

NEWS RELEASE

717 General Booth Blvd. Virginia Beach, VA 23451



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Matt Klepeisz | O: 757 385-0252 C: 757-613-0876 MKlepeis@VirginiaAquarium.com

January 18, 2017

Seals Showing Up Along Shorelines

Try to say that three times fast!

(Virginia Beach, VA) Virginia's coastline is home to an incredible array of permanent and migratory animals, and winter brings some of the most amazing visitors- whales and seals!

Each year, the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Team receives dozens of calls alerting us to the location of hauled out seals, which is helpful for our population surveys and research.

As sightings continue to increase, we urge you to leave the animals alone. It is normal behavior for seals to haul out onto beaches and rocky outcroppings to rest, and approaching these animals is dangerous for you and the seal. Seals, as with most marine mammals, are protected by federal law and should not be approached or harassed. If threatened, seals may bite people or other animals. It is important to keep these animals wild, and feeding seals may result in them associating people with food.

If you see a seal, please call the Stranding Response Program at (757) 385-7575 as soon as possible, regardless of the animal's condition. Taking a picture and/or video with your phone-- while maintaining a safe distance--can help stranding response staff assess the condition of the animal. Our team may need to come out and evaluate the health of the animal, determine the species and location, and take pictures of it for individual identification.

The Virginia Aquarium Foundation is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring conservation of the marine environment through education, research and sustainable practices. The Foundation was formed in 1981, three years before construction on the Aquarium even began. Over the years, the Foundation's role in support of the Aquarium has not only included garnering financial support to pay for the Aquarium's exhibits, but it has expanded to include funding of education programs, and research and conservation efforts such as the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response and Sensible Seafood™ programs.

###