



The Society for Marine Mammalogy

<http://www.marinemammalogy.org>

13 June 2017

President

Jay Barlow
Scripps Institution of Oceanography
5072 Gasconade Ave.
San Diego, CA 92110 USA
jay.barlow@noaa.gov

President-Elect

D. Ann Pabst
Univ. of North Carolina Wilmington
Biology and Marine Biology
601 S. College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403 USA
pabsta@uncw.edu

Secretary

Tara Cox
Savannah State University
Savannah, GA 31404 USA
coxt@savannahstate.edu

Treasurer

Tim Ragen
Marine Mammal Commission (ret)
4006 Castilleja Place
Anacortes, WA 98221 USA
timragen@gmail.com

Members at Large

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho
National Institute of Ecology and
Climate Change
6051 Business Center Court
San Diego, CA USA
lrojasbracho@gmail.com

Alexandre Zerbini
Marine Mammal Laboratory
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
NOAA
7600 Sand Point Way, N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115 USA

Sarah Kienle (Student)
Long Marine Laboratory
100 Shaffer Rd
Santa Cruz, CA 95060 USA
skienle@ucsc.edu

Laura Joan Feyrer (Student)
Dalhousie University
Biology Department
1355 Oxford Street
Halifax, NS B3H 4R2 Canada

Dear Senator and Representative:

Congress passed the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) to conserve whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions, manatees, sea otters, polar bears, and walrus. The MMPA established the U.S. Marine Mammal Commission (Commission) and charged it with oversight of marine mammal science, management, and conservation both domestically and internationally. The Commission also is to recommend “provisions for the protection of the Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts whose livelihood may be adversely affected by actions taken pursuant” to the MMPA.

President Trump’s proposed budget for fiscal year 2018 eliminates the Commission with potentially severe, irreversible effects on marine mammals and ecosystems in U.S. waters and throughout the world’s oceans.

Despite its small annual budget — roughly 1¢ per person in the U.S. — the Commission has worked effectively to —

- improve marine mammal science, management, and conservation in U.S. and international waters;
- integrate science into policy to promote better decision-making;
- engage all facets of society affected by actions taken pursuant to the MMPA;
- minimize the social and economic costs of marine mammal protection;
- maintain a focus on the health and stability of the marine ecosystem — the primary objective of the MMPA; and
- ensure that it provides the U.S. government and public a net economic benefit.

Among other things, the Commission has helped other agencies to reduce fishery-marine mammal conflicts, recover endangered species (e.g., Hawaiian monk seal, vaquita), investigate the effects of various human activities (e.g., production of sound) on marine mammals, respond to oil spills, reduce the effects of debris and pollution on marine mammals and marine ecosystems, and evaluate the effects of global warming.

At its core, the Commission is a non-partisan broker that promotes effective, fair-minded solutions to conservation problems through better science and more informed decision-making. It emphasizes cost-effective conservation by minimizing management errors that provide more protection than is needed or, conversely, less protection. It is recognized nationally and internationally for its contributions and leadership. And it is widely respected by the American public, which continues to value marine mammal conservation.

The U.S. Congress has the final word on this matter. For the benefit of U.S. waters and, indeed, all the world’s oceans, we urge Congress to restore the Commission’s budget and maintain this small but effective federal agency. We submit our plea on behalf of the 1,291 members of the international Society for Marine Mammalogy, the world’s leading society of marine mammal scientists.

Sincerely,

Jay Barlow, President



The Society for Marine Mammalogy

<http://www.marinemammalogy.org>

D. Ann Pabst
President-Elect

Daniel K. Odell
President, 2000-2002

Helene Marsh
President, 2012-2014

Douglas P. DeMaster
President, 1998-2000

Randall S. Wells
President, 2010-2012

Bernd Würsig
President, 1992-1994

Andrew J. Read
President, 2008-2010

Robert L. Brownell, Jr.
President, 1988-1990

John E. Reynolds, III
President, 2006-2008

William F. Perrin
President, 1986-1988

Kit M. Kovacs
President, 2004-2006

James G. Mead
President, 1984-1986

Paul Nachtigall
President, 2002-2004