



**NOAA**

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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## **NOAA Looking for Additional Organizations to Help Respond to Stranded and Injured Marine Mammals in the Northeast United States**

NOAA Fisheries announced today that it wants to expand membership in its Northeast Marine Mammal Stranding Network between Maine and Virginia. Network members are volunteer organizations trained and federally authorized to respond to sick or injured dolphins, seals and whales that strand along the U.S. shoreline at different times of the year.

“Authorized responders are our eyes and ears in the field,” said Mendy Garron, northeast region marine mammal stranding coordinator for NOAA Fisheries. “They play a critical role by assessing, responding and in some cases rehabilitating sick or injured marine mammals. Network members recover and examine dead animals to monitor causes of mortalities (natural or human caused) that could pose health risks to marine mammal populations, people or pets.”

Marine mammal strandings are not uncommon along the northeast U.S. coast, especially in Massachusetts, which averages the highest annual marine mammal stranding rate between Maine to Virginia. Strandings occur for a variety of reasons including: advanced age, infectious diseases, harmful algal blooms, extreme weather or oceanographic events, as well as human caused impacts such as vessel strikes, entanglement in fishing gear or marine debris, and exposure to pollution. Strandings may involve individual animals or groups of animals.

NOAA Fisheries is the federal agency responsible for monitoring marine mammal populations in the United States. In the Northeast, NOAA Fisheries relies on a team of

dedicated, trained personnel from Maine to Virginia to assist the agency in carrying out its mission.

NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Region is currently seeking additional volunteers, individuals or organizations to undergo formal training and become authorized to respond to stranded or injured animals in the northeast when they are reported through the agency's regional hotline. NOAA Fisheries is particularly interested in identifying responders for Massachusetts for the north shore (Cape Ann), Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket response areas beginning in January 2014.

The Marine Mammal Stranding Network has been in existence for several decades and is comprised of organizations from the wildlife rescue community, academic institutions, zoo/aquarium facilities, and federal state or local government agencies. The Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) was officially formalized in 1992 under the Marine Protection Act of 1972 after numerous mass strandings and unusual mortality events occurred around the country. Although participation in the Marine Mammal Stranding Network is voluntary, the Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000 established the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program under federal law to provide limited federal funding to support the mandates of the MMHSRP.

The Prescott Grant Program provides competitive grants to eligible stranding network participants for the recovery and treatment (i.e., rehabilitation) of stranded marine mammals. Grants also support data collection from living or dead stranded marine mammals, facility upgrades, operation costs, and staffing needs to support this work. The Prescott Grant Program is an annual program, but is subject to available funds.

For more information on the Northeast Region Stranding Program (covering the coastlines of Maine to Virginia), please visit our website [http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/stranding/](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/stranding/). To report a stranding please call NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional 24-hour hotline 866-755-NOAA (6622).

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/noaa>.