

2024 Current Fiscal Year Report: Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals

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1. Department or Agency

Marine Mammal Commission

2. Fiscal Year

2024

3. Committee or Subcommittee

Committee of Scientific Advisors on
Marine Mammals

3b. GSA

Committee No.

1059

4. Is this New Fiscal Year?

No

5. Current Charter

04/29/2021

6. Expected Renewal Date

04/29/2023

7. Expected Term Date

8a. Was Terminated During Fiscal Year?

No

8b. Specific Termination Authority

8c. Actual Term Date

9. Agency

Recommendation for Next Fiscal Year

Continue

10a. Legislation Req to Terminate?

10b.

Legislation Pending?

Not Applicable

11. Establishment Authority

Statutory (Congress Created)

12. Specific Establishment Authority

16 U.S.C. 1403

13. Effective Date

12/21/1972

14. Committee Type

Continuing

14c. Presidential?

No

15. Description of Committee

Scientific Technical Program
Advisory Board

16a. Total

Number of Reports

No Reports for
this Fiscal Year

17a.

Open

0

17b. Closed

0

17c. Partially Closed

0

Other Activities

0

Meetings and Dates

No Meetings

Current Next

FY

FY

18a(1). Personnel Pmts to Non-Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18a(2). Personnel Pmts to Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18a(3). Personnel Pmts to Federal Staff	\$0.00	\$0.00
18a(4). Personnel Pmts to Non-Member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(1). Travel and Per Diem to Non-Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(2). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Members	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(3). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Staff	\$0.00	\$0.00
18b(4). Travel and Per Diem to Non-member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00
18c. Other(rents,user charges, graphics, printing, mail, etc.)	\$0.00	\$0.00
18d. Total	\$0.00	\$0.00
19. Federal Staff Support Years (FTE)	0.00	0.00

20a. How does the Committee accomplish its purpose?

Through periodic meetings and frequent exchanges of information with the Commissioners and staff, the members of the Committee of Scientific Advisors keep abreast of current marine mammal issues, review pertinent documents, and assist in formulating Commission recommendations. During Fiscal Year 2023, the Marine Mammal Commission's Committee of Scientific Advisors continued to provide the Commission with the expert scientific advice necessary to prepare 66 letters with formal recommendations to other agencies concerning Federal, State, and international actions affecting the conservation of marine mammals and their habitats. Specific matters upon which the

Committee provided essential scientific review and advice to the Commission during Fiscal Year 2023 included actions needed to reduce threats to marine mammal species listed under the Endangered Species Act, including the North Atlantic right whale, Rice's whale, southern resident killer whale, Hawaiian monk seal, Cook Inlet beluga whale, West Indian manatee, and North Pacific gray whale. In addition, the Committee helped formulate agency positions on steps needed to reduce interactions between marine mammals and fisheries activities, particularly for the North Atlantic right whale and the vaquita. The Committee also reviewed several other Commission recommendations designed to help ensure that other activities, such as military training and sonar operations, offshore oil and gas exploration and production, and wind energy projects, do not adversely affect marine mammal populations. Other key issues on which the Committee provided advice included proposed stock assessment revisions, aboriginal subsistence whaling, including a proposal from the Makah Tribe to hunt gray whales, and the effects of climate change on marine mammals and their habitats. During Fiscal Year 2023 the Committee also reviewed documents prepared by other agencies pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Committee members reviewed and provided detailed comments and recommendations on 41 permit applications and requests for permit amendments to take or import marine mammals for purposes of scientific research, public display, photography, and/or species enhancement. The Committee also reviewed and provided advice on numerous scientific research proposals and preproposals, as well as on reports submitted by Commission contractors as part of the Commission's research

and studies program.

20b. How does the Committee balance its membership?

The members of the Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals are selected by the Chairman of the Commission, in consultation with the other Commissioners. Consistent with the provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the names of nominees are submitted to the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the Director of the National Science Foundation, and the Chairman of the National Academy of Sciences for review. This helps to ensure a high level of expertise in members is maintained with respect to scientific disciplines, marine mammal species, and geographic areas of particular importance to the Commission's responsibilities. For example, sources of scientific expertise in marine mammal veterinary medicine, population dynamics, population assessment, biometrics, acoustics, and behavior are needed to provide advice on various matters before the Commission. The Commission also requires a high level of knowledge concerning the biology and ecology of certain marine mammal species, such as the West Indian manatee, right whales and other species of large whales, the vaquita, southern resident killer whales, sea otters, the Cook Inlet stock of beluga whales, the polar bear, and the Hawaiian monk seal. These marine mammal species require special attention by the Commission because of their small population levels and/or threats they face. In addition, Committee members are selected to provide broad familiarity with marine mammal species and issues from a range of geographic regions, including Alaska and other polar regions, the

Pacific coast of the United States, Florida, and Hawaii, where Commission responsibilities are especially great. The Commission periodically solicits nominations of prospective Committee members from the public via a Federal Register announcement. Those nominations will be considered as appointments to the committee are made.

20c. How frequent and relevant are the Committee Meetings?

The Committee generally meets annually and at other times as necessary. The meetings provide the Committee and Commission with the opportunity to exchange views and information and to focus its attention on issues of particular importance or urgency. The Commission and Committee had planned to meet in Fiscal Year 2020 to review the effects of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and ongoing efforts to address the impacts of the spill, as well as other issues related to marine mammal conservation in the southeastern United States. Due to closures and travel restrictions related to the Covid 19 pandemic, that meeting was postponed. In Fiscal Years 2021, 2022, and 2023, the Commission and the Committee held shorter, single-topic-focused webinars in lieu of its typical multi-day annual meeting. In FY 2023, the Commission and Committee convened a virtual meeting to review federal agency efforts directed at Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Health Surveillance, and Conservation. The Commission and Committee expect to resume convening multi-day, in-person meetings beginning in November 2023.

20d. Why can't the advice or information this committee provides be obtained elsewhere?

No other body, either within or outside the

government, has the breadth of knowledge or expertise that the Committee possesses with respect to marine mammals. Having a ready source of expertise available to the Commission is essential for scientifically sound and timely decisions to be made with respect to research and management questions before the Commission. If the Committee were not available to the Commission, contracts to obtain the expert knowledge and advice would be required on a case-by-case basis, which would be more time-consuming, more costly, and more administratively burdensome.

20e. Why is it necessary to close and/or partially closed committee meetings?

N/A

21. Remarks

None

Designated Federal Officer

Michael L. Gosliner General Counsel

Committee Members	Start	End	Occupation	Member Designation
Baker, Jason	01/14/2013	09/30/2024	Hawaiian Monk Seal Population Assessment Program, National Marine Fisheries Service	Regular Government Employee (RGE) Member
Forney, Karin	04/04/2023	04/04/2026	Research Biologist, National Marine Fisheries Service	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member
Palacios, Daniel	05/18/2022	05/18/2025	Oregon State University	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member
Reeves, Randall	11/14/2005	09/30/2024	Okapi Wildlife Associates	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member

Rosel, Patricia	02/15/2011	09/30/2024	National Marine Fisheries Service	Regular Government Employee (RGE) Member Special Government Employee (SGE) Member Special
Strindberg, Samantha	04/30/2017	09/30/2024	Wildlife Conservation Society	Government Employee (SGE) Member Special
Suydam, Robert	02/17/2008	09/30/2024	North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management	Government Employee (SGE) Member Special
Thode, Aaron	03/21/2016	02/03/2024	Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego	Government Employee (SGE) Member Special
Wells, Randall	05/17/2015	09/30/2024	Mote Marine Laboratory	Government Employee (SGE) Member

Number of Committee Members Listed: 9

Narrative Description

The Marine Mammal Protection Act requires the Commission to consult with the Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals on all studies and recommendations it makes, on research programs conducted or proposed by the Commission, and on all applications for scientific research permits under the Act. The advice that the Commission receives from the Committee is critical to meeting the statutory obligations of the Commission as it formulates recommendations to other agencies on matters concerning marine mammal conservation and as it establishes priorities for its own research program.

What are the most significant program outcomes associated with this committee?

Checked if
Applies

Improvements to health or safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Trust in government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Major policy changes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Advance in scientific research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective grant making	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improved service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased customer satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of laws or regulatory requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outcome Comments

NA

What are the cost savings associated with this committee?

Checked if Applies

None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unable to Determine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Under \$100,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$100,000 - \$500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost Savings Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost Savings Comments

NA

What is the approximate Number of recommendations produced by this committee for the life of the committee?

66

Number of Recommendations Comments

This is the number of Commission recommendation letters reviewed by the Committee in Fiscal Year 2023. We do not maintain a running total going back to the Committee's creation in the 1970s.

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Fully implemented by the agency?

100%

% of Recommendations Fully Implemented Comments

NA

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Partially implemented by the agency?

0%

% of Recommendations Partially Implemented Comments

NA

Does the agency provide the committee with feedback regarding actions taken to implement recommendations or advice offered?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Not Applicable ☐

Agency Feedback Comments

Committee members are provided copies of Commission recommendations that result from consultation with the Committee and all agency recommendations are posted on the Commission's web site.

What other actions has the agency taken as a result of the committee's advice or recommendation?

Checked if Applies

Reorganized Priorities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reallocated resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Issued new regulation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved grants or other payments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action Comments

NA

Is the Committee engaged in the review of applications for grants?

Yes

What is the estimated **Number** of grants reviewed for approval 63

What is the estimated **Number** of grants recommended for approval 7

What is the estimated **Dollar Value** of grants recommended for approval

\$388,682

Grant Review Comments

Not Applicable

How is access provided to the information for the Committee's documentation?

Checked if Applies

Contact DFO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Agency Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Committee Web Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online GSA FACA Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Publications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Access Comments

N/A