



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

10 May 2010

Admiral Thad W. Allen
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard
2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Allen:

On 2–4 December 2009 the Marine Mammal Commission held its annual meeting in Honolulu, in large part to review recovery efforts for the Hawaiian monk seal. This species numbers about 1,200 seals and is declining at a rate of 4.5 percent a year. The National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for protecting the species, but it relies heavily on other federal and state agencies, including the Coast Guard, to bring additional assets and capabilities to recovery efforts.

The Coast Guard has contributed to vital recovery tasks that otherwise would not have been possible. During the Commission's meeting, Mr. Eric Roberts, manager of the Marine Protected Species Program of the Coast Guard's 14th District, summarized the District's work in support of monk seal recovery under the Coast Guard's Marine Protected Species Strategic Plan. The Coast Guard has supplied ships, helicopters, and airplanes to meet special recovery needs, such as moving monk seals in need of medical care and transporting recovery personnel and equipment.

Coast Guard vessel support also has been essential for removing marine debris from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Since the 1980s, more than 300 seals have been found entangled in marine debris on these beaches. Most of those animals have been disentangled by monk seal biologists, but seals that become entangled in lagoon waters are not likely to be found and probably die. Removing the debris from lagoon waters is the only way to prevent such deaths.

The Coast Guard's contributions to the Hawaiian monk seal recovery program are deeply appreciated. The Marine Mammal Commission commends the Coast Guard's 14th District and Eric Roberts in particular for assisting Hawaiian monk seal recovery activities and making Coast Guard assets available to carry out essential recovery work. With the Coast Guard's continued assistance, the Commission is confident that this ancient species can be recovered.

Please contact me if the Marine Mammal Commission can assist the Coast Guard in any way as it seeks to fulfill its vital missions, including protection of our marine ecosystems.

Sincerely,

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

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cc: Rear Admiral Manson K. Brown, 14th District Commander
Mr. Eric Roberts
Mr. Steve Tucker, Chief, Marine Protected Species