



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

23 February 2012

Jonathan Sleeman, DVM
Center Director
National Wildlife Health Center
U.S. Geological Survey
6006 Schroeder Road
Madison, WI 53711-6223

Dear Dr. Sleeman:

The Marine Mammal Commission is an independent federal agency comprised of three presidentially-appointed Commissioners, a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors, and a staff of 14 located in Bethesda, Maryland. The Commission is not a regulatory agency, but instead provides oversight of other federal agencies whose actions or policies may affect marine mammals. One of our Commissioners, Dr. Frances Gulland, has a strong background and interest in wildlife health.

The Commission recently received a copy of the National Wildlife Health Center's "Science Strategy: Advancing Wildlife and Ecosystem Health for the Next Decade." The goals highlighted in the document are highly relevant to marine mammals and their ecosystems. At this very moment, unusual marine mammal mortality events are underway in three of our Nation's coastal ecosystems. Although the ultimate cause of each event is still unclear, all have elements relevant to terrestrial wildlife, domestic animals, and human health. As you know, the National Marine Fisheries Service studies and manages such events involving cetaceans and pinnipeds, whereas the Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey study and manage health and disease issues involving the polar bear, walrus, sea otter, and manatee. Although these three agencies cooperate to a degree, more must be done to make the best use of the limited resources available for addressing wildlife health and disease management. Your Center's strategic science plan provides a very useful basis for improving cooperation.

The Commission would like to propose a small meeting with representatives from your Center, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Marine Mammal Commission, and representatives from other related federal agencies such as the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Center for Disease Control to consider opportunities for forming partnerships and expanding our collective ability to respond to wildlife health and disease issues in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

We would like to speak with you by phone regarding the possibility of such a meeting. You can reach me at (301) 504-0087 or tragen@mmc.gov. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director