



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

Marine Mammal Commission
Climate Change Adaptation Policy
19 June 2012

As required by the Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation Planning implementing Instructions, the Marine Mammal Commission is releasing a statement that commits the Commission to addressing the impacts climate change may have on our operations and assets through adaptation planning.

Climate disruption poses many challenges to marine mammals and their conservation. It is a driving force in the loss of polar sea ice that is now and will continue to have profound effects on Arctic and Antarctic marine ecosystems. It is leading and will continue to lead to acidification of the world's oceans, a phenomenon that may fundamentally disrupt the base of oceanic food webs with severe ecological consequences. It is causing and will continue to cause the melting of land-bound glaciers, which is raising and will continue to raise sea levels with potentially severe effects on coastal ecosystems. And it is now and will continue to alter weather patterns, leading to increased variability and/or severity of weather events such as hurricanes, tornadoes, drought, floods, and temperature anomalies.

Some marine mammal species are expected to adapt successfully to climate disruption and, indeed, may benefit from it. However, many others may not be able to adapt. Marine mammals are mobile and many may respond to climate disruption by, among other things, shifting their distribution to higher latitudes. However, some species may not be able to make such shifts, including those already occurring in polar ecosystems (e.g., polar bears). The loss of sea ice poses a grave threat to polar species that use the ice for foraging (e.g., walrus) and reproduction (e.g., ringed seal). But other species also will be affected; Hawaiian monk seals, for example, likely will lose much of the habitat they depend on for resting, molting, and reproduction. The Commission will support/promote studies to predict and determine how marine mammals are being and will be affected by climate disruption. In addition, it will emphasize management measures to enhance their conservation in the face of such changes.

The Commission also will continue to take actions to minimize its contribution to climate disruption and to ensure continuity of its operations. In Fiscal Year 2012 the Commission—

- is prepared to continue its operations in the event that its office must be closed because of severe weather conditions;
- will use public transportation systems to minimize contributions to greenhouse gas emissions;
- will emphasize the use of electronic communication rather than relying on paper products;
- will minimize its use of electricity by avoiding unnecessary use of lights, heating, and air conditioning, and placing all electric systems on switches that are turned off each night;
- will increase its use of internet meetings to limit the need to travel; and
- will maintain its recycling program.

The Commission would welcome comments or suggestions on how it might adapt its operations and activities to minimize their contribution to climate disruption and to ensure that the Commission continues to operate effectively despite the need to adapt to climate disruption. Please contact us at mmc@mmc.gov, call (301) 504-0087, or write the Commission at 4340 East-West Highway, Room 700, Bethesda, Maryland, 20814.

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

Timothy J. Ragen
Executive Director