

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

Summary of Special SAC Meeting On Cetacean Stranding Issues January 17, 2002

Members Present

Wayne Blevins	Nancy Klingener
Thomas Davidson	Karen Lee
Todd Firm	Duncan Mathewson
Richard Grathwohl	Martin Moe
Debra Harrison	Ken Nedimyer
David Hawtof	George Neugent
Tony Iarocci	Anita Schwessinger
Don Kincaid	

Alternates Present

Greg DiDomenico
Jerome Lorenz for Deborah Shaw
Susan Mickey for Fran Decker
Sheila Mullins
Jody Thomas

Call to Order and Welcome

Chairman Neugent called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. He welcomed all the participants and requested that everybody's views be respected.

Introductions

Mr. Causey located the reason for the special meeting in the controversy currently surrounding the Southeast Region Stranding Network, and emphasized that the issue will come before the Sanctuary Advisory Council at this meeting uniquely and has no pre-determined outcome. He recognized that authority and jurisdiction over certain marine mammals were designated by the Marine Mammal Protection Act to the National Marine Fisheries Service. He said that the issue had come before the Board of Monroe County Commissioners who asked that it be reviewed by the Sanctuary Advisory Council. He proposed that the Sanctuary Advisory Council, after listening to panel presentations by experts, participants in the stranding network and concerned organizations, and after a Public Comment period, discuss the issues and make recommendations to the Superintendent who will pass them on to the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Dr. William Hogarth. He expressed gratitude to Joanne Delaney, Cheva Heck and Laura Engleby for their hard work in organizing the meeting. Mr. Causey welcomed Alex Score to Marathon in her capacity as facilitator for the meeting.

Review of Agenda and Code of Conduct

Ms. Score introduced herself as an associate with Reef Environmental Education Foundation and as unbiased on the issues for discussion. She outlined the format of the meeting, with five panels assembled by Sanctuary staff presenting information to the Sanctuary Advisory Council, and emphasized the information-gathering nature of the meeting, with a Public Comment period after the panel presentations. She noted that individual speakers will be timed and the meeting is being recorded. Ms. Score observed that inappropriate remarks will not be acceptable and that breaking this code of conduct will result in a request to leave the meeting.

Panel Presentations

Panel A Background/Legal Authority

History and achievements of the National Stranding Network and the Southeast Stranding Network, Purpose of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, and Summary of Current Practices: Dr. Janet Whaley, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Dr. Whaley introduced herself as a National Stranding Coordinator and childhood resident of the Florida Keys with a doctorate in environmental toxicology. She reviewed the content of her presentation, and summarized the legal, medical and administrative perspectives of other panel presenters. She clarified the definition of a stranding under the Marine Mammal Protection Act as a dead marine mammal that lands on a U.S. beach or shore or in waters under the jurisdiction of the U.S., or a live marine mammal on a beach or shore in the U.S. that is unable to return to the water or in apparent need of medical attention, or that is in waters under the jurisdiction of the U.S. but is unable to return to its natural habitat under its own power or without assistance. She explained that the National Marine Fisheries Service has authority over all cetaceans (dolphins, whales, porpoises) and pinnipeds (seals, sea lions and walruses) with the exception of walruses, and operates a national monitoring program by region that reveals that the southeastern region does not produce many live strandings. Dr. Whaley itemized various causes of death, both natural and anthropogenic, and the role played by the volunteers within the stranding network in not only responding to strandings, but also collecting data in both live and dead strandings. She described the role of the NMFS in providing training, protocols and information from strandings to the stranding network, as well as Letters of Agreement (LOA) authorizing individuals entrusted by the NMFS to respond to strandings. She referred to several national initiatives undertaken by the NMFS, including the establishment of the Prescott Stranding Grants system to assist stranding organizations and the adoption of national criteria in the LOA application process, which is scheduled to be available in the winter of 2002. She concluded that cooperation, teamwork and humane treatment of animals are germane to any stranding response and that NMFS headquarters will serve to facilitate those goals in both ordinary and extraordinary events.

Jurisdiction and legal authority for stranding response and Letters of Agreement (LOAs): Mr. Dan Hytrek, Office of the General Counsel for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Mr. Hytrek introduced himself as an adviser to the NMFS on the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which protects listed endangered or threatened species, some of which are marine mammals, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), which protects all marine mammals. He explained that both of these acts prohibit the taking of protected species, which is broadly defined as harassing, collecting, capturing, restraining or detaining, however temporary, as well as killing an animal, other than under specific exceptions. He drew attention to the primary exception in a particular section of the MMPA that authorizes a Federal, State or local government official or employee in the course of his or her duties to respond to marine mammal strandings, in compliance with the requirements that the response be conducted in a humane manner for the protection and welfare of the mammal or for the protection of public health and welfare, with the intent of returning live animals to their natural habitat where possible. Mr. Hytrek specified that the incorporation of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Act into the MMPA authorized the NMFS to enter into Letters of Agreement (LOAs) with stranding network participants on its own discretion, distinguishing it from the ESA which provides for permits that can be designated to regional coordinators for scientific purposes or for enhancing the survival of a particular species. He concluded that the NMFS is authorized under the MMPA and the ESA to respond to strandings.

National Ocean Service (NOS) Role in Marine Mammal Issues: Mr. Ted Beuttler, Office of the General Counsel for Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Mr. Beuttler introduced himself as a member of the NOAA General Counsel working with the National Marine Sanctuary Program. He noted that all marine mammals are protected as a resource in all of the nation's marine sanctuaries under the authority of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, and that individual sanctuaries can be more protective of marine mammals, though subsumed under the MMPA and ESA.

Jurisdiction and Legal Authority with regard to Non-cetacean Marine Mammals: Mr. James Valade, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)

Mr. Valade introduced himself as Stranding Coordinator of the Federal agency (FWS) with authorization for manatee rescue, rehabilitation and release, through a specific permit enhancement. He delineated the area covered by that authority as the natural range of the manatee and noted that the number of distressed animals responded to in the Florida Keys was very small.

Question and Answer Period with the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC)

Mr. Blevins asked Mr. Hytrek to clarify that the Regional Coordinator was the final decision-maker on local stranding responses and received an affirmative reply.

Mr. Moe asked Dr. Whaley if there was a value attached to a stranded dolphin that might lead to competition within the captive animal industry. Dr. Whaley replied that she was unaware of any value applied to a wild animal. He asked for the source of data used by the NMFS in constructing protocols for the stranding community. Dr. Whaley indicated that information was gathered from the stranding community, the biological community and the captive industry community in a very open process. Mr. Moe asked the panel to clarify the decision-making process with regard to a strandings, mentioning the importance of a timely response, and also asked about the duration of a Letter of Agreement. Dr. Whaley indicated that NMFS regulations ensured that a local verifier triggers the response to a stranding. Mr. Hytrek explained that although national standards regarding LOAs are in the process of adoption, the Southeast Region is extending existing LOAs through 2002.

Mr. Kincaid asked if the new national standards would be more stringent or more flexible. Dr. Whaley explained that since there are no national standards in existence, comparisons are not possible, but that applicants for LOAs will have to satisfy national criteria.

Ms. Mullins asked that the NMFS retain the ability of an LOA holder to appoint designees. Dr. Whaley clarified that LOA holders, their designees and volunteers are not restricted in responding to a stranding by the NMFS.

Mr. Blevins asked Mr. Valade if there was any LOA holder between the Dolphin Research Center and Miami Seaquarium. Mr. Valade indicated that LOA holders have designees and volunteers throughout the Keys and John Pennekamp State Park employees cover the Upper Keys.

Mr. Kincaid asked if the Prescott Grant was meant to ease the financial burden on LOA holders and was assured that it is not an incentive.

Mr. Iarocci asked for the number of potential volunteers able to respond throughout the Keys, and particularly the number associated with the Dolphin Research Center. Dr. Whaley was unable to give a figure for the Dolphin Research Center, as it does not have a NMFS LOA and suggested that there are several hundred local volunteers authorized to respond to a stranding. Mr. Causey clarified that the Dolphin Research Center is the holder of a non-cetacean LOA and that there are three authorized holders of cetacean LOAs in the Keys.

Mr. Neugent, following on Mr. Moe's initial question, asked if money could be generated from viewing an animal undergoing rehabilitation. Dr. Whaley replied that the public couldn't be charged money to view sick animals.

Issue Clarification

Ms. Score invited the SAC to raise issues for clarification and the duration of the grant program, the status of dolphin watching, the timeliness of managerial decisions, the

clarification of the legal roles between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the likelihood of maintaining the status quo were raised by members of the Sanctuary Advisory Council.

Panel B The Science of Strandings

**What is a ‘Stranding Event’, What is the Importance of Strandings to Scientific Understanding, and What is the Importance of Sampling and Research Protocols?:
Dr. Daniel Odell, Senior Research Biologist, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute,
Orlando, FL**

Dr. Odell introduced himself as a marine mammal researcher who, after co-founding the Florida manatee carcass salvage program, became the volunteer Scientific Coordinator for the Southeastern U.S. Marine Mammal Stranding Network. He presented a report in which he defines a marine mammal stranding, noting that since recorded history this has been a naturally occurring component of marine mammal behavior and is to be distinguished from other behaviors that certain species exhibit. He stressed the important role played by stranding networks in the systematic and standardized collection of scientific information from dead, stranded marine mammals, especially rare offshore cetaceans that have never been seen alive. He noted that aside from basic biological parameters, life history data, disease and mortality patterns, and information on anthropogenic effects on marine mammals comes from necropsies performed on dead stranded animals. He observed that without careful post mortem examination, a stingray spine embedded in the skull of a bottlenose dolphin would not have been recorded as the cause of death. Dr. Odell concluded that in order to meet the standards set by the American Society of Mammologists on the collection of data from cetaceans and pinnipeds, nationwide cooperation among all the volunteers within the stranding network is vital.

**Decisions During a Stranding – When Do We Intervene?, Rescue, Response and Rehabilitation from a Scientific Perspective, Mass Strandings, and Standards of Care and Medical Treatment: Dr. Michael Walsh, Director of Veterinary Services,
SeaWorld of Orlando, Orlando, FL**

Dr. Walsh introduced himself as a zoomedical specialist with an interest in rehabilitation. He described the state of medical knowledge of marine mammals since the 1980s as greatly improved through the application of basic diagnostic techniques and principles of critical care, as well as organizational improvements within the NMFS. He mentioned a variety of causes for single strandings that have been observed, including propeller damage, fatal interactions with other species, and diseases, leading to the current belief that all live stranded animals are considered ill or compromised until proven otherwise and that intervention is necessary in all strandings. He said that tagging and sampling should be performed on live stranded animals and necropsies on dead stranded animals where possible, with histology, virology, toxicology and bacterial tests run. Dr. Walsh noted that live stranded animals, where possible, are evaluated and treated for acidosis, myositis and septicemia since those are the three most common problems. He observed

that with experience through time, the treatment of orphaned animals and those involved in complex mass strandings has improved both from a medical and a response standpoint, with enhanced chances of survival. He concluded that integrity, cooperation and learning are important in taking care of marine mammals.

Question and Answer Period with SAC members

Ms. Mullins asked if there was a way of evaluating the role of cooperation in setting guidelines. Dr. Walsh cited a *Pseudorca* mass stranding in the Florida Keys as an example of cooperation with the Marine Patrol and press corps and how important that was to the outcome of the stranding, and added that some of the disease processes are of long-standing duration.

Mr. Kincaid asked about the possibility of disease transmission from stranded animals to humans. Dr. Walsh explained that most diseases are species-specific and on further query from Mr. Kincaid about *Candida* suggested that appropriate training will prevent exposure.

Mr. Moe asked if tagging and sampling an animal could compromise the survival of that animal. Dr. Walsh said that it did not, but is important in a stranding event to determine the nature of the event.

Ms. Schwessinger asked how long a dolphin could stay out of the water without being endangered. Dr. Walsh indicated that as long as an animal is kept moist and comfortable, which for some smaller species involves sedation, several hours out of water is not harmful, and that in his experience transport to a well-equipped facility is better for an animal than maintaining them near the stranding site.

Mr. Neugent asked what the survivability rate of animals undergoing rehabilitation is and whether it has improved over the last five years. Dr. Walsh replied that it has improved from less than 10% over the years but that his organization is no longer accepting stranded animals for rehabilitation since the morbillivirus test revealed widespread incidence of the virus in wild populations that might jeopardize the health of their collection of animals.

Mr. Moe asked if acoustic pollution is implicated in some cases of stranding, what the scope of the problem is and what is the solution. Dr. Walsh said that current research is trying to evaluate the effects of instantaneous large noises as well as chronic noise. Dr. Odell referred to naval exercises in the Bahamas that were considered partially responsible for a mass stranding of beaked whales, and mentioned that the effects of ship operations, drilling platforms and oil exploration on marine mammals are not well known.

Mr. Causey asked if handling healthy, social animals in a mass stranding could stress them and whether marine mammals are ever subject to hypothermia. Dr. Walsh agreed that handling could be stressful but that the alternative of not intervening is potentially

fatal, and that planning a stress relationship to help more than hurt minimizes the stress. He replied that a healthy animal within its range is protected from hypothermia, which is possible but not common, by its blubber, although manatees suffer from frostbite if the water temperature falls to the fifties. Mr. Causey, referring to his participation in a mass stranding event, asked whether his personal observation that human emotions could affect dolphin behavior is valid. Dr. Walsh indicated that that can be the case.

Mr. Hawtof asked if in the case of a mass stranding whether local veterinarians are available to make medical determinations, or whether the rescue operation depends on the arrival of specialists from outside. Dr. Walsh said that depends on the circumstances of each event and that a number of local veterinarians are trained to respond to strandings.

Issue Clarification

Ms. Score invited the SAC to raise issues for clarification, and gathering information on acoustic pollution for the Council, information on the diagnostic protocol and degree of standardization, availability of rehabilitation facilities, and data on causes of strandings, both natural and anthropogenic, were issues raised by members of the SAC.

Compilation of Take-home Points

Ms. Score asked members of the SAC for the main take-home points from the scientific presentation.

Ms. Mullins suggested the diversity of causes for strandings.

Mr. Nedimyer indicated that advances in the last thirty years are notable.

Dr. Lorenz said that the importance of collecting information from a stranding is vital.

Mr. Kincaid, after brief discussion, requested that scientific information be made available to the public.

Ms. Lee observed that the level of expertise involved in handling stranded animals far exceeds the general public perception of stranding as a local issue.

Panel C The Southeast Marine Mammal Stranding Network

Overview of Southeast Region Role in the Stranding Network and Letter of Agreement Process in the Southeast Region: Dr. Kathy Wang, Marine Mammal Team Leader, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS

Dr. Wang introduced herself and offered a presentation. She described the purpose of the Southeast Marine Mammal Stranding Network as providing emergency care and

subsequent rehabilitation for live stranded marine mammals, and collecting, archiving and analyzing data and samples from live and dead animals. She noted that the Regional Stranding Coordinator provides the guidance, oversight and coordination to the stranding network as well as issuing Letters of Agreement. She said the regional office has the authority to make decisions concerning endangered animals and the course of action to be taken including the feasibility of rehabilitation and determinations on retention and release of captive animals. Dr. Wang observed that the regional office investigates unusual mortality events, authorizes scientific studies, maintains a database that monitors health and contaminant trends, investigates human interactions, and conducts enforcement investigations.

Dr. Wang reviewed the process for issuing a Letter of Agreement (LOA) to a first responder, noting that criteria are being standardized nationally and LOAs issued where there is a geographic need. She observed that a rehabilitation facility has additional qualifying requirements that include an established facility with experienced staff, a volunteer base to provide constant care, and a veterinarian with marine mammal expertise, in addition to adequate funding. She added that some states hold LOAs in order to authorize volunteers to act on their behalf. Dr. Wang clarified some issues that arose from previous panel presentations concerning the roles and responsibilities of the region and Regional Coordinator. She emphasized that there is someone at the regional office on call 24 hours a day and that experienced, trusted LOA holders are not obliged to wait for the Regional Coordinator when responding to a stranding.

Overview of Volunteer Network Organization Locally and Regionally, Overview of Established Protocols, What Happens When a Dolphin or Whale is Reported To Be in Distress?, and Summary of Data on Stranding Events in Florida and Monroe County: Ms. Jenny Litz, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, NMFS

Ms. Litz introduced herself as the assistant to the Southeast Region Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator, Blair Mase, offered Ms. Mase's apologies for not attending the meeting, and gave a presentation prepared by Ms. Mase. She showed the geographic locations of the 24 LOA holders in the Southeast Region with 17 in Florida and two in Monroe County, as well as all the designee locations including the Dolphin Research Center, which holds designee status under the Marine Animal Rescue Society of Miami (MARS) LOA. She demonstrated that the majority of rehabilitation centers in the Southeast Region are in Florida, with two organizations, Marine Animal Rescue Society of Miami and the Florida Keys Marine Mammal Rescue Team, currently authorized to conduct rehabilitation in the Florida Keys. Ms. Litz outlined the action plan that is followed once a stranding is reported, noting that LOA holders are not required to contact the NMFS unless the animal is still free-swimming or it becomes a capture situation. She noted that first responders contact the Stranding Coordinator for recommendations in the event of a disentanglement or mass stranding and detailed the sequence of procedures followed by the first responder in the case of both live and dead strandings up to the arrival of the second responder. She detailed the material support provided by the Coordinator to the LOA holder in the event of a live stranding, including but not limited to, crane rental, aerial surveys, and locating rehabilitation facilities. Ms. Litz stated that

rehabilitation is an option when NMFS-approved facilities are available and equipped for the species and the number of animals involved, and that euthanasia is an option when it is necessary to end the suffering of an animal that is in irreversibly poor condition. She mentioned that mass strandings could sometimes be predicted on the basis of reports of unusual behavior by large groups of animals, in which case the Stranding Coordinator will alert the local stranding networks to prepare for appropriate action. She outlined the triage procedure followed in the event of a mass stranding, noting that certain species will strand en masse due to the social cohesion of the group, even though not all animals are sick or injured. Ms. Litz concluded with a presentation of stranding data from Monroe County and the State of Florida.

Questions and Answer Period with SAC Members

Mr. Blevins asked who was the on-site coordinator for the mass stranding of bottlenose dolphins on Long Key in 2000 and Ms. Litz confirmed that it was the Southeast Region Stranding Coordinator.

Mr. Moe asked if geography determined the distribution of LOAs. Dr. Whaley indicated that the NMFS is currently rationalizing the number of LOAs in the Southeast Region, which does not preclude anyone from working under existing LOA holders as either designees or volunteers.

Mr. Grathwohl asked for information on the training necessary for volunteers and means of identifying volunteers at a stranding. Dr. Whaley said that until national guidelines are adopted it is up to the stranding networks to provide training on a continuing basis for all volunteers and they provide their protocols to the NMFS. Dr. Wang added that the region holds training programs for LOA holders on at least a biennial basis and that all LOA holders know who their volunteers and designees are.

Mr. Iarocci asked for information on the kind of tag used, the placement of the tag and the information on the tag. Ms. Litz described it as a color-coded, numbered plastic punch that goes through the trailing edge of the dorsal fin after local anesthesia for animals released off the beach. She said that radio tags or satellite tags are fitted to animals released into the wild from rehabilitation, resources permitting.

Mr. Nedimyer asked if lack of rehabilitation facilities often prevented animals from receiving care. Ms. Litz said that since Florida was well endowed with rehabilitation facilities compared to the rest of the country that this was not the case. Dr. Whaley added that animals are brought from around the country for rehabilitation in Florida.

Ms. Mickey asked if the animals at the Long Key mass stranding were tagged and what is known of them. Ms. Litz said that none of the beached animals survived and that the decision was made not to catch the animals swimming in 25 feet of water in the lagoon. She noted that although several carcasses were later discovered, they were in an advanced state of decomposition and could have been part of the original stranding event.

Ms. Lee, mentioning an earlier presentation, queried the release of animals from a stranding when their disease status was unknown. Ms. Litz explained the difference between sick and injured animals that beach and free swimming animals that accompany them. She observed in the Long Key case that blood work indicated severe dehydration as a cause for the stranding and that morbillivirus titers were not run. Ms. Lee asked how long the virus test would take to run. Dr. Walsh said that it would take several days. Ms. Lee noted that in this case it would not have been practical and that a risk-benefit analysis made pushing the free-swimming animals offshore the best outcome.

Mr. Kincaid asked for specifics on the training for volunteers and the timeline in a response. Ms. Litz explained that it mostly involves class lectures on how to handle animals and behave around them and that the timeline for each stranding depends on the number and state of animals involved.

Ms. Mullins asked whether the state and local officials and employees exempted from the take prohibition under the MMPA might put public health concerns ahead of data collection in response to a stranding and what limitations they operated under. Dr. Whaley cited one example where this was the case and how it was resolved. Mr. Hytrek said that the exemption allowed state and local government officials to deal with a carcass and that the basic general requirement is that they are protecting marine mammals.

Ms. Harrison requested confirmation that South Florida has more than adequate facilities for taking care of marine mammal strandings. Ms. Litz confirmed that this is the case and that rehabilitation is very expensive.

Mr. Blevins asked if the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation is the authorized rehabilitation organization for the Upper Keys, as the Dolphin Research Center is no longer authorized. He also asked why viral tests were not run on the animals at the Long Key mass stranding. Ms. Litz clarified that the Marine Animal Rescue Society of Miami is the closest facility to the Upper Keys. Mr. Blevins further asked if the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation is going to receive an LOA for rehabilitation. Dr. Whaley said that a decision has not yet been made.

Mr. Moe asked if the NMFS received many reports of dead or distressed animals offshore and the protocol for addressing those situations. Ms. Litz indicated that the numbers are small and that in the case of injury or entanglement the Stranding Coordinator makes the decision on appropriate action, and that FWS and the Coast Guard assist with towing in dead animals.

Mr. Causey asked if there was any thought of breaking the Southeast Region into smaller entities and whether the peculiar conditions of the Keys shoreline made them more challenging in response to strandings. Ms. Litz suggested that the population density in the Keys made response time more rapid in the Keys than in marshland Louisiana, for example. She responded to Mr. Blevins' second question, that viral work was indeed done on all beached animals at the Long Key mass stranding event. Dr. Wang said, in

response to Mr. Causey, that if more resources become available a second coordinator might be employed.

Issues for Clarification

Ms. Score invited members of the SAC for issues requiring clarification to be raised. LOA selection criteria, defining status of LOA holders, designees, and volunteers, chain of command, training opportunities for volunteers, types of entanglement, and meetings of stranding groups were subjects mentioned for clarification by members of the SAC.

Panel D Authorized Dolphin and Whale Rescue Organizations in the Florida Keys

Florida Keys Marine Mammal Rescue Team: Ms. Becky Arnold

Ms. Arnold introduced herself as the LOA holder for the Florida Keys Marine Mammal Rescue Team, which is called upon to respond to live and dead cetacean strandings in the area from Mile Marker 70 south. She characterized the organization as being all volunteer, full-time residents of the Florida Keys and outlined some of the history and scope of the organization, emphasizing the importance of education, training and teamwork to the philosophy of the organization. She noted the collaboration between her organization and Mote Marine Laboratory's Summerland Key facility and their veterinarian from the whale and dolphin hospital in Sarasota. Ms. Arnold mentioned the importance of collecting data from strandings and sharing that data with other members of the stranding network, researchers, and the NMFS, as well as keeping abreast of the latest research and techniques and passing that information to every member of the organization. She detailed the rigorous training requirements for volunteers and designees, including basic necropsy training, anatomy and physiology. She expressed a desire to build a cetacean rehabilitation facility in the Lower Keys with the help of Mote Marine Laboratory and funding through the Prescott grant, as part of the ongoing commitment of her organization to provide ever better care for marine mammals.

Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation of the Upper Keys/Dolphin Plus: Mr. Art Cooper

Mr. Cooper introduced himself as both the Curator of Dolphins Plus and Dolphin Cove, and the President of the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation of the Upper Keys, specifying that on this occasion he is representing the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation. He cited a civil suit as the reason why the organization allowed Article 4 of their LOA, authorizing rehabilitation, to lapse, and stated that the organization is in the process of reapplying for an Article 4. He reassured fellow panel members that in his opinion this would not negatively impact the integrity of the network. Mr. Cooper observed that his preference is for treating animals at or near the stranding site and to this end would like to see more natural water sites available for rehabilitation throughout the Keys. He expressed a wish for formal training in stranding response for Fish and Wildlife

Conservation Commission officers, who are often the first on the scene. He outlined the history and success rates of some of the groups of volunteers in the Upper Keys that have responded to live strandings. He mentioned both the local and off-site veterinarians and their expertise that assist the organization, and gave a detailed inventory of the equipment owned by the organization, including a dedicated RV for field situations, nets, boats and medical kits. He noted that the organization has a large volunteer base, and concluded with detailing a comprehensive list of other groups, individuals, agencies and organizations with which the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation has collaborated.

Marine Animal Rescue Society: Mr. Chris Hadjez

Mr. Hadjez introduced himself as the stranding director with the Marine Animal Rescue Society (MARS), and one of a group of former Seaquarium employees attending Florida International University that formed a stranding response group that ultimately became MARS. He outlined the training protocol for volunteers with the organization and described the facilities available, both on the north campus of FIU on Biscayne Bay, and at Long Key at the Keys Marine Lab. He observed that the organization is authorized to verify, rescue, rehabilitate and release marine mammals, in addition to conducting research, teaching, educating and facilitating among other organizations. Mr. Hadjez noted that although the organization primarily operates in Palm Beach, Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties, it has worked in Florida Bay and provided support as far away as Texas. He detailed the equipment owned by the organization, including three grant-funded trailers, portable pools, generators and pumps. He said that basic training for volunteers, as well as more scientific training and necropsy work, is based on a program developed at Miami Seaquarium and emphasized that education and public outreach are central to the organization.

Question and Answer Period with SAC Members

Mr. Blevins asked Mr. Hadjez if the facility at Layton is an authorized rehabilitation facility and Mr. Hadjez said that it is.

Ms. Harrison asked what the current level of cooperation and coordination is between the LOAs and organizations. Mr. Cooper indicated that during a mass stranding everyone is notified and participates.

Mr. Moe asked how many live strandings the panel has responded to in the past two years. Ms. Arnold said that there were five or six. Mr. Cooper added that strandings are random events and that adding rehabilitation facilities was in the event of an unpredictable larger event.

Mr. Nedimyer asked for clarification on an apparent discrepancy in the rehabilitation success rate and if most of the animals involved are dolphins. Mr. Cooper indicated that the discrepancy was due to the timeframe employed and that most of the animals are dolphins.

Mr. Firm asked Mr. Cooper about his future plans for a rehabilitation facility in the Key Largo area. Mr. Cooper said that the Marine Mammal Conservancy owns property with deep water and shallow water access and that the organization owns portable pools.

Mr. Hawtof asked the panel if they felt the need for more LOAs in the Keys. Ms. Arnold said no and that the current LOA holders collaborated. Mr. Cooper observed that there is no shortage of designees or volunteers as first responders in the Keys, but there is a lack of rehabilitation facilities between the Lower Keys and Miami.

Mr. Causey asked if there might be confusion of leadership roles at a stranding in the absence of the Stranding Coordinator. Mr. Cooper clarified that the nearest organization is called first and provides the on-site coordinator, and other organizations are subordinate. Mr. Neugent asked if conflicting philosophies on animal handling between organizations caused problems. Mr. Cooper acknowledged that there are differences and that through the NMFS system of appointing the nearest on-site coordinator, his or her philosophy prevails and is respected by other organizations in the interest of the animals. Ms. Arnold agreed that this is the case.

Mr. Moe asked Mr. Cooper for the source and dependability of his funding. Ms. Arnold responded that reliable funding is part of the Letter of Agreement. She added that her organization has a private foundation, fund raises and receives donations from the community whenever an event takes place. Mr. Arnold added that private donations as well as grants are available to his organization.

Mr. Iarocci asked Ms. Arnold how many hours of advanced training are required of volunteers to her organization. She said that the designees have participated in conferences sponsored by the NMFS, International Wildlife Rehabilitation conferences, Southeast Veterinary conferences on marine mammal topics and training provided by Mote Marine Lab, and that they are all responsible individuals.

Ms. Mullins expressed the wish that the issue be looked at rationally and not in an idealized way.

Mr. Blevins asked if the standardized guidelines being adopted by the Southeast Marine Mammal Stranding Network will standardize the way the panelists operate. Mr. Cooper agreed that this is the case.

Issues for Clarification

Ms. Score invited the SAC members to raise points for clarification, and the issue of rehabilitation facilities was raised by several members.

Take-Home Points

Mr. Kincaid said that he felt that everyone is working together and that they are all very experienced.

Mr. Blevins said that a standardization of protocol would facilitate cooperation.

Panel E Concerned Organizations

All Creatures Pet Hospital: Dr. Laura L'Heureux-Kupkee

Dr. L'Heureux-Kupkee introduced herself as a veterinarian from the All Creatures Pet Hospital in Tavernier and a member of the Board of Directors for the Marine Mammal Conservancy. She identified herself as not being a marine mammal expert, although she has taken Master's courses in marine mammology and has been a four-year volunteer with the Marine Mammal Conservancy. She described her attempts to become officially involved with marine mammal strandings through the NMFS and MARS, though noted that she has not been called upon by either entity to assist as a veterinarian with a marine mammal stranding. She mentioned an incident concerning a juvenile dolphin in July 2001, on which she sent a letter to Dr. Joe Powers of the NMFS. She drew the Council's attention to the fact that the Southeast Regional Stranding Coordinator instructed local respondents not to intervene until she arrived on the scene. She expressed the opinion that the outcome of this stranding would have been better if local groups like the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation and the Marine Mammal Conservancy had been allowed the freedom to respond. She urged the Council to ensure that local stranding responders be allowed to act as first responders and continue their record of success with rescue, rehabilitation and release of marine mammals in the Florida Keys.

Mr. Martin Firestone

Mr. Firestone introduced himself as an administrative lawyer and former resident of the Keys. He referred to a section, 109h(1), of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and suggested that the Board of Monroe County Commissioners could designate another organization, without the approval of the National Marine Fisheries Service, to undertake the humane taking of marine mammals within the County. He mentioned another section of the statutory provisions that imposes the requirement that in any situation steps should be taken to facilitate the return of the subject animal to its natural habitat. He encouraged the NMFS to make guidelines public.

Marine Mammal Conservancy: Mr. Rick Trout

Mr. Trout introduced himself as a marine mammal handler/trainer/rescuer and advocate with the Marine Mammal Conservancy and thanked the Sanctuary Advisory Council and Joanne Delaney and Billy Causey for putting the meeting together. He outlined his experiences with marine mammals both in the Navy program and at Ocean Reef Club, and gave some of the history of the Marine Mammal Conservancy and its successes returning several stranded species back to their natural habitat, in particular a sixty-five day rescue of the remnants of a group of pilot whales. He observed that lessons learned from this experience included treating animals on-site to reduce stress on the animals and

cited the case of a dolphin that was transferred from the Upper Keys to the MARS facility and thence to a facility in Clearwater where it subsequently died, as an example of what not to do. He mentioned the case of a local resident keeping dolphins in her backyard lagoon for a number of years as an example of animals thriving in lagoons.

Dolphin Freedom Foundation: Mr. Russ Rector

Mr. Rector introduced himself as having been involved with strandings for over thirty years. He established that the format of his presentation would be responses to issues raised in previous panel presentations and observed that if there were no controversy the meeting would not be taking place. He said that timeliness was important in responding to a sick dolphin and referred to the Golden Hour. He quoted Dr. Walsh as saying that all animals that strand are considered sick, ill, compromised, or distressed, and that if they are pushed out to open water it is assumed that they are healthy and should therefore be tagged. He said that none of that was done at the Long Key stranding and that the animals were not counted. Mr. Rector mentioned disease transmission, specifically an incident in which morbillivirus was introduced into the Miami Seaquarium, causing the deaths of a number of animals. He expressed concern at the number of dolphin deaths in the Keys and suggested that dive shops be used as stranding centers. He referred to rehabilitation facilities and expressed his preference for open water rehabilitation facilities as opposed to above-ground facilities. He suggested that determining the cause of a stranding was not an important component of responding to a stranding. He questioned the decision to send a juvenile dolphin rescued from the Long Key mass stranding to a captive facility. Mr. Rector expressed dissatisfaction with the NMFS response to the Indian River dolphin population die-off as well as the NMFS response to the Long Key stranding and the stranding record in the last two years. He indicated that he has a petition containing three thousand Monroe County residents' signatures requesting change. He questioned the rationale behind MARS volunteers coming from Miami to respond to strandings in the Keys and the quality of the MARS facility on Long Key. He suggested the use of zinc oxide on dorsal fins as a temporary marking device rather than cattle tags. He expressed surprise that LOAs could be issued to individuals rather than universities or non-profit organizations. Mr. Rector spoke in favor of lagoon rescues, noting that he and Dr. Whaley held different opinions on the matter. He requested the involvement of Monroe County in dolphin rescue and asked for the issuance of an Article 4 for Dolphins Plus.

Question and Answer Period with SAC Members

Mr. Causey asked Mr. Rector what the advantage of turning stranding response to the County would be, given that the current LOA holders work together as a group. Mr. Rector said that the NMFS is not doing its job. Dr. L'Heureux-Kupkee said that if MMRF receives an Article 4, then the County doesn't need to take over. Mr. Trout said that the Long Key mass stranding was not a rescue, rehabilitation and release.

Mr. Blevins asked why the NMFS would ask local responders not to do anything in the case of a distressed juvenile dolphin. Discussion between panelists and SAC members focused on the Southeast Regional Stranding Coordinator.

Ms. Lee asked if there was an authorized local rehabilitation facility available north of Long Key in the past two years. Mr. Trout indicated that there was a lagoon available. Ms. Lee asked if the Marine Mammal Conservancy is a designee of the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation. Mr. Trout said yes. Ms. Lee asked if the Dolphin Freedom Foundation is a designee of the MMRF. Mr. Rector said no.

Mr. Iarocci asked the panel that if the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation has an Article 4 would they support that, and the panel agreed that they would.

Mr. Firm asked Mr. Trout why his facility is not NMFS-certified. Mr. Trout said that his organization is developing a natural facility and has an application for an LOA pending with the NMFS.

Ms. Harrison expressed concern that this panel's presentations seemed to contradict Dr. Walsh's presentation. Mr. Rector referred to pushing dolphins off at the Long Key stranding as being directly contradictory to the NMFS protocols. Ms. Harrison rephrased her question to include all the previous panel presentations, with a tight focus on cooperation and teamwork, and suggested that the present panel is not included in a way in which it wishes to be. Discussion between Ms. Harrison and the panel focused on the stranding record of the past two years and the NMFS guidelines and protocols.

Ms. Mullins asked why there seemed to be a discrepancy between this panel and all the other panels. Mr. Trout said that before 1999, 26 dolphins and whales were released after rehabilitation and since then, none have been.

Mr. Moe asked the panel what possible mechanism could be in place to handle a mass stranding of more than fifty animals in a short period of time. Mr. Trout referred to a mass stranding in the past that evoked a large response and resulted in morbillivirus being introduced to the Miami Seaquarium, and further said that he did not know why any animal would be denied help.

Issue Clarification

Ms. Score invited SAC members to raise issues for clarification, and the relationship between LOA holders and the NMFS, rehabilitation facilities, tank versus natural habitat facilities, stranding definitions and open-water rescues were subjects raised by SAC members. Other issues are captured in the flip-chart summary document.

Public Comment

Ms. Denise Jackson commented on the presentations made by Panel E. She noted that Mr. Trout, in conjunction with three thousand volunteers led by Ms. Arnold, participated in the successful outcome with the pilot whales and Stenella dolphins. She referred to the mass stranding at Long Key in which she participated, and clarified the circumstances

under which dolphins were escorted into deeper water, necropsies performed on twenty animals and blood work tested that showed the animals to be starving and out of habitat. She mentioned the aerial overflights the day after the stranding event. She noted the need for teamwork and cooperation and made the observation that the network has improved in this regard over the years. She questioned Mr. Trout's use of mortality statistics.

Mr. Craig Pelton introduced himself as the former Director and founder of the Marine Animal Rescue Society. He explained that the animals pushed out at Long Key were free-swimming and not entangled and that if they had died as a result of being pushed out, the aerial overflights would have pinpointed the carcasses. He noted that different species survive strandings differentially, with pilot whales having a high survival rate, and that MARS deals primarily with pygmy sperm whales that tend to strand with adult cardiac problems, as was the case of a mother-calf pair. He referred to two recent deaths in the Keys, one of a pilot whale and the other of a pygmy sperm whale, and suggested that natural facilities can be quite unsafe for both animals and people.

Ms. Kandi Lyn Strock introduced herself as a first responder with some experience of handling dolphins working with the Marine Mammal Rescue Team and the Marine Mammal Conservancy. She detailed some of her experiences since 1995 and noted that in mass strandings mishandlings do occur and that there is a need for better communication among the stranding organizations.

Mr. Steven Swartz introduced himself as the Director of the Protected Species and Biodiversity Group for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center for the National Marine Fisheries Service in Miami. He went on record thanking the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council for making the forum possible and allowing for the exchange of information that makes for informed decisions and evaluations. He thanked all of the panelists for taking the time to come and present all the information, and he thanked all the members of the community of the Florida Keys for participating in the event.

Mr. William Graf introduced himself as a homeowner from Ramrod Key involved in the pilot whale rescue and rehabilitation effort on Big Pine Key. He noted that necropsy results showed that all six whales died from starvation and that there was no intervention other than moving them out into a channel.

Mr. Gary Sutton introduced himself as a Big Pine resident involved with the four pilot whales that came into Big Pine in 1995. He described the tremendous effort expended and logistical complexity involved and the degree of cooperation between all the organizations and volunteers. He expressed the opinion that without on-the-spot care the other fifty percent of animals would not have survived.

Ms. Stephanie Aylor mentioned an incident involving six dolphins on Big Pine. She said that no one responded to the distress call and that local people are willing to respond.

Ms. December Lauretano introduced herself as a volunteer who responded to a call for volunteers on the radio in 1999 and was immediately put in the water in an ill-fitting wetsuit. She described the ultimate fate of the animal at a facility in Clearwater. She said she now volunteers with the Marine Mammal Conservancy because they are dedicated to education training and returning the animals to their natural environment, and lives in Ft. Lauderdale. She expressed the opinion that local organizations should be first responders and that the system does not work.

Mr. Lloyd Brown introduced himself as the Director of Wildlife Rescue in Dade County and an ex-staff member at the Sugarloaf Dolphin Sanctuary. He outlined his experience rehabilitating marine mammals in South America, as a member of the Disaster Animal Response Team for the State of Florida, and he has also worked with the International Fund for Animal Welfare's Emergency Response Team. He said that as a result he knows the value of training, equipment and mobility. He expressed the view that it should be required that any organization doing rehabilitation should be licensed or permitted by the State of Florida. He endorsed Mr. Trout and the Marine Mammal Conservancy.

Mr. Richie Moretti introduced himself as a fifteen-year veteran of marine mammal rehabilitation at The Turtle Hospital in Marathon. He mentioned that he maintained a rehabilitation facility under the LOA with the Dolphin Research Center for ten years. He described his return to marine mammal work after the Layton stranding, seeing that MARS and Wildlife Rescue were cooperating as a caring team and doing the technical work of taking tests with Dr. Mike Walsh and Dr. Ruth Ewing. He observed that if he felt that the animals at that stranding were being mistreated, he would have written to the newspaper. He expressed satisfaction with the way that stranding response is currently organized.

Mr. Robert Lingenfelter introduced himself as the President of the Marine Mammal Conservancy. He clarified that MMC has never held an LOA but has always worked as a designee or volunteer under another LOA. He observed that MMC provides equipment and expertise to other organizations and works with agencies and their designated veterinarians. He suggested conducting a study to determine whether natural lagoons or above ground facilities are more effectual rehabilitation tools, and that the answer is already known, that natural lagoons, minimal transportation, and stabilization of the animal before transport work. He expressed the opinion that if Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation were to receive an Article 4 the problem will be solved.

Ms. Vicki Graf introduced herself as a local resident and stated that she thought that Monroe County should be in charge of their own strandings and that Dade County should be in charge of theirs.

Ms. Jessica Kielsch introduced herself as a marine wildlife advocate for The Ocean Conservancy who worked for the Mote Marine Laboratory stranding program in Sarasota. She observed that every stranding situation is different and sometimes circumstances require alteration of standard protocols, even though the NMFS has set protocols to deal with norms. She noted that the norm for the Keys seems to be a small

handful of live strandings per year and that in the opinion of many other LOA holders and based on the distribution of rehabilitation facilities in the State of Florida, there is no need for further rehabilitation facilities in the Keys. She urged the SAC to support the National Marine Fisheries Service system of stranding response.

Ms. Holly Green introduced herself as a massage therapist who has worked with both animals and people and was involved with the pilot whale stranding in 1995. She said that was one of the most valuable and insightful situations of her career and expressed the wish that the people involved in that rescue, rehabilitation, education and release be able to continue the good work.

Mr. Spencer Slate introduced himself as the owner of a marina and dive operation for 24 years. He said that certification is important, as well as experience, and that cooperation saves lives. He explained that speed is essential in a response and drew a parallel to the Fire-Rescue Service. He noted that he has participated in dozens of marine strandings, rescues and releases in the past fourteen years with the Marine Mammal Conservancy and Marine Mammal Rescue of Key Largo and considers them to be caring volunteers. He concluded that animals are the most important issue.

SAC Working Session – Issue Clarification

A Draft Summary of Flip-Chart Exercise and SAC Recommendations has been prepared based on issues that the Sanctuary Advisory Council considered needed further clarification after each panel presentation.

Ms. Score invited members of the SAC to ask further questions of the panelists as appropriate.

Mr. Kincaid asked to know the target number of LOA holders. Dr. Whaley said that there was none but that the NMFS is holding a region-wide review in the summer to see if there is a need to change the current situation or whether it should be increased or decreased. Mr. Kincaid was satisfied that the issue is being addressed.

Ms. Klingener asked Dr. Walsh to address the protocol used in the Long Key situation since some of the animals were free-swimming. Dr. Walsh clarified the term ‘protocol’ in the context of strandings and said that each situation was handled on a case-by-case basis determined in part by species and in part by number of animals. In the Long Key case, he noted, the animals that were coming in were getting into trouble and there were problems handling the number of animals. He stated that he did not feel the need to differentiate between lagoon versus pool rehabilitation, as different species respond differently as different lagoons have different characteristics. Conversation between Dr. Walsh, Ms. Klingener and Mr. Blevins resulted in a consensus that flexibility in approach to a beaching is essential.

Mr. Causey requested legal clarification on the dolphin calf stranding. He said it was his belief that had the animal been taken to a non-certified, illegal holding facility, that would

have been a ‘taking’ that constituted a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Mr. Hytrek confirmed that, although he wasn’t sure of the specific circumstances, to hold an animal for rehabilitation it would have to be in an LOA-qualified facility. Mr. Rector, at Mr. Causey’s invitation, distinguished between stabilization and rehabilitation. Mr. Causey identified another issue for clarification, which is, can they stop at another facility temporarily for stabilization purposes.

Mr. Hawtof asked if it is legal for NOAA or another organization or agency to fence off a piece of lagoon and use it for even short- or long-term care of an animal. Mr. Hytrek said that there was nothing specific in the law, and that it was up to the discretion of the NMFS and LOA holders to determine what is reasonable under the circumstances when they are responding to a situation. Mr. Hawtof enquired about time limits. Mr. Hytrek responded that there might be problems with Sanctuary and State regulations. Mr. Beuttler explained that with regard to structures in submerged lands, there are Federal permits required of the Army Corps of Engineers and there are State requirements for structures in submerged lands, regardless of how temporary. Mr. Hawtof requested that the Sanctuary address the issue before the next emergency.

Mr. Firm asked Mr. Cooper if he has any temporary holding facilities in the Upper Keys. Mr. Cooper replied that only privately owned lagoons have been used, where landowners hold a deed to the bottom and work within Florida Department of Environmental Protection guidelines.

Mr. Causey asked that the incident-command system be clarified. Dr. Whaley explained that the closest organization is called first, who send out a first responder who calls back with details of the stranding. She said that the organization will then send more people and their equipment and that the most experienced person from that organization becomes the site-coordinator. She noted that most strandings do not need more than one organization present at the site.

SAC Discussion

Chairman Neugent invited Mr. Blevins to extract the salient points of the two main issues isolated in the previous session by Ms. Score and Ms. Delaney, Chain of Command and Monroe County Rehabilitation Facilities.

Mr. Blevins summarized the stranding network response system and noted that communication between the NMFS and LOA holders could be improved, specifically through devolving the on-site decision-making from the Regional Coordinator to the local LOA. Chairman Neugent invited Ms. Litz to comment. Ms. Litz said that LOA holders do not have to call every time that there is a stranding, but in the previously mentioned dolphin cow-calf stranding there was a MARS designee on-site with the entangled animal and mother, staying with the animals that had been reported some weeks earlier but not located. She said that the Regional Coordinator called the closest stranding organization, which was the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation, and asked

that they gather their equipment and respond to the scene. She explained that as it was an unusual situation, an advisory council was convened through headquarters of marine mammal experts outside of the NMFS to decide how to handle the situation. She added that the only thing MMRF was asked not to do was capture the calf until the Regional Coordinator and other staff could assess the condition of the calf and act on one of the two options given by the council, to capture a free-swimming animal or to let it be. Further discussion of the incident took place among Council members.

Ms. Delaney summarized the recommendation of the Council to the National Marine Fisheries Service that they ensure that LOA holders continue to retain the autonomy that they hold at this time. The Council agreed unanimously.

Ms. Lee made the recommendation that as policy the NMFS Coordinator call the closest geographical LOA holder first, to request a response to a specific incident, and that LOA holder becomes the on-site coordinator for that particular event. She added a demand that LOA holders have 24-hour/7 day a week/365 days a year responsibility as part of the condition of their LOA. Dr. Lorenz asked if all the member of Panel D agreed with this. They said they do.

Ms. Arnold explained that there is a need for some degree of flexibility in delegating the first responder as on-site coordinator, as different LOA holders have different levels of expertise with different species and sometimes a consensual change is made among LOA holders.

Mr. Firm recommended that the solution lies in having three LOAs geographically in the County, one in the Upper Keys, one in the Middle Keys and one in the Lower Keys. After discussion among Council members, Chairman Neugent asked for a hand vote on the issue.

Mr. Iarocci recommended that the Marine Mammal Rescue Foundation be granted an Article 4.

Ms. Score moved the discussion from the Chain of Command issue to the Rehabilitation Facilities issue. Discussion took place among Council members on the number and nature of facilities in Monroe County.

Mr. Blevins recommended to the Council that they try to get one more facility in Monroe County.

Ms Lee recommended that the Council try to ensure at least three facilities, but that in the case of an emergency to have as many facilities pre-approved by the NMFS as possible. After discussion between panel members and Ms. Arnold regarding the type of facilities at her disposal, Ms. Litz clarified that that organization does have NMFS-approved rehabilitation facilities and that there is a NMFS-approved facility at Long Key with MARS and that Wildlife Rescue has the option to use it.

Ms. Klingener recommended a facility in the Upper Keys. Ms. Delaney clarified, on Mr. Causey's behalf, that it could be either an in-water or shore-based facility.

Discussion among the Council took place on the wording of a recommendation that more facilities be identified and approved throughout Monroe County. Mr. Causey added the caveat "and approve as appropriate recognizing some extraordinary circumstances might require transport to a permanent facility".

Final Comments

Chairman Neugent invited final comments from all Council members.

Ms. Mullins thanked everybody for participating, especially those who gave up a working day.

Ms. Klingener thanked everybody and recognized that all present care about the animals.

Mr. Iarocci thanked everyone for the educational experience, and expressed the hope that a closer working relationship will develop between the Regional Coordinator and all other stakeholders.

Mr. Blevins said he thought that the Council has come up with some good, implementable ideas that he would like to see acted upon and thanked everyone.

Mr. Firm thanked everyone for the education.

Dr. Lorenz thanked everyone for the education.

Mr. Kincaid thanked everyone for the education and added that in all his experience of photographing strandings, he has noticed that everyone who works on them shows great compassion to the animals.

Ms. Lee thanked everyone in the room, especially those that had traveled a long way, for the amount of selfless dedication, of heart, and of time spent trying to save marine animals. She expressed confidence that every single person that works on these situations is doing the very best that they can and make the very best decisions that they can at a given time, but that there are communication failures that can be rectified.

Chairman Neugent thanked Joanne Delaney and Alex Score for their hard work. He thanked all the participants at the meeting and he especially thanked the members of the Council for their terrific work.

Superintendent Causey thanked each and every Council member for their unselfish dedication of time and energy. He expressed his total confidence in the Council's ability to work together as a group and pass on well-considered recommendations. He thanked the audience for individual dedication to marine mammal issues as well as a desire to

achieve a resolution. He thanked all of the personnel present from the National Marine Fisheries Service as well as all the other panelists. He especially thanked Joanne Delaney and also thanked Fiona Wilmot and Nancy Diersing. He also thanked Laura Engleby, who will be leaving the Keys soon and will be missed for her marine mammal input into the Sanctuary.

Meeting Adjourned

Chairman Neugent adjourned the meeting at 9:43 p.m.