

## **Marine Mammals Committee**

**Committee Members:** D. J. Boness (USA), R. L. Brownell, Jr. (USA), V. M. da Silva (Brazil), H. H. Edwards (USA), J. E. Heyning (USA), J. M. Lapsieritis (USA), C. D. Marshall (USA), S. L. McDonald (USA), T. J. McIntyre (USA), D. K. Odell (USA, Chair), T. J. O'Shea (USA), C. W. Potter (USA), R. J. Small (USA), M. J. Smolen (USA), M. A. Stevens (USA), and J. A. Thomas (USA)

### **Mission:**

The marine mammals committee was formed in 1921 under the Chairmanship of 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) Symposium – O'Shea and Odell continued follow-up coordination with the 2006 marine mammal symposium speakers and the Local Committee.

(2) Podcasting experiment – Odell and Smolen will make digital audio and video recordings of the 2006 marine mammal symposium. Pending approval of all parties, the audio recordings will be uploaded to the ASM web site. This will allow us to reach a wider audience and, hopefully, increase the participation of marine mammalogists in the ASM. Both audio and video recordings will serve archival purposes.

(3) Japanese scientific whaling – In February 2001 the ASM issued a Presidential letter to the U.S. Ambassador to Japan expressing concern over Japanese "Scientific Whaling". This was followed by a Resolution approved by the membership at the 2001 annual meeting and subsequently published in the *Journal of Mammalogy* (82:1134). Japanese scientific whaling has continued and increased in magnitude in both numbers and species killed and their research program now includes minke, Bryde's, sei, and sperm whales. The Committee is reviewing the situation and considering the recommendation of a second Presidential Letter to the government of Japan and relevant parties.

(4) Acoustics and marine mammals

(A) The U.S. Congress directed the Marine Mammal Commission to conduct a study of the effects of sound on marine mammals. An advisory committee of stakeholders was appointed and, after several hearings, the committee could not reach consensus and was dissolved. The final report from the advisory committee can be found at: <http://www.mmc.gov/sound/>.

(B) The National Marine Fisheries Service released the final report on the multi-species Unusual Mortality Event that occurred in North Carolina in January 2005. There were allegations that the event was caused by U.S. Navy sonar transmissions; however, this could not be confirmed. The report can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/health/umese0501sp.pdf> (13 MB).

(5) Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program

(A) The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement in advance of the reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Program (MMHSRP). Details can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/eis.htm> .

(6) Marine Mammal Protection Act – The reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act continues its slow move through Congress. The House Resources Committee has twice reported on a bill containing "non-controversial" amendments, which has yet to be approved by the House of Representatives. The Senate is refocusing on the issue this year and will talk to stakeholders, but other legislation has priority. It is doubtful that a Senate bill will be completed this year.

**Action Items:** None.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
Daniel K. Odell  
([dodell@cfl.rr.com](mailto:dodell@cfl.rr.com))