

BOEMRE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ONGOING STUDIES

Region: Headquarters

Planning Area: Nationwide

Title: Support for the Development of a Marine Mammal Data Archive (NT-10-12)

Total Cost: \$40,000

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2011

Conducting Organization: USGS

Description:

Background: A great many scientific projects and monitoring efforts involve observing marine mammals in all aspects of their lives. Many research institutions and governmental agencies have accumulated this information, but, to date, there is no one repository for these observations from which interested groups could obtain the information for their needs. A report of the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science & Technology, an interagency task force on anthropogenic sound and the marine environment states "...agencies often have common science and technology needs on this issue that could be most quickly and economically through a coordinated program of effort." Further, the report recommends that government agencies "support the development, standardization, and integration of online data archives of marine mammal distribution, abundance, and movement for use in assessing potential risk to marine mammals from sound-producing activities" (Southall, et al., 2009).

Given the obvious usefulness of a marine mammal observations archive analogous to that of the National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC) of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), many people now working with marine mammals in various capacities want to proceed with the formation of such a repository. This idea has been evolving in the Interagency Coordinating Group on the Impact of Noise on Marine Mammals (ICG) and is now being seriously pursued. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Installations and Environment) has taken the lead and has had serious conversations with NOAA about the development of such an archive, likely to be housed somewhere in NOAA.

The development plan as it now stands calls for: the development of a common data format for observations of marine mammals through extensive discussion with marine mammal researchers and monitors nationwide; the acquisition of hardware, software, and maintenance personnel needed to receive, quality check, and store the observations; publicizing the existence of the data archive and encouraging researchers and monitors to contribute their past and future marine mammal observations. After several years, the successfulness of the archive will be evaluated. If successful, a determination of the means of indefinitely sustaining the archive will be made.

Since this project arose from discussions and expressed interest among the federal agencies participating in the ICG (BOEMRE, NOAA, the Marine Mammal Commission, the U. S. Navy, U. S. Coast Guard, the U. S. State Department, and the U. S. Department of Defense), these agencies will fund the start-up costs of the archive and a much smaller

annual contribution to maintain the archive in the near future. If successful, and if NOAA funds permit, NOAA may officially adopt the archive and pay for its future costs.

Objectives: The objectives of this study are to:

- develop a common data format for observations of marine mammals and,
- produce a data archive to receive, store, and make publically available these observations.

Methods: BOEMRE will make a financial contribution to support the start up of a marine mammal archive

Importance to BOEMRE: Research results on observational data on marine mammals are scattered among the many organizations that collect this information. The results are also in a variety of formats. Easy access to a comprehensive collection of observations of marine mammals from research and monitoring projects conducted nationwide and, perhaps, internationally can be achieved through a marine mammal data archive. The archive would provide BOEMRE with additional marine mammal observational data.

Current Status: Awarded and ongoing.

Final Report Due: May 12, 2011

Publications:

Affiliated WWW Site:

Revised Date: December 16, 2010