

Laws & Regulations

What They Mean for Marine Mammals & Fisheries

In the U.S., marine mammals are managed under two main statutes: The Endangered Species Act (1973) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (1972).

Endangered Species Act

Protects **threatened** and **endangered** species and their **critical habitat**



Requires agencies to seek consultation to **evaluate** if the actions they permit, fund, or carry out will harm listed species & critical habitat



May impose **restrictions on fisheries** if activities jeopardize listed species or critical habitat



Marine Mammal Protection Act

Protects **all marine mammals** from unauthorized take in U.S. waters



Requires fisheries to be managed in a way that **avoids and minimizes** marine mammal bycatch



Requires **marine mammal stock assessments**, which provide updates on marine mammal stocks in the U.S.



Marine Mammal Stock Assessments

How Are Assessments Done?

Step 1

NOAA uses the best available science, through surveys or available data, to compile information on marine mammals.



Step 2

Biologists estimate the following:

A recovery factor between 0.1 and 1.0

Minimum population size

Net productivity rate



Step 3 Calculate the PBR

Potential Biological Removal

The maximum number of animals, not including natural mortalities, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population.

Sources of human-caused serious injury and mortality that are considered relative to the PBR include:

PBR include:

Entanglement

Fishery bycatch

Ship strikes

Marine debris



What is a Marine Mammal Stock?

A group of marine mammals of the same species in a common spatial arrangement that interbreed when mature

Stock A



Stock B



Why Does This Matter?

Marine mammal stock assessments estimate serious injuries and mortalities caused by fisheries. PBR calculations can help inform fisheries management practices, particularly for fisheries that interact with marine mammals.