

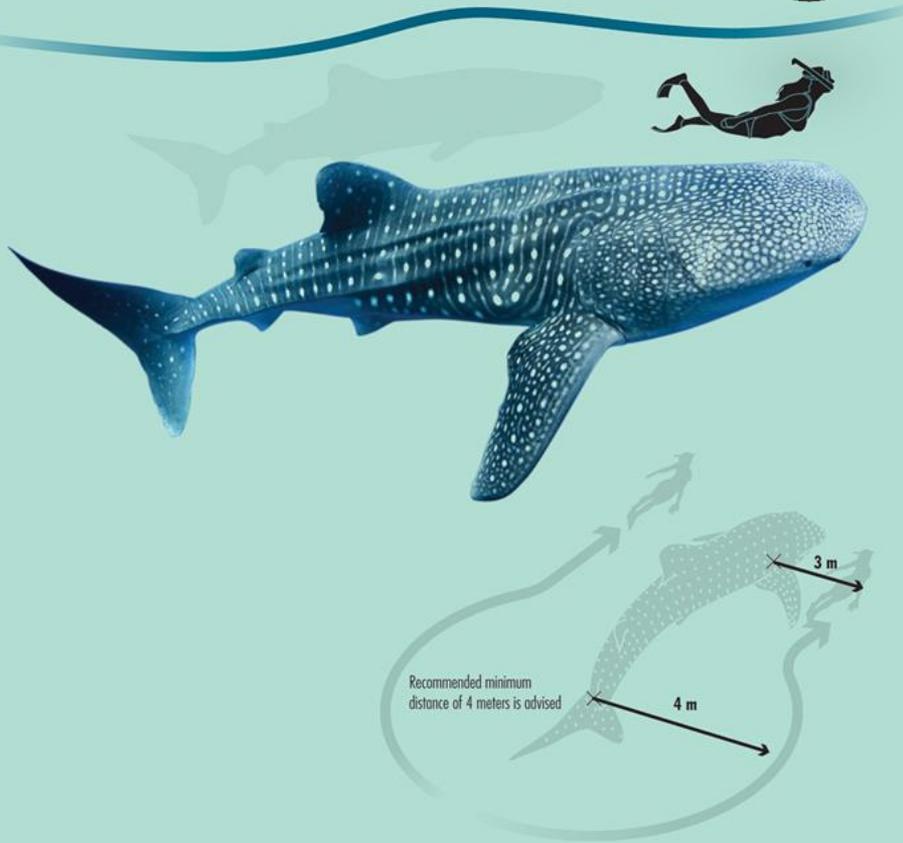
# Hawai'i Ecotourism Whale Shark Guidelines

## for Boat Operators & Crew



### For Boat Operators

- Remain under 6 kts.
- Shift engines into neutral or off <100m.
- Approach ahead of the shark, parallel to the direction of travel to drop swimmers.
- Do not approach any animal head-on, keep path clear.
- Limit interaction time and be courteous of other operators and the animal's behavior.



### For Crew

#### Whale Shark Education

- Whale sharks are the largest of the world's fishes, reaching up to 65 ft in length, and weighing up to 34 tons.
- The animal's sex can be determined by the presence or absence of claspers.
- They are filter feeders, feeding mostly on microscopic krill and copepods up to small schooling fishes.
- Seen world-wide in mostly temperate waters, but have been seen as north as Nova Scotia.
- They aggregate in many places all over the world, including Mexico, Western Australia, Philippines, and Galapagos.
- Listed as *endangered* by the IUCN.
- It is currently unknown why whale sharks are in Hawaii.
  - You can help our local research organization, Hawai'i Uncharted Research Collective, understand more about these animals by sharing photos and videos of your encounter.

#### Safety Briefing

- Clearly explain the code of conduct to all swimmers.
  - Do not touch the animal.
  - Stay 3m (10ft) away from the head and 4m (13ft) away from the tail.
  - Do not obstruct the animal's path.
  - No flash photography.
  - Do not use motorized scooters.
  - Limit diving below the animal's head and body.
  - In the event the animal turns toward you, make your best effort to return to the side of the body with appropriate distance.
  - Be courteous to other swimmers.
- If the animal is showing signs of stress, such as a "banking" behavior or frequent diving, give the animal more room and determine if removing swimmers is necessary.