

**MARINE MAMMAL
COMMISSION:
ANNUAL REPORT
TO CONGRESS 1995**

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VARIOUS

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MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

Annual Report to Congress

1995

Marine Mammal Commission
1825 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

29 February 1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the 23rd Annual Report of the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals. The Commission was established under Title II of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to provide an independent source of policy and program guidance to Congress, the Executive Branch, and Federal agencies on domestic and international activities affecting marine mammal conservation.

The purpose of this report is to provide timely information on marine mammal-related issues and events to Congress, Federal and state agencies, public interest groups, the academic community, private citizens, and the international community. When combined with previous annual reports, it provides a historical record of the nation's progress in developing policies and programs to conserve marine mammals and their habitat. To ensure factual accuracy, the draft report was provided to relevant federal and state agency representatives and other involved persons for comment. The contents of the report are briefly described below.

Introduction (Chapter I)

Members of the Commission, its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, and staff are listed in this chapter along with a brief summary of the Commission's recent funding history. The Commission's fiscal year 1995 appropriation was \$1,384,000.

Reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Related Legislation (Chapter II)

Federal actions to conserve marine mammals are guided by several key laws, the most important of which is the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. In 1994 Congress amended that Act, reauthorizing its funding provisions through 1999 and making certain other changes. Perhaps the most significant amendments are those to establish a new regime for managing interactions between individual marine mammal stocks and commercial fisheries. In part, they call for assessments of the status of each marine mammal stock in U.S. waters and for measures to reduce the bycatch that may be impacting marine mammal stocks determined to be strategic by virtue of their reduced or declining status. Other significant amendments change Federal responsibility for regulating the care and maintenance of captive marine mammals, streamline permitting processes for scientific research and for the take of small numbers of marine mammals by harassment incidental to various other human activities, provide for importing polar bear hunting trophies from Canada, and require analyses of the health and stability of marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Maine and the Bering Sea. Chapter II provides an overview of these changes and identifies sections of the report that discuss actions by the Commission and others to implement the amendments.