



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

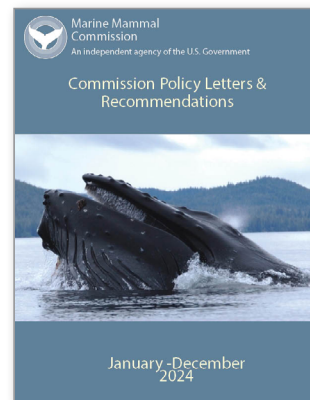
About Us

The Marine Mammal Commission is a small, independent federal agency charged under the [Marine Mammal Protection Act \(MMPA\)](#) with providing comprehensive oversight of federal government science, policy, and management actions affecting marine mammals and their ecosystems. The MMPA acknowledges the integral role marine mammals play in the world’s oceans and in some freshwater habitats.

Independent Oversight: The Commission reviews actions proposed by federal and state agencies and other stakeholders to further the MMPA’s policies. We recommend measures to minimize adverse impacts on marine mammals and their habitats and promote science-based, practical, cost-effective, solutions to conservation and management issues related to marine mammals. In 2024, the Commission sent [over forty letters](#) commenting on and providing recommendations concerning proposed policies and actions under the MMPA and [related laws](#). The Commission tracked and reviewed proposed activities associated with [offshore energy development](#) to anticipate potential adverse impacts on marine mammals and provide recommendations to minimize such impacts. The Commission also made strong recommendations for the continuation of agency partnerships to survey marine mammal populations.

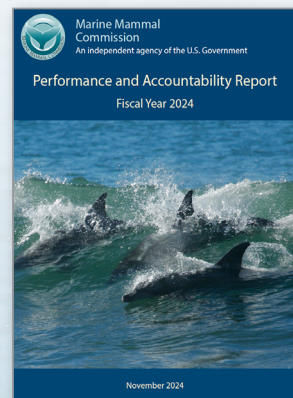
Community & Stakeholder Engagement: The Commission facilitates cooperation and communication among government agencies, marine mammal scientists, Alaska Native Organizations (ANOs), and ocean resource users through meetings, webinars, briefings and other outreach. The Commission held a [Working Meeting of the Commission](#) focusing on implementation challenges of the 1994 MMPA Amendments, climate change impacts to marine mammals, and the Commission’s [grant program](#). Throughout 2024, we consulted with and provided briefings for Congressional offices, federal agencies, ANOs, and Tribes to encourage partnerships and explore solutions to complex marine mammal conservation challenges, including those involving [marine mammal health and strandings](#), North Atlantic and [North Pacific right whales](#), [Rice’s whales](#), and the preparation of marine mammal stock assessments.

Letters



Read our [science and policy recommendations](#) from this year’s oversight letters.

Performance and Accountability Report



Review our FY2024 [Performance and Accountability Report](#) for an overview of our accomplishments.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

Reducing Marine Mammal Bycatch Globally: The Commission addresses global marine mammal bycatch at multiple levels through its [oversight work](#), [grants program](#), and participation in take reduction teams. In 2024, we continued to focus on preventing the extinction of [North Atlantic right whales](#), mitigating entanglement risks to humpback whales on the West Coast, and reducing bycatch of [false killer whales](#) in the Hawaii longline fishery. We collaborated with the Atlantic Large Whale, Pelagic Longline, and False Killer Whale [Take Reduction Teams](#) in developing and recommending bycatch mitigation measures, engaged in efforts to further ropeless or pop-up gear technology, and provided input on federal budget priorities concerning these issues.



Learn more about our work on [North Atlantic right whales](#).



Learn more about our [2024 Grant Awards](#).

Supporting Marine Mammal Research and Collaboration: The Commission's small [grants and research program](#) funds novel, low-cost, small-scale projects designed to leverage available funding and catalyze future work. In 2024, we funded seven projects that further the conservation and management goals of the MMPA and study marine mammal health and distribution in a changing climate. Additionally, the Commission provided support for an Alaska Sea Grant summer internship with the Chugach Regional Resource Commission. The Commission consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on plans for a 2025 joint meeting of the [Scientific Review Groups](#). In 2024, the Commission participated in the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Implementation Task Force as a member

of the Habitat and Threats Management Committee, collaborating with a variety of partners to provide guidance and recommendations on the implementation of recovery actions for this endangered population.

International Conservation: The Commission supports and participates in many international efforts that further the goals of the MMPA. Commissioner Gulland continued to lead the [global network of marine mammal stranding responders](#). The Commission also attended and supported the work of the U.S. Delegation to the 69th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, which approved a six-year extension of catch limits for aboriginal subsistence whaling, including the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission's subsistence harvest of bowhead whales. The Commission continued to participate in efforts to persuade Mexico to enforce gillnet bans in the northern Gulf of California, the key for avoiding extinction of the critically endangered [vaquita](#). The Commission continued to lead the [Rare Pinniped Conservation Network](#), planning and guiding its third successful meeting at the World Marine Mammal Conference in Perth, Australia.



Learn about our work on [vaquitas](#).

Emphasizing Science-Based Decision Making: The Commission promotes the use of the best-available science in decision-making as mandated by the MMPA and related statutes. We track and report on relevant research funding by federal agencies through our annual [Survey of Federally Funded Marine Mammal Research](#). The Commission continued engagement with Alaska Native Organizations to advance research and [co-management of marine mammals](#) and safeguard cultural, economic, and subsistence values. Additionally, the Commission was a partner in the Arctic Watch program, a collaborative initiative to build critical real-time communication between Alaska Native subsistence communities and the Marine Exchange of Alaska on vessel traffic, subsistence hunting activities, and marine mammal occurrence in the Bering Strait region.