to describe the learning that occurs when it is largely under the choice and control of the learner. Personal interests and needs drive these learners.

- Write down the top three interests of your visitor clients.
- Write down the top three needs of your visitor clients.
- How do you see the Hawaiian monk seal relating to your visitor interests and needs?

Research has shown that tour guides are a crucial element in conveying conservation messages and values. Interacting with a tour guide, or perhaps a concierge, may also be the only time visitors learn conservation-related information. The NOAA Education Strategic Plan suggests that partnering with various groups that educate the public, including commercial businesses, is important for achieving its mission of educating and encouraging stewardship of the environment. Recommendations from a recent survey also suggest that NOAA should partner with commercial operators to increase awareness about the Hawaiian monk seals with the visitor population.

- What are some ways that you think NOAA Fisheries can partner with lodging and tour operators to educate visitors about the Hawaiian monk seal and encourage responsible viewing of these animals?
- Are there other agencies or non-profits you already partner with that NOAA Fisheries should look to as examples?

Researchers in Australia suggest the importance of “post-action” resources as an effective way to encourage conservation actions by visitors after they leave an experience where they encounter conservation messages and follow through with conservation actions. This experience could be at a permanent facility, like a nature center or botanical garden, where visitors follow signs to stay on marked trails. This experience could also take place on a guided nature tour, where visitors refrain from feeding birds or touching coral as requested by their tour guides. Example post-action resources could include printed or web-based materials given to visitors when they leave a site, or Information delivered to visitors post visit through social media outlets like forums, weblogs, podcasts, email, Twitter, and Facebook.

- Please describe how you currently use post-action resources with your clients.
- If NOAA Fisheries or their partners were to develop post-action resources focused on conservation and responsible viewing of the Hawaiian monk seal, would you be interested in using them with your clients? How would you use them with your clients? What kinds of post-action resources would be the most effective with your clients?

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