



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

CONGRESSIONAL JUSTIFICATION

MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

May 28, 2025

Budget Request Summary

The Marine Mammal Commission (Commission) is an independent federal agency established by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) to further the conservation of marine mammals and their environment. The Commission’s work is directed at restoring and maintaining global marine mammal populations as significant functioning elements of healthy marine ecosystems for future generations, with human activities managed to minimize impacts on those populations and ecosystems. The Commission provides independent, science-based oversight of domestic and international policies and actions, thereby promoting effective implementation of the MMPA and its goals of protecting and conserving marine mammals and their habitat. For additional background about the MMPA and the Commission, please refer to the “About the Commission and the MMPA” section on page 3.

In FY 2026 **the Administration proposes the elimination of the Commission, requesting \$1 million** to account for the costs associated with an orderly shutdown. This request would terminate the Commission’s grant program, cut personnel that fulfill the mandates set forth by the MMPA, and shut down the agency. The majority of the Commission’s FY 2026 budget request would be used to pay for the severance of Commission employees and outstanding rent.

FY 2026 Budget Overview

Summary (\$ thousands)

	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
President’s Budget	5,040	5,000	1,000
Appropriations	4,500	4,500	

Budget by Category (\$ thousands)

Identification code 95-2200-0-1-302	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026 estimated	Change from FY 2025
Program and Financing (\$ thousands)				
Budget Authority	4,500	4,500	1,000	-3,500
Total Budgetary Resources	4,500	4,500	1,000	-3,500
Spending (\$ thousands)				
Personnel	2,677	2,821	928	-1,893
Research, Contracts, and Special Projects	1,104	1,052	0	-1,052
Rent, Communications, and Utilities	441	347	72	-275
Other (supplies, equipment, travel)	278	280	0	-280

About the Commission and the MMPA

Title II of the MMPA created the Commission as an independent agency of the Executive Branch. The Commission consists of three members appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Commission is assisted by a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals (Committee) and a full-time staff of 12, which includes the Commission's Executive Director. A Special Advisor on Native Affairs serves the Commission under contract.

Section 202 of the MMPA specifies the duties of the Commission. The Commission, among its enumerated duties, is charged with making recommendations to other agencies on measures it deems necessary or desirable to further the policies of the MMPA, including provisions for protecting the interests of Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos residing in Alaska whose livelihoods may be adversely affected by actions taken under the Act.

To fulfill its duties, the Commission reviews and makes recommendations on the domestic and international policies and actions of federal agencies to ensure that they are consistent with the MMPA. Marine mammals are subject to multiple human-related risk factors including fishing, climate change, anthropogenic sound, harmful algal blooms (HABs) and other habitat alterations, disease, contaminants, marine debris, vessel strikes, and vessel disturbance. Additionally, as some marine mammal populations have recovered to near their historical levels, conflicts with human activities have increased in number and kind. To identify and characterize risk factors and minimize harm to marine mammals from human activities, the Commission consults with other federal agencies, such as NOAA, NMFS, FWS, the Navy and BOEM, state resource agencies, and Tribes and tribal organizations (e.g., IPCoMM and species- or region-specific Alaska Native Organizations). The Commission reviews numerous environmental analyses and applications seeking authorizations to take marine mammals, including taking incidental to military, oil and gas, renewable energy, construction, and research activities. The Commission also helps develop and coordinate multi-agency and international research and management initiatives to facilitate marine mammal protection and conservation. In all its work, the Commission seeks to be a source of useful information, catalyze critical marine mammal research, and provide independent and objective oversight of domestic and international actions impacting marine mammals and their environment.

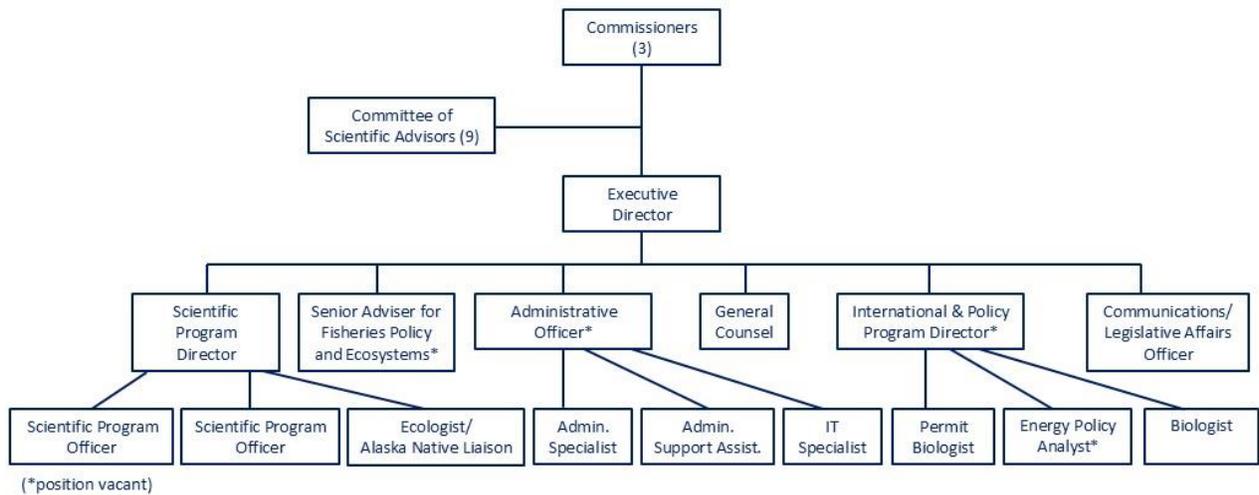
Statutory Duties

The Commission is charged with fulfilling basic statutory duties as set forth in section 202 and other sections of the MMPA. To meet these responsibilities, the Commission:

- Reviews all marine mammal stock assessment reports and related documents prepared by NMFS and FWS;
- Participates in take reduction teams and recommends actions to reduce the taking of marine mammals incidental to commercial fisheries to below each stock's potential biological removal level and ultimately to achieve the MMPA's zero mortality and serious injury rate goal.
- Reviews applications for authorizations to take marine mammals incidental to activities other than commercial fishing (e.g., oil and gas development, seismic surveys, military exercises, coastal development projects) under section 101(a)(5) of the MMPA;
- Reviews all scientific research and other permit applications involving the taking or importing of marine mammals, as required under section 101(a)(1) of the MMPA, and supporting research projects focused on matters critical to marine mammal conservation and management;

- Consults with the Department of State, NOAA, and FWS regarding international agreements pertaining to marine mammals and research and management measures needed to promote marine mammal conservation in foreign jurisdictions and in international waters;
- Reviews all proposals for listing, or changing the listing status, of marine mammals under the Endangered Species Act (ESA);
- Recommends actions to enhance and monitor the effectiveness of recovery programs for endangered, threatened, and depleted species and populations such as the Hawaiian monk seal, Cook Inlet beluga whale, southern resident killer whale, western Steller sea lion, North Atlantic right whale, North Pacific right whale, Rice’s whale, southern sea otter, polar bear, bearded seal, ringed seal, and West Indian manatee;
- Promotes co-management of marine mammals taken for subsistence purposes by Alaska Natives pursuant to section 119 of the MMPA and effective implementation of tribal consultation requirements established under Executive Order 13175; and
- Facilitates development of research and management capacity in foreign countries focused on endangered marine mammal species and stocks (e.g., the vaquita, freshwater dolphins, and Arabian Sea humpback whales).

Organization





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