

Executive Summary

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has prepared this final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), and the NOAA environmental review procedures (NOAA Administrative Order 216-6).

ES.1 Proposed Actions

With the passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in 1972, Congress gave jurisdiction over marine mammals in U.S. waters to the Federal government. All cetaceans and all pinnipeds, except walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*), were placed under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce, of which NMFS is a part. The Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was given authority over walrus, sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*), sirenians (manatees [*Trichechus spp.*] and dugongs [*Dugong dugon*]), and polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*).

In 1992, the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program (MMHSRP) was formalized with the passage of Title IV, an amendment to the MMPA entitled The Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Act. This Act charged the Secretary of Commerce to develop a marine mammal health and stranding response program with three goals:

1. Facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on the health of marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild;
2. Correlate the health of marine mammals and marine mammal populations, in the wild, with available data on physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters; and
3. Coordinate effective responses to unusual mortality events by establishing a process in the Department of Commerce in accordance with Section 404.

The MMHSRP developed the following four Proposed Actions to encompass the activities of the MMHSRP:

1. Issuance of the *Policies and Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release* (Policies and Best Practices) as final guidance.
2. Issuance of a new Endangered Species Act (ESA)/MMPA permit to the MMHSRP. The new permit would include current and future response activities for endangered species,

1 disentanglement activities, biomonitoring projects, and import and export of marine mammal
2 tissue samples. The permit would be issued no later than July 1, 2009 and would expire in
3 five years.

4 3. Continuation of current MMHSRP operations, including response, rehabilitation, release, and
5 research activities, with renewal and authorization of Stranding Agreements (SAs) and
6 Scientific Research Authorizations and other NMFS activities referenced in Section 1.3.1.

7 4. Continuation of the Prescott Grant Program.

8 The action area for the Proposed Actions and alternatives includes all areas where MMHSRP
9 activities may occur. The action area encompasses the coastal zone and Exclusive Economic Zone of
10 the U.S., its territories, and possessions, and adjacent marine waters. The coastal zone includes
11 coastal waters, adjacent shorelands, intertidal areas, salt marshes, wetlands, and beaches. The action
12 area also includes the marine mammal rehabilitation facilities of the stranding network.

13 **ES.2 Purpose and Need**

14 The purposes of the Proposed Actions are to respond to marine mammals in distress, including those
15 stranded, entangled, and out of habitat, and to answer research and management questions about
16 marine mammal health. Stranded and distressed marine mammal response is conducted for many
17 reasons including NMFS' legislative mandate and the need to obtain data for management and
18 scientific purposes. Marine mammals are also sentinels of ecosystem health and may provide
19 valuable links to human health. Response to marine mammals is also conducted out of a concern for
20 animal welfare and ocean stewardship.

21 NMFS is charged with the national oversight and collaboration of the MMHSRP, and creating
22 policies that will work for the majority of participants. The MMHSRP has identified several needs
23 for effectively carrying out the mandates of Title IV:

24 1. Operational efficiency - To operate the MMHSRP effectively and efficiently, maximizing the
25 benefits from opportunistic events while making the best use of limited resources;

26 2. Quality data - To collect data on marine mammal health and health trends in an organized and
27 consistent manner to meet current and future information needs for appropriate conservation
28 and management; and

29 3. Safety - To implement policies to ensure that MMHSRP activities are conducted humanely
30 and in a manner that protects the safety of volunteers and the public to the maximum extent
31 possible.

1 **ES.3 Alternatives**

2 The alternatives to implement the Proposed Actions are grouped into the following six topics: SAs
 3 and response; carcass disposal; rehabilitation activities; release activities; disentanglement; and
 4 biomonitoring and research activities. A No Action Alternative, Status Quo Alternative, and
 5 Preferred Alternative are designated under each issue. The No Action Alternative for each issue is
 6 based upon NMFS not undertaking the coordination and operation of the MMHSRP. Current SAs
 7 would not be renewed and new SAs would not be issued. The Policies and Practices manual and the
 8 ESA/MMPA permit would not be issued. As current SAs expired, the current National Stranding
 9 Network would cease to exist. Once the current ESA/MMPA permit expires on June 30, 2009, the
 10 current disentanglement network would no longer function.

11 Table ES-1 summarizes the alternatives considered in the PEIS and which of the four Proposed
 12 Actions the alternatives would impact.

13 **Table ES-1. Alternatives Considered in Detail**

Alternative	Description	Proposed Action(s) Impacted
<i>Stranding Agreements and Response</i>		
Alternative A1	No Action- SA's expire, stranding response would end.	1, 2, 3, 4
Alternative A2	Status Quo- Current SAs would be renewed, current stranding response activities continue. Final SA criteria would not be issued.	
Alternative A3	SAs issued to any applicants after review, new SA template would not be utilized. Final SA criteria would not be issued. Current and future activities included.	
Alternative A4 (Preferred)	Final SA criteria would be implemented, new SA template would be utilized, current and future activities included.	
Alternative A5	Final SA criteria would be implemented, new SA template would be utilized, and response to threatened, endangered, or rare animals would be required.	
<i>Carcass Disposal</i>		
Alternative B1	No Action- SA's expire, no carcass disposal would occur, carcasses would be left where stranded.	1, 3
Alternative B2	Status Quo- Current methods of carcass disposal continue.	
Alternative B3 (Preferred)	Status Quo with the recommendation to transport chemically euthanized animal carcasses off-site.	

Table ES-1. Alternatives Considered in Detail (continued)

Alternative	Description	Proposed Action(s) Impacted
<i>Rehabilitation Activities</i>		
Alternative C1	No Action- Current SAs would expire, stranding response would cease, and animals would not be rehabilitated.	1, 2, 3, 4
Alternative C2	Status Quo- Current rehabilitation activities would continue. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would not be implemented.	
Alternative C3 (Preferred)	New SAs would be issued, rehabilitation activities continue. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would be implemented.	
Alternative C4	New SAs would be issued, rehabilitation activities would continue. Rehabilitation of threatened, endangered, and rare animals would be required; response to other animals would be optional. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would be implemented.	
<i>Release of Rehabilitated Animals</i>		
Alternative D1	No Action- Current SAs would expire, stranding response and rehabilitation would cease, and therefore there would be no animals to release.	1, 2, 3, 4
Alternative D2	Status Quo- Current release activities would continue. Adaptive changes to release activities would not be permitted. Final release criteria would not be implemented.	
Alternative D3 (Preferred)	New SAs would be issued, release activities continue. Final release criteria would be implemented and would include adaptive management of release activities.	
<i>Disentanglement Activities</i>		
Alternative E1	No Action- No disentanglement network.	1, 2, 3, 4
Alternative E2	Status Quo- Disentanglement network would continue current activities, no modifications or new members added	
Alternative E3 (Preferred)	Disentanglement network would continue current activities on East Coast with modifications to West Coast network. The Disentanglement Guidelines and training prerequisites would be implemented.	
<i>Biomonitoring and Research Activities</i>		
Alternative F1	No Action- Biomonitoring and research activities would not occur.	2, 3
Alternative F2	Status Quo- New ESA/MMPA permit would continue current biomonitoring and research activities.	
Alternative F3 (Preferred)	New ESA/MMPA permit would be issued to include current and future biomonitoring and research activities.	

1 **ES.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation**

2 The environmental impacts of the alternatives were analyzed for the following resources:

- 3 • Biological resources: protected and sensitive habitats, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV)
4 and macroalgae, sea turtles, marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, fish, birds,
5 and other wildlife;
6 • Water and sediment quality;
7 • Human health and safety;
8 • Cultural resources; and
9 • Socioeconomics.

10 Table ES-2 summarizes the impacts on these resources from each of the alternatives. While potential
11 adverse and beneficial effects on all of the chosen resource areas could occur, effects on marine
12 mammals and human health and safety would be considered the most important. Mitigation measures
13 have been developed to avoid, minimize, or eliminate the potential adverse effects on the affected
14 resources from the proposed alternatives.

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Table ES-2. Summary Matrix of Impacts

Alternatives	Impact Area				
	Biological Resources	Water & Sediment Quality	Cultural Resources	Human Health & Safety	Socioeconomics
Stranding Agreements & Response					
<p>Alternative A1- No Action No Action- SA's expire, stranding response would end.</p>	<p>Moderate, adverse effects on marine mammals, as stranded animals would be removed from the population. Valuable information on marine mammal health would not be collected.</p> <p>No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.</p>	<p>No effects on water and sediment quality.</p>	<p>No effects on cultural resources.</p>	<p>Minor, short-term adverse effects as the public interact with stranded animals. Beneficial effects as response personnel no longer needed.</p>	<p>Moderate, long-term beneficial direct effects on stranding network members, as there would be reduction, if not an elimination, of costs.</p> <p>Minor to moderate indirect adverse effects to SA holders whose activities attract external funding.</p> <p>Potential adverse effects if stranded animals reduce the visual and aesthetic such that other beach uses decrease while the stranded animal is decomposing. Negligible adverse effects to businesses adjacent to stranding sites. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event.</p>
<p>Alternative A2- Status Quo Status Quo- Current SAs would be renewed, current stranding response activities continue. Final SA criteria would not be issued.</p>	<p>Minor, short-term adverse effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, shellfish, and birds from equipment use or leaks on beaches/nearshore waters and the presence of responders.</p> <p>Minor to moderate, adverse effects on marine mammals would be expected from response activities and if new SAs are not issued.</p>	<p>Minor, short-term adverse effects on surrounding sand and nearshore waters could occur from equipment leaks and euthanasia solution or other environmental contaminants in tissue, blood, and other body fluids.</p>	<p>Potential minor, adverse effects on submerged cultural resources or resources buried in sand from equipment and vehicle use on beaches and nearshore waters. There would not be any effects on Alaska Natives, Native American tribes, or other aboriginal people's cultural uses of coastal resources.</p>	<p>Minor, short-term adverse effects on the public (interacting with a stranded animal) and stranding responders (e.g., physical injury and zoonotic diseases).</p>	<p>Minor to moderate, long-term adverse effects to stranding network members from operating costs associated with these activities.</p> <p>Negligible adverse effects to businesses adjacent to stranding sites. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event.</p>
<p>Alternative A3 SAs issued to any applicants after review, new SA template would not be utilized. Final SA criteria would not be issued. Current and future activities included.</p>	<p>Same effects on biological resources as Alternative A2. Some beneficial impacts could come from allowing new SA holders to be added, given that they have the proper experience with marine mammal response, as geographic coverage would increase and new rehabilitation facilities may be added.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2.</p>	<p>Minor to moderate, long-term adverse effects on network members from operating expenses. New involvement with response activities would help offset expense of these activities. Negligible adverse effects to businesses adjacent to stranding sites. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding.</p>
<p>Alternative A4 (Preferred) Final SA criteria would be implemented, new SA template would be utilized, current and future activities included.</p>	<p>Same effects on biological resources as Alternative A2. Beneficial impacts from use of new techniques and tools during response activities and ability to add new SA holders.</p> <p>Long-term beneficial effects on marine mammals would be expected to occur with the implementation of SA criteria.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2.</p>	<p>Same effects as Alternative A2, with one exception. SA criteria would ensure that responders are experienced and have the knowledge to avoid or minimize health and safety risks.</p>	<p>Alternative A4 is similar to Alternative A3, but under Alternative A4 the Final SA criteria would be implemented. Moderate to major, adverse effects to the current SA holders would be expected to occur, as existing SA holders may need more training or may need to alter existing practices in order to meet the new criteria.</p> <p>Negligible adverse effects to businesses adjacent to stranding sites. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event.</p>

Table ES-2. Summary Matrix of Impacts (continued)

Alternatives	Impact Area				
	Biological Resources	Water & Sediment Quality	Cultural Resources	Human Health & Safety	Socioeconomics
Stranding Agreements & Response					
Alternative A5 Final SA criteria would be implemented, new SA template would be utilized, and response to threatened endangered or rare animals would be required.	Same effects from stranding response activities as Alternative A2, with two exceptions. Beneficial effect on threatened endangered or rare animals and an adverse effect on other species. Same effects from the implementation of SA criteria as Alternative A4.	Same effects as Alternative A2.	Same effects as Alternative A2.	Same effects as Alternative A4.	Minor to major, long-term adverse effects to SA holders similar to those described in Alternatives A3 and A4, but they would also depend on the proportion of stranded marine mammals that are not rare, threatened, or endangered and whether or not the network member chooses to continue responding to those animals. Negligible adverse effects to businesses adjacent to stranding sites. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event.
Carcass Disposal					
Alternative B1- No Action No Action- SA's expire, no carcass disposal would occur, carcasses would be left where stranded.	Potential adverse effects could occur from leaving carcasses on the beach to naturally decompose. Animal carcasses may contain contaminants, which could negatively impact the surrounding environment. No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.	Potential adverse effects could occur from leaving carcasses on the beach to naturally decompose. Animal carcasses may contain contaminants, which could negatively impact the surrounding water and sediment quality.	No effects on cultural resources.	Minor, short-term adverse effects as the public interact with stranded animals. Contaminated or chemically euthanized carcasses could potentially contaminate the groundwater and/or nearshore water. Beneficial effect on personnel involved in carcass disposal as they would no longer be exposed to risks.	Negligible adverse impacts in terms of lost revenues, restaurants, and parks in the immediate vicinity of the carcass(es), if the public chose to avoid the area. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event
Alternative B2- Status Quo Status Quo- Current methods of carcass disposal continue.	Minor to moderate, short- and long-term adverse effects, as animal carcasses may contain persistent environmental contaminants or euthanasia solution, which could negatively impact the surrounding environment. Other adverse effects from burial, equipment use, spills of hazardous materials or wastes from equipment or vessels. Disposal at sea might allow contaminants to re-enter the marine environment, but would provide a benefit by serving as a food source for marine organisms.	Minor, short-term adverse effects on water and sediment quality could occur from equipment leaks; euthanasia solution or other contaminants in tissue, blood, and other body fluids; spills of hazardous materials or wastes from vessels. Burial and equipment use may have a negligible impact on erosion.	Potential minor, long-term, adverse effects on submerged cultural resources or resources buried in sand from beach burial and equipment and vehicle use on beaches and nearshore waters. There would not be any effects on Alaska Natives, Native American tribes, or other aboriginal people's cultural uses of coastal resources.	Minor and major, short- and long-term adverse effects as the public interacts with a stranded animal. Contaminated or chemically euthanized carcasses left on the beach or buried could potentially contaminate the groundwater and/or nearshore water, making it unhealthy for humans to swim near the carcass site. Workers involved in disposal could be exposed to zoonotic diseases, contaminants, and euthanasia solution.	Negligible adverse impacts in terms of lost revenues, restaurants, and parks in the immediate vicinity of the carcass(es), if the public chose to avoid the area. Potential beneficial effects if people come to see stranding event
Alternative B3 (Preferred) Status Quo with the recommendation to transport chemically euthanized animal carcasses off-site.	Same effects as Alternative B2, with one exception. Chemically euthanized carcasses would not be buried on-site, minimizing some of the adverse effects.	Same effects as Alternative B2.	Same effects as Alternative B2.	Same effects as Alternative B2 with one exception. Recommended that chemically euthanized animal carcasses not be buried on the beach, which would remove the health and safety risks associated with beach burial	Effects would be the same as those described under Alternative B2, except that chemically euthanized carcasses would be moved off-site and the cost would be incurred by the stranding network member. Adverse effects would be negligible, minor, or major, depending on the number of carcasses.

Table ES-2. Summary Matrix of Impacts (continued)

Alternatives	Impact Area				
	Biological Resources	Water & Sediment Quality	Cultural Resources	Human Health & Safety	Socioeconomics
Rehabilitation Activities					
<p>Alternative C1- No Action No Action- Current SAs would expire, stranding response would cease, and animals would not be rehabilitated.</p>	<p>Moderate, long-term, adverse effects as marine mammals would not be taken into rehabilitation and most would likely die from injuries or disease.</p> <p>No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.</p>	No effects on water and sediment quality.	No effects on cultural resources.	Beneficial effects would be expected as risks to rehabilitation personnel would end.	Potential major, long-term, adverse effects on facilities that focus primarily on rehabilitation activities. Facilities may cease operation, unless their activities could be shifted. Larger facilities that engage in other activities may experience a minor, long-term positive effect in terms of the reduced operating costs from the elimination of rehabilitation activities.
<p>Alternative C2- Status Quo Status Quo- Current rehabilitation activities would continue. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would not be implemented.</p>	<p>Minor to major, short- and long-term, beneficial and adverse effects on marine mammals. Potential adverse effects from sampling, anesthesia, disease, euthanasia, and not implementing the Rehabilitation Facility Standards</p> <p>No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.</p>	Minor adverse effects due to use of open ocean/bay net pens and temporary pools and contamination from wastes, pathogens, etc. Rehabilitation facilities would have necessary permits for wastewater discharges.	Potential minor to major adverse effects on from the use of temporary pools and net pens, depending on where they are sited. Net pens may disturb or damage submerged cultural resources.	Minor, short-term, direct adverse effects on rehabilitation personnel, including physical injuries, exposure to chemicals, and exposure to zoonotic diseases.	Current rehabilitation facilities would continue to bear minor to major, long-term adverse effects. Rehabilitation facilities would operate as they currently do and therefore continue to incur supply, equipment, personnel, and maintenance expenses.
<p>Alternative C3 (Preferred) New SAs would be issued, rehabilitation activities continue. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would be implemented.</p>	Same effects as Alternative C2, with one exception. Rehabilitation Facility Standards would decrease the risk of disease transmission ensure a healthy environment, maximize the success of rehabilitation, and increase the potential for release to the wild. Would reduce animal pain and suffering.	Same effects as Alternative C2.	Same effects as Alternative C2.	Same effects as Alternative C2, with one exception. Health and safety standards in the rehabilitation facility standards would have a beneficial effect.	Minor to major, adverse effects on rehabilitation facilities. Facilities would need to upgrade to comply with the minimum facility standards. Level of impact would depend on each facility, if they need to upgrade, and how much they would need to upgrade to meet the minimum standards.
<p>Alternative C4 New SAs would be issued, rehabilitation activities would continue. Rehabilitation of threatened endangered and rare animals would be required; response to other animals would be optional. Final Rehabilitation Facility Standards would be implemented.</p>	Same effects as Alternative C3, with a few exceptions. Adverse effects on animals that are not rare, threatened or endangered. These animals often serve as models for other species and this would be an indirect adverse affect on rare, threatened, and endangered species.	Same effects as Alternative C2.	Same effects as Alternative C2.	Same effects as Alternative C3.	Alternative C4 would adversely affect rehabilitation facilities in the same manner as Alternative C3. Alternative C4 could adversely affect facilities to a lesser extent, however, since under the rehabilitation of non-rare and non-ESA species would only be optional.
Release of Rehabilitated Animals					
<p>Alternative D1- No Action No Action- Current SAs would expire, stranding response and rehabilitation would cease, and therefore there would be no animals to release.</p>	<p>Adverse effects as marine mammals would not be released back to the wild, which negatively impacts all species, but especially threatened or endangered species. Beneficial effect on wild populations, as there would not be the risk of introducing a diseased animal that could potentially infect other marine mammals.</p> <p>No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.</p>	No effects on water and sediment quality.	No effects on cultural resources.	Beneficial effects would be expected as risks to release personnel would end.	Beneficial effects as the end of release activities would eliminate the expenses related to these activities.

Table ES-2. Summary Matrix of Impacts (continued)

Alternatives	Impact Area				
	Biological Resources	Water & Sediment Quality	Cultural Resources	Human Health & Safety	Socioeconomics
Release of Rehabilitated Animals					
Alternative D2- Status Quo Status Quo- Current release activities would continue. Adaptive changes to release activities would not be permitted. Final release criteria would not be implemented.	Minor, short- and long-term, adverse and beneficial effects on marine mammals. Release activities (tagging, marking, and transport) may have adverse effects. Released animal could carry a zoonotic disease and infect wild population. Adverse effects on all biological resources from equipment use, spills of hazardous materials or wastes from equipment or vessels.	Minor, short-term, direct adverse effects could occur from spills of hazardous materials or wastes from release vessels or leaks from equipment into sand or surrounding waters.	Minor, long-term, adverse effects on cultural resources buried in sand from equipment and vehicle use on beaches.	Minor, short-term, direct adverse effects on release personnel, including physical injuries and exposure to chemicals.	Minor to moderate, adverse effects as continued expenses would be incurred from release activities. Facilities that release more animals, larger species of marine mammals, or those that need to travel greater distance to release animals would incur a greater share of expenses.
Alternative D3 (Preferred) New SAs would be issued, release activities continue. Final release criteria would be implemented and would include adaptive management of release activities.	Same effects as Alternative D2, with one exception. Release criteria would be implemented and may reduce the effects on marine mammals.	Same effects as Alternative D2.	Same effects as Alternative D2.	Same effects as Alternative D2	Minor to moderate, adverse effects as costs may increase at each facility in order to comply with the release criteria. Possible addition of facilities could help offset the release activities and their costs.
Disentanglement Activities					
Alternative E1- No Action No Action- No disentanglement network.	Major, long-term adverse effects on marine mammals from ending the Disentanglement Network as animals would have increased pain and suffering and would most likely die. No significant effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds. Gear on an entangled animal may be shed and become marine debris, which could potentially harm biological resources.	No effects on water and sediment quality.	No effects on cultural resources.	Beneficial effects would be expected as risks to responders would end. Potential adverse impacts on public health if individuals attempt to disentangle an animal.	Minor to moderate, beneficial effects on current participants could occur from the elimination of expenses incurred from disentanglement activities.
Alternative E2- Status Quo Status Quo- Disentanglement network would continue current activities, no modifications or new members added	Minor, short-term adverse effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, birds, and marine mammals from spills of hazardous materials or wastes from vessels. Minor to major, short- and long-term, beneficial and adverse effects on marine mammals. Disentanglement would continue; new responders could not be added. Animal adverse reactions to close approaches, physical/chemical restraint, or be injured during the process.	Minor, short-term, adverse effects could occur from spills of hazardous materials or wastes from release vessels.	No effects on cultural resources.	Adverse effects on responders, including physical injuries, exposure to chemicals, potentially death. Potential adverse impacts on public health if individuals attempt to disentangle an animal.	Minor to moderate, adverse effects would continue to be borne by participants engaged in disentanglement activities.

Table ES-2. Summary Matrix of Impacts (continued)

Alternatives	Impact Area				
	Biological Resources	Water & Sediment Quality	Cultural Resources	Human Health & Safety	Socioeconomics
Disentanglement Activities					
Alternative E3 (Preferred) Disentanglement network would continue current activities on East Coast with modifications to West Coast network. The Disentanglement Guidelines and training prerequisites would be implemented.	Same effects as Alternative E2, except that new responders and techniques could be added and Disentanglement Guidelines/training would be in place to reduce adverse effects.	Same effects as Alternative E2.	No effects on cultural resources.	Same effects as Alternative E2. There would be less risk under this alternative, as modifications new tools and techniques and the Disentanglement Guidelines/training could reduce safety risks.	No impacts to East Coast participants. Minor to moderate, adverse effects would be borne by West Coast participants due to modifications of current operations and training expenses.
Biomonitoring & Research Activities					
Alternative F1- No Action No Action- Biomonitoring and research activities would not occur.	Adverse effects on marine mammals as important health information would no longer be collected. No effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, and birds.	No effects on water and sediment quality.	No effects on cultural resources.	Beneficial effects would be expected as risks from research activities would end.	No effects on socioeconomics.
Alternative F2- Status Quo Status Quo- New ESA/MMPA permit would continue current biomonitoring and research activities.	Minor, short-term adverse effects on protected and sensitive habitats, SAV and macroalgae, sea turtles, fish, shellfish, other invertebrates, birds, and marine mammals from spills of hazardous materials or wastes from vessels or leaks from equipment into sand or surrounding waters. Protected and sensitive habitats and SAV and macroalgae could be damaged by vessels/researchers. Sea turtles/birds and their nests could be disturbed/ damaged. Fish may be caught in nets or disturbed. Minor to major, short- and long-term, adverse effects on marine mammals from close approach, tagging, marking, restraint, handling, capture, transport, sampling, and other activities. Long-term beneficial effects from collection of health information.	Minor, short-term, direct adverse effects could occur from spills of hazardous materials or wastes from release vessels or leaks from equipment into sand or surrounding waters.	Adverse effects would not likely occur. Potential effects on submerged cultural resources or resources buried in sand from equipment and vehicle use on beaches and vessel use in nearshore waters.	Minor, short-term, direct adverse effects on research personnel, including physical injuries, exposure to chemicals, and exposure to zoonotic diseases.	Minor to moderate, adverse effects could occur depending on the nature of biomonitoring and research activities and the ongoing personnel and research expenses.
Alternative F3 (Preferred) New ESA/MMPA permit would be issued to include current and future biomonitoring and research activities.	Same effects as Alternative F2, with other adverse effects from new research activities. The increase in research activities would have a beneficial affect on marine mammals, as more health information would be collected.	Same effects as Alternative F2.	Same effects as Alternative F2.	Same effects as Alternative F2.	Minor to moderate, adverse effects could occur depending on the nature of new biomonitoring and research activities and the ongoing personnel and research expenses.