



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

28 April 2010

Marcia McNutt, Ph.D., Director  
U.S. Geological Survey  
USGS National Center  
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive  
Reston, Virginia 20192

Dear Dr. McNutt:

At the Marine Mammal Commission's annual meeting in December 2009, Mark Fornwall of the U.S. Geological Survey updated the Commission on the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). The Commission commends the Survey for its foresight in developing OBIS and encourages the agency to continue its development.

Together, a number of agencies (e.g., Navy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Science Foundation) spend tens of millions of dollars to survey and study marine mammals and other marine life. These efforts provide data that the agencies need to meet their obligations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and other relevant legislation.

Before OBIS, agencies did not follow any standards for shared data; the fate of the data was determined by the individual agency, and other agencies and the public had limited or no access to the data. OBIS now provides data and metadata standards along with data exploration and analytical tools that form the backbone of a standardized, shared national archive of marine biological information. For that reason, various agencies have committed funding to support OBIS in the past and can reasonably be expected to provide further support in the future.

Agencies using OBIS should contribute fairly to its budget, but continued leadership from the U.S. Geological Survey will be critical to the long-term success of this effort. Although the agency's budget is limited, the Marine Mammal Commission strongly encourages the Survey to continue and expand this program. OBIS provides a timely and much needed federal capacity to integrate multiple datasets and promote true ecosystem-based management.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if the Commission can be of assistance with this program.

Sincerely,

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

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.  
Executive Director