



# Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government

## Performance and Accountability Report

### Fiscal Year 2020



3101 Harmonia and calf  
CCS, NOAA permit #19315-1

November 2020



## **Table of Contents**

1. Message from the Chairman	Pg. 4
2. Background: About the Marine Mammal Commission	Pg. 5
3. Financial Analysis: Overview of Commission Finances in FY 2020	Pg. 5
4. Performance Goals and Results: Commission Accomplishments in FY 2020	Pg. 7
a. Strategic Objective 1	Pg. 7
b. Strategic Objective 2	Pg. 8
c. Strategic Objective 3	Pg. 8
d. Strategic Objective 4	Pg. 9
e. Strategic Objective 5	Pg. 11
f. Overarching Mission Accomplishments	Pg. 12
5. Commission Outlook	Pg. 14





16 November 2020

### **Message from the Chairman**

With this letter, I submit the Commission's Fiscal Year 2020 (FY 2020) Performance and Accountability Report, including financial and program performance results. The performance data in this report are complete and reliable. 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 2020 Performance and Accountability Report to the Office of Management and Budget.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daryl J. Boness". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Daryl J. Boness, Ph.D.  
Chairman

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

## Background: About 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 addressing impacts on marine mammals and their ecosystems. This ensures 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 all 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/)<sup>1</sup>.

## Financial Analysis: Overview of Commission Finances in FY 2020

### Annual Appropriations and Distribution of Funds

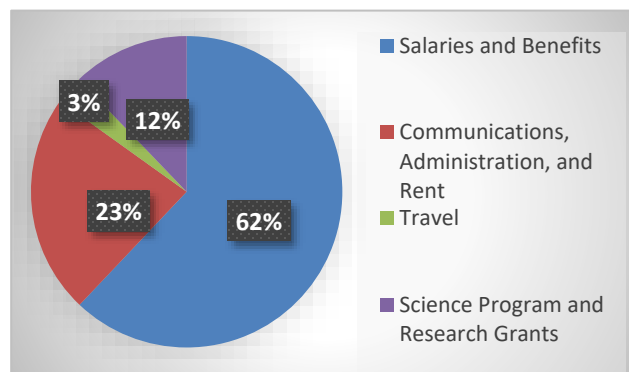
Congressional appropriations are the primary source of funding for the Commission. Total annual appropriations for the Commission from FY 2016 to 2020 are listed in Table 1. In FY 2020 the Commission’s appropriation was \$3,616,000. Approximately 62 percent of the Commission’s appropriation was used for salaries and benefits (including salaries for Commissioners and non-federal Committee members, see Commission Structure below), 23 percent for administration and rent, 12 percent to fund the Commission’s Science Program and research grants, and 3 percent for travel (Figure 1). The Commission used its FY 2020 appropriation to meet its general oversight responsibilities as mandated by the MMPA.

### Management of Commission Finances

The Executive Director oversees and assumes responsibility for all financial systems and transactions. The Chief Administrative and Financial Officer manages and is responsible for all day-to-day budgetary matters, including issuing

**Table 1. Annual Appropriations for the Marine Mammal Commission, FY 2016 to 2020**

Fiscal Year	Appropriation
2016	\$3,341,000
2017	\$3,341,000
2018	\$3,431,000
2019	\$3,516,000
2020	\$3,616,000



**Figure 1. Distribution of Funds Appropriated to the Marine Mammal Commission for FY 2020**

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

purchase orders, processing time cards, and processing invoice payments. The Chief Administrative and Financial Officer also works with the Directors of the Science Program and the International and Policy Program to oversee expenditures for those programs. The Administrative Assistant processes all paperwork related to travel expenses and assists the Chief Administrative and Financial Officer in day-to-day management of the Commission's budget. The Research 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 2020. 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 U.S. generally accepted accounting principles. The financial statements for the Commission are included in the audit report.

## Commission Structure

The Commission consists of three Commissioners, a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors, and a staff of 14 full-time employees (Figure 2).

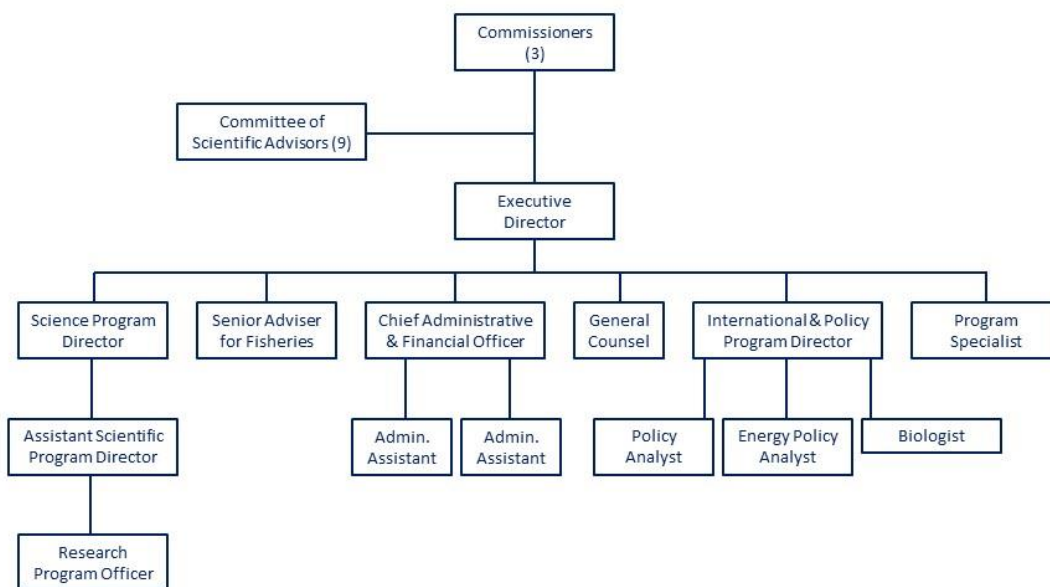


Figure 2. Organizational Structure of the Marine Mammal Commission

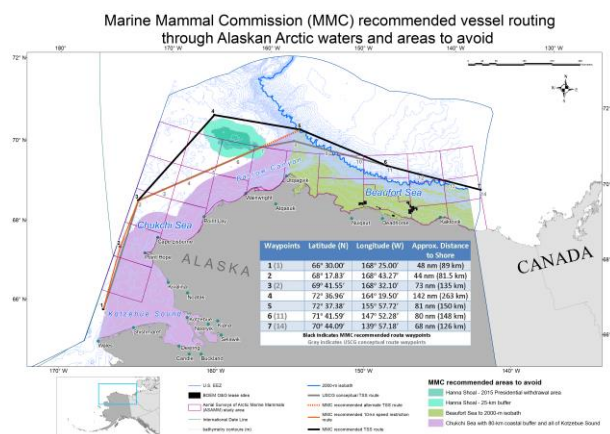


## Performance Goals and Results: Commission Accomplishments in FY 2020

The work performed by the Commission centered around the five strategic objectives outlined in the Commission's [Strategic Plan](#)<sup>2</sup>. Below is a summary of accomplishments for FY 2020 under each strategic objective.

**Strategic Objective 1: Marine mammal populations in the Arctic are maintained as viable functioning elements of their ecosystems through management measures that address direct and indirect effects of climate change and the ensuing economic, scientific, and other activities in the region.**

- Protecting Arctic Marine Mammals, Particularly Species Important to Alaska Natives:** The Commission prepared detailed comments and recommended routing measures to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) on its Alaskan Arctic Coast Port Access Route Study. With accelerating loss of seasonal sea ice in the Arctic, the USCG is seeking input on routing measures that would minimize impacts of increased shipping on marine mammals and the Alaska Natives that depend on them for subsistence. In preparing its comments, the Commission conducted an extensive analysis of the distribution and seasonal movements of marine mammal species, based on aerial surveys conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) with support from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). The Commission has been working with NMFS biologists to generate maps showing areas where walrus and several species of large whales occur frequently. The Commission's comments are intended to ensure that any increase in vessel traffic does not disrupt subsistence hunting or cause marine mammals to abandon traditional hunting areas, making them less available or even unavailable for subsistence. The Commission's comments were in the process of being finalized at the end of FY 2020, and will be submitted to the USCG in November 2020. The comments will include recommended routing and other measures designed to minimize impacts on marine mammals and subsistence activities, and will be posted on the Commission's [website](#)<sup>3</sup>.
- Managing Marine Mammals in Arctic Waters:** In addition to its general responsibility to make recommendations to further the MMPA policies relating to the subsistence livelihoods of Alaska Natives, the Commission has long supported 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 was particularly concerned about the cessation of a 40-year aerial survey program monitoring the distribution, movements, and behavior of bowhead and other whales in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas



The Marine Mammal Commission's recommended route through Alaskan Arctic waters and areas to avoid.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.mmc.gov/reports/strategic\\_plans/welcome.shtml](http://www.mmc.gov/reports/strategic_plans/welcome.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/20-11-10-Newell-USCG-Alaskan-Arctic-Coast-PARS-with-appendices\\_reduced.pdf](https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/20-11-10-Newell-USCG-Alaskan-Arctic-Coast-PARS-with-appendices_reduced.pdf)



funded by BOEM and conducted in partnership with NOAA, especially in light of diminished sea ice and increased industrial activities. The Commission participated in meetings with BOEM, NOAA, and Alaska Natives to identify critical information needs and alternative monitoring strategies going forward. The Commission continued to engage in this and other Arctic issues in FY 2020 through participation in meetings of the Indigenous People's Council for Marine Mammals and the Alaska Beluga Whale Committee. The Commission continued to serve on the US International Whaling Commission (IWC) interagency Team that serves to consider and address emerging issues of concern to the IWC, especially regarding Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, in the interim between IWC meetings. The Commission also participated in meetings of the U.S.-Russia Polar Bear Commission and activities carrying out U.S. obligations under the bilateral polar bear agreement. Additionally, the Commission participated in efforts to coordinate federal agency actions in the Arctic, particularly in the face of rapid ecosystem change in the Bering Sea, through its involvement in Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee and attendance at several Arctic-focused forums and symposia.

**Strategic Objective 2: Scientifically robust mitigation and monitoring measures are developed, refined, and implemented to prevent, minimize, or mitigate the impacts of offshore oil and gas and renewable energy activities on marine mammals and their ecosystems.**

- **Restoring Marine Mammal Populations Impacted by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill:** The Commission has engaged at many levels to further activities to restore Gulf of Mexico marine mammal populations impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Commission provided input on marine mammal restoration projects for NMFS and each Gulf state to consider and worked with NMFS on marine mammal specific restoration projects. The Commission has also reviewed and commented on proposed restoration projects that have the potential to harm nearshore bottlenose dolphins and manatees incidental to their implementation. Additionally, the Commission serves as a technical advisor for a project to evaluate trophic relationships and critical habitat features for the small population of Bryde's whales that occurs off the coast of Florida. This population of baleen whales was significantly impacted by the oil spill and was recently listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The Commission is also serving as an advisor to a project, funded by BOEM, to improve assessments of coastal and offshore marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico and to deploy passive acoustic monitoring devices throughout the entire Gulf.

**Strategic Objective 3: Marine mammal strandings are more thoroughly investigated and analyzed to improve understanding of the factors causing mortality and affecting the health of marine mammals, determine the efficacy of measures such as ship speed reduction to reduce mortality, and explore the relationships between marine mammal health and human health and ecosystem services.**

- Marine Mammal Health Monitoring and Analysis Platform (Health MAP):** During 2020, the Commission continued its work to develop Health MAP through participation on four expert working groups whose efforts focused on the Gulf of Mexico ([GulfMAP<sup>4</sup>](#)) in collaboration with marine mammal stranding network members supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Commission continued to play a leadership role in these activities, with one of its Commissioners and the Scientific Program Director serving on the Health MAP steering committee.



A tagged grey seal (Kimberly Murray, NOAA).

- Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events:** In FY 2020, no new unusual mortality events (UMEs) were declared and NMFS closed the investigation of a UME involving common bottlenose dolphins in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. Experts concluded that this UME was environmentally driven and due to exposure of dolphins to low-salinity waters resulting from extreme freshwater discharge from watersheds draining into the Northern Gulf. Investigations of nine UMEs declared in previous years, including the North Atlantic right whale and gray whale UMEs remain active. The Commission served with other federal partners on the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, monitored the various events, and, for the gray whale investigative team, served as team leads for sub-groups on oceanography and gray whale health while also providing funding to support Mexican stranding and necropsy efforts in the southern portion of the gray whale range.

**Strategic Objective 4: Anthropogenic threats to marine mammals, particularly those most vulnerable to extinction, are identified and reduced in the coastal and fresh waters of other nations and on the high seas worldwide through bilateral and multilateral scientific and conservation efforts and sharing of expertise.**

- Vaquita Conservation:** The Commission continued to support Mexican efforts to conserve the vaquita, a small porpoise endemic to the northern Gulf of California, Mexico. Rampant illegal gillnet fishing for an endangered fish, the totoaba, presents a continuing entanglement threat to vaquitas. The failure to develop and transition to legal, non-entangling gear for other fisheries has led to continued alienation and unrest in the local communities. Totoaba swim bladders, valued at thousands of dollars per kilogram, are smuggled to China in the illegal wildlife trade. Visual surveys and acoustic monitoring, supported in part by the Commission, indicate that a small number of vaquitas persist in the northern Gulf of California. Commission staff, Commissioners, and



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

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mmc.gov/priority-topics/marine-mammal-health-and-strandings/marine-mammal-health-and-monitoring-analysis-platform-marine-mammal-health-map/#gulfmap>

CSA members continued longstanding collaborations and consultations with Mexico's vaquita science team and with NOAA scientists and administrative officials – providing authoritative, publicly accessible plans and updates on vaquita science and conservation. The Commission directed FY 2020 grant funds to support ongoing removal of illegal nets from the area by a devoted team of non-governmental and Mexican government groups. Without these efforts, Mexico's largest endemic mammal would likely already be extinct.

- **Supporting Conservation Planning in Asia:** In FY 2019 the Commission funded a special meeting of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Sirenia Specialist Group to review the status of and threats to the Dugong sub-population inhabiting the Nansei Islands region of Japan. This meeting resulted in the development and, in FY 2020, publication of a research plan to guide efforts to document the presence and define the seagrass habitat of this endangered population that occurs in Okinawa and neighboring islands. Additionally, Commission efforts in Asia include providing research grant funds to support an international capacity-building workshop on preventing fisheries entanglement of narrow-ridged finless porpoises in Korean waters.
- **Advancing Efforts to Address Large Whale Entanglements:** Building upon work since the Commission's 2017 Annual Meeting, during which entanglement of North Atlantic right whales was a focus, the Commission furthered its support of efforts to address whale entanglements in U.S. coastal waters in FY 2020. North Atlantic right whales are declining and in danger of extinction, largely due to entanglements and ship strikes. The Commission has actively worked with the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) and NMFS to develop measures to immediately and substantially reduce entanglement risk to right whales. The Commission provided comments, advice and recommendations to the ALWTRT on North Atlantic right whale entanglements, to a California state working group on mitigating entanglement of humpback and blue whales in West Coast Dungeness crab gear, and to the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries on gear interactions in US and Canadian waters. The Commission is also supporting the development and testing of "ropeless" gear for future use in pot fisheries. Such gear has the potential to significantly decrease entanglement as a risk to North Atlantic right whales, among others. Because of the risks that vertical lines pose to large whales on the East and West Coasts and, more recently in the Bering Sea, the Commission is working to ensure effective communication among all parties focusing on ropeless gear in North America and around the world.



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

- **Conservation of freshwater dolphins:** Commission staff and advisors work with the IWC and other organizations on freshwater dolphin conservation efforts around the world. The Commission continued to support efforts to reduce mortality of Mekong River Irrawaddy dolphins in Cambodia. The Commission encouraged public-private support of Mekong River dolphin conservation programs to successfully address critical funding shortfalls for the program in 2020. Promising improvements in local enforcement measures targeting entangling gillnets continued to be overshadowed by the concern over hydropower dam construction in the region. The announcement of a ten-year moratorium on new Mekong dams by the Cambodian government dam was a victory for the dolphins and Mekong River biodiversity.



WWF-Cambodia Mekong team on the water in Sarasota. (Lindsay Porter, Sea Mammal Research Unit).

- **Advancing Conservation of Rare Pinnipeds:** The Commission has facilitated formation of the Rare Pinniped Conservation Network (RAPCON) and is providing leadership and organizational support. RAPCON is a network to foster organization and sustained collaboration among individuals working to conserve rare pinniped populations globally. The [inaugural meeting](https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/RAPCON-Inaugural-Workshop-Agenda-18.10.2019.pdf)<sup>5</sup> of this network took place at the 2nd World Marine Mammal Science Conference in Barcelona (7th December 2019).

**Strategic Objective 5: Understanding of human impacts on marine mammals and their ecosystems, and the management of those impacts, is improved through enhanced scientific research, policy analysis, and information dissemination.**

- **Take Reduction Teams:** The Commission continued to participate in NMFS's marine mammal take reduction teams and provide advice on measures needed to improve the effectiveness of take reduction plans in fisheries. The Commission is playing a key role in revising the take reduction plan for pelagic false killer whales in Hawaii. Mortality and serious injury occurring incidental to certain commercial fisheries exceeded allowable levels for at least a dozen marine mammal populations in U.S. waters. This problem continues to be a major conservation challenge. Deliberations by take reduction teams spurred several new regulatory proposals from NMFS, which were reviewed by the Commission.
- **International Bycatch Issues:** Countries that export fish and fish products to the U.S. (Export Countries) are now required under the MMPA Import Rule to demonstrate that they can achieve comparably effective mitigation of marine mammal bycatch as is achieved by the U.S. fisheries and protected species management system. The Commission has contributed to the development of tools for the estimation of bycatch and marine mammal population size for use by Export Countries. The Commission also continues its participation or support of bycatch mitigation processes led by international bodies such as the IWC and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mmc.gov/wp-content/uploads/RAPCON-Inaugural-Workshop-Agenda-18.10.2019.pdf>



- **Southeast Alaska Fishery-Sea Otter Conflicts:** In FY 2020 the Commission helped the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) organize and convene a workshop to review the status of sea otters in Southeast Alaska and to consider management options available to address conflicts between a recovering sea otter population and fisheries. A report of the workshop, held in November 2019, was issued by USFWS in FY 2021.

## Overarching Mission Accomplishments

A significant portion of the Commission's work cuts across multiple strategic objectives. Examples of some of the Commission's multi-faceted FY 2020 accomplishments are summarized below.

- **Recommendations on and Reviews of Federal Agency Actions:** Drawing on the extensive expertise of its staff and the technical knowledge of its Committee of Scientific Advisors, the Commission submitted 120 letters during FY 2020 to federal agencies and other organizations. The letters provided comments and specific recommendations to conserve marine mammals and further the policies of the MMPA, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and related laws. The Commission's letters often included recommendations regarding measures to minimize the impacts on marine mammal species and stocks from proposed human activities such as commercial fishing, military operations, marine construction, offshore energy development (oil and gas and renewables), and research. The Commission consulted regularly with other federal agencies on the substance of its comments and recommendations and worked with them to pursue the best means of minimizing impacts on marine mammals.
- **Creating Connections in the Gulf of Mexico Region Despite COVID-19:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the early months of FY 2020, the Commission began the final preparations for its 2020 Annual Meeting to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Postponed until 2021, the meeting will have a focus on Gulf of Mexico marine mammal science and management issues, with particular consideration of impacts to and restoration of marine mammal populations from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Prior to postponement of the meeting, the Commission staff, scientific advisors, and Commissioners had nearly finalized topical sessions on the basis of longstanding and newly established relationships with presenters and panelists from federal agencies, state governments, academia, the fishing industry and other businesses, and NGOs. These preparations and relationships were strengthened throughout FY 2020, and resulted in ongoing planning of Gulf-focused "virtual" workshops. These and other ongoing efforts will serve as the foundation for the Commission's 2021 Annual Meeting.
- **Surveying Federally Funded Research:** The Survey of Federally Funded Marine Mammal Research (the Survey) is an online survey and data repository that provides information at a Federal level on what marine mammal research is being supported by different agencies, on



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

which species, where, and at what cost. The Survey aids the the Commission in fulfilling its duties under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) by helping identify gaps in research effort or funding, illuminating areas of strength in Federal research investment, and informing recommendations on needed agency actions and budget priorities. After extensive consultations with several key agencies, the survey platform was redesigned to reduce the reporting burden on participating agencies, improve the accuracy of information collected, and increase the value of the compiled data. In March 2020, the Commission resumed data collection with a request to agencies for FY 2019 project information. More information on the survey is available on [our website](#)<sup>6</sup> along with a summary of the results from the [FY 2019 data call](#)<sup>7</sup>.

- **Advancing Marine Mammal Research:** In FY 2020 the Commission funded ten new research projects that will further the conservation and management goals of the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and assist the Commission in fulfilling its duties under the MMPA. Researchers submitted 40 proposals for consideration and ten were funded for a total of about \$242,000. The funded proposals are:
  - Best Management Practices for Reducing Ship Strikes in the San Francisco Bay Region
  - Creating momentum for integrated conservation measures for Narrow-ridged finless porpoises
  - A Cooperative Training Workshop on Seal-Fisheries Interactions for Fishermen, Scientists, Marine Mammal Stranding Network Personnel and Fisheries Managers
  - Mortality reduction of vaquita, *Phocoena sinus*, through removal of abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) and deterrence of illegal fishing in the Vaquita Protection Refuge
  - Evaluating the efficacy of using broad-scale ship speed restrictions in the U.S. East Coast Exclusive Economic Zone for reducing large whale mortalities
  - Evaluating the utility of Protected Species Observer data to address cetacean management and conservation
  - Systematic analysis of injuries sustained by rorquals (humpback, fin and minke whales) from documented entanglements off the U.S. East Coast
  - Protecting the sentinels of the Peruvian Sea: Electronic monitoring and mitigation measures to reduce cetacean bycatch in the most important fishery of Peru
  - Characterizing the Occurrence of Manatees in Northwestern Cuba and Their Interaction with Fisheries
  - Resource User Outreach on Molokai for Cooperative Conservation and Long-term Management of Hawaiian Monk Seals

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mmc.gov/grants-and-research-survey/survey-of-federally-funded-research/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mmc.gov/grants-and-research-survey/survey-of-federally-funded-research/fy-2019-results-summary/>

In addition to projects funded under the Request for Proposals, the Commission supported an additional project (totaling \$13,000) addressing an important marine mammal stranding response gap in coverage area during an active UME:

- Support for surveys and necropsies of gray whales in México during an Unusual Mortality Event

For more information about the funded projects, visit our [FY 2020 Grants Award page](#)<sup>8</sup>.

- **Animal Telemetry Network Brings Together Global Tracking Data:** During 2020 the Commission continued its participation in the Animal Telemetry Network ([ATN](#))<sup>9</sup> Steering Group, which oversaw ongoing development of the [data portal](#)<sup>10</sup>, designed to increase the availability of standardized tracking data to multiple stakeholders, completion of regional workshops, and continued funding for the four ATN baseline projects.
- **Marine Mammals in the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS):** The Commission has been involved in identifying Essential Ocean Variables (EOVs) for the GOOS Biology and Ecosystems Panel. The Commission's Scientific Program Director is involved in revising the [specification sheet for the marine mammal EOV](#)<sup>11</sup> and developing implementation plans to establish a globally sustained observing system for this EOV. Ultimately, the EOVs will improve our ability to monitor marine mammals and understand their functional roles in the ecosystem at local, regional, national, and global scales. This will enhance efforts to meet the goals of the MMPA. Marine mammals are also a key component of the newly endorsed GOOS network for Animal Borne Ocean Sensors (AniBOS). The Commission's Scientific Program Director was involved in the efforts to officially recognize the network in 2020 and will play a role in formally implementing the network in the coming years. Data and information from the ATN will be integrated into this global network.
- **Commission Tops Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Ratings:** The Commission received the highest government-wide scores in the 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey for "Employee Engagement" and "Global Satisfaction" indices, an achievement we look forward to repeating once the 2020 data are released. This voluntary survey, conducted annually in all U.S. federal agencies, asks employees several questions to determine the overall satisfaction with their jobs and workplace. Out of all 84 agencies that completed the survey in 2019, the Commission received top marks for the third time since 2016.

## Commission Outlook

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

In FY 2021 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 industry, foundations, and NGOs to facilitate participation of key stakeholders

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.mmc.gov/grants-and-research-survey/grant-awards/2020-grant-awards/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://ioos.noaa.gov/project/atn/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://portal.atn.ioos.us/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://goosocean.org/eov>



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 around the world.

In FY 2020 we initiated a review of our strategic plan. We intend to complete a comprehensive review and update the plan in FY 2021. The goal is to have a new strategic plan in place to guide agency activities in FY 2021-2025. Keeping the Commission's strategic plan up to date is important to guide how we use our funding to enhance the effectiveness and reach of our work.



Commission staff at a socially distanced get-together in FY 2020.





# Marine Mammal Commission

An independent agency of the U.S. Government

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

[www.mmc.gov](http://www.mmc.gov)