



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

2 February 2010

Ms. Diana Hynek
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer
Department of Commerce
14th and Constitution Ave., NW, Room 7845
Washington DC 20230

Dear Ms. Hynek:

The Marine Mammal Commission has reviewed the notice regarding reporting requirements for the National Ocean Recreation Expenditure Survey (74 Fed. Reg. 64662). As stated in the notice, the National Marine Fisheries Service plans to collect data to estimate expenditures on recreational activities in the United States that interact with marine resources falling within the scope of the Service's public trust responsibilities. The Service would rely on the collected information to evaluate the regional and economic benefit of such recreational activities and to better assess the contribution of these activities as part of an overall marine spatial planning exercise.

In the Commission's opinion, the data obtained through this effort would be necessary to meet U.S. obligations under the International Whaling Commission initiative to assess whale watching worldwide, including tourism numbers, expenditures, and economic benefits. Such data also would be necessary in conducting regulatory impact reviews done in accordance with Executive Order 12866 (58 Fed. Reg. 51735), which requires a comparative analysis of the costs and benefits of alternatives under consideration for a proposed action under the National Environmental Policy Act. Additionally this information would be directly relevant to the Service's recently proposed rule to develop regulations to protect killer whales from vessel effects (74 Fed. Reg. 37674). Finally, these data are vital to the Service's effort to propose regulations to prevent "harassment from human activities directed at marine mammals in the wild" (67 Fed. Reg. 4379). For these reasons, the Commission considers the collection of this information an essential part of the Service's duties in carrying out its functions and endorses the agency's plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Sincerely,

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

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director