

The John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance
Grant Program

Program Report FY2011–2015: A Five-Year Review of Support to Save and Conserve Stranded Marine Mammals



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Cover photo: Release of a harbor seal successfully rehabilitated at the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Photo: National Aquarium/Theresa Keil

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A sea lion undergoes anesthesia and surgery at the Marine Mammal Center. Photo: The Marine Mammal Center/Bill Hunnewell

Executive Summary

Since FY2001, Congress has appropriated approximately \$1 to 4 million annually to NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) to fund the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program under the authority of Title IV of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), which formally established the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) in 1992. NOAA Fisheries funds eligible members of the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network through grants and cooperative agreements for the recovery or treatment of marine mammals, the collection of data from living or dead stranded marine mammals for health research, and the support of facility operation costs. From 2001 through 2015, the Program awarded more than \$48.2 million in funding through 552 competitive grants to Stranding Network members in 24 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. Additionally, NOAA Fisheries sets aside a portion of Prescott funds for emergency assistance with unforeseen stranding events, and provided \$2.3 million in emergency funds from 2001 to 2015.

Prescott Grant funding has enabled Stranding Network members to expand response coverage, enhance response capabilities and data collection, and build and upgrade rehabilitation facilities. As a result, NOAA Fisheries and our Network partners operate a comprehensive nationwide health and emergency response program that aids stranded or entangled marine mammals in distress, and monitors and assesses the health of marine mammal populations. A previous report summarized Prescott Grant activities from 2001–2010 (<https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/3933>), and highlighted the first 10 years of the program. This new report provides an updated overview of regional stranding response in the ensuing five years, and contains summaries provided by Prescott Grant recipients highlighting their many accomplishments using Prescott funding. Using funds appropriated in FY2011-2015, the Program awarded more than \$13.5 million in funding through 160 competitive grants to Stranding Network members and collaborators in 24 states. Additionally, from 2011 to 2015 the Program awarded \$999,122 in emergency funds to assist the Network in 15 emergency events that required extra support.

Program Highlights (2001-2015)

- **\$1-4 million** in annual funding provided from Congress.
- **More than \$48.2 million** awarded to grant recipients.
- **552** competitive grants awarded in 24 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia.
- **\$2.3 million** in emergency funds set aside by NOAA Fisheries.

2011-2015 Highlights

- **\$13.5 million** awarded to Grant recipients.
- **160** competitive grants awarded in 24 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia.
- **Nearly \$1.0 million** in emergency funds set aside by NOAA Fisheries.



A rehabilitated harbor seal, Marmalade, is released by the National Aquarium. Photo: National Aquarium/Theresa Keil

Introduction

History

In 1992, Congress formally established the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) under Title IV of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Public concern about the health of wild marine mammal populations guided the development of this program.

The primary goals of the MMHSRP are to:

- *Correlate marine mammal health with available data on physical, chemical, environmental, and biological parameters;*
- *Coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events; and*
- *Facilitate collection and dissemination of reference data and assess health trends of wild marine mammals.*

Understanding marine mammal health is important because the animals can serve as indicators of ocean health and give insight into larger environmental issues. This has implications for human health and welfare as the animals live in waters people use.

In 2000, Congress established the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program under the Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Act of 2000, which was an amendment to Title IV of the MMPA. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service's (NOAA Fisheries) Office of Protected Resources administers the MMHSRP and the Prescott Grant Program for marine mammals under our jurisdiction (cetaceans, seals, and sea lions). NOAA Fisheries funds eligible members of the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network through grants and cooperative agreements for the recovery and treatment (i.e., rehabilitation) of stranded marine mammals, data collection from living or dead marine mammals for scientific research on the health of marine mammal populations, and facility operations dedicated to those purposes.

Investing in the Marine Mammal Stranding Network

Since 2001, Congress has appropriated \$1 to 4 million annually to the Prescott Grant Program. In the first 10 years of the program (2001–2010), NOAA Fisheries awarded more than \$34.6 million in funding through 392 competitive grants to Stranding Network members in 24 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia. In addition, NOAA Fisheries provided approximately \$1.3 million in emergency funds during this time period to help reimburse Stranding Network members with costs incurred from unforeseen emergency events. In the ensuing five years (2011–2015), which is the focus of this report, the Program awarded more than \$13.5 million in funding through 160 competitive grants to Network members in 24 states, and an additional nearly \$1.0 million in emergency funds. In total

from 2001 through 2015, the Prescott Grant Program has awarded more than \$48.2 million in funding through 552 competitive grants to Network members in 24 states, two territories, and the District of Columbia, and provided an additional \$2.3 million in emergency funds.

Marine mammals can serve as indicators of ocean health and give insight into larger environmental issues.

While Prescott Grants provide valuable support for Stranding Network members, these organizations do not solely rely on these grants. Prescott Grants require a 25 percent match from the recipients, which increases their impact and ensures the Prescott Grant Program leverages funds. Organizations use Prescott Grants as seed

money to leverage additional funds through donations, as well as in-kind donations of volunteer hours, veterinary services, laboratory services, etc. Therefore, these grants can have an outsized impact.



Rehabilitated harbor seals being released by The Marine Mammal Center. Photo: The Marine Mammal Center/Bill Hunnewell

Overview of Accomplishments to Date

Since its inception, the Prescott Grant Program has contributed to unprecedented improvements to the primarily volunteer stranding networks along the U.S. coast. Consistent funding is important for the maintenance of basic operational needs and the continued success of the Stranding Network.

Tangible Benefits

Prescott funding has enabled Stranding Network members to:

- Expand stranding response coverage over wider geographic areas.
- Enhance response capabilities and data collection.
- Screen animals to examine the prevalence of diseases in wild marine mammal populations, including morbillivirus, leptospirosis, and West Nile virus.
- Upgrade rehabilitation facilities to meet the NOAA Fisheries Standards for Rehabilitation, including state-of-the-art instruments, diagnostic tools, and quarantine pools.
- Conduct post-release monitoring of rehabilitated animals to evaluate post-release survival.
- Hire trained staff for organizations previously operated solely by volunteers.
- Increase understanding of the causes of illness and death in wild marine mammals.

Intangible Benefits

In addition to these improvements, the Prescott Grant Program has provided many intangible benefits. Specifically, Prescott funding has:

- Enabled and encouraged collaborations among Stranding Network organizations.
- Trained Network members.
- Increased staff and volunteer morale by providing much needed tools and resources for response activities and diagnostic sampling.
- Provided safer Network operations for animals and people alike.

John H. Prescott



John H. Prescott. Photo: New England Aquarium

John H. Prescott was a conservationist, marine biologist, congressional advisor, teacher, explorer, world-renowned whale expert, and pioneer whose achievements were known nationally and internationally.

He began his career as a commercial tuna fisherman in California. Mr. Prescott was a biologist, curator, and General Manager at Marineland of the Pacific. At Marineland, Mr. Prescott and his colleague, Ken Norris, were the first to document echolocation by bottlenose dolphins.

From 1972 to 1994, Mr. Prescott was the Executive Director of the New England Aquarium in Boston, MA. He was the guiding force behind the transformation of the Aquarium from a Boston waterfront attraction to a world-class institution in education, research, and conservation. He oversaw the completion of the sea lion facility Discovery and the Animal Care Center. The New England Aquarium became the model for aquariums around the world and influenced the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to shift its focus from entertainment and attractions to conservation. Mr. Prescott also founded the Marine Animal Stranding Network at the New England Aquarium. The Aquarium became a center for marine animal rescue and rehabilitation and paved the way for the creation of many similar groups. In 1988, Mr. Prescott led the first successful rehabilitation and release of three pilot whales that had stranded on Cape Cod, MA.

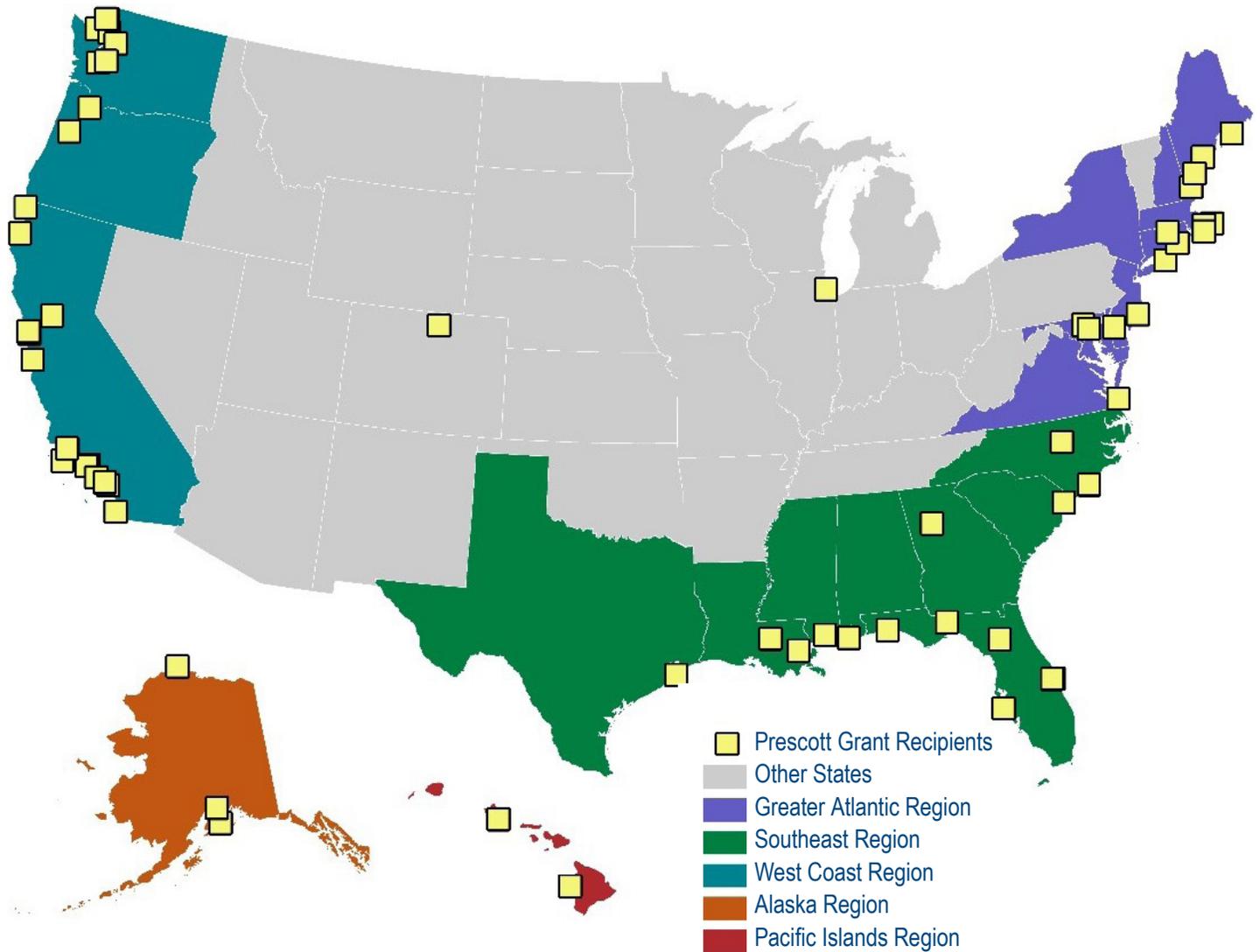
John H. Prescott was chairman of the Marine Mammal Commission's Scientific Advisory Group and headed the National Humpback Whale Recovery Team. He served for five years as a member of the U.S. delegation to the International Whaling Commission and was on the NOAA Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee from 1988 to 1993. In 1997 Mr. Prescott was awarded the Marlin Perkins Award for Professional Excellence by the AZA for his contributions to husbandry, zoological display, research, conservation, and public education.



Cascadia Research Collective responds to a dead stranded gray whale on the outer coast of Washington on June 13, 2013. Photo: Cascadia Research Collective

Prescott Grant Recipients

From 2011 to 2015, Prescott funding was awarded to 61 different recipients in 24 states. These applicants were authorized participants or researchers in the National Marine Mammal Stranding Network.



The location of all Prescott Grant award recipients from 2011 to 2015. Map: NOAA Fisheries

Organizations with Stranding Agreements²

NOAA Fisheries maintains Stranding Agreements with institutions and individuals who have appropriate training and facilities to assess and care for stranded marine mammals. Organizations with Stranding Agreements include non-profits, for-profits, academic institutions, museums, and governmental agencies. Federal, state, tribal, or local employees also participate in stranding response activities in accordance with Section 109(h) of the MMPA.

These organizations work to accomplish the goals of the MMHSRP by responding to dead or live marine mammal strandings and entanglements to investigate the causes of illness or mortalities, provide humane care to animals that are suffering, and improve our scientific knowledge about marine mammal—and ocean—health.

Eligible Prescott applicants must be:

- *Stranding Agreement holders or their designee organizations;*
- *Eligible federal, state, tribal, or local government personnel; or*
- *Authorized researchers that collaborate with the stranding network.*

Types of Activities Funded by the Prescott Grant Program

Dead Animal Response

Dead animal response may include beach assessment, collection of a carcass, necropsy, carcass disposal, and/or retention of parts and specimens. Investigating the causes of mortalities is vital to understanding health trends in marine mammal populations, and is especially critical when endangered species are impacted. Marine mammal populations are considered indicators of ocean health. By investigating marine mammal mortalities, the Stranding Network serves as an invaluable monitoring system for changes in ocean health and marine mammal populations, especially for threatened and endangered species, and provides important information that is used for conservation and management efforts.

Live Animal Response

Live animal response may include beach assessment, capture, relocation, and transport to a rehabilitation facility, entanglement response, euthanasia, and/or release back to the wild. Stranding Agreement holders may also operate marine mammal rehabilitation facilities to treat sick or injured animals in need of round-the-clock veterinary care. By responding to live animals, the Network provides humane care to animals in distress, while also gathering valuable marine mammal health data. This knowledge and expertise can often be applied across taxa, so the skills gained from meeting the challenges of response and rehabilitation for one species can benefit others. This is especially important for threatened and endangered marine mammal species, as rehabilitating and releasing individual animals can have an immense impact on their conservation.

Scientific Research Projects

Scientific research projects use data from living and dead stranded marine mammals to test hypotheses about marine mammal strandings, health, or rehabilitation. Some research is broad, looking at a variety of species in many locations, while other projects may focus on a single disease, species, or basic biology. Research projects funded by Prescott Grants have been essential for increasing our knowledge about marine mammal biology, anatomy, health, and population structure, and have provided valuable insights into the cause(s) of strandings, as well as ways to validate and, in some cases, improve methods of treatment for individual animals and populations.

² A Stranding Agreement is an official written agreement between NOAA Fisheries and a Network participant that authorizes the participant to respond to stranded marine mammals under section 112(c) of the MMPA.

Total Amount of Prescott Grant Funding by State: 2011–2015

Region	State	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Greater Atlantic	ME	\$199,938	\$176,393	\$79,996	\$183,812	\$0	\$640,139
	NH	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000
	MA	\$398,350	\$184,971	\$71,518	\$79,861	\$219,317	\$954,017
	CT	\$0	\$166,104	\$0	\$46,745	\$79,933	\$292,782
	NY	\$199,160	\$100,000	\$99,313	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$648,473
	NJ	\$98,080	\$98,055	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$196,135
	DE	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$49,203	\$0	\$149,203
	MD	\$0	\$87,119	\$0	\$55,705	\$0	\$142,824
	VA	\$184,995	\$99,394	\$0	\$96,630	\$99,703	\$480,722
	Total	\$1,180,523	\$912,036	\$250,827	\$611,956	\$563,953	\$3,519,295
Southeast	NC	\$195,726	\$267,602	\$0	\$193,156	\$193,680	\$850,164
	SC	\$88,080	\$79,585	\$0	\$0	\$80,661	\$248,326
	GA	\$63,750	\$0	\$0	\$10,045	\$0	\$73,795
	FL	\$332,038	\$399,075	\$99,996	\$322,067	\$263,353	\$1,416,529
	AL	\$74,388	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$74,388
	MS	\$99,812	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$99,812
	LA	\$0	\$98,980	\$0	\$100,000	\$99,992	\$298,972
	TX	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$99,778	\$79,778	\$90,407	\$469,963
	IL	\$0	\$99,996	\$0	\$49,933	\$58,316	\$208,245
	Total	\$953,794	\$1,045,238	\$199,774	\$754,979	\$786,409	\$3,740,194
West Coast	CA	\$746,632	\$628,325	\$180,439	\$597,853	\$508,409	\$2,661,658
	OR	\$199,804	\$199,954	\$100,000	\$199,978	\$199,964	\$899,700
	WA	\$319,387	\$265,880	\$88,802	\$249,882	\$303,829	\$1,227,780
	Total	\$1,265,823	\$1,094,159	\$369,241	\$1,047,713	\$1,012,202	\$4,789,138
Alaska	AK	\$176,005	\$99,421	\$158,680	\$99,720	\$197,943	\$731,769
	CO	\$0	\$100,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$100,000
	Total	\$176,005	\$199,421	\$158,680	\$99,720	\$197,943	\$831,769
Pacific Islands (Hawaii and Mariana Islands)	HI	\$100,000	\$98,312	\$67,900	\$186,948	\$189,465	\$642,625
	Total	\$100,000	\$98,312	\$67,900	\$186,948	\$189,465	\$642,625
Total Competitive Awards	-	\$3,676,145	\$3,349,166	\$1,046,422	\$2,701,316	\$2,749,972	\$13,523,021
Emergency Funding ³	-	\$0	\$196,797	\$459,736	\$148,828	\$193,761	\$999,122
Grand Total	-	\$3,676,145	\$3,545,963	\$1,506,158	\$2,850,144	\$2,943,733	\$14,522,143

³ The Emergency Prescott program funds are administered through a cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, which may not spend the funds until a future fiscal year.

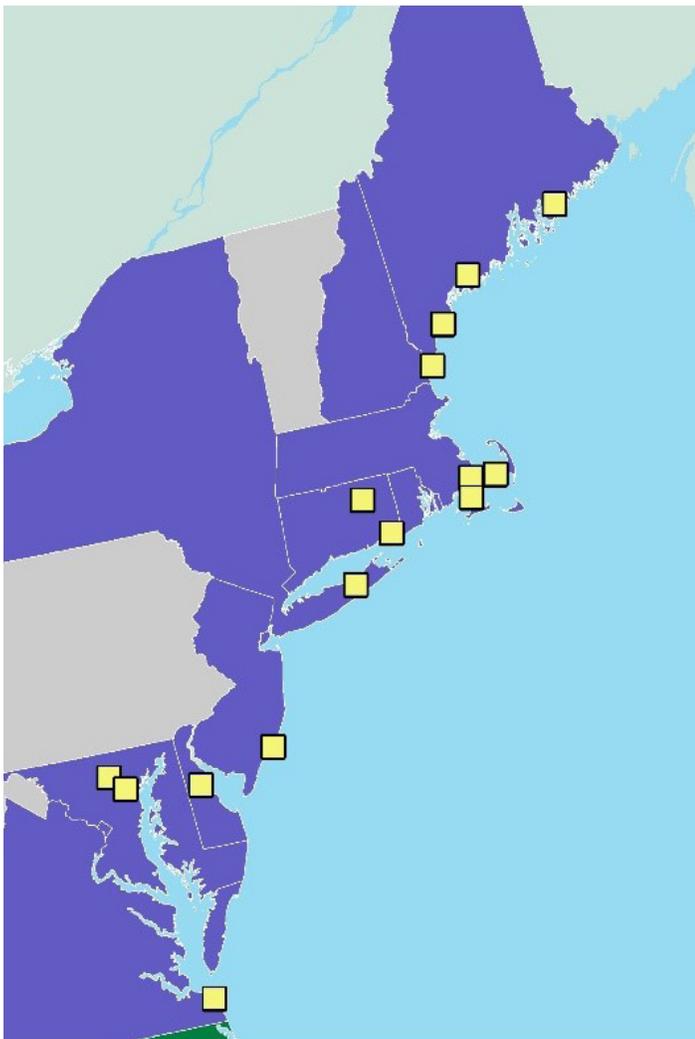


**Luna, a gray seal, being fed while in rehabilitation at the National Aquarium. Photo: National Aquarium/
Theresa Keil**

Greater Atlantic Region

Region at a Glance (2011-2015)

- 16,747 miles of coastline
- \$3.5 million in Prescott Grant funding
- 15 agreement holders/responders
- 15 Prescott Grant recipients
- 8 rehabilitation facilities
- 5,726 total stranding responses
- 1,422 live stranding responses
- 307 rehabilitated/released animals



Network partners in the Northeast Region that received Prescott Grant funding from FY2011-2015. The region received a total of \$3.5 million in Prescott Grant funding during this time. Map: NOAA Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region covers 16,747 miles of varied coastline from Maine to Virginia, and the Regional Stranding Coordinator is located in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Between 2011 and 2015, the Greater Atlantic Region had 15 Stranding Agreement holders/government responders and 15 Prescott Grant recipients. Throughout the region, there were eight rehabilitation facilities authorized to rehabilitate marine mammals. During this time period, the Greater Atlantic Stranding Network responded to 5,726 strandings (2,518 cetaceans and 3,208 pinnipeds). Approximately 24.9 percent (n=1,422) of responses were to live stranded marine mammals, and 307 of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Prescott Grant funding supported investigations into strandings, including multiple mass stranding events on Cape Cod, and large whale mortalities (some floating many miles offshore), rehabilitation, releases, data collection from necropsies, and live animal assessments. A Prescott Grant funding priority for the Greater Atlantic Region is to offset the higher cost of properly disposing of chemically euthanized carcasses.

Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: The National Aquarium

The National Aquarium received a Prescott Grant in 2012 to implement a wide-reaching marine mammal outreach and education program. This multi-faceted project allowed the National Aquarium to increase their outreach to a variety of stakeholders. During the three-year project period, the aquarium participated in 77 outreach events and interacted with 16,614 visitors during those events. The outreach events included seal-themed displays, information, activities, and messaging.

The National Aquarium and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program worked cooperatively to implement a marine mammal outreach program that was centered on pinniped social haul-out areas. Staff worked with NOAA Fisheries staff to design a brochure highlighting responsible viewing of seal haul-out areas, which was distributed to resort visitors, year-round residents, seasonal residents, and other relevant stakeholders. Public service

announcements were also drafted that mirrored the messaging of the brochures, and the National Aquarium’s media relations team scheduled radio interviews during each seal season in Maryland to discuss this topic. Twelve large signs were designed and built to warn the public to remain at a distance when seals are hauled out on public beaches. This approach benefits the welfare of the animals, and also helps reduce strandings. Some proportion of pinniped strandings are due to harassment and disturbance, often by well-intentioned members of the public. Increasing awareness can prevent these stranding events.

In addition to this collaboration with a local environmental group, the Aquarium hosted workshops to raise awareness about responsible viewing of marine mammals and about how to identify and report sick or injured pinnipeds. These workshops were targeted toward charter boat captains. Participants were provided with a digital camera, a marine

mammal identification guide, a waterproof notebook, binoculars, copies of the seal brochure, and copies of the National Aquarium’s volunteer husbandry manual (for more life in-depth information about pinniped rehab/release). The Aquarium and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program continue to work with these captains to further their education, share information on population health, and monitor the marine mammal populations using the coastal bays of Maryland.

During the project period, media and the public were invited to three rehabilitated seal releases in Maryland. The National Aquarium celebrated their 150th release on June 9, 2015, when they released a rehabilitated gray seal named Lily. Her release was a huge success, with more than 550 visitors joining them on the beach to say farewell to Lily. During her release, 14 Animal Rescue staff from the National Aquarium were on site to answer questions, hand out seal brochures, and inspire visitors to help protect resting seals.



Lily, a gray seal, plays with enrichment toys. Lily was the 150th rehabilitated seal to be released by the National Aquarium in Baltimore. Photo: National Aquarium

2011–2015 Greater Atlantic Region Prescott Grant Recipients

Prescott Grant Recipient	Location	Total Awards	Total Amount
College of the Atlantic	Bar Harbor, ME	4	\$359,865
University of New England	Biddeford, ME	2	\$196,396
Marine Mammals of Maine	Harpswell, ME	1	\$83,878
Seacoast Science Center	Rye, NH	1	\$15,000
International Fund for Animal Welfare	Yarmouth, MA	5	\$453,408
National Marine Life Center	Buzzards Bay, MA	4	\$301,264
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution	Woods Hole, MA	2	\$199,345
Sea Research Foundation, Inc.	Mystic, CT	3	\$222,109
University of Connecticut	Hartford, CT	1	\$70,673
Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation	Riverhead, NY	7	\$648,473
Marine Mammal Stranding Center	Brigantine, NJ	2	\$196,135
Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control	Lewes, DE	2	\$149,203
Maryland Department of Natural Resources	Annapolis, MD	2	\$108,164
National Aquarium in Baltimore	Baltimore, MD	1	\$34,660
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, Inc.	Virginia Beach, VA	5	\$480,722
Total	15 locations	42	\$3,519,295



Satellite-linked tag on bottlenose dolphin “Speedy” rescued from a lake in the Everglades in 2014, being transported via airboat to saltwater. Photo: Chicago Zoological Society, Sarasota Dolphin Research Program (CZS-SDRP)

Southeast Region

Region at a Glance (2011-2015)

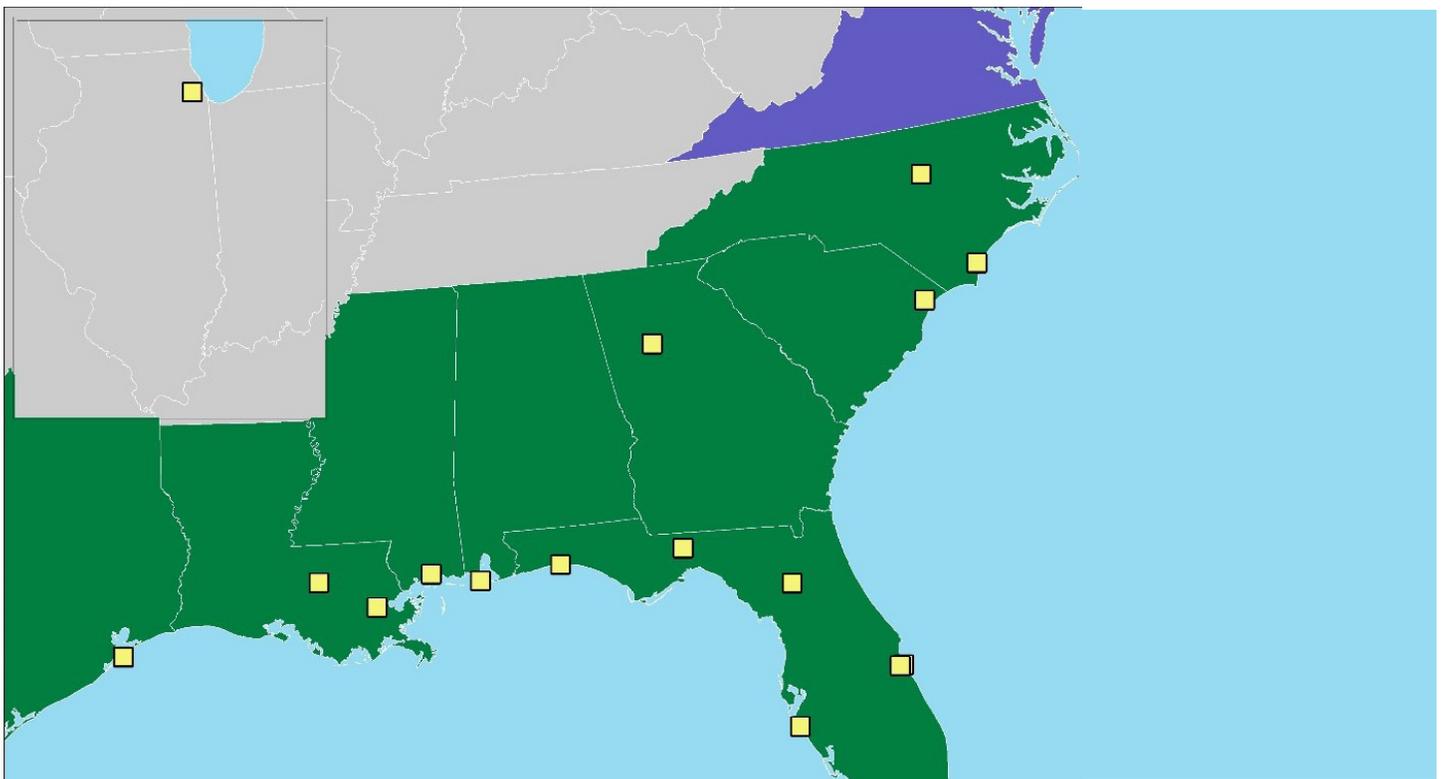
- 29,067 miles of coastline
- \$3.7 million in Prescott Grant funding
- 28 agreement holders/responders
- 17 Prescott Grant recipients
- 10 rehabilitation facilities
- 4,076 total stranding responses
- 201 live stranding responses
- 6 rehabilitated/released animals

NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Region covers 29,067 miles of coastline from North Carolina to Texas and includes Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The NOAA Fisheries Regional Stranding Coordinator is located in Miami, Florida and the Regional Stranding Administrator is located in St. Petersburg, Florida. Between 2011 and 2015, the Southeast region had 28 Stranding Agreement

holders (including eight designee organizations) and 17 Prescott Grant recipients. Ten of the stranding organizations had rehabilitation capabilities.

During this time period, the Southeast Stranding Network responded to 4,076 strandings (4,041 cetaceans and 35 pinnipeds). Approximately 4.9 percent (n=201) of responses were to live stranded marine mammals, and six of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Stranding Responders in the Southeast Region used Prescott Grant funding to support stranding responses, including disease investigations and biotoxin research. Prescott Grant funding has also supported Marine Mammal Stranding Program Reviews, responses to animals out of habitat, and cetacean disentanglements.



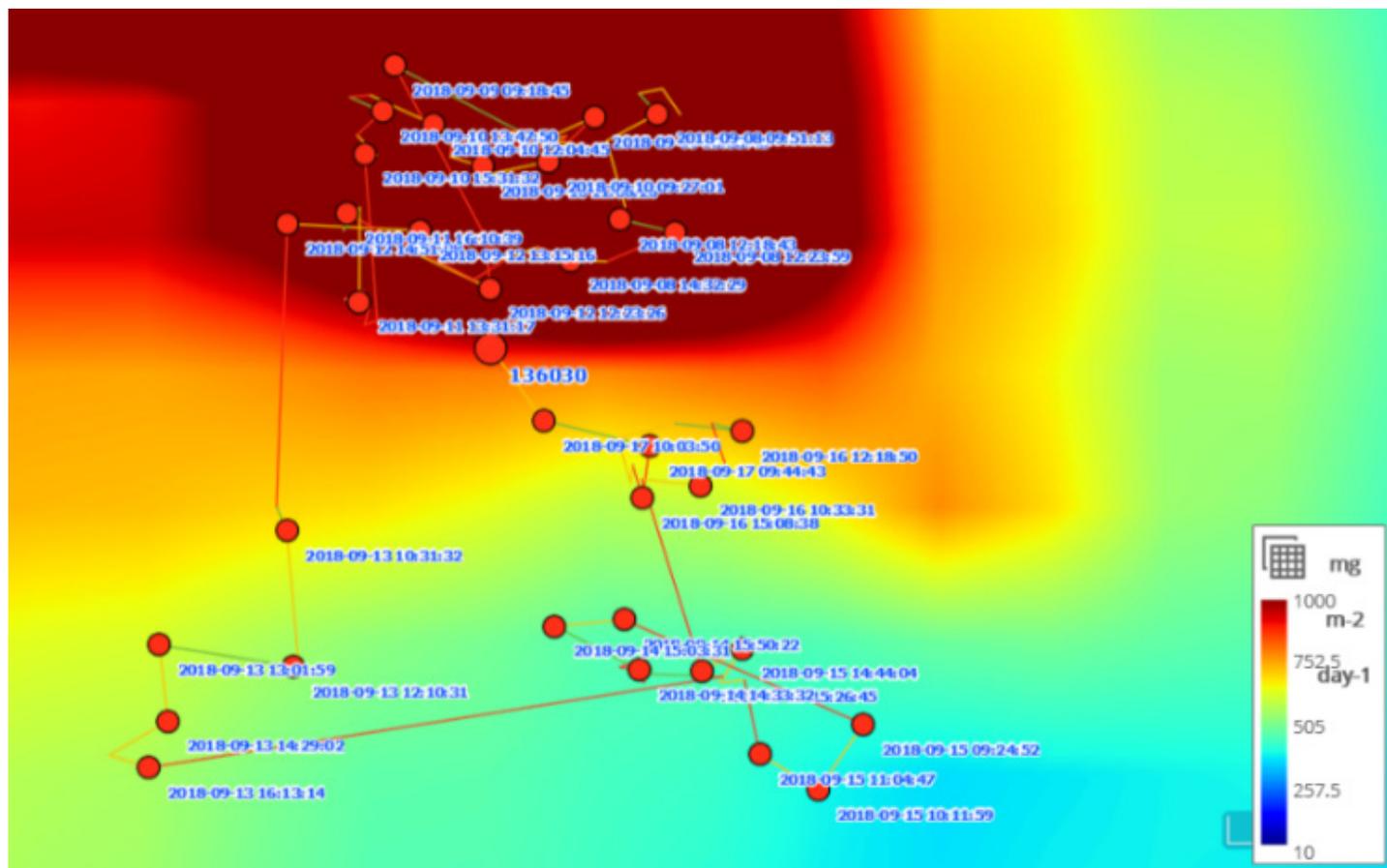
Network partners that conducted activities in the Southeast Region and received Prescott Grant funding from FY2011–2015. The region received a total of \$3.7 million in Prescott Grant funding during this time. Map: NOAA Fisheries

Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: The Chicago Zoological Society, Sarasota Dolphin Research Program (CZS-SDRP)

Between 2011 and 2015, the Chicago Zoological Society received four Prescott Grants for their Sarasota Dolphin Research Program to engage in dolphin interventions and post-release monitoring of small cetaceans post-rescue or rehabilitation, and to maintain a cache of tags and tagging and tracking gear for post-release monitoring of cetaceans, regionally and nationally. During this time, CZS-SDRP led or assisted with numerous disentanglements of bottlenose dolphins from recreational fishing gear and from crab pot gear, helped with the capture and translocation of a bottlenose dolphin from a lake in the Everglades to a saltwater bay, helped to herd pygmy killer whales away from a beach to prevent a mass stranding, and provided satellite-linked and/or VHF tags and tagging/tracking guidance to Stranding Network members around the country. Additionally, CZS-SDRP made presentations and provided trainings to

other Stranding Network organizations at national and regional meetings.

In addition to the work that CZS-SDRP conducted directly, they were awarded grants in 2014 and 2015 to provide tags and, when needed, tracking services for follow-up monitoring for the Stranding Network. This tagging service has provided benefits to a wide range of cases since 2015, as the grants have allowed for a range of species to receive post-release monitoring, including bottlenose dolphins in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas; pygmy killer whales; short-finned pilot whales; a false killer whale; a melon-headed whale; a harbor porpoise off Vancouver, Washington; and common dolphins off Cape Cod, Massachusetts. This post-release monitoring provided opportunities to assess the success of intervention efforts, providing guidance for future efforts. A



A 10-day plot of the movements of bottlenose dolphin R-10 off the coast of the Carolinas, including the period of passage of Hurricane Florence to the north. Initially the dolphin was in an area of high primary productivity (dark region extending off from shore, averaged over 8 days). She apparently was moved out of that area by strong hurricane-associated surface currents, and then she returned to the area of high primary productivity after the hurricane passed. Map: Chicago Zoological Society, Sarasota Dolphin Research Program (CZS-SDRP)

previous Prescott Grant to evaluate post-intervention survival from cases around the country found that small cetaceans that survived at least 42 days post-release were likely to survive well beyond this period. Thus, post-release monitoring beyond this threshold of success can also provide a window into the lives of animals that are sometimes difficult to study in any other way, due to their movements beyond the logistically practical range of researchers.

More recently, the CZS-SDRP used funds from the grant awarded in 2015 to track a rehabilitated female

bottlenose dolphin (R-10) released by SeaWorld-Florida. During 110 days of tracking, the animal demonstrated movement patterns through the coastal waters of the Carolinas offshore of where most bottlenose dolphin research has been conducted to date, and responded to the passage of Hurricane Florence immediately to her north. She remained in an area of high primary productivity through much of her track, except when surface currents associated with Hurricane Florence apparently moved her temporarily out of the region.

2011–2015 Southeast Region Prescott Grant Recipients

Prescott Grant Recipient	Location	Total Awards	Total Amount
University of North Carolina at Wilmington	Wilmington, NC	4	\$392,709
North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources	Raleigh, NC	5	\$457,455
Coastal Carolina University	Conway, SC	3	\$248,326
Georgia Aquarium, Inc.	Atlanta, GA	1	\$10,045
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Waynesboro, GA	1	\$63,750
Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge	Crestview, FL	1	\$57,130
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	St. Petersburg, FL	5	\$331,622
Florida Institute of Technology	Melbourne, FL	1	\$49,888
Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute	Melbourne Beach, FL	5	\$499,940
Mote Marine Laboratory	Sarasota, FL	4	\$377,949
University of Florida	Gainesville, FL	1	\$100,000
MESC/Dauphin Island Sea Lab	Dauphin Island, AL	1	\$74,388
Institute for Marine Mammal Studies, Inc	Gulfport, MS	1	\$99,812
Audubon Nature Institute, Inc./Audubon Commission	New Orleans, LA	1	\$32,398
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries	Baton Rouge, LA	3	\$266,574
Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network	Galveston, TX	5	\$469,963
Chicago Zoological Society	Chicago, IL	4	\$208,245
Total	17 locations	46	\$3,740,194

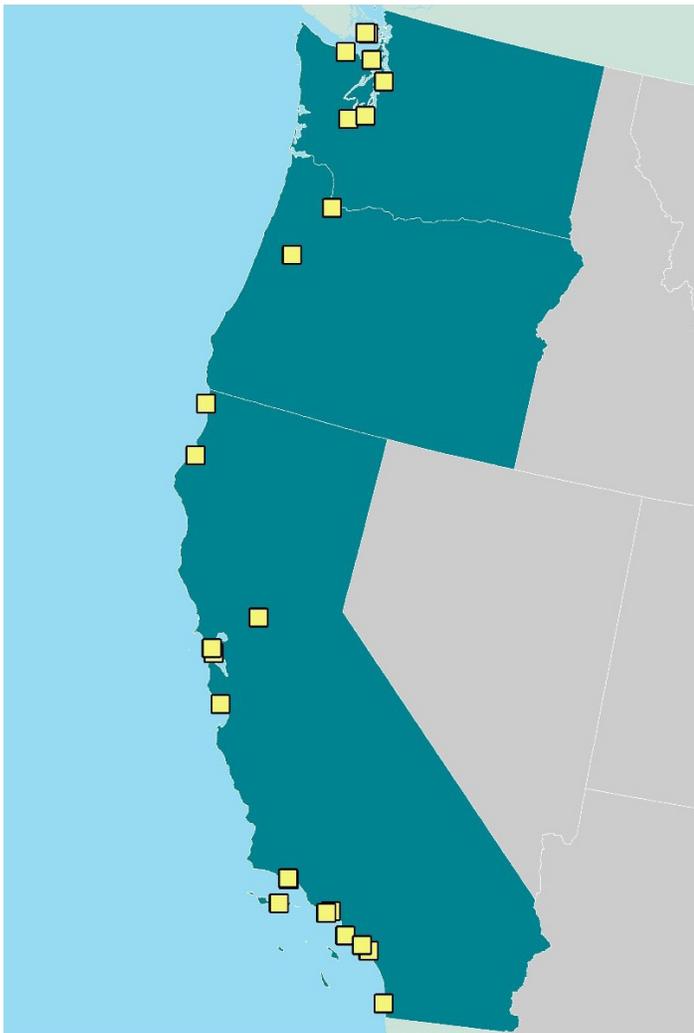


Stranded striped dolphin, Lincoln City, Oregon, December 12, 2012. Photo: Oregon State University/Jim Rice

West Coast Region

Region at a Glance (2011-2015)

- 7,863 miles of coastline
- \$4.8 million in Prescott Grant funding
- 25 agreement holders/responders
- 23 Prescott Grant recipients
- 9 rehabilitation facilities
- 18,429 total stranding responses
- 11,893 live stranding responses
- 4,921 rehabilitated/released animals



Network partners in the West Coast Region that received Prescott Grant funding from FY2011-2015. The region received a total of \$4.7 million in Prescott Grant funding during this time. Map: NOAA Fisheries

NOAA Fisheries' West Coast Region includes Washington, Oregon, and California and has a total of 7,863 miles of shoreline. The NOAA Fisheries Regional Stranding Coordinators are located in Seattle, Washington (coordinates responses in Washington and Oregon) and Long Beach, California (coordinates responses in California). From 2011 to 2015, the Region had 25 Stranding Agreement holders/government responders, with nine of these organizations conducting rehabilitation. Among these organizations are state, federal, academic, non-governmental organizations, museums, aquariums, and Native Tribes. The region had 23 Prescott Grant recipients during this time.

During this time period, the West Coast Stranding Network responded to 18,429 strandings (1,267 cetaceans and 17,162 pinnipeds). Approximately 64.5 percent (n=11,893) of the responses were to live stranded marine mammals, and 4,921 of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Prescott Grant funding supported the development of data collection protocols, stranding and ship strike responses, and post-release monitoring. Prescott Grant priorities for the Region include: providing coverage for basic (referred to as Level A) data collection in areas where coverage is sporadic or unknown, enhancing reporting and documentation of live entangled large whales and pinnipeds throughout the West Coast Region, and establishing or maintaining capabilities to humanely euthanize live stranded marine mammals, especially large whales.

Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: Oregon State University

Oregon State University, on behalf of the Oregon Marine Mammal Stranding Network (OMMSN), received funding from several Prescott Grants between 2011 and 2015. The OMMSN responds to approximately 400 stranded marine mammals annually, mostly comprising five species: California sea lions, Steller sea lions, Pacific harbor seals, northern elephant seals and harbor porpoises. However, in 2012 there were multiple strandings representing species that had rarely stranded on Oregon beaches previously. These included 34 strandings of Guadalupe

fur seals, a species for which there were no stranding records prior to 2006; the first recorded stranding of a bottlenose dolphin; and five separate strandings of striped dolphins, a pelagic species typically found in tropical and warm temperate waters, and that rarely strands along the Oregon coast.

A particularly active time was between December 5 and 12, 2012, when five dolphins stranded along a 67-mile stretch of the Oregon coast, between Newport and Cape Meares. Of the five animals, four were striped dolphins

and one was a Pacific white-sided dolphin. One of the striped dolphins was found stranded alive and soon died on its own; all of the others were found recently dead. Dolphin strandings on the Oregon coast are rare (an average of two per year prior to 2012), and five separate events in one week was highly unusual. Necropsies were conducted on most of the dolphins, and revealed that three of them most likely died of a *Brucella ceti* infection, the first time this disease was recorded in stranded cetaceans in Oregon.

Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: Cascadia Research Collective

Cascadia Research Collective (CRC) received funding from the Prescott Grant Program in 2011 to support stranding activities from 2012 through 2014. This grant allowed CRC to continue to act as the primary responder for all large whales in Washington State, all cetaceans on the central Washington outer coast, and all marine mammals in southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal. During this project, CRC participated in the response to and/or examination of a total of 323 marine mammals (110 cetaceans and 213 pinnipeds). CRC acted as the lead examiner in 21 whale strandings throughout the state, including gray whales, humpback whales, fin whales, sperm whales and killer whales. CRC worked with a number of agencies in the cooperative response and examination.

This project supported CRC's continued documentation of human interaction and causes of mortality in marine mammals in Washington, and contributed to post Unusual Mortality Event (UME) monitoring of harbor porpoise, Guadalupe fur seal, and gray whale strandings. The collective documented 70 incidences of human interaction, although not all of these were the direct cause of death. Predominant human interactions were entanglement injuries (most often seen in harbor porpoise and large whales), vessel collisions (most commonly in large whales), and gunshot wounds in pinnipeds. CRC continued efforts to recover all harbor porpoises and provide other Stranding Network members with response assistance and necropsy expertise as a follow-up to the 2006–2007 Harbor Porpoise UME and documented continually high numbers of stranded harbor porpoises in Washington, particularly in 2012.

Peer-reviewed publication topics included the harbor porpoise UME investigation, results of dedicated beach surveys for stranded marine mammals, contaminants in harbor seals, and diseases found in marine mammals of the Pacific Northwest.



Cascadia Research Collective conducts a necropsy on a dead stranded humpback whale. Photo: Cascadia Research Collective

2011–2015 West Coast Region Prescott Grant Recipients

Prescott Grant Recipient	Location	Total Awards	Total Amount
California Academy of Sciences	San Francisco, CA	4	\$329,315
California Wildlife Center	Malibu, CA	3	\$235,956
Channel Islands Cetacean Research Unit	Santa Barbara, CA	2	\$169,228
Channel Islands Marine and Wildlife Institute	Santa Barbara, CA	3	\$293,307
Humboldt State University Sponsored Programs	Arcadia, CA	1	\$81,724
Marine Mammal Care Center at Fort MacArthur	Los Angeles, CA	3	\$246,150
Northcoast Marine Mammal Center	Crescent City, CA	1	\$99,464
Pacific Marine Mammal Center	Laguna Beach, CA	1	\$99,600
Sea World San Diego	San Diego, CA	1	\$98,450
Southern California Coastal Water Research Project	Costa Mesa, CA	1	\$99,717
The Marine Mammal Center	Sausalito, CA	2	\$195,016
The Regents of the University of California, Santa Cruz	Santa Cruz, CA	5	\$441,936
The Regents of the University of California, Davis	Davis, CA	2	\$194,997
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History	Santa Barbara, CA	1	\$76,798
Oregon State University	Corvallis, OR	5	\$499,792
Portland State University	Portland, OR	4	\$399,908
Cascadia Research Collective	Olympia, WA	3	\$288,725
Feiro Marine Life Center	Port Angeles, WA	1	\$25,226
The Whale Museum	Friday Harbor, WA	4	\$304,704
Port Townsend Marine Science Society	Port Townsend, WA	2	\$84,608
Progressive Animal Welfare Society	Lynnwood, WA	1	\$49,717
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife	Olympia, WA	4	\$400,000
Wolf Hollow Wildlife Rehabilitation Center	Friday Harbor, WA	2	\$74,800
Total	locations	56	\$4,789,138



Pimniq, a ringed seal, is housed at the Alaska SeaLife Center, but is part of PHOCAS, a research program that studies ice seal physiology (Photo taken under permit No. 18902). Photo: University of California Santa Cruz, Long Marine Lab/Coleen Reichmuth

Alaska Region

Region at a Glance (2011-2015)

- *33,904 miles of coastline*
- *\$0.8 million in Prescott Grant funding*
- *17 agreement holders/responders*
- *4 Prescott Grant recipients*
- *1 rehabilitation facility*
- *255 total stranding responses*
- *75 live stranding responses*
- *32 rehabilitated/released animals*

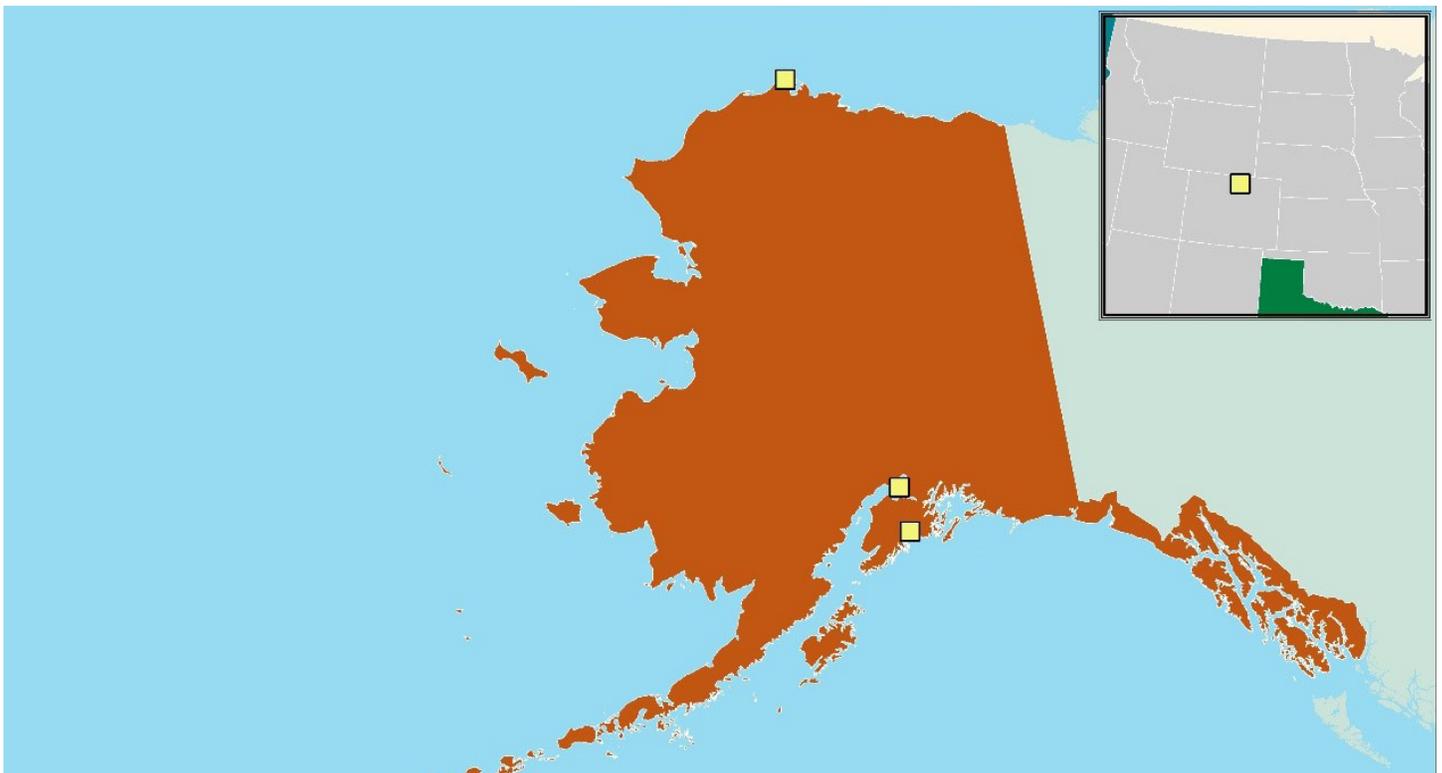
NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region covers 33,904 miles of coastline and includes the Pribilof Islands, Kodiak, and the Aleutian Islands. The NOAA Fisheries Regional Stranding Coordinator is located in Juneau, Alaska. Between 2011 and 2015, the Alaska Region had 17 Stranding Agreement holders/government responders throughout the region. There is only one facility with rehabilitation capabilities,

the Alaska SeaLife Center. The region had four Prescott Grant recipients during this time period.

During this time period, the Alaska Region Stranding Network responded to 255 strandings (184 cetaceans and 71 pinnipeds). Approximately 29.4 percent (n=75) of responses were to live stranded marine mammals, and 32 of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Stranding responders in the Alaska region have used Prescott Grant funding for disentanglements of pinnipeds, improvements to sample tracking and archiving, salvage of beach-cast animals along Bristol Bay, development of outreach materials and workshops, and rehabilitation program support of animal husbandry, transport, and post-release monitoring of rehabilitated animals.

Prescott Grant priorities for the Alaska region included enhancing coastline coverage (with particular attention to rural and remote areas in the Arctic), further developing outreach and educational tools, reducing and responding



Network partners that received Prescott Grant funding to conduct work in the Alaska Region from FY2011–2015. The region received a total of \$0.8 million in Prescott Grant funding during this time. Map: NOAA Fisheries

to marine mammal fishery entanglements, and enhancing network capacity to respond to stranding events by

providing training for assessment techniques, sample collection, necropsy, and documentation.

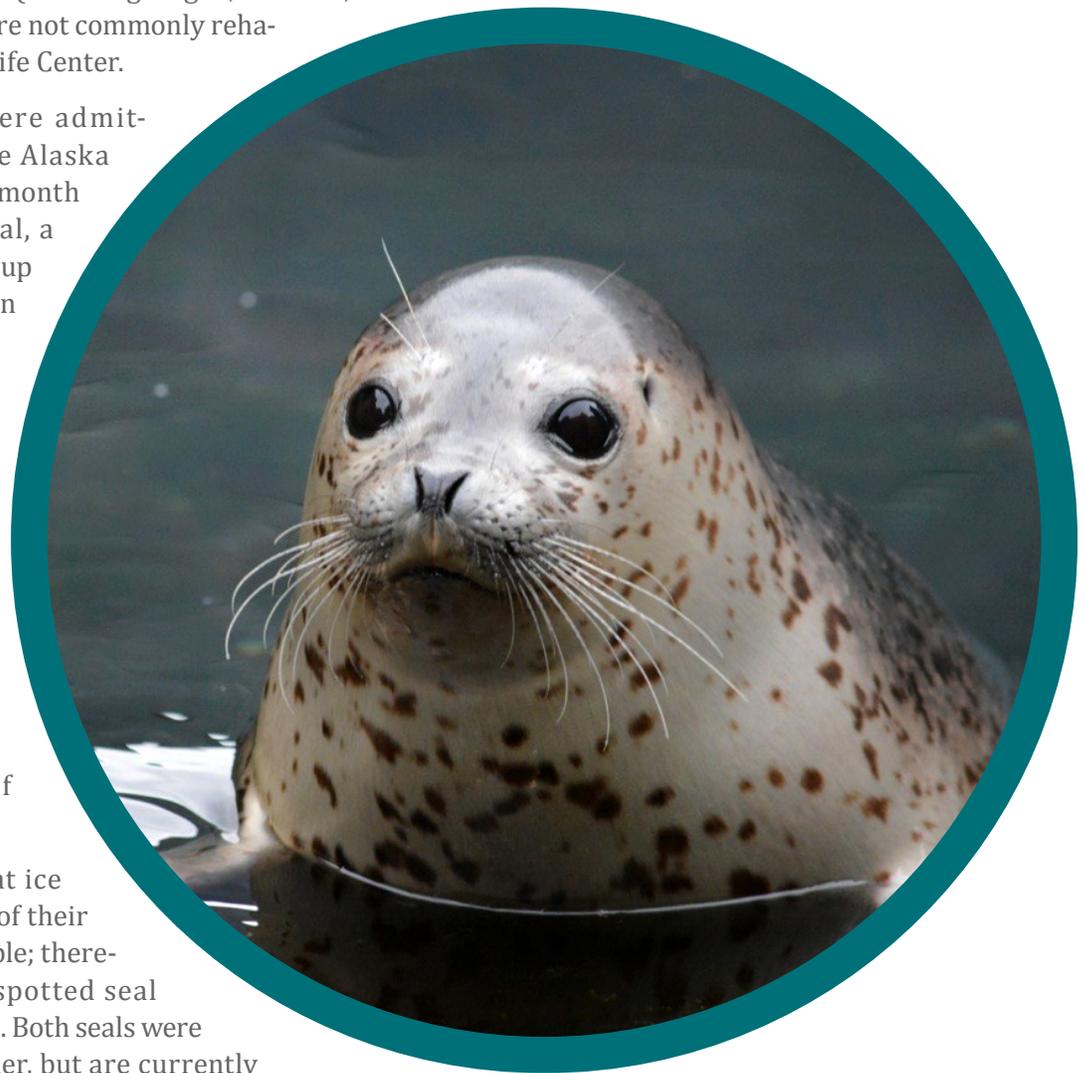
Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: The Alaska SeaLife Center

In 2015, two ice seals from the Bering Sea received much needed medical care from the Alaska SeaLife Center's Wildlife Response team, the only permanent marine rehabilitation center in Alaska. The program received Prescott Grant funding every year from 2011 to 2015. While the program rehabilitates an average of six to 12 harbor seals, ice seal species (including ringed, bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals) are not commonly rehabilitated at the Alaska SeaLife Center.

In 2015 two ice seals were admitted to rehabilitation at the Alaska SeaLife Center within one month of each other. The first seal, a two-week-old spotted seal pup from Nome, was admitted in June 2015. The second seal, a male ringed seal from the Stebbins area, was admitted in July 2015. Veterinary staff estimated the ringed seal was approximately one year old and was experiencing a challenging molt when it was spotted by a concerned local hunter. The seal was brought in with wounds and signs of dehydration.

NOAA has determined that ice seals rehabilitated outside of their usual range are not releasable; therefore, the ringed seal and spotted seal were deemed non-releasable. Both seals were placed with a seal researcher, but are currently housed at the Alaska SeaLife Center while the research data are collected. These seals are part of the PHOCAS (Physiology and Health of Cooperating Arctic Seals) program, which works to better understand ice seal

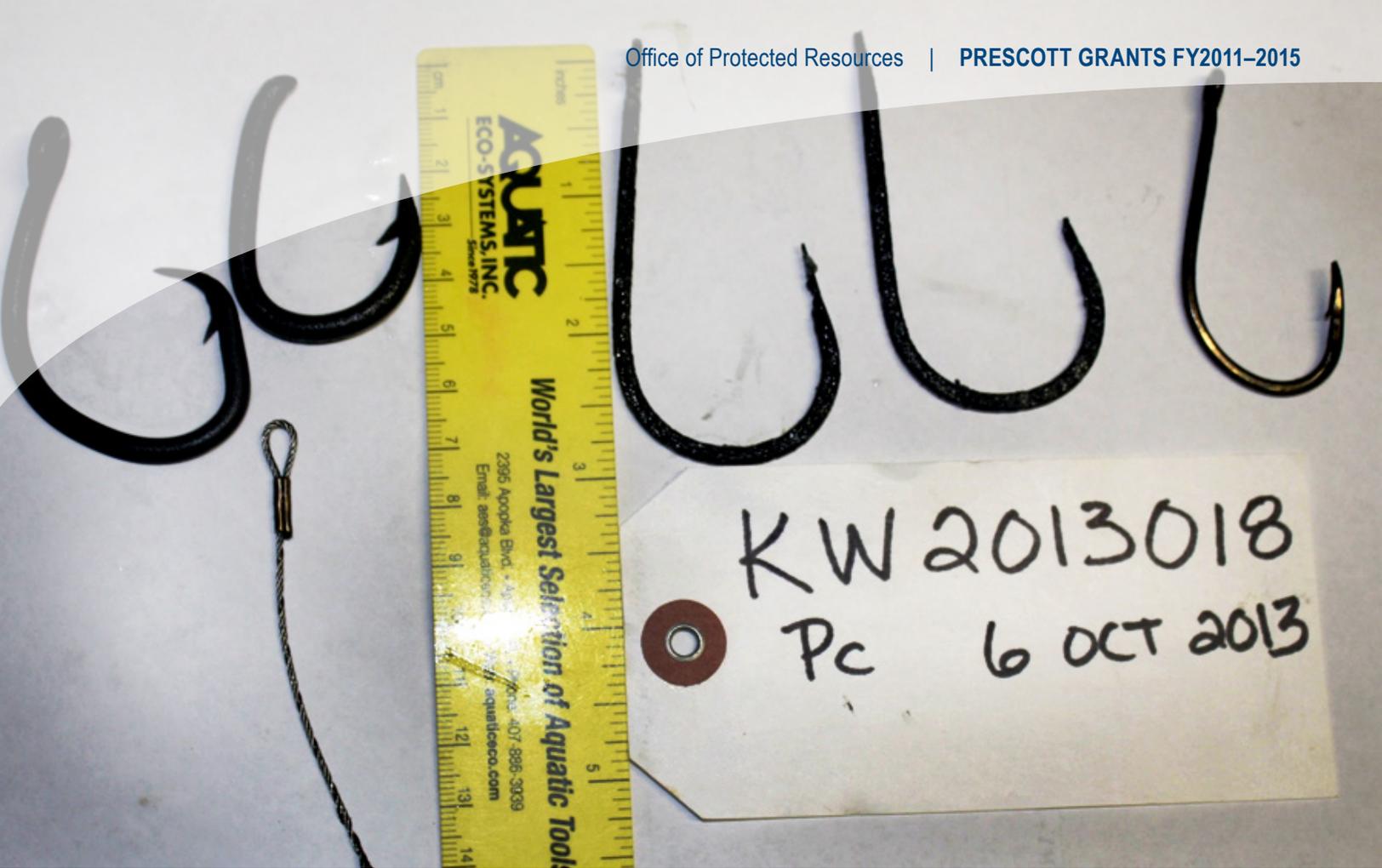
physiology. Ice seals are difficult to study because they tend not to live in congregated packs and are difficult to access in their natural habitat. Sea ice habitats are diminishing in the Arctic due to climate change, making ongoing research about ice seals a high priority.



Kunik, a spotted seal, is housed at the Alaska SeaLife Center but is part of PHOCAS, a research program that studies ice seal physiology (Photo taken under permit No. 18902). Photo: University of California Santa Cruz, Long Marine Lab/Coleen Reichmuth

2011–2015 Alaska Region Prescott Grant Recipients

Prescott Grant Recipient	Location	Total Awards	Total Amount
North Slope Borough	Barrow, AK	1	\$85,992
Seward Association for the Advancement of Marine Science (Alaska SeaLife Center)	Seward, AK	5	\$448,068
University of Alaska, Anchorage	Anchorage, AK	2	\$197,709
Colorado State University	Fort Collins, CO	1	\$100,000
Total	4 locations	9	\$831,769



Five fish hooks were discovered among the stomach content remains of an endangered Main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whale. There are thought to be only 150 individuals remaining in the population. Photo: University of Hawaii/Kristi West

Pacific Islands Region

Region at a Glance (2011-2015)

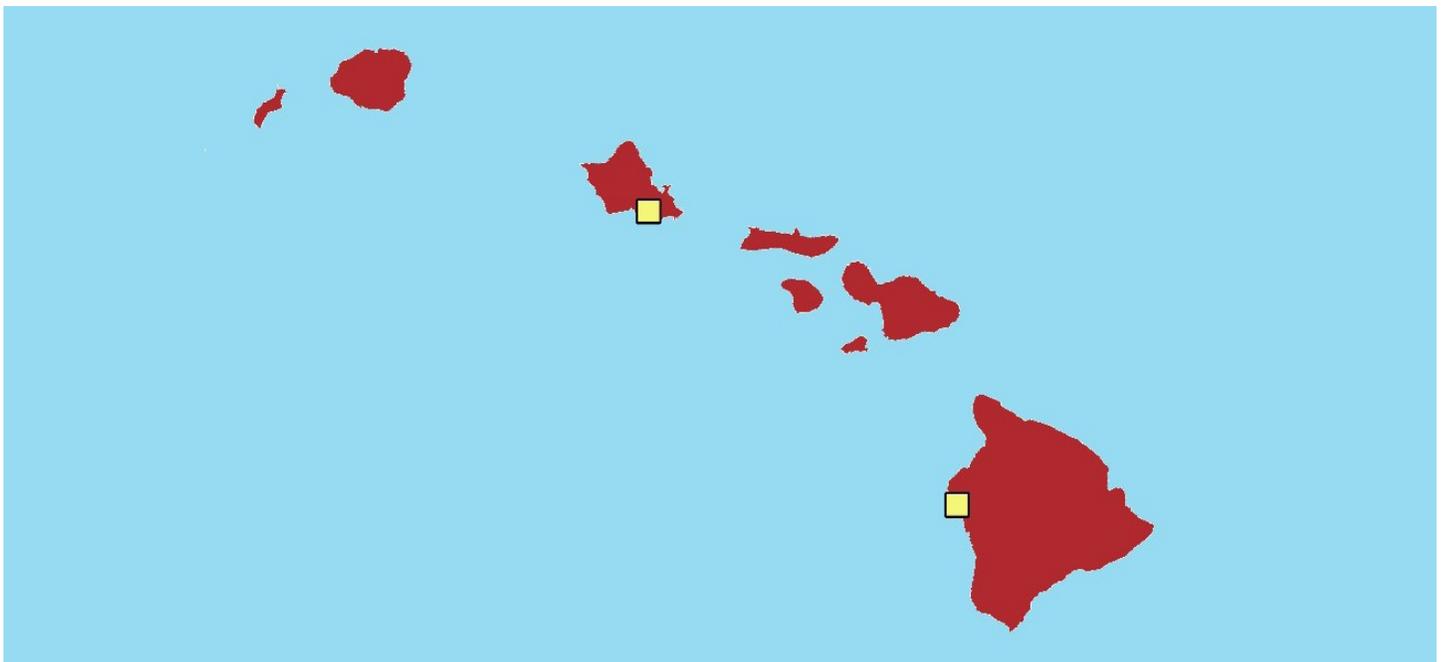
- 1,905 miles of coastline
- \$0.6 million in Prescott Grant funding
- 6 agreement holders/responders
- 2 Prescott Grant recipients
- 2 rehabilitation facilities
- 220 total stranding responses
- 94 live stranding responses
- 15 rehabilitated/released animals

NOAA Fisheries' Pacific Islands Region includes Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and seven small islands of various jurisdictions, making up a total 1,905 miles of coastline and covering 1.5 million square nautical miles. The NOAA Fisheries Regional Stranding Coordinator is located in Honolulu, Hawaii. From 2011 to 2015, the Pacific Islands Region had six stranding agreement holders/government responders throughout the region, and two of those stranding agreement holders were facilities

with rehabilitation capabilities. The region had two Prescott Grant recipients between 2011 and 2015.

During this time period, the Pacific Islands Stranding Network responded to 220 strandings (93 cetaceans and 127 pinnipeds). Approximately 45.4 percent (n=94) of responses were to live stranded marine mammals, and 15 of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Stranding responders in the Pacific Islands Region have used Prescott Grant funding for necropsies, training, community outreach, obtaining health and disease data for Hawaiian monk seals, and to improve the region's ability to efficiently respond to dolphin and small whale strandings. Priorities for the region are to maintain the ability to respond to strandings and to enhance the understanding of species threats, ecosystem health, and cause of death of individuals. Other Prescott Grant priorities for the region include maintaining the capacity to rehabilitate monk seals in need of medical attention and nutritional supplementation and work toward a solution for rehabilitation of live cetaceans, and to increase capacity for large whale disentanglement efforts.



Network partners that received Prescott Grant funding to conduct work in the Pacific Islands Region from FY2011–2015. The region received a total of \$0.6 million in Prescott Grant funding during this time. Map: NOAA Fisheries

Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: Hawaii Pacific University

Between 2011 and 2015 Hawaii Pacific University received Prescott Grants that allowed them to continue operating the only cetacean stranding response network in the State of Hawaii. During this time, the network characterized a novel beaked whale morbillivirus strain initially discovered in a stranded Longman’s beaked whale off Maui in 2010- a major contribution towards improved global surveillance for cetacean morbilliviruses. The network also described a number of anthropogenic threats to Hawaiian cetaceans, including the discovery of fishing hooks and marine debris among the stomach

contents of endangered Main Hawaiian Islands insular false killer whales. Prescott Grant support during this period also made it possible to better understand the biology and ecology of poorly known Hawaiian cetaceans, with stranded specimens contributing significantly to describing diet composition and physiological adaptations of poorly known cetacean species. For example, stranded specimens obtained between 2011 and 2015 contributed to the most comprehensive description of the diet of North Pacific Cuvier’s beaked whale to date, which spanned a 40-year stomach content collection effort.

2011–2015 Pacific Islands Region Prescott Grant Recipients

Prescott Grant Recipient	Location	Total Awards	Total Amount
Hawaii Pacific University	Honolulu, HI	4	\$375,812
The Marine Mammal Center	Kailua Kona, HI	3	\$266,813
Total	locations	7	\$642,625

Emergency Prescott



Mea Ola, an endangered Hawaiian monk seal, is x-rayed at Ke Kai Ola (Photo taken under Permit No. 18786). Photo: The Marine Mammal Center's Ke Kai Ola/Julie Steelman

The Prescott Grant Program has often set aside a portion of appropriated funds for emergency assistance to help support Stranding Network members when unforeseen or catastrophic events occur throughout the year. These emergency funds allowed organizations to provide immediate response to events such as mass strandings, out-of-habitat animals, and natural disasters that might otherwise be impossible to respond to without financial assistance.

Emergency funding has provided assistance for a number of events, including increased stranding response during the 2013–2016 California sea lion UME, increased geographic coverage for stranding response to fill unexpected “gaps”, and building capacity for rehabilitation of

endangered monk seals in Hawaii. From FY2011 to 2015, the Prescott Grant Program has awarded \$999,122 in emergency funding. Without these funds, the success of all of the organizations that received emergency funding would not have been possible.

Emergency Prescott Grant Recipient Highlight: The Marine Mammal Center’s Ke Kai Ola Hawaiian Monk Seal Hospital

In 2013, The Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito (TMMC), California, received an emergency Prescott Grant to open a facility in Kona, Hawaii, to rehabilitate endangered Hawaiian monk seals. The following year TMMC opened Ke Kai Ola, a state-of-the-art hospital dedicated to the rehabilitation of sick and injured Hawaiian monk seals. Between 2014 and 2015, Ke Kai Ola admitted 15 seals from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

This rehabilitation program enhanced the ability to respond to, treat, and collect data from Hawaiian monk seals. Each individual seal received high-quality 24-hour veterinary care with

a dedicated on-site veterinary technician, on-site and on-call veterinarians, and basic animal care provided by a team of trained volunteers. Health data were collected from all seals in rehabilitation by clinical examination, hematology and serum biochemistry analyses, testing for infectious agents and/or antibodies to them, and monitoring of biotoxin exposure and parasite load. All seals were monitored post-release for behavior, body condition, and survival using telemetry instruments and individual markings in collaboration with NOAA Fisheries, increasing our knowledge of this endangered species.



Pearl and Hermes, two endangered Hawaiian monk seals that were rehabilitated at Ke Kai Ola in 2015 (Photo taken under Permit No. 932-1905-01/MA-009526-1). Photo: The Marine Mammal Center’s Ke Kai Ola/Julie Steelman

2011–2015 Emergency Prescott Grant Recipients

Year Awarded	State	Applicant	Purpose	Funding
2011	<i>No Emergency Prescott grants were awarded in 2011</i>			
2012	AK	North Slope Borough	Increase capacity in response to Alaska Pinniped UME	\$84,942
	AK	University of Alaska, Anchorage	Increase capacity in response to Alaska Pinniped UME	\$92,355
	LA	Audubon Nature Institute, Inc.	Increase capacity in response to Northern Gulf of Mexico UME	\$19,500
2013	CA	California Wildlife Center	Increase capacity in response to California Sea Lion UME	\$29,401
	CA	MAR3INE on behalf of Marine Mammal Care Center/Fort MacArthur	Increase capacity in response to California Sea Lion UME	\$65,220
	HI	The Marine Mammal Center ⁴	Increase capacity to rescue and rehabilitate endangered Hawaiian monk seals	\$99,825
	NY	Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation	Increase capacity in the Greater Atlantic Region in response to Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin UME	\$99,997
	NY	Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation	Increase capacity in the Southeast Region in response to Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin UME	\$99,960
	VA	Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center Foundation, Inc.	Increase capacity in response to Mid-Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin UME	\$65,333
2014	CA	The Marine Mammal Center	Fill a gap in coverage and increase capacity in response to California Sea Lion UME	\$98,828
	NH	Seacoast Science Center	Fill a gap in coverage	\$50,000
2015	CA	Northcoast Marine Mammal Center	Repair damaged equipment and facility	\$13,521
	CA	Pacific Marine Mammal Center	Increase capacity in response to California Sea Lion UME	\$100,000
	CA	The Marine Mammal Center	Increase capacity in response to California Sea Lion and Guadalupe Fur Seal UMEs	\$66,506
	CT	Sea Research Foundation, Inc.	Fill a gap in coverage	\$13,734
Total		12 Organizations Funded	15 Grants Awarded	\$999,122

⁴ Highlighted story on the previous page.

Acknowledgements

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