

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the 1994 amendments of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were required to generate stock assessment reports (SARs) for all marine mammal stocks in waters within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The first reports for the Atlantic (includes the Gulf of Mexico) were published in July 1995 (Blaylock *et al.* 1995). The MMPA requires NMFS and USFWS to review these reports annually for strategic stocks of marine mammals and at least every 3 years for stocks determined to be non-strategic. The second edition of the SARs (1996 assessments) was published in October 1997 and contained all the previous reports, but major revisions and updating were only completed for strategic stocks (Waring *et al.* 1997). In subsequent annual reports, including this current 2011 edition, updated reports are indicated by the corresponding year date-stamp at the top right corner of the report and are included in the main body of the document. Stock assessments not updated in the current year are listed in an appendix. Also included in this report as appendices are: 1) a summary of serious injury/mortality estimates of marine mammals in observed U.S. fisheries (Appendix I), 2) a summary of NMFS records of large whale/human interactions examined for this assessment (Appendix II), 3) detailed fisheries information (Appendix III), 4) summary tables of abundance estimates generated over recent years and the surveys from which they are derived (Appendix IV), and 5) the the USFWS West Indian manatee assessments (Appendix VI).

Table 1 contains a summary, by species, of the information included in the stock assessments, and also indicates those that have been revised since the 2010 publication. Most of the changes incorporate new information into sections on population size and/or mortality estimates. A total of 23 of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico stock assessment reports were revised for 2011. In addition to this, three of the Gulf of Mexico bay, sound and estuary stocks of bottlenose dolphins – Barataria Bay, St. Joseph Bay, and Choctawhatchee Bay were given their own new reports (all of strategic status). Five new Caribbean stock reports were added this year—bottlenose dolphin, Cuvier’s beaked whale, short-finned pilot whale, spinner dolphin and Atlantic spotted dolphin. The revised and new SARs include 18 strategic and 12 non-strategic stocks.

This report was prepared by staff of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). NMFS staff presented the reports at the February 2011 meeting of the Atlantic Scientific Review Group (ASRG), and subsequent revisions were based on their contributions and constructive criticism. This is a working document and individual stock assessment reports will be updated as new information becomes available and as changes to marine mammal stocks and fisheries occur. The authors solicit any new information or comments which would improve future stock assessment reports.