



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 August 2011

The Honorable Mark Begich, Chairman  
The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe, Ranking Member  
Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard Subcommittee  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
425 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Begich and Ranking Member Snowe:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, wishes to thank you for convening the 20 July 2011 hearing on Looking to the Future: Lessons in Prevention, Response, and Restoration from the Gulf Oil Spill. The hearing provided a timely opportunity to evaluate spill response efforts and develop a long-term strategy for restoring the Gulf of Mexico and the resources and economies that depend on it.

The Gulf's ecosystem supports 21 species of whales and dolphins, as well as the Florida manatee. The extent to which we can learn more about the spill's effects on these marine mammals and other protected resources will depend largely on improving our research strategies and capacity in that region. The Marine Mammal Commission has prepared the enclosed report "Assessing the Long-term Effects of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill on Marine Mammals in the Gulf of Mexico: A Statement of Research Needs" to (1) guide assessment of the long-term effects of the Gulf spill and associated risk factors on marine mammals, (2) guide mitigation and restoration efforts for Gulf marine mammal populations, (3) help track the changes in the Gulf ecosystem, including recovery and restoration, and (4) help guide assessment of future spills in the Gulf and elsewhere.

The Commission appreciates this opportunity to provide its comments and recommendations, which are solely those of the Commission. Please contact me if you have any questions or if we can provide any assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Daniel M. Ashe, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service  
Michael R. Bromwich, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement  
Jane Lubchenco, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration