

Marine Mammals Committee

Committee Members: R. L. Brownell, Jr. (USA), C. Callahan (USA), H. H. Edwards (USA), J. M. Lapsieritis (USA), C. D. Marshall (USA), S. L. McDonald (USA), T. J. McIntyre (USA), J. Moore (USA), D. K. Odell (USA, Chair), T. J. O'Shea (USA), C. W. Potter (USA), R. J. Small (USA), M. J. Smolen (USA), and J. A. Thomas (USA).
Consultants: I. Martinez-Serrano (Mexico), S. Sheffield (USA), J. Wilson (USA).

Mission:

The marine mammals committee was formed in 1921 and Chaired by E. W. Nelson. It is the longest-standing active committee of the American Society of Mammalogists. Its mission is to maintain and encourage interest in marine mammals in the ASM, to provide the Society membership with information about marine mammalogy, including conservation and legislative issues, to spearhead resolutions and legislation involving marine mammals, and to serve as a liaison between ASM and the Society for Marine Mammalogy (SMM). Members of the Marine Mammals Committee are frequently active in both ASM and SMM.

Information Items:

- (1) 2006 Marine Mammal Symposium – Tom O'Shea shepherded the manuscripts resulting from the symposium through the publication process. This *Journal of Mammalogy* Special Feature is scheduled for publication in 2008.
- (2) The Committee reviewed and provided some input on the polar bear letter developed by the Conservation Committee and signed by President Timm. This letter is linked to both committees' web pages. As of 29 April 2008 the Bush Administration had failed to meet the legal deadline for listing or not listing the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act. A U.S. federal judge ordered the administration to make and implement its decision by 15 May 2008.
- (3) The Committee continues to monitor progress toward reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act which has apparently been postponed until some time after the 2008 elections.
- (4) The State of Florida still has not taken any final action on down-listing the Florida manatee under Florida endangered/threatened species criteria from endangered to threatened. <http://myfwc.com/whatsnew/07/statewide/postcomm-dec.07.htm>
- (5) The Committee continually watches matters related to underwater sounds and their potential effects on marine mammals. This includes the potential effects of offshore wind farms.
- (6) NOAA Fisheries proposed to list the Cook Inlet beluga whale population as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. However, the federal government has

announced a delay of their decision for up to six months.

<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2008/belugalisting.pdf>

(7) Walrus – The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is due (on 7 May) to present its 90-day finding on whether or not a petition to list walrus as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/walrus/pdf/walrus_conservation_issues_chuckchi.pdf

(8) California Sea Lion Culling – The states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho were issued a permit to cull up to 85 sea lions per year for five years for eating endangered salmon at the Bonneville Dam. A federal court intervened and ruled ‘no killing’. Up to 19 of the offending sea lions (all males) will be captured and housed at cooperating zoos, aquaria and marine parks.

(9) HR 1006 – This bill amends the Marine Mammal Protection Act to increase funding for the Prescott marine mammal stranding grant program and to allow stranding network participants to disentangle gear-entangled marine mammals. <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1006>.

(10) NMFS Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) – The Committee reviewed this ANPR which relates to various aspects of marine mammal stranding operations. Comments were due 30 April 2008.

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/fr/fr73-5786.pdf>

(11) HR 5106 – The National Marine Mammal Research Program Act would create an annual appropriation of \$25M to be managed by the Marine Mammal Commission.

(12) Japan, Iceland and Norway continue ‘scientific whaling’.

(13) U.S. Navy Sonar – A federal judge in Hawaii ordered the Navy to increase protection for marine mammals during ASW training exercises. Similar rulings in California have restricted the Navy’s use of active sonar.

<http://thehonoluluadvertiser.com/article/2008/Mar/01/In/hawaii803010343.html>

(14) D. K. Odell will step down as chair of the Marine Mammal Committee after the June 2008 annual meeting of the ASM.

(15) Many of this committee’s information items are short-lived and time-critical. We are looking forward to be able to post them on the ASM web page. The Committee does have a page with links to a number of marine mammal-related organizations.

http://www.mammalogy.org/committees/commmarinemammals/ASM_MMC_Links.html

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,

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