

Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Office of Protected Resources

John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program

The first three years of the Prescott Grant Program have made unprecedented improvements to the primarily volunteer and underfunded stranding networks on both U.S. coastlines. Consistent funding is important to the maintenance of basic infrastructure and the continued success of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Program. This Grant Program is administered by NOAA Fisheries' Office of Protected Resources' Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program.

Since the inception of the Prescott Grant Program in FY 2002,

- over \$10 million has been disbursed in 114 grants to eligible members of the Marine Mammal Network.
- \$125,000 has been awarded to date in Emergency Stranding Grants to reimburse network members for their emergency response activities, including the treatment and release of a young killer whale, "Springer", in Washington state, and the response to a mass stranding of pilot whales by the Cape Cod Stranding Network.
- FY 2004 Grants are still being processed, and the recommendations will be completed this spring

The effects of the Prescott grant program have been far-reaching throughout the United States. Money received in a Prescott grant has been put to many uses, including:

- Salary support to hire staff for organizations previously operated solely by volunteers
- Equipment, including trucks, boats, veterinary supplies, and safety gear
- Rehabilitation veterinary centers were renovated; equipped with state of the art instruments
- Renovation of rehabilitation veterinary centers for better animal care
- Purchase of satellite transmitters to track rehabilitated sea lions suffering from domoic acid toxicity to monitor the animals and evaluate the effects of the rehabilitation process
- Improved diagnostic tests for more complete evaluation of blood, genetics, and tissue samples
- Disease screening to examine the prevalence of many diseases in marine mammal populations, including morbillivirus and West Nile virus
- Coordinated response to stranded marine mammals, including a stranding of a rare adult male Blainville's beaked whale, *Mesoplodon densirostris*, in North Carolina.

Also, stranding network members report intangible benefits associated with the Prescott program, including:

- Increased morale of staff and volunteers as a result of having funds for equipment, samples, and response, and due to the recognition of the stranding network as a worthy beneficiary
- Better skills and abilities of network members from training courses developed with or attended using Prescott funds
- Improved collaboration between organizations within the stranding network, and
- Funding of student research projects.

