

Marine Mammal Commission 2015 Annual Meeting

Ocean and Coastal Issues Impacting Marine Mammals and their Environment in the Carolinas and the Broader Atlantic Region

Session Summary

During the discussion session for this panel, multiple questions were raised by the CSA and Commissioners. The discussion centered on three themes: threats to marine mammals in the Carolinas and Atlantic Region; challenges to scientists and policy makers; and research gaps.

The majority of the questions and discussion focused on the challenges of funding research. Multiple people provided suggestions for how to find research grants and identify long-term funding options, including suggestions to apply for grants with a larger purpose, then work marine mammals in as part of the research under that grant. For example, find a grant where the main purpose is impacts of dispersants on the marine environment, then work on marine mammals as part of the marine environment. Other options suggest by the Commissioners and CSA were to look to BOEM for funding, since energy issues, especially wind energy, are coming up in the area and money may be there to fund research. There was also an emphasis for continuing and seeking out new partnerships. The discussion suggested there may be opportunities for increasing partnerships between researchers and/or Federal agencies with State agencies.

The group further spoke at some length about pressing threats to marine mammals in the region. Major threats discussed included fishery interactions and longterm impacts from the Deep Water Horizon event. There was also discussion about increased human populations in the area, as well as changes to the finite resources of the area (e.g., marshes, sand). Presenters noted these issues need to be considered as part of the big picture of managing marine mammals in the region.

Lastly, there was discussion on the need for monitoring offshore animals, including through acoustic monitoring arrays.