

Launch, Day 0: Saturday, July 17, 2010

First Email to the Wise Family and Friends

Dear Family,

Well we are off on the first leg of our voyage to study the impacts of the oil crisis on whales in the Gulf. Why whales? Well: 1) whales are mammals and thus are models for humans in the ocean, 2) whales are economically critical as they drive millions in tourist industry, 3) whales are keystone species in the ecosystem and 4) people love them. Our first leg will span two weeks and land us in Fort Lauderdale about July 30. We expect to see whales and begin sampling at dawn. Cathy will be climbing the mast at dawn to a platform about halfway to the top about 40 feet up where she will scan the horizon for whale blows. The students will rotate every hour from sunrise to sunset while we scan for whales.

On board is my science team consisting of three undergrads – Johnny Wise, Cathy Wise, and Matt Braun and one grad student Kellie Joyce. Then there is a 5 man crew- Captain Bob Wallace, Engineer Rick Walker, First mate Eric (need to learn his last name) and Vicki Beaver a deckhand/education program leader and Eric's wife. Plus our cook is Kyle, my nephew. I imagine there are now lots of pictures of our launch on Facebook.

Cell phone and internet service are unpredictable so we will see.

John