



Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government

Performance and Accountability Report

Fiscal Year 2024



November 2024

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Message from the Chair | Pg. 3 |
| 2. Mission and Organizational Structure | Pg. 4 |
| 3. Financial Analysis: Overview of Commission Finances in FY 2024 | Pg. 5 |
| 4. Analysis of Systems, Controls, and Legal Compliance | Pg. 6 |
| 5. Performance Goals and Results: Commission Accomplishments in FY 2024 | Pg. 7 |
| a. Provide Legal and Policy Oversight | Pg. 7 |
| b. Improve Population Assessment and Health Surveillance | Pg. 7 |
| c. Assess and Address Threats to Marine Mammals | Pg. 9 |
| d. Improve Marine Mammal and Ecosystem Research | Pg. 11 |
| e. Engage with Marine Mammal Protection Act Stakeholders | Pg. 12 |
| 6. Commission Outlook | Pg. 14 |



15 November 2024

Message from the Chair

With this letter, I submit the Commission's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) Performance and Accountability Report, including financial and program performance results. The performance data in this report are complete and reliable and there are no material inadequacies. Prior to preparation of the report, the Commission evaluated its management controls and financial management system pursuant to the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act of 1982. No material weaknesses were identified and the financial management system conforms to government financial system requirements. In accordance with OMB Circular 123, Appendix C, no improper payments were made. An independent, certified public accountant audited the Commission's financial statements, internal controls, and management systems and verified that they conform to generally accepted accounting principles, laws, regulations, and requirements.

The Commission's work is guided by its Strategic Plan, which helps the agency focus its attention on the most pressing issues pertaining to marine mammals and their environments.

On behalf of the Marine Mammal Commission, I am pleased to submit this FY 2024 Performance and Accountability Report to the Office of Management and Budget.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F Gulland".

Frances M.D. Gulland, Vet. M.B. Ph.D.
Chair

The Marine Mammal Commission’s Performance and Accountability Report consists of two elements: 1) the Management Discussion and Analysis, presented here, and 2) the Financial Audit Report and Financial Statement provided in a separate document.

Management’s Discussion and Analysis

The Mission of the Marine Mammal Commission

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission) is an independent agency of the federal government charged by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) with furthering the conservation of marine mammals and their environment. We work to ensure that marine mammal populations are restored and maintained as significant functioning elements of healthy marine ecosystems in the world’s oceans. Our mission is to provide independent, science-based oversight of domestic and international policies and actions of federal agencies affecting marine mammals and their ecosystems. This promotes consistency with the MMPA and other relevant mandates to protect and conserve marine mammals. Our role is unique—we are the only U.S. government agency that provides comprehensive oversight of science, policy, and management actions affecting all species of marine mammals. To learn more about us and what we do [please visit our website](https://www.mmc.gov/about-the-commission/our-mission/)¹.

Commission Structure

The Commission consists of three Commissioners, a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors, and a staff of 15 full-time employees (Fig. 1). A Special Advisor on Native Affairs serves the Commission under contract.

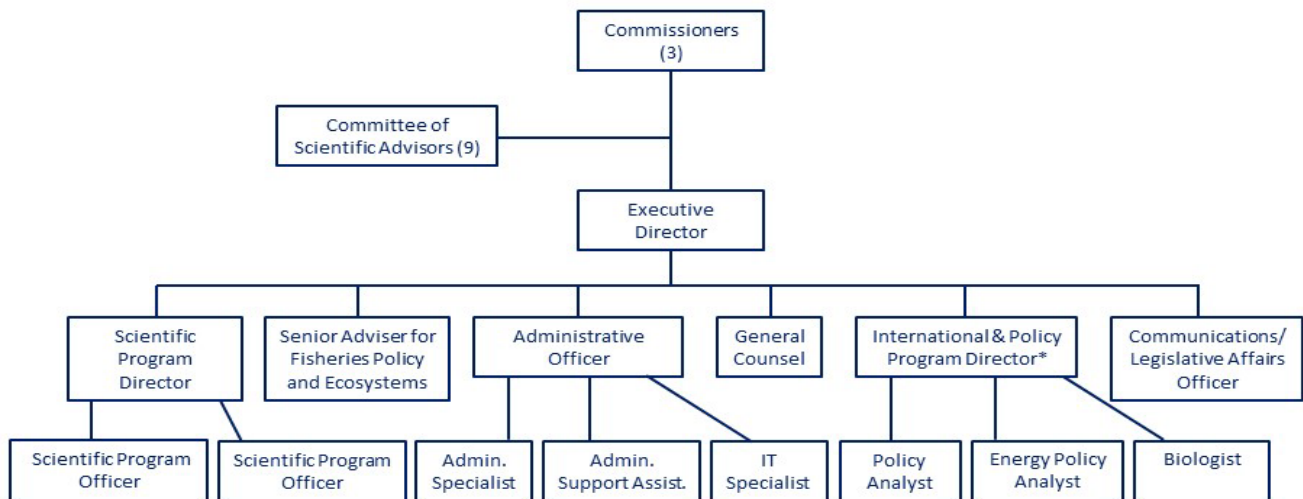


Figure 1. Organizational Structure of the Marine Mammal Commission (**position vacant during FY 2024*)

¹ <https://www.mmc.gov/about-the-commission/our-mission/>

Financial Analysis: Overview of Commission Finances in FY 2024

The Marine Mammal Commission’s electronic financial systems are maintained by the General Services Administration (GSA), External Services Branch.

The Marine Mammal Commission complies with applicable federal financial laws, including the Antideficiency Act. The Administrative Officer has received appropriations law training and confers with the Executive Director and General Counsel to ensure that the agency remains in compliance.

Annual Appropriations and Distribution of Funds

Congressional appropriations are the only source of funding for the Commission. The Commission used its FY 2024 appropriation to meet its general oversight responsibilities as mandated by the MMPA. Total annual appropriations for the Commission from FY 2020 to 2024 are listed in Table 1. In FY 2024, the Commission’s appropriation was \$4,500,000. Approximately 63 percent of the Commission’s appropriation was used for salaries and benefits (including salaries for Commissioners and non-federal advisory Committee members, see

Commission Structure above), 22 percent for rent, administration, and communications, 10 percent to fund the Commission’s Scientific Program and research grants, and 5 percent for travel (Fig. 2).

Table 1. Annual Appropriations for the Marine Mammal Commission, FY 2020 to 2024

| Fiscal Year | Appropriation |
|-------------|---------------|
| 2020 | \$3,616,000 |
| 2021 | \$3,769,000 |
| 2022 | \$4,200,000 |
| 2023 | \$4,500,000 |
| 2024 | \$4,500,000 |

Management of Commission Finances

The Executive Director oversees and assumes responsibility for all financial transactions. The Administrative Officer manages and is responsible for all day-to-day budgetary matters, including issuing purchase orders, processing time cards, and overseeing invoice payments. An Administrative Assistant processes all paperwork related to invoices and travel expenses and assists the Administrative Officer in day-to-day management of the Commission’s budget. A Scientific Program Officer oversees all day-to-day fiscal transactions related to Commission-sponsored research. The Executive Director works with a team of senior staff

to address key issues, including budget planning and management of the Commission’s finances. An independent, certified public accountant examined all financial systems and controls and completed a comprehensive audit for FY 2024. The audit found no material internal weaknesses in financial systems and controls. The audit report concluded that the Commission’s financial statements are presented fairly and in accordance with generally accepted U.S. accounting principles. The financial statements for the Commission are included in the audit report.

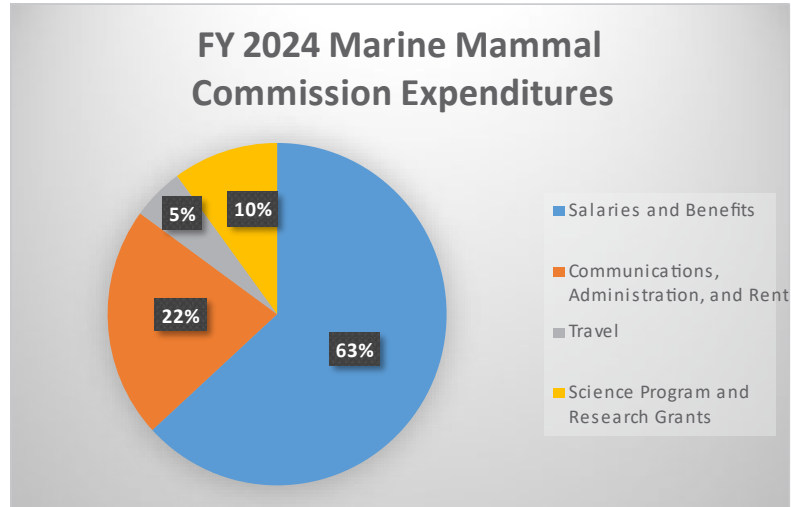


Figure 2. Distribution of Funds Appropriated to the Commission for FY 2024



15 November 2024

Analysis of Systems, Controls, and Legal Compliance

The Marine Mammal Commissioners and senior staff are responsible for managing risks and maintaining effective internal control to meet the objectives of Sections 2 and 4 of the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act. The Marine Mammal Commission conducted its assessment of risk and internal control in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-123, Management's Responsibility for Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control. Based on the results of the assessment, the Agency can provide reasonable assurance that internal control over operations, reporting, and compliance was operating effectively as of September 30, 2024.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F Gulland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frances M.D. Gulland, Vet. M.B. Ph.D.
Chair

Performance Goals and Results: Commission Accomplishments in FY 2024

The work performed by the Commission is centered around the five strategic goals set forth in the Commission's [Strategic Plan](#)². Below is a summary of accomplishments for FY 2024 under each strategic goal.

Provide Policy and Legal Oversight

- **Regulatory Agency Relationships:** In FY 2024, the Commission worked proactively with relevant regulatory agencies to assist them in addressing emerging or ongoing marine mammal conservation issues. It also worked with those agencies to help streamline regulatory processes. The other federal agencies with which the Commission engaged most frequently in its oversight role were the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Ocean Service (NOS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Department of State, and Navy. It also engaged frequently with state agencies and coastal Native American Tribes and Organizations, particularly Alaska Native Organizations.
- **Implementation of the MMPA:** The Commission worked with agencies by advocating for faithful and effective implementation of the MMPA and fostering a science-based, fully-informed regulatory process that adheres to Congressional directives and considers relevant stakeholder views. For example, the Commission reviewed and commented on proposed incidental take authorizations and associated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents to assess potential impacts on marine mammals and identify appropriate mitigation measures for inclusion in those authorizations. The Commission also reviewed and commented on permit applications submitted under the MMPA, including all scientific research permit applications, to ensure that the proposed research is *bona fide* and the taking of marine mammals is humane. Further, the Commission made recommendations concerning statutory requirements relating to reducing mortality and serious injury of marine mammals incidental to commercial fisheries and the preparation of stock assessment reports required by the MMPA.
- **Science-Based Recommendations:** The Commission worked with other federal agencies to identify and support critical research that promotes well-informed decisions concerning marine mammal programs, including those designed to reduce potential threats from interactions with fisheries, offshore energy development, and other coastal and offshore activities. For example, the Commission reviewed offshore leasing and construction plans in support of expanded wind energy development to anticipate and minimize potentially adverse impacts on marine mammals for activities regulated under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. Additionally, the Commission recommended that BOEM continue its support for the Atlantic Marine Assessment Program for Protected Species (AMAPPS) and renew its funding of periodic broad-scale marine mammal surveys in the Gulf of Mexico.

Improve Population Assessment and Health Surveillance

- **Marine Mammal Stock Assessments:** The Commission reviewed and evaluated all aspects of stock assessments relating to the status of marine mammal populations (hereafter, stocks),

² <https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/Marine-Mammal-Commission-FY22-26-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

pursuant to section 117 of the MMPA. This included reviewing draft stock assessment reports, participating in regional scientific review group meetings, and developing strategic recommendations or plans in collaboration with other agencies to improve the information used to meet section 117 requirements. In a letter to NMFS, the Commission expressed concern that the most basic metrics required by section 117 – a minimum population estimate and an estimate of human-caused mortality and serious injury – were not available for approximately one third of marine mammal stocks under NMFS jurisdiction. The Commission considered this issue further at its July 2024 meeting and discussed possible approaches to address these shortcomings.

- **Assessment of Climate Change Impacts:** The Commission previously led a peer-reviewed scientific assessment of current knowledge about the impacts of climate change on marine mammals in U.S. waters, including species and stocks shared with Canada and Mexico. To build upon this effort, the Commission generated recommendations for additional research and conservation measures, consulted with other agencies to strengthen assessment methodologies, and sought to integrate climate-related research elements into the MMPA’s stock assessment process. The Commission’s goal is to synthesize knowledge about climate change impacts on marine mammals to improve management and conservation strategies, and provide relevant information in formats useful for policy-makers, managers, and the public. The Commission’s November 2023 Annual Meeting focused on case studies of threatened and endangered marine mammals to explore national-level issues related to stock assessment, health surveillance and other management needs in a changing climate. In a July 2024 working meeting, the Commission discussed specific impacts of climate change on marine mammal populations to identify next steps that the Commission can take and/or support to mitigate these effects.
- **Marine Mammal Health Monitoring and Analysis Platform (or Health MAP):** In FY 2024, the Commission advised NMFS and regional stakeholders on the development of Health MAP, a platform designed to maximize the availability and use of marine mammal health information and integrate that information with other ocean observing systems. The Health MAP platform will provide the public, scientists, and resource managers rapid access to marine mammal health information and support efforts to detect and communicate potential public and animal health risks arising in a changing ocean environment. The Commission also released a workshop report outlining a national plan for marine mammal health surveillance to collect the data necessary for timely detection of marine mammal population declines, impacts of climate change and broader ecosystem changes on marine mammal health, and ocean associated emerging threats to human health. Following the release of the report, the Commission worked to promote implementation of the plan’s components and tracked regional efforts to contribute data to Health MAP, prioritizing data needs in accordance with the national marine mammal health surveillance plan.
- **Restoration Efforts in the Gulf of Mexico:** The Commission has engaged at many levels to further efforts to restore Gulf of Mexico marine mammal populations impacted by the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill. The Commission monitored restoration projects aimed at providing benefits for marine mammal populations injured by DWH and reviewed and commented on proposed large-scale coastal restoration or development projects to identify possible measures to reduce adverse effects on marine mammal populations. The Commission served as an advisor to a multiagency project designed to inform restoration

efforts and improve assessments of coastal and offshore marine mammals throughout the Gulf of Mexico using passive acoustic monitoring devices, including in Mexican waters.

- **Interagency Committee Participation:** The Commission participated in several interagency working groups and committees concerned with ocean science and policy. These included the Sub-committee on Ocean Science and Technology (SOST) interagency working groups (IWGs), the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee (IOOC), IWG Biodiversity, IWG Sound and Marine Life, and the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee. The Commission contributed to the development of the IOOC Strategic Plan and played a leadership role in interagency efforts to integrate marine mammal observations into the Global Ocean Observing System.

- **Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events:**

The Commission served with other federal partners on the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (UMEs). Recent marine mammal UMEs highlight the need to monitor marine mammal health and integrate that information into interagency efforts to promote a One Health approach to wildlife disease surveillance, which recognizes interactions among animal health, human health, and the environment. The need for a One Health approach is



Gray seal (*Marine Mammals of Maine*).

exemplified by the global spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, H5N1, which killed thousands of marine mammals in South America in 2023 and 2024, has been detected sporadically in carcasses of seals and dolphins in the U.S. in 2024, and has potential to cause pandemics in humans. The Commission continues to promote collection and inclusion of marine mammal data as the One Health approach to ocean conservation is developed. The ongoing UME of North Atlantic right whales off the east coast of the United States is of grave concern due to the critically small size of this population, the continuing threat of fishing gear entanglement and vessel strikes, and the slow pace of establishing additional regulatory measures to mitigate these threats (see below).

Assess and Address Threats Facing Marine Mammals

- **Impacts of Climate Change:** The Commission built upon its assessment of climate change impacts (discussed above) and, in concert with management agencies, sought to identify and implement measures to mitigate those impacts.
- **Fisheries Interactions:** During FY 2024, the Commission worked closely with federal and state agencies, fishermen, scientists, and representatives from conservation organizations to identify and implement measures designed to reduce mortalities and serious injuries of marine mammals incidental to commercial fishing operations. The Commission is an active participant on all seven Take Reduction Teams established by NMFS and has provided recommendations on actions and policies designed to reduce marine mammal deaths and serious injuries from fisheries to the levels mandated by the MMPA. In addition, the Commission evaluated the needed level of support for this important MMPA process and

raised concerns over inadequate funding levels with NMFS leadership and Congressional offices.

- **North Atlantic Right Whales:** Entanglement in pot/trap fishing gear and vessel strikes are the two gravest threats to the survival and recovery of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale. The ongoing North Atlantic Right Whale UME (2017-present) involves 148 whales to-date, including 41 confirmed dead, 37 seriously injured, and 70 whales injured or in poor health. These totals include 25 confirmed human-caused whale deaths since 2017, 10 from entanglement and 15 from vessel strikes. In addition, 96 human-caused injuries to right whales have been recorded in that period -- 86 attributed to entanglement in fishing gear and 10 caused by vessel strikes -- with 36 of those injuries serious enough that the whale has died or is expected to die as a result. Twenty right whale calves were born during the 2024 calving season, giving hope for eventual recovery, but the species' abundance remains precariously low, with fewer than 370 individuals remaining in the population. The Commission remains committed to preventing the extinction of the North Atlantic right whale and promoting its recovery. In FY 2024, the Commission participated in webinars to address threats to the species from fisheries and participated in the work of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team, supported efforts to transition to whale-safe ropeless gear, and provided advice to Congress on needed measures and funding priorities. The Commission provided formal comments to NMFS on proposed amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule and advocated for technologies capable of reducing the risk of vessel strikes.

- **International Efforts to Conserve other Endangered Marine Mammals:** The Commission participated as an active partner with the U.S. and Mexican governments and international non-governmental organizations in efforts to prevent extinction of the vaquita a small porpoise endemic to the Upper Gulf of California in Mexico. In addition, the Commission worked with an international team to address threats to Mekong River dolphins in Cambodia and is a member of the Arabian Sea Whale Network, working to conserve humpback and other whale species in that area. A member of the Commission's Committee of Scientific Advisors was a Member, and the Executive Director was an Advisor, to the U.S. Delegation to the 69th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) 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 assisted in building international awareness of threats to particular marine mammals and supplying expert technical assistance through its work with the IWC Scientific Committee, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Cetacean Specialist Group, the Rare Pinniped Conservation Network (RAPCON) and other international and national bodies. The Commission also directed grant funds to support international projects directed at conserving species of concern.



A critically endangered vaquita mother and calf alongside an illegal gillnet fishing boat in October 2019 (CONANP/Museo de la Ballena/Sea Shepherd).

- **Renewable Energy:** The Commission supported the Administration's goal to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind power by 2030. As federal agencies work to achieve that goal,

care must be taken to minimize the impacts of wind energy development on marine mammals and other marine resources. To that end, the Commission worked with federal and state agencies, Tribal organizations, industry, environmental organizations, and academics to identify research and monitoring priorities to inform the review of ongoing and planned projects. The Commission also reviewed ongoing and planned wind farm construction projects to assess the appropriateness of various mitigation, monitoring, and reporting measures.

- **Southern Resident Killer Whales:** The Commission continued to monitor the status of Southern Resident killer whales, providing advice on the ecological links between this endangered and declining killer whale population and the availability of their preferred prey, Chinook salmon, and on efforts to conduct health assessments of these whales. The Commission continued to promote the restoration of key salmon populations, protection of critical Southern Resident killer whale foraging grounds, and mitigation of disturbance from vessels.
- **Sea Otters:** The Commission tracked and attended stakeholder meetings on proposals to expand the range of sea otters on the West Coast through translocation and engaged with FWS following the release of that agency’s “Feasibility Assessment: Sea Otter Reintroduction to the Pacific Coast” mandated by the Consolidated Appropriation Act for 2021. That report focused on the feasibility of reintroducing sea otters to Oregon and/or the northern California coast. The Commission supports further consideration of such proposals and related research on sea otter contributions to coastal ecosystem health and carbon sequestration/storage, both in Oregon and in states with extant sea otter populations (Alaska, Washington, and California).

Improve Marine Mammal and Ecosystem Research

- **Small Grants Program:** With a relatively modest budget, the Commission’s Grants and Research program has filled an important niche in marine mammal research for many years by funding novel, low-cost, small-scale research projects. The Commission is currently supporting 32 active projects targeting marine mammal conservation, protection, and management, including seven new grants awarded under the FY 2024 request for proposals, which focused on the effects of climate change on marine mammals and advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging in marine mammal science. Funded projects align with the Commission’s MMPA duties and strategic objectives, and include topics such as emerging technologies (e.g., ropeless fishing gear), community engagement, critical or emergent issues (species of conservation concern, specific geographic regions), threat reduction, filling data gaps and improving data quality and accessibility, and measuring success of implemented actions.



Humpback whale in the Hawaiian Islands entangled in gear thought to be used to trap crabs (NOAA, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary).

- **Survey of Federally Funded Marine Mammal Research (the Survey):** The Commission manages an online survey and data repository to collect and collate information on federal funding of marine mammal research by agency, species, objective, and location. The Commission uses the results of this Survey to identify gaps in research funding, illuminate areas of strength in federal research investment, and inform recommendations on needed agency actions and budget priorities. In FY 2020, the Commission launched a new survey platform, designed with interagency input, to make data reporting easier and results more accessible. In FY 2024, the Commission completed the fifth year of data collection with this new platform and released the results of the FY 2019-2023 surveys on the Commission’s website.
- **Arctic Marine Mammal Research:** As a member of the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC), the Commission continues to support the development of systematic monitoring to document the effects of environmental change on Arctic ecosystems and the marine mammal species that reside in them. The Commission worked with BOEM, NMFS, USCG, and Alaska Native Organizations and Tribes to promote comprehensive monitoring of marine mammal abundance and movements to provide critical information in support of Alaska coastal communities and document the impacts of increased human activities in the Arctic as a result of climate change. The Commission also advised NMFS and local stranding network responders on marine mammal health monitoring in the Arctic to ensure it follows the One Health approach (see above).
- **Rice’s Whale:** The only resident baleen whales in the Gulf of Mexico are a small population of Rice’s whales. In FY 2024, the Commission worked with NMFS to advance the science, and develop and support the implementation of a recovery plan, for this critically endangered species, which was significantly impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. The Rice’s whale was the focal species of the scientific symposium titled, “Whales on the Brink”, a public event led by NMFS, the Commission, and the Smithsonian Institution in November 2023. The Commission also worked with NMFS to identify critical habitat features in the Gulf of Mexico for the Rice’s whale.
- **North Pacific Right Whale:** With an estimated 50 individuals of the approximately 500 remaining North Pacific right whales residing in U.S. waters, the Commission continued to highlight the species’ endangered status and high risk of extinction. At the recommendation of the Commission, the North Pacific right whale was one of three whale species highlighted during the “Whales on the Brink” symposium (see above). Significant gaps in our understanding of the population’s distribution, movements, and the risks they encounter in their range, hinder effective management and protection of the population.

Engage with Marine Mammal Protection Act Stakeholders

- **Collaboration with Agencies:** In addition to sending comment letters to other federal agencies providing recommendations on implementing the MMPA and related laws, the Commission collaborated with, and supported the work of those agencies in a number of other ways. For example, the Commission assisted in preparing and implementing recovery plans for endangered species (e.g., Rice’s whales and Cook Inlet beluga whales), developing approaches for reducing vessel strikes of cetaceans, understanding and reducing impacts of offshore wind energy and oil and gas development on marine mammals, and supporting

NMFS' and FWS' implementation of the MMPA, including their work on the stock assessment process, reducing the take of marine mammals in commercial fisheries, marine mammal health and strandings, and the MMPA-mandated import rule for fish and fish products coming into the United States from other countries.

- **Legislative Affairs:** During FY 2024, the Commission served as an important resource for Congress on issues pertaining to marine mammals and their ecosystems. The Commission responded to a wide variety of inquiries from Congressional committees and offices, consulted with and provided briefings for member offices, and offered technical drafting assistance. The Commission also worked through the OMB legislative review process to formulate Administration testimony and views on proposed legislation and recommended measures to further the policies of the MMPA. The Commission also assisted in the confirmation process of President Biden's nominee for Commissioner and Chair of the Marine Mammal Commission.



False killer whale mother and calf, October 2010 (Robin Baird, Cascadia Research).

- **Building Partnerships among Stakeholders:** Each calendar year, the Commission holds its annual meeting to examine regional issues and/or priority topics at the national and global levels. At our annual meetings, we engage other federal agencies, stakeholders, and interested members of the public on the science, policy, and management issues related to the Commission's mission to conserve marine mammals and their ecosystems. The Commission's November 2023 Annual Meeting focused on case studies of threatened and endangered marine mammals to explore national-level issues related to stock assessment, health surveillance and other management needs in a changing climate. Additionally, the Commission is 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. The Commission attended and supported Tribal delegate participation in a kickoff meeting for the Arctic Watch program, hosted by the Marine Exchange of Alaska and collaborated with Arctic Watch partners to finalize the summary report and support further progress on this initiative. Building on the Chugach Regional Resources Commission's (CRRC) Chugach Imaq Initiative funded through the Commission's RFP, Commission staff attended the first Chugach Imaq Research Collaborative workshop, formed by USGS, USFWS, and CRRC to co-produce science and support co-management of marine mammals in the Chugach Region.
- **Promoting Co-Management:** The Commission participated in meetings of the Indigenous People's Council for Marine Mammals (IPCoMM), the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee (ABWC), the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC), and other Alaska Native organizations. To further the engagement of Alaska Native youth in co-management, the Commission, in partnership with Alaska Sea Grant, sponsored a summer 2024 internship with CRRC. The Commission is represented on the U.S. delegation to the IWC (see above) and serves on the inter-agency team that develops U.S. positions on whaling issues, especially those regarding Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. The Commission also serves on U.S. delegations to meetings of the polar bear Range States (the parties to the Agreement on the Conservation

of Polar Bears), which reviews progress on implementing the Circumpolar Action Plan and discusses research and management activities of mutual interest, and to meetings of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission, which, although currently suspended, jointly manages the shared Chukchi Sea polar bear population.

- **Tribal Consultation:** The Commission has updated its Tribal consultation action plan pursuant to the President’s 26 January 2021 memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships and has consulted with Tribal representatives on the plan. The original action plan was developed in 2010 in response to the 2009 Presidential memorandum concerning Tribal consultation and coordination under E.O. 13175. The Commission is a member of the Administration’s Task Force on the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area, and the National Science and Technology Council’s Subcommittee on Indigenous Knowledge. As above, the Commission participated in meetings held by several Alaska marine mammal groups (e.g., ABWC, EWC) to consult on agency actions as appropriate and promote consultation efforts by other federal agencies.
- **Data Sharing:** The Commission continued to work with local, state, Tribal, regional, national, and international partners to identify ocean observations essential for evaluating and monitoring the health of ocean ecosystems and the marine mammal species and stocks that are a part of those ecosystems. The Commission facilitated the sharing of data and information on essential ocean observations and marine mammal strandings and health monitoring, while advocating for a “measure once, use often” philosophy. In FY 2024, The Commission co-hosted a workshop with the West Coast Ocean Alliance to develop marine mammal indicators for a West Coast Ecosystem Health Report Card being prepared by WCOA and discuss ways in which those indicators can be linked to Health MAP efforts.

Commission Outlook

Consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA, the Commission strives to ensure that marine mammal populations are maintained at optimum sustainable population levels and as significant functioning elements of healthy marine ecosystems.

In FY 2025, the Commission will continue to look for ways to reduce operational costs and leverage its resources and expertise by working with a diverse set of partners. For example, we will continue to collaborate with other agencies, industry, foundations, and NGOs to facilitate participation of key stakeholders and experts to promote the success of workshops and meetings. We will continue to host fellows and interns to support multiple mission-critical projects at little or no cost to the Commission. We also plan to promote new partnerships through our research and grants program to enhance novel and ongoing investigations in the field of marine mammal science at research institutions at home and abroad.



Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government

4340 East-West Highway | Room 700 | Bethesda, MD 20814

www.mmc.gov