

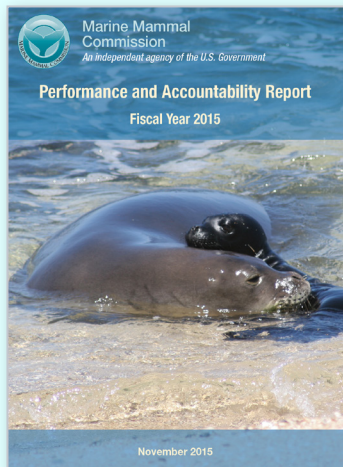
2015 Annual Report

About Us

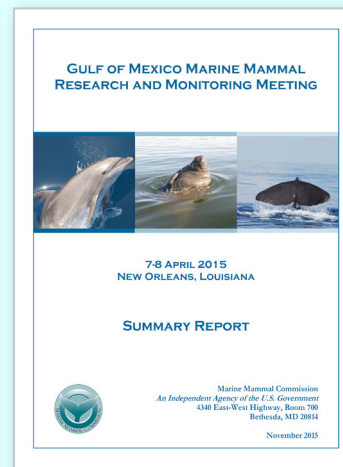
The Marine Mammal Commission (Commission) is an independent government agency charged by the Marine Mammal Protection Act to further the conservation of marine mammals and their environment. We work to ensure that marine mammal populations are restored and maintained as functioning elements of healthy marine ecosystems in the world's oceans. We provide science-based oversight of domestic and international policies and actions of federal agencies with mandates to address human impacts on marine mammals and their ecosystems. Our role is unique—we are the only U.S. entity that provides comprehensive oversight of all science, policy, and management actions affecting marine mammals. Our work is centered on five strategic objectives outlined in our FY15-19 Strategic Plan, and we pay special attention to particular species considered to be most vulnerable to human activities. The Commission consists of three Commissioners appointed by the President and is assisted by a nine-member Committee of Scientific Advisors and 14 full-time permanent staff.

Recent Accomplishments

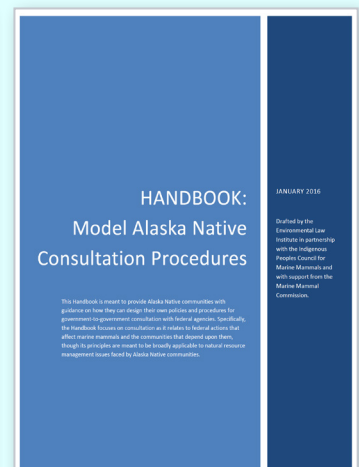
Highlights of our 2015 accomplishments are provided on the following page. For a detailed overview of our activities, please see our [Fiscal Year 2015 Performance and Accountability Report](#), or visit [our website](#).



Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2015



Gulf of Mexico Marine Mammal Research and Monitoring Meeting Report



Alaska Marine Mammal Model Consultation Procedures Handbook

Gulf of Mexico Research and Monitoring: In April 2015, we convened a meeting of scientists, resource managers, NGOs, and industry representatives working in the Gulf of Mexico to review current and recent marine mammal research, identify high priority marine mammal information needs for the next 5-15 years, and explore potential partnerships and funding sources for expanded research and monitoring. The recommendations in the [meeting report](#) provide guidance to state and federal agencies and other partners in the Gulf regarding marine mammal conservation, including restoration and monitoring after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Marine Mammal Research: In Fiscal Year 2015 we awarded \$207,711 to support researchers working on a variety of projects in the United States and overseas. The topics included investigation of dolphin immune system function potentially contributing to unusual mortality events along the U.S. Atlantic and Gulf coasts, assessment of the potential effects of noise on reproduction in seals, and studies of threatened whale and dolphin populations in the western Indian Ocean. We also helped to fund a joint research project by NOAA's Alaska and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers to increase understanding of the distribution of North Pacific right whales. [Learn more](#) about our Grants and Research Program.

Vaquita Conservation: We provided technical and funding support for the [conservation and recovery of the vaquita](#). We supported research to assess the status of vaquita through acoustic monitoring, projects to develop and test alternative fishing gear, and surveys and analyses of markets for vaquita-friendly seafood products. We also continued to participate in the international recovery team (CIRVA) advising the government of Mexico on vaquita conservation measures. In response to evidence of an accelerating decline of the vaquita population, and of increasing threats, the President of Mexico announced significant new conservation measures in April 2015.

Alaska Marine Mammal Model Consultation Procedures: We supported the development of [model consultation procedures](#) to ensure meaningful and timely consultation between federal agencies and Alaska Native communities on policies and actions that could affect the availability of marine mammals for subsistence and cultural purposes. The procedures, developed under a Commission contract by the Environmental Law Institute in partnership with the Indigenous People's Council on Marine Mammals, have been published in a final report that underwent a lengthy public review process.

Marine Mammal Health Monitoring and Analysis Platform (HealthMAP): We are co-leading the development of a web-based data management and visualization platform for marine mammal health information in partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). The pilot project presenting location and date data on types of marine mammal disease in California was completed and presented on the Central California IOOS website. The long-term vision of the [Marine Mammal HealthMAP](#) is to give the public, scientists, and decision-makers ready access to data on changes in marine mammal health that can be used to determine associations with oceanographic variables.

2015 Annual Meeting: At our [annual meeting in Charleston, South Carolina](#), we discussed human-caused impacts on marine mammals and their environment in the Carolinas and broader Atlantic region. Topics included the threats of entanglement and ship strikes to North Atlantic right whales, human interactions with manatees and dolphins, health assessments of marine mammals and exposure to harmful algal blooms, and offshore energy exploration and development, including concerns over seismic surveys. Representatives of other federal agencies, industry and environmental groups, and members of the public participated in the meeting.

