

**Marine Mammal Stranding Agreement**

**#SA-REG-YYYY-##**

[REDACTED]

**BETWEEN**

**[REGION]**

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OF THE NATIONAL  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**AND**

**[Stranding Network Organization]**

[REDACTED]



Articles III-VII are reserved and issued at the discretion of the NMFS Regional Administrator.

## Table of Contents

Article II: Purpose and General Responsibilities .....	5
Article III: Dead Animal Response.....	12
Article IV: Live Animal Response: First Response.....	15
Article V: Live Animal Response: Rehabilitation and Final Disposition.....	21
Article VI: Live Animal Response: Short-Term Holding.....	27
Article VII: Temporary Participation in the Stranding Network .....	31
Article VIII: Participant’s Authorized Personnel [and Designees].....	36
Article IX: Rights of States, Tribal, and Local Governments.....	39
Article X: Effective Date, Renewal, and Application Procedures .....	40
Article XI: Review, Modification, and Termination.....	42
Signature Page .....	46
Appendix A: Designee Signature Page.....	47

# Article I: General Provisions

## A. Authority

1. This Marine Mammal Stranding Agreement (hereinafter Agreement) is entered into between the Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) [REGION], and the Stranding Network Participant [*insert Stranding Network Organization*] (Participant), under the authority of section 112(c) and section 403 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA), as amended. **This Agreement supersedes all pre-existing Stranding Agreements between these parties. An organizational representative with signatory authority (e.g., Executive Director, President, CEO) must sign this Agreement on behalf of the Stranding Network Organization.**
2. NMFS has been delegated authority by the Department of Commerce to administer the MMPA. To assist in the implementation and administration of the MMPA, the Stranding Network has been established to respond to stranded marine mammals within NMFS' [REGION] of the United States. The [REGION] consists of the following coastal states and territories: [STATES]

## B. Scope

1. Under the MMPA, NMFS is responsible for mammals of the **Order Cetacea** and the **Order Pinnipedia** other than walruses (hereinafter marine mammals).
2. The geographic response area assigned to the Participant consists of the following: [*list response area including primary and secondary geographic response areas as necessary, and if different for different articles*]. The Participant may assist in stranding response within the Region outside of their assigned response area, if requested by NMFS or by another Participant. Outside the [REGION], the Participant may assist with stranding response upon request from the appropriate regional NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator(s).

## C. Limitations

1. This Agreement creates an authorization for the Participant to take marine mammals, which would be otherwise prohibited by the MMPA. This taking authorization only applies to the Participant and its authorized personnel (see Article VI) for activities that are consistent with this Agreement.
2. In particular, this Agreement does not authorize:
  - a. The taking of any marine mammal species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended. Authorization to take ESA listed species is provided under a MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Coordinator and **requires authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding**

**Coordinator in the event of a stranding involving a threatened or endangered marine mammal.**

- b. The sale or offer of sale of any marine mammal or marine mammal parts including cells, gametes, or cell cultures.

**D. Definitions** - All terms used in the Agreement shall be interpreted to have the meaning specified in the MMPA section 3 and section 410 and NMFS implementing regulations 50 CFR 216.3 unless the context or specific language requires otherwise.

## Article II: Purpose and General Responsibilities

**A. Purpose of Agreement.** NMFS and the Participant enter into this Agreement for the following purposes:

1. To provide for rapid response and investigation of stranded marine mammals *[insert taxa]* within the **[REGION]** in accordance with the purposes and policies of the MMPA.
2. To implement Title IV (Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program) of the MMPA
  - a. To facilitate the collection and dissemination of reference data on the health of marine mammals and health trends of marine mammal populations in the wild
  - b. To correlate the health of marine mammals and marine mammal populations in the wild with available data on physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters; and
  - c. To detect and coordinate effective responses to Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events (UMEs).
3. To specify the activities during which the Participant may take stranded marine mammals *[insert taxa]* or marine mammal parts for the primary purpose of ensuring the appropriate response, *[short-term holding]*, *[rehabilitation]*, disposition, and utilization of stranded marine mammals or marine mammal parts under MMPA sections 109(h), 112(c), and 403 and the Agreement.
4. To define the nature and extent of services that the Participant will provide NMFS under this Agreement and NMFS' responsibilities to the Participant.
5. To specify the requirements for the preparation and maintenance and reporting of records containing scientific data obtained from dead and live stranded marine mammals or parts from dead stranded marine mammals.
6. To provide for the timely exchange of information for use by both parties and other network members in furthering the objectives of the MMPA under this Agreement.

**B. Joint Responsibilities:** NMFS and the Participant will work cooperatively to:

1. Implement Title IV of the MMPA.
2. Effectively respond to and investigate the causes and impacts of UMEs.
3. Collect the appropriate data for determination of serious injuries and mortalities due to human interactions.
4. Collect reference data on marine mammal health and diseases.
5. Collect data on the frequency and causes of strandings.

6. Interpret findings and identify health trends and diseases of concern to include national and state reportable and/or zoonotic diseases.
7. Work collaboratively to communicate with Federal, state, tribal, and local officials and employees in preparation for, during, and after stranding events within their jurisdictions and area of operations.

C. NMFS Responsibilities – NMFS shall:

1. Provide the Participant with notice of any changes to laws, regulations, policies and/or guidelines applicable to or promulgated by NMFS that may apply to the Participant's activities. This includes criteria for issuance, renewal and termination of stranding agreements. Notwithstanding this provision, it is the responsibility of the Participant to comply with any and all federal, state, tribal or local laws, regulations, policies and/or guidelines that apply given the Participant's activities and area of operations.
2. Conduct periodic compliance reviews of Stranding Agreements as stated in Article IX and provide feedback to the Participant on findings, including clarifications on any requirements or expectations that are not being fully met
3. Provide guidance and assistance regarding investigation of marine mammal unusual mortality events including physical resources (example: NOAA laboratory assistance) and financial resources when available and authorized (in accordance with section 405 of the MMPA – UME National Contingency Fund) and in coordination with the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events.
4. Alert the Participant when NMFS has been notified that there are diseases of concern that are national and state reportable and/or zoonotic within the [REGION].
5. Pursuant to criteria established under the MMPA section 407, provide access to the National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Database, as developed, and access to marine mammal tissues in the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank following NMFS data and tissue access procedures and policies.
6. As needed and as resources are available, provide specialized marine mammal stranding response and investigation training on a local, regional or national basis.
7. Pursuant to MMPA Section 402, collect and update periodically and make available to stranding network participants, and other qualified scientists, existing information on:
  - a. Procedures and practices for rescuing and rehabilitating stranded marine mammals.
  - b. Species by species criteria used by the stranding network participants, for determining at what point a marine mammal undergoing rescue and rehabilitation is returnable to the wild based on its ability to survive in the wild and risk to the wild population of marine mammals.

- c. Procedures and practices for collecting, preserving, labeling, and transporting marine mammal tissues for physical, chemical, and biological analyses.
  - d. Relevant scientific literature on marine mammal health, disease, and rehabilitation.
  - e. Compilation and analyses of strandings by region to monitor species, numbers, conditions, and causes of illness and death in stranded marine mammals.
  - f. Other life history and reference level data, including marine mammal tissue analyses that would allow comparison of the causes of illness and death in stranded marine mammals with physical, chemical, and biological environmental parameters.
8. Identify a [REGION] Marine Mammal Stranding Program Coordinator who will serve as the Participant's primary point of contact for notification, coordination, reporting, and response [and rehabilitation] activities as specified throughout this Agreement. The NMFS Regional Administrator will serve as the Participant's primary point of contact for administration of the Agreement, as well as dispositions and other management activities as specified throughout the Agreement. **The NMFS Regional Administrator's designated point of contact for this Agreement is the NMFS [REGION] Marine Mammal Stranding Program Administrator, [REGION] Regional Office, Protected Resources Division.** (see Attachment B for contact information).
9. In certain circumstances such as large scale events (*e.g.*, mass stranding, unusual mortality events, live right whale stranding), NMFS may establish a formal Incident Command System (ICS) for response, including the identification of an Incident Commander. For multi-agency incidents, NMFS will follow direction from any Federal incident commanders, including the United States Coast Guard (USCG). Opportunities for ICS training can be accessed through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (see <http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is100.asp>), USCG, or NMFS. If necessary, guidance will be provided by NMFS on a case-by-case basis.
- D.** Relay reports of stranded marine mammals (live or dead) within the Participant's geographic range to the Participant and determine whether the Participant has the capability to respond. If the Participant cannot respond, the Stranding Coordinator may make requests to other regional Stranding Participants to respond.
- 1. Coordinate regional activities to maximize geographic coverage while facilitating appropriate division of responsibilities among regional Participants according to institutional abilities and authorities, and assisting with coordination and communication between Participants and Federal, State, tribal, and local officials and employees as needed, before, during and after stranding events.
  - 2. Facilitate communication and coordination between Participants.
  - 3. Respond to the Participant's completed requests for authorizations such as requests for parts authorizations, parts transfers, and release determinations.

4. Provide information regarding availability of Prescott Grants and any other relevant NMFS funding opportunities.
5. For emergency stranding events (live or dead), provide and maintain a [24-hour] stranding cellphone or pager number: [RESERVED].

E. Participant Responsibilities: The Participant shall:

1. Comply with laws, regulations, policies and/or guidelines applicable to or promulgated by NMFS that apply to activities under this Agreement; or any Federal, state, tribal or municipal laws that pertain to stranding network operations (*e.g.*, National Park Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge regulations, policies, or permit requirements; municipal water management laws).
2. Cooperate with other members of the [REGION] Stranding Network and the National Marine Mammal Stranding Program as well as Federal, state, tribal and local officials and employees, including NMFS communications staff, in matters supporting the purposes of this Agreement.
3. Be subject to the direction of a designated employee (*e.g.*, NMFS Marine Mammal Stranding Coordinator or NMFS Special Agent) representing the NMFS [REGION] Regional Administrator or Office of Law Enforcement with respect to the taking of a stranded marine mammal.
4. Manage any and all expenses that the Participant incurs associated with the activities authorized by this Agreement, including close-out costs should the Stranding Agreement be modified or terminated. NMFS does not have funds to reimburse participants for expenses incurred in responding to stranding events. However under the marine mammal UME process, funding may be available for costs associated with specific analyses and additional requests in accordance with section 405 of the MMPA UME National Contingency Fund and in coordination with the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events. Additionally, competitive funding opportunities for Stranding Network Participants may be available through the Prescott Stranding Assistance Grant Program ([see https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/john-h-prescott-marine-mammal-rescue-assistance-grant-program](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/john-h-prescott-marine-mammal-rescue-assistance-grant-program)).
5. Promote human and public safety by taking precautions against injury or disease to any network personnel, volunteers, and the general public when working with live or dead marine mammals. Immediately notify the NMFS Stranding Coordinator of an injury or illness resulting from contact with a marine mammal that requires the injured party to seek medical attention.
6. Notify immediately the NMFS Stranding Coordinator upon learning of any diseases of concern (*e.g.*, national and state reportable and/or zoonotic diseases; please see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control, or your state public health department list) that are detected and/or confirmed that could be a potential hazard for public health or animal health;



7. Follow requirements for the transfer of marine mammal parts (50 CFR 216.22 and 216.37):
  - a. Non-diagnostic parts, including research specimens (see Attachment A), parts used for species enhancement, or education, shall be transferred only to persons or labs that are authorized under 50 CFR 216.22 or 216.37. A unique field number assigned by NMFS (*e.g.*, NMFS Registration Number) or the Participant must be marked on or affixed to the marine mammal part or container. The Regional Administrator must be notified of the transfer within 30 days after the transfer occurs (50 CFR 216.22(5)(v)).
  - b. Diagnostic specimens (see Attachment A) may be transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use without any additional authorizations or notifications. If specimens are positive or suspect for a reportable disease, proper shipping protocols are required as well as informing the lab, researchers, or SA participant the parts are being transferred to.
8. Work cooperatively with the NMFS and the USCG in a hazardous waste spill (*i.e.*, oil spills) ICS, if implemented. If you do not want to work cooperatively with NMFS and the USCG during a hazardous waste spill, you should notify the NMFS Regional Administrator as part of your application for a Stranding Agreement, or minimally in writing within 5 days of a request from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator during an ongoing spill response.
9. Abide by all confidentiality requirements as required during active investigations (*i.e.*, NMFS Office of Law enforcement) or litigation (*i.e.*, Department of Justice). These confidentiality conditions may also require all data to be withheld from public release until the investigation or case concludes.
10. Notify the NMFS Regional Administrator in writing within 30 days of any changes in its key personnel (see Attachment A), capabilities, Designee organizations, and/or ability to respond within its geographic coverage area.
11. If requested, coordinate with NMFS and other relevant Agencies (*e.g.*, Federal, state, tribal, and local governments) to develop and implement a cooperative media and communications plan relating to stranding events.
12. Notify the Regional Coordinator for their awareness of any prospective media requests, such as documentary films, television programs, and social media live streams.
13. Conduct photo documentation (still or video) for other than diagnostic or identification purposes (such as dorsal fin identification, documentation of lesions, scars, etc.) that does not interfere with or influence the conduct of the stranding responders and response in any way or cause additional harassment to marine mammals.
14. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, provide copies of any photographs, films, and/or videotapes documenting any stranding, particularly for those strandings when human interactions are reported or suspected. Any photography, film and/or videotape of the stranding response

used for educational or commercial purposes of stranding response by the Participant should include a credit, acknowledgment, or caption indicating that the stranding response was conducted under a Stranding Agreement [#SA – REG – YYYY– ##] between NMFS and the Participant under the authority of the MMPA or ESA. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publicly display the photograph, film, and/or videotape without consent of the owner, unless required to release a copy under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act).

15. By its nature, the handling of stranded marine mammals (dead or alive) is potentially a dangerous activity. The Participant shall indemnify and hold harmless the United States Government from any and all losses, damages, or liability -or claims therefore -on account of personal injury, death, or property damage of any nature whatsoever, arising out of the activities of the Participant, his/her/its employees, his/her/its qualified representatives, designees, subcontractors, volunteers, or agents. Liability for person(s) acting under this agreement is addressed in sections 406(a) and (b) of the MMPA [16 U.S.C. 1421e).
  - a. *Reserve for state agencies/universities and replace above language with:* [By its nature, the handling of stranded marine mammals (dead or alive) is potentially a dangerous activity. To the extent allowed by law and without waiving its sovereign immunity, [State Agency] shall indemnify and hold harmless the United States Government from any and all losses, damages, or liability or claims thereof on account of personal injury, death, or property damage of any nature whatsoever, arising out of the activities of [State Agency], his/her/its employees, his/her/its qualified representatives, designees, subcontractors, volunteers, or agents. Liability for person(s) acting under this agreement is addressed in Section 406(a) and (b) of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1421e)].
16. Provide accurate and honest information in all reports and communications to NMFS.
17. Maintain records upon which required reports are based for at least 3 years on-site, except where a longer period is specified (e.g., 15 years for rehabilitation cases, see Attachment D *NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release – Standard for Rehabilitation Facilities*).
18. Upon request by the NMFS Regional Administrator, allow the Regional Stranding Coordinator, other appropriate NMFS employees, or any other appropriate person duly designated by the Regional Administrator, to inspect the facilities and inspect and/or request records that pertain to stranding network activities.
19. To the extent practicable and to the extent consistent with MMPA and other applicable authorities, coordinate with local state and federally-recognized Native American tribes, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and other indigenous Pacific islanders, and other aboriginal peoples during stranding

event responses. It is recommended that a communication and coordination protocol should be developed prior to stranding events between the Participant and each interested entity.

20. *Reserved for GARFO/SERO:* [Verbally report any right whale sightings that occur or are reported as part of their normal activities. See Attachment B for contact information.]

## Article III: Dead Animal Response

[Reserved]

Or

- A. The Participant may take species of marine mammals under the MMPA for the purpose of dead animal investigation and response.**
- B.** Subject to the conditions contained in this Agreement, the MMPA, and the implementing regulations, the Participant may take dead stranded marine mammals or parts therefrom for the collection of data on the health and health trends of wild populations, for the detection of marine mammal UMEs, for the detection of signs of human interaction, for research or education on marine mammal biology and life history, for the determination of cause of death, for the detection of human caused and natural mortality, or for other research as deemed appropriate by the NMFS. These activities specifically include: obtaining measurements and biological samples from dead stranded marine mammals; disposing, or assisting in the disposal, of the carcass of dead stranded marine mammals at a suitable location (following the Marine Mammal Carcass Disposal Best Practices); and taking and transporting dead stranded or floating dead marine mammals, or parts therefrom, to facilities or individuals approved pursuant to 50 CFR 216.22 or 216.27 for scientific research, maintenance in a properly curated, professionally accredited scientific collection, or for educational purposes. Note that stranding response activities may require additional authorization(s) from entities with land or water jurisdiction.
- C. Terms and Conditions for Dead Animal Response**

1. Response

- a. The Participant shall respond as practicable to reports of dead stranded marine mammals within the geographic range or response specified under Article I B.2. If the Participant is the closest and/or first responder, the Participant is considered the on-site coordinating organization and is in charge of all on-site activities. In certain circumstances such as a UME, mass stranding, or endangered marine mammal stranding, NMFS may implement the ICS structure and designate an on-site coordinator to be in charge of the event (see Article II C.9). In all situations, the Participant will cooperate with Federal, state, tribal, and local government officials and employees and other stranding network participants when responding to these strandings, and follow all applicable Federal, state, tribal, or local laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidelines. If the Participant receives a verified report of a dead stranded marine mammal and does not have the capability to respond appropriately to the report, the Participant shall notify the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and/or adjacent stranding network participants within 24 hours if feasible.
- b. If the Participant leaves a dead animal at the stranding site, or if responding to multiple animals, such as the case of a UME or mass stranding response, the Participant shall, if feasible, mark each animal

with a tag or mark, such as roto-tags or grease stick, to assist with data collection and to prevent multiple reports of the same animal(s).

- c. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and if feasible and practicable, the Participant will assist with stranding response in neighboring areas outside the Participant geographic range (specified in Article I B2).

**2. Data Collection and Reporting** – The Participant shall collect and provide the following information for each stranded marine mammal they respond to:

- a. Complete the Marine Mammal Stranding Report – Level A form (NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178) for each stranded marine mammal. Complete the Human Interaction form (also NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0468-0178) for each applicable stranded marine mammal (see Examiner’s Guide for when this form should be completed). Completed forms shall be sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator via the NMFS National Marine Mammal Stranding Database or via submission of a paper Level A form in writing (see Attachment B), no later than 30 days after responding to the stranding event. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and if feasible, the Participant shall provide preliminary data (verbal or written) from the Level A - Marine Mammal Stranding Report within 24 hours.
- b. Upon request and as resources are available, collect additional Level B and Level C data, including skin or other samples for genetic analysis at a NMFS lab, to assist NMFS with stock assessments (16 U.S.C. 1386) or other mandates of the MMPA.
- c. Notify the Regional Stranding Coordinator of the following cases within 24 hours or according to the specific reporting guidance provided by the Stranding Coordinator:
  - 1. Possible or confirmed human interactions (including military activity).
  - 2. Suspected UMEs.
  - 3. Extralimital or out-of-habitat situations.
  - 4. Mass stranding events and/or mass mortalities.
  - 5. Large whale strandings.
  - 6. Any stranding involving endangered or threatened species or identified species of concern [list species].
- d. In certain circumstances (*e.g.*, oil spill, listed or rare species stranding, UME, possible human interaction case, extralimital or out-of-habitat situation), the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may request necropsies be conducted by a NMFS designated Necropsy Team Leader, a specific sampling protocol be followed, samples be stored in a certain manner or location, or that there be additional and expedited reporting (verbal or written) of Level B and C data, such as analytical results and necropsy reports, if available. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish data submitted under this section without

consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act).

- e. Collect and make available any samples, gear, debris, or other objects (*e.g.*, tissues, bullets, arrows, net webbing, etc.) recovered from a stranded marine mammal that may provide evidence of human interaction or may otherwise be necessary for law enforcement or Federal litigation. The Participant must comply with chain of custody procedures or any other instructions as specified and supported by NMFS [REGION] and/or NMFS Office of Law Enforcement personnel.
3. **Parts Disposition** - Diagnostic parts, tissue samples, fluid specimens, hard, and soft parts may be transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use for the Participant without any additional authorizations. For non-diagnostic parts or samples:
- a. Retention: Marine mammal parts may be retained by the Participant for education and/or research purposes, provided they are properly indicated in the “Specimen Disposition” field of NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648- 0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).
  - b. Retention of parts from ESA-listed species: Authorization to take and retain parts from ESA listed species in the [REGION] is provided under a MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Coordinator, and requires authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and Permit PI or CI.
  - c. Transfers to and from Other Organizations within the Stranding Network: The Participant may transfer and receive marine mammal parts from other members of the [REGION] Stranding Network for education and/or research purposes with no additional authorization or notification, provided the transfer is properly indicated in the “Specimen Disposition” field of NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).
  - d. Transfers to Other Organizations Outside the Stranding Network: Report to the NMFS Regional Administrator (see Attachment B) within 30 days of the stranding event, the transfer of any parts salvaged from the stranded marine mammal collected under this Agreement as required by 50 CFR 216.22 or 50 CFR 216.37. The Participant must ensure the receiving institution is authorized by the NMFS Regional Administrator to receive marine mammal parts. The Participant must provide the institution name where specimen materials have been deposited and ensure that the retained or transferred parts are marked

with the field identification number or assigned NMFS Registration number in the “Specimen Disposition” field on the NOAA Form 89864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report – Level “A” Form) and ensure that retained or transferred parts are marked with the field identification number or the NMFS Registration Number.

- e. Transfers upon Termination of Stranding Agreement: Upon suspension or termination of the Stranding Agreement, NMFS may authorize retention or may require that the Participant transfer marine mammal parts, samples, and data collected while the Stranding Agreement was active. These transfers may extend beyond the official termination date of this Stranding Agreement, per conditions set forth by NMFS when confirming the suspension or termination of this Stranding Agreement.
4. **Site cleanup** - The Participant shall make every reasonable effort to assist in the clean-up of beach areas where their activities (*e.g.*, necropsy or specimen collection) occur under this Agreement that may contribute to soiling of the site.

## **Article IV: Live Animal Response: First Response**

[Reserved]

Or

- A. The Participant may take species of marine mammals covered under the MMPA for the purpose of live stranding first response (initial assessment and care at the site of stranding and assist in the appropriate disposition of the animal), [hazing/deterrence of out of habitat animals or to prevent strandings,] beach triage, beach release, temporary (not to exceed 24 hours unless extended by a Regional Coordinator) holding for assessment and triage, translocation and/or transportation to a NMFS authorized rehabilitation center within the [REGION].**
1. The Participant must take live stranded marine mammals in a humane manner (as defined in 50 CFR 216.3, see Attachment A) for the protection or welfare of the marine mammal. [Reserve for those w/ Article III authorization: If the animal dies during the course of response and/or investigation, then the terms and responsibilities contained in Article III of this Agreement become operative.] In addition to the activities authorized in Articles I, II, (*reserved Article III*), the Participant is authorized to implement the following activities under this article:
    - a. Take measurements [and customized list of authorized procedures – *e.g.*, collect blood or other diagnostic samples] from live stranded marine mammals.
    - b. Return live stranded marine mammals, as directed by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, to their natural habitat, including tagging or marking such animals.
    - c. Transport live stranded marine mammals for rescue and rehabilitation to a NMFS approved rehabilitation facility or NMFS approved (verbal

or written) temporary (< 24 hours) holding facility. [Treatment may be given during transport, for animal welfare and optimal outcomes].

- d. [Perform humane euthanasia. Euthanasia shall only be performed by the attending veterinarian or by a person acting under the direction of the attending veterinarian and following approved guidelines such as those referenced in Attachment C (AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition, 3rd Edition of the CRC Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine) as well as the Marine Mammal Euthanasia Best Practices. When using controlled drugs, such person(s) shall comply with all applicable state and Federal laws and regulations (*i.e.*, registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration). Authorization for euthanasia of ESA-listed species is provided under the current MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, as amended, and requires prior approval and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator.]

2. This Agreement does not authorize any projects involving “intrusive research” (as defined in 50 CFR 216.3). Measurements or sampling for scientific research purposes (*i.e.*, outside the scope of accepted diagnostic and treatment practices for the care of an animal) must be authorized under a NMFS MMPA/ESA scientific research permit.

## **B. Terms and Conditions for Live Stranding: First Response**

### **1. Response**

- a. The Participant shall respond to reports of live stranded marine mammals [Reserved for taxa and schedule]. If the Participant is the closest and/or first responder, the [Participant acronym] is considered to be the on-site coordinator and is in charge of all on-site activities. In certain circumstances such as a UME, mass stranding, or endangered marine mammal stranding, NMFS may implement the ICS structure and designate an on-site coordinator to be in charge of the event (see Article II C9). In all situations, the Participant will communicate and cooperate with Federal, state, tribal, and local government officials and employees and other stranding network participants when responding to these strandings. If the Participant receives a verified report of a live stranded marine mammal and does not have the capability to respond appropriately to the report, the Participant shall notify the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator without delay. Also, if the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator receives a report of a live stranded marine mammal, the Regional Stranding Coordinator may contact the Participant to determine whether the Participant has the capability to respond to the stranding. If the Participant cannot respond in a timely manner, the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may request another Stranding Network participant to respond.
- b. The Participant shall take all steps reasonably practicable under the circumstances to prevent further injury to any live stranded marine



mammal, injury to any network personnel, volunteers, government personnel and the general public.

- c. The Participant shall tag or mark any animals that are immediately released to their natural habitat using a NMFS pre-approved tag, such as one-bolt roto-tag (cattle ear tag, *e.g.*, Caisley, Allflex, y-tex or similar), or marking method such as hair dye or paint stick. Application of other tagging methods including VHF and satellite tags or marking methods including freeze and hot branding must first be approved or pre-approved by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator. Tagging and post-tagging activities are restricted to monitoring the success of marine mammals released to the wild. Any telemetry projects outside the scope of monitoring the success of a release must be authorized under a NMFS MMPA/ESA scientific research permit.
  - d. If the Participant determines that it is necessary to temporarily hold or triage a stranded marine mammal at a separate site from the NMFS approved rehabilitation facility, the animal(s) cannot be moved until the Participant obtains verbal approval from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator. Written documentation of the need for an interim location and written concurrence from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator with any associated conditions must be provided at the earliest time practicable within 24 hours.
  - e. If the Participant considers responding to an “out-of-habitat” or free-swimming marine mammal in distress (including injured or entangled), the Participant must first contact the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator for approval and discuss plans for live capture, any required authorizations (including determining whether the response will be conducted under the authority of this Stranding Agreement or needs to be covered under the MMPA/ESA Permit), and/or needs for assistance. The NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may require a NMFS employee to be present at the time of capture.
  - f. [RESERVED or The participant shall follow the guidance provided by the REGION in attachment E. "Disposition of live stranded marine mammals", and shall consult with NMFS stranding coordinator and the attending veterinarian to make a determination regarding immediate release, rehabilitation or euthanasia of a live stranded marine mammal.]
2. Data Collection and Reporting – The Participant shall collect and provide the following information for each stranded marine mammal they respond to:
- a. Complete the Marine Mammal Stranding Report – Level A form (NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178) for each stranded marine mammal. Complete the Human Interaction form (also NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0468-0178) for each applicable stranded marine mammal (see Examiner’s Guide for when this form should be completed). Completed forms shall be sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator via the NMFS National Marine Mammal Stranding Database or in writing (see Attachment B), no later than 30 days after

responding to the stranding event. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, and if feasible, the Participant shall provide preliminary data (verbal or written) from the Level A - Marine Mammal Stranding Report within 24 hours.

- b. If temporarily (<24 hours) holding a stranded animal under NMFS approval prior to transferring to a NMFS approved longer-term rehabilitation facility acting in accordance with this Article, the Participant should not complete the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Disposition Report (NOAA Form 89878, OMB # 0648-0178), as this form will be completed by the long-term rehabilitation facility.
  - c. Upon request and as resources are available, collect additional Level B and Level C data, including skin or other samples for genetic analysis at a NMFS lab, to assist NMFS with stock assessments (16 U.S.C. 1386) or other mandates of the MMPA.
  - d. Notify the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator of the following cases within 24 hours or according to the specific reporting guidance provided by the Stranding Coordinator:
    1. Possible or confirmed human interactions (including military activity).
    2. Suspected UMEs.
    3. Extralimital or out-of-habitat situations (see B.1.e. of this Article)
    4. Mass stranding events and/or mass mortalities.
    5. Large whale strandings.
    6. Any stranding involving endangered or threatened species or identified species of concern: [list species].
  - e. In certain circumstances (*e.g.*, oil spill, listed or rare species stranding, UME, possible human interaction case, extralimital or out-of-habitat situation), the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may request necropsies be conducted by a Necropsy Team Leader, a specific sampling protocol be followed, samples be stored in a certain manner or location, or that there be additional and expedited reporting (verbal or written) of Level B and C data, such as analytical results and necropsy reports, if available. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish data submitted under this section without consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act).
  - f. Collect and make available any samples, gear, debris, or other objects (*e.g.*, tissues, bullets, arrows, net webbing, etc.) recovered from a stranded marine mammal that may provide evidence of human interaction or may otherwise be necessary for law enforcement or Federal litigation. The Participant must comply with chain of custody procedures or any other instructions as specified and supported by NMFS Office of Law Enforcement personnel.
3. [Reserved for those without Article III authorization: Parts Disposition – Diagnostic parts, tissue samples, fluid specimens, parts or cells may be

transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use without any additional authorizations. For non-diagnostic parts or samples:

- a. Retention: Marine mammal parts may be retained by the Participant for education and/or research purposes, provided they are properly indicated in the “Specimen Disposition” field of the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form (NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648- 0178). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).
- b. Retention of parts from ESA-listed species: Authorization to take and retain parts from ESA listed species in the [REGION] is provided under a MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Coordinator, and requires authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and Permit PI or CI.
- c. Transfers to and from Other Organizations within the Stranding Network: The Participant may transfer and receive marine mammal parts from other members of the [REGION] Stranding Network for education and/or research purposes with no additional authorization or notification, provided the transfer is properly indicated in the “Specimen Disposition” field of NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).
- d. Transfers to Other Organizations Outside the Stranding Network: Report to the NMFS Regional Administrator (see Attachment B) within 30 days of the stranding event, the transfer of any parts salvaged from the stranded marine mammal collected under this Agreement as required by 50 CFR 216.22 or 50 CFR 216.37. The Participant must ensure the receiving institution is authorized by the NMFS Regional Administrator to receive marine mammal parts. The Participant must provide the institution name where specimen materials have been deposited and ensure that the retained or transferred parts are marked with the field identification number or assigned NMFS Registration number in the “Specimen Disposition” field on the NOAA Form 89864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report – Level “A” Form) and ensure that retained or transferred parts are marked with the field identification number or the NMFS Registration Number.
- e. Transfers upon Termination of Stranding Agreement: Upon suspension or termination of the Stranding Agreement, NMFS may authorize retention or may require that the Participant transfer marine mammal parts, samples, and data collected while the Stranding Agreement was active. These transfers may extend beyond the official termination date of this Stranding Agreement, per conditions set forth by NMFS when confirming the suspension or termination of this Stranding Agreement.]

4. **Site Cleanup** – The Participant shall make every reasonable effort to assist in the clean-up of beach areas where their activities (*e.g.*, euthanasia, necropsy, or specimen collection) occur under this Agreement.

# Article V: Live Animal Response: Rehabilitation and Final Disposition

[Reserved]

Or

**A. The Participant may take live stranded marine mammals in a humane manner with the goal of rehabilitation and release. If the animal dies during the course of rehabilitation, then the terms and responsibilities contained in Article III of this Agreement become operative. In addition to the activities authorized in Articles I, II, (reserved III, IV) of this Agreement and subject to the conditions contained in this Agreement, the MMPA, and the implementing regulations, the Participant is authorized to implement the following activities under this article:**

1. In accordance with applicable regulations and NMFS guidelines and best practices, transfer marine mammals to another NMFS approved rehabilitation facility within the [REGION] for:
  - a. Release back to the wild;
  - b. Temporary placement in a scientific research facility holding a current NMFS scientific research permit and a United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Research License; or
  - c. Permanent disposition at an authorized facility (i.e. holds an APHIS exhibitors license or research registration {7 U.S.C. 2131 et seq.} or with Department of Defense authorization) after consultation with, and authorization by, the NMFS Office of Protected Resources Permits, Conservation and Education Division.
2. Conduct scientific research on stranded animals in a rehabilitation facility, only if the responsible individual has a NMFS scientific research permit and the facility holds an APHIS research license in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act (see 50 CFR 216.27 (c)(6)).
3. Return rehabilitated stranded marine mammals to their natural habitat. A decision regarding whether or not a marine mammal has the potential to be released must be made as early as possible during the rehabilitation period. Any marine mammal eligible for release must be released as early as possible and no later than six months after being taken for rehabilitation unless the attending veterinarian determines that: the marine mammal might adversely affect marine mammals in the wild; release is unlikely to be successful due to the physical condition and behavior of the marine mammal; or more time is needed to make a determination. Release plans must be submitted to the NMFS Regional Administrator at least 15 days prior to the release, unless advanced notice is waived by the NMFS Regional Administrator. The NMFS Regional Administrator may require the participant to provide additional information, modify the release plan, or dispose of the marine mammal in another manner (see 50 CFR 216.27(a) and the “*Standards for Release of Marine Mammal*”).

*Following Rehabilitation*”).

4. Tag rehabilitated stranded marine mammals, strictly for purposes of monitoring success of release to the wild using a NMFS approved tag, such as one-bolt roto-tag, cattle ear tags, or freeze branding. Application of other tagging methods must first be approved by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator. Tagging and post-tagging activities are restricted to monitoring the success of marine mammals released to the wild. Any projects outside the scope of monitoring the success of a release must be authorized under a NMFS MMPA/ESA scientific research permit.
5. Perform humane euthanasia. Euthanasia shall only be performed by the attending veterinarian or by a person acting under the direction of the attending veterinarian and following approved guidelines such as those referenced in Attachment C (*AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020 Edition, 3rd Edition of the CRC Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine*). When using controlled drugs, such person(s) shall comply with all applicable state and Federal laws and regulations (*i.e.*, registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration). Authorization for the euthanasia of ESA-listed species is provided under a MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, and requires prior approval and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator.

**B. Terms and Conditions for Live Animal Response: Rehabilitation, Release, or Final Disposition Determination.**

1. Rehabilitation

- a. The Participant shall comply with laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidelines applicable to or promulgated by NMFS that apply to activities under this Agreement. The Participant must also have all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitation facilities, and must comply with all Federal, state, and municipal laws related to operations of the facility.
- b. The Participant shall be responsible for the custody of any living marine mammal taken pursuant to this Article using standards for humane care and for practicing accepted medical evaluation and treatment as described in the *NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*.
- c. The Participant shall not exceed their maximum holding capacity for cetaceans and pinnipeds based on the minimum standard space requirements, the number of animals housed in each holding area, and the availability of qualified personnel as described in the *NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities* unless a written waiver is first received from the NMFS Regional Administrator. The NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may offer assistance for relocating animals to another rehabilitation facility and in supporting decisions to euthanize when necessary. Other considerations for determining maximum holding capacity include:

1. On-site veterinary and husbandry care, volunteer support, and experienced staff.
  2. Adequate food and medical supplies and medical test capabilities.
  3. Isolation for marine mammals.
  4. Adequate water quality.
  5. Limited public access.
  6. Ability to maintain current, accurate, and thorough records.
- d. The Participant shall follow contingency plans approved by NMFS for the care of marine mammals in rehabilitation during planned events (*e.g.*, construction) or unexpected events such as mass strandings, UMEs, natural disasters (*e.g.*, hurricanes, harmful algal blooms, El Niño), and/or hazardous waste spills.
  - e. The Participant shall separate rehabilitating marine mammals from other wild or domestic animals and from any animal in permanent captivity.
  - f. The Participant shall prohibit the public display and training for performance of stranded rehabilitating marine mammals as required by 50 CFR 216.27(c)(5). This includes any aspect of a program involving interaction with the public.
  - g. The Participant shall follow any additional requirements for rehabilitation (*e.g.*, isolation) and release prescribed by NMFS in consultation with the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events during a marine mammal UME, as recommended in the *National Contingency Plan for Response to Unusual Marine Mammal Mortality Events*; D.W. Wilkinson, NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-OPR-9, September 1996.
  - h. The Participant must temporarily refuse admittance of new cases of stranded marine mammals due to the severity of a disease outbreak when instructed by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, in consultation with the UME Working Group or other experts, if diseases of concern have been reported (*e.g.*, diseases associated with a UME, zoonotic diseases).
  - i. The Participant shall not transfer a marine mammal being rehabilitated under this Agreement to another facility without prior approval from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator.
  - j. [Reserved, or: If a marine mammal dies while in rehabilitation, Article III applies.]

## 2. Release

### a. Release Recommendation

1. The Participant shall make a final written recommendation for each animal in rehabilitation as early as possible, and no more than six months after its date of rescue, for release or non-

release determination to the NMFS Regional Administrator according to any applicable NMFS release guidelines and regulations including 50 CFR 216.27 (release, non-releasable, and disposition under special exception permits for rehabilitated marine mammal).

2. The final recommendation shall include a release recommendation signed by the Participant's attending veterinarian, attesting that the marine mammal is either medically and behaviorally suitable for release in accordance with the NMFS Standards for Release, or not suitable for release for reasons listed in the letter.
3. The final recommendation shall include a concurrence signature from the Participant's Authorized Representative or Signatory of the Stranding Agreement (see *Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*).

b. Release Plan

1. If the Participant recommends release, a release plan is also required for review and approval by NMFS. A template release plan is available in the *Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*.
2. The Participant is responsible for communication and coordination with local land management agencies with jurisdiction over proposed release sites, including obtaining prior approval if necessary.
3. The release plan must be submitted to and approved by the NMFS Regional Administrator (or their designee) at least 15 days prior to the release, unless advanced notice is waived by the NMFS Regional Administrator, as required by 50 CFR 216.27(a).

3. Data Collection and Reporting

- a. Diseases of concern reporting - The Participant shall immediately notify the NMFS Stranding Coordinator upon learning of any diseases of concern (*e.g.*, national and state reportable and/or zoonotic diseases; please see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control, or your state public health department list) that are detected and/or confirmed that could be a potential hazard for public health or animal health.
- b. Disposition Reports- Upon release or other disposition of any marine mammal under this Article, the Participant shall complete the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Disposition Report Form (NOAA Form 89878, OMB # 0648-0178). Completed forms shall be sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator via the NMFS National Marine Mammal Stranding Database or in writing (see Attachment B), no later than 30 days after final disposition of the marine mammal. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and if feasible, the Participant shall provide preliminary data (verbal or written) from the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Disposition Report within 24 hours.



- c. In certain circumstances (*e.g.*, oil spill, listed or rare species stranding, UME, possible human interaction case, extralimital or out-of-habitat situation), the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may request a specific sampling protocol be followed, samples be stored in a certain manner or location, necropsies be conducted by a Necropsy Team Leader (if applicable), or that there be additional and expedited reporting (verbal or written) of Level B and C data, such as analytical results and necropsy reports, if available. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish data submitted under this section without consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act).
- d. [Reserved for Regions that require an Annual Summary: Annual Summary Reports - The Participant shall submit an annual report (due January 31 each year) summarizing the Participant's rehabilitation activities for the past calendar year. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish the data without consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act). The reports shall include the following for each animal in rehabilitation:
  - 1. Field number
  - 2. Species
  - 3. If the animal was released:
    - a. Date
    - b. Location of release (latitude and longitude)
    - c. Type and specifics of post-release monitoring (roto-tag, satellite tag, etc.) and any tag or brand numbers used
    - d. Duration of post-release monitoring. Status of post-release monitoring
    - f. Indications from monitoring relative to the success of the rehabilitation effort
    - g. Disposition of tracking data (if applicable)
    - h. Photos if possible
  - 4. If the animal was transferred to permanent captivity:
    - a. Date of transport (or retention if applicable)
    - b. Location of permanent care
  - 5. If the animal was euthanized, provide the date of euthanasia
  - 6. If the animal died, provide the date of death

4. **[Reserved for those without Article III Authorization: Parts Disposition.** Diagnostic parts, tissue samples, fluid specimens, parts or cells may be transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use without any additional authorizations. For non-diagnostic parts or samples:

- f. **Retention:** Marine mammal parts may be retained by the Participant for education and/or research purposes, provided they are properly indicated in the "Specimen Disposition" field of NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - "Level A" Form). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field

identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).

- g. Retention of parts from ESA-listed species: Authorization to take and retain parts from ESA listed species in the [REGION] is provided under a MMPA/ESA permit issued to the NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Coordinator, and requires authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and Permit PI or CI.
- h. Transfers to and from Other Organizations within the Stranding Network: The Participant may transfer and receive marine mammal parts from other members of the [REGION] Stranding Network for education and/or research purposes with no additional authorization or notification, provided the transfer is properly indicated in the “Specimen Disposition” field of NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form). Parts and/or containers must be marked with the field identification number assigned by the Participant or by NMFS (*i.e.*, NMFS registration number).
- i. Transfers to Other Organizations Outside the Stranding Network: Report to the NMFS Regional Administrator (see Attachment B) within 30 days of the stranding event, the transfer of any parts salvaged from the stranded marine mammal collected under this Agreement as required by 50 CFR 216.22 or 50 CFR 216.37. The Participant must ensure the receiving institution is authorized by the NMFS Regional Administrator to receive marine mammal parts. The Participant must provide the institution name where specimen materials have been deposited and ensure that the retained or transferred parts are marked with the field identification number or assigned NMFS Registration number in the “Specimen Disposition” field on the NOAA Form 89864, OMB #0648-0178 (the Marine Mammal Stranding Report – Level “A” Form) and ensure that retained or transferred parts are marked with the field identification number or the NMFS Registration Number.
- j. Transfers upon Termination of Stranding Agreement: Upon suspension or termination of the Stranding Agreement, NMFS may authorize retention or may require that the Participant transfer marine mammal parts, samples, and data collected while the Stranding Agreement was active. These transfers may extend beyond the official termination date of this Stranding Agreement, per conditions set forth by NMFS when confirming the suspension or termination of this Stranding Agreement.]

## Article VI: Live Animal Response: Short-Term Holding

[Reserved]

Or

- A. The Participant may take live stranded marine mammals in a humane manner with the goal of short-term holding (24 to 96 hours) for assessment and triage, translocation and/or transportation to a NMFS authorized rehabilitation center within the [REGION]. If the animal dies during the short-term holding period, then the terms and responsibilities contained in Article III of this Agreement become operative. In addition to the activities authorized in Articles I, II, (reserved III, IV) of this Agreement and subject to the conditions contained in this Agreement, the MMPA, and the implementing regulations, the Participant is authorized to implement the following activities under this Article:**
1. In accordance with applicable regulations and NMFS guidelines and best practices, transfer marine mammals held for less than 96 hours to another NMFS approved rehabilitation facility within the [REGION or NETWORK] for long-term (*i.e.*, greater than 96 hours) rehabilitation. [Treatment may be given during transport, for animal welfare and optimal outcomes]. All transfers must be pre-approved by the [REGION] [Reserved: on a case-by-case basis OR in a blanket written approval]
  2. The Participant must take marine mammals in short-term holding in a humane manner (as defined in 50 CFR 216.3, see Attachment A). [*Reserve for those w/ Article III authorization:* If the animal dies during the course of response and/or investigation, then the terms and responsibilities contained in Article III of this Agreement become operative.] [*Reserve for those without Article III authorization:* If the animal dies during the course of response and/or investigation, then the carcass must be transferred to another Stranding Agreement holder, at the direction of and in coordination with the NMFS [REGION] Stranding Coordinator.] In addition to the activities authorized in Articles I, II, [*reserved Article III, Article IV*], the Participant is authorized to implement the following activities under this Article:
    - a. Take measurements [and customized list of authorized procedures – *e.g.*, collect blood or other diagnostic samples] from marine mammals in short-term holding for health assessment.
    - b. Remove entanglements and hooks.
    - c. Apply tags or marks for identification [may be further customized or specified]
    - d. Give medical treatments or provide supportive therapy [may be further customized or specified]
  3. Perform humane euthanasia. Euthanasia shall only be performed by the attending veterinarian or by a person acting under the direction of the attending veterinarian and following approved guidelines such as those referenced in Attachment C (AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals: 2020

Edition, 3rd Edition of the CRC Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine). When using controlled drugs, such person(s) shall comply with all applicable state and Federal laws and regulations (*i.e.*, registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration). Authorization for the euthanasia of ESA-listed species provided under MMPA/ESA Permit No. 18786, as amended, and requires prior approval and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator.

4. [Reserved or for organizations without Article III – Conduct necropsies of animals that die in care or during transport.]

## **B. Terms and Conditions for Short-Term Holding**

1. The Participant shall comply with laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidelines applicable to or promulgated by NMFS that apply to activities under this Agreement. The Participant must also have all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitation facilities, and must comply with all Federal, state, and municipal laws related to operations of the facility.
2. The Participant shall be responsible for the custody of any living marine mammal taken pursuant to this Article using standards for humane care and for practicing accepted medical evaluation and treatment for short-term holding as described in the *NMFS Final Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities– Standards for Short-Term Holding Facilities*.
3. The Participant shall not exceed their maximum short-term holding capacity for cetaceans and pinnipeds based on the minimum standard space requirements, the number of animals housed in each holding area, and the availability of qualified personnel as described in the *NMFS Final Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities– Standards for Short-Term Holding Facilities* unless a written waiver is first received from the NMFS Regional Administrator. The NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may offer assistance for relocating animals to another rehabilitation facility and in supporting decisions to euthanize when necessary. Other considerations for determining maximum holding capacity include:
  - a. On-site veterinary care, volunteer support, and experienced staff.
  - b. Adequate food and medical supplies and medical test capabilities.
  - c. Isolation for marine mammals.
  - d. Adequate water supply.
  - e. Limited public access.
4. Ability to maintain current, accurate, and thorough records. The Participant shall follow contingency plans approved by NMFS for the care of marine mammals in rehabilitation during planned events (*e.g.*, construction) or unexpected events such as mass strandings, UMEs, natural disasters (*e.g.*, hurricanes, harmful algal blooms, El Niño), and/or hazardous waste spills.
5. The Participant shall separate rehabilitating marine mammals from other wild or domestic animals and from any animal in permanent captivity.
6. The Participant shall prohibit the public display and training for performance of stranded rehabilitating marine mammals as required by 50 CFR

216.27(c)(5). This includes any aspect of a program involving interaction with the public.

7. The Participant shall follow any additional requirements for short-term holding (*e.g.*, isolation) prescribed by NMFS in consultation with the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events during a marine mammal UME, as recommended in the *National Contingency Plan for Response to Unusual Marine Mammal Mortality Events*; D.W. Wilkinson, NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-OPR-9, September 1996.
8. The Participant must temporarily refuse admittance of new cases of stranded marine mammals due to the severity of a disease outbreak when instructed by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, in consultation with the UME Working Group or other experts, if diseases of concern have been reported (*e.g.*, diseases associated with a UME, zoonotic diseases).
9. The Participant shall not transfer a marine mammal being rehabilitated under this Agreement to another facility without prior approval from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator, per A(1).

### C. Data Collection and Reporting

1. Diseases of Concern Reporting - The Participant shall immediately notify the NMFS Stranding Coordinator upon learning of any diseases of concern (*e.g.*, national and state reportable and/or zoonotic diseases; please see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control, or your state public health department list) that are detected and/or confirmed that could be a potential hazard for public health or animal.
2. Disposition Reports – The Participant shall complete the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Disposition Report (NOAA Form 89878, OMB # 0648-0178) for all animals held in short-term holding (24-96 hours). This report shall be sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator via the NMFS National Marine Mammal Stranding Database or in writing (see Attachment B), no later than 30 days after responding to the stranding event. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and if feasible, the Participant shall provide preliminary data (verbal or written) from the Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Disposition Form within 24 hours.
3. In certain circumstances (*e.g.*, oil spill, listed or rare species stranding, UME, possible human interaction case, extralimital or out-of-habitat situation), the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may request a specific sampling protocol be followed, samples be stored in a certain manner or location, necropsies be conducted by a Necropsy Team Leader (if applicable), or that there be additional and expedited reporting (verbal or written) of Level B and C data, such as analytical results and necropsy reports, if available. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish data submitted under this section without consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act).

4. Collect and make available any samples, gear, debris, or other objects (*e.g.*, tissues, swabs, bullets, arrows, net, webbing, etc.) recovered from a stranded marine mammal that may provide evidence of human interaction or may otherwise be necessary for law enforcement or Federal litigation. The Participant must comply with chain of custody procedures or any other instructions as specified and supported by NMFS [*insert Region*] and/or NMFS Office of Law Enforcement personnel.

**D. Parts Disposition**

1. Diagnostic parts, tissue samples, fluid specimens, parts or cells may be transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use without any additional authorizations.
2. As a short-term holding facility, no parts may be retained by or transferred from this organization for purposes other than diagnostic use (*e.g.*, scientific research or archival) without authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator.

## Article VII: Temporary Participation in the Stranding Network

[Reserved]

Or

Introduction/Description:

This Article is intended to authorize a facility that does not intend to be a long-term, continuing participant in the marine mammal stranding network, but is instead participating in a short-term capacity. This may be for purposes of response to an anthropogenic event such as an oil spill, a marine mammal event such as an Unusual Mortality Event, or to fill a temporary “gap in coverage.” The intent is for a Participant to be able to apply for and receive this SA Article in an expedited manner, and for it to be authorized on a short-term basis until the emergency situation is resolved. Participants must still demonstrate qualifications necessary to undertake the proposed role(s), which will be assessed and approved by NMFS prior to issuance of a SA.

- A. The Participant may take species of marine mammals (cetaceans and pinnipeds, excluding walrus) under the MMPA for the purpose of emergency response to stranded and distressed marine mammals.
1. Subject to the conditions contained in this Agreement, the MMPA, and the implementing regulations, the Participant may take live and/or dead stranded marine mammals or parts therefrom. Participant must collect and make available any samples, gear, debris, or other objects (*e.g.*, tissues, bullets, arrows, net webbing, etc.) recovered from a stranded marine mammal that may provide evidence of human interaction or may otherwise be necessary for law enforcement or Federal litigation. The Participant must comply with chain of custody procedures or any other instructions as specified and supported by NMFS [REGION] and/or NMFS Office of Law Enforcement personnel.
  2. The full suite of response activities may include:
    - a. Reconnaissance activities to identify impacted marine mammals.
    - b. Hazing or deterrence activities to prevent stranding of, or impacts to, marine mammals.
    - c. Recovery activities to collect live or dead stranded marine mammals.
    - d. Processing activities to collect appropriate samples, including necropsy of dead animals.
    - e. Care and rehabilitation activities.
    - f. Providing personnel to conduct these activities.
  3. General considerations:
    - a. Placement of individuals will be subject to availability, logistics, and needs of the temporary facility, but may be coordinated with other organizations including permanent members of the marine mammal stranding network.
    - b. Personnel training (and maintenance of training) is the sole responsibility of the organization. NMFS will endeavor to periodically

provide opportunities for applicable trainings (e.g., oil spill drills and exercises, necropsy training, webinars or other virtual trainings).

- c. Participation as a Temporary Facility may be on a voluntary or paid basis, depending on the arrangements with the Responsible Party and/or Incident Command, Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events, etc. Each incident may be different, and it is the responsibility of the Personnel Organization to determine the compensation structure.
- d. Participants must manage any and all expenses that the Participant incurs associated with the activities authorized by this Agreement, including close-out costs should the Stranding Agreement be modified or terminated. NMFS does not have funds to reimburse volunteers for expenses incurred in responding to stranding events. However under the marine mammal UME process, funding may be available for costs associated with specific analyses and additional requests in accordance with section 405 of the MMPA UME National Contingency Fund and in coordination with the Working Group on Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events. Additionally, competitive funding opportunities for Stranding Network Participants may be available through the Prescott Stranding Assistance Grant Program (see: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/grant/john-h-prescott-marine-mammal-rescue-assistance-grant-program>).

## B. Participant Authorized Roles

1. [Reserved or] **Personnel:** This organization is authorized to provide trained and qualified individuals (as approved by NMFS) to other organizations for the purposes of emergency response.
2. [Reserved or] **Hazing/Deterrence:** This organization is authorized to conduct field activities to haze or deter marine mammals from areas of potential danger (e.g., oiled areas, near-mass strandings, etc.). [May be limited by species, taxa, etc. upon issuance].
3. [Reserved or] **Field Response to Dead Marine mammals:** This organization is authorized to conduct field recovery activities to closely approach, assess, and capture or recover dead animals [May be limited by species, taxa, etc. upon issuance].
4. [Reserved or] **Field Response to Live Marine Mammals:** This organization is authorized to conduct field recovery activities to closely approach, assess, and capture or recover animals determined to be in need of medical attention. [May be limited by species, taxa, etc. upon issuance].
5. [Reserved or] **Processing Facility:** A processing facility has the capacity to fully process/necropsy dead mammals (following appropriate protocols and sample storage requirements needed for evidentiary purposes). [May be limited by species, taxa, etc. upon issuance].
6. [Reserved or] **Stabilization:** A stabilization facility has the ability to



temporarily hold live stranded marine mammals and provide initial “first aid” before moving on to a Primary Care Center. [May be limited by species, taxa, etc. upon issuance].

7. [Reserved or] **Rehabilitation:** These facilities will not receive oiled animals (or wash/de-oil mammals) but can hold and treat clean mammals for extended periods of time to allow for them to return to normal function/health (e.g., zoos/aquaria can fill these roles if off-exhibit holding is available). This facility is also authorized for the release of animals deemed releaseable following rehabilitation in accordance with NMFS regulations (50 CFR 216.27) and the guidance in the *Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*.
  - a. Any marine mammal in rehabilitation shall be isolated from other wild, domestic, or permanently captive animals.
  - b. No public display and training for performance of animals in rehabilitation is permitted. No interaction with any members of the public is permitted.
  
8. [Reserved or] **Primary Oiled Animal Care (oil spill only):** Primary Oiled Animal Care facilities can receive live oiled marine mammals, conduct processing and intake procedures, clean them appropriately (and dispose of the oily waste water in a safe and legal manner), and hold them post-wash until they are cleared for release (e.g., typically larger facilities with full indoor and outdoor holding areas, cleaning space to de-oil mammals, the ability to zone the facility into “hot” and “cold” zones, and the necessary infrastructure (HVAC, water systems) to support spill operations). This facility is also authorized for the release of animals deemed releaseable following rehabilitation in accordance with NMFS regulations (50 CFR 216.27) and the guidance in the *Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*.
  - a. Any marine mammal in rehabilitation shall be isolated from other wild, domestic, or permanently captive animals.
  - b. No public display and training for performance of animals in rehabilitation is permitted. No interaction with any members of the public is permitted.
  
9. [Reserved or List any equipment or resources at the organization that will not be made available to support temporary response, e.g., particular pools, trucks, etc.]

### C. General Restrictions and Responsibilities as a Temporary Facility

1. This authorization is for response within the following geographic area: [insert geographic area] and for the following taxa: [insert taxa or species]
2. In all situations, the Participant will cooperate with Federal, state and local government officials and employees and other stranding network participants when responding to strandings. If the Participant receives a “confirmed by public” report of a stranded marine mammal and does not have the capability to respond appropriately to the report, the Participant shall notify the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and/or adjacent stranding network participants within 24 hours if feasible.

3. The Participant will take all steps reasonably practicable under the circumstances to prevent further injury to any live stranded marine mammal, network responders, volunteers, government personnel, and the general public.
4. If the Participant leaves a dead animal at the stranding site, or if a live stranded animal is immediately released from the stranding site, the Participant shall, whenever feasible, mark each animal with a tag or mark, such as roto-tags or grease stick, to assist with data collection and to prevent multiple reports on the same animal(s).

**D. Data Collection and Reporting** – The Participant shall collect and provide the following information for each stranded marine mammal they respond to:

1. Complete the Marine Mammal Stranding Report - “Level A” Form (NOAA Form 89-864, OMB #0648-0178) for each stranded marine mammal. Completed forms shall be sent to the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator in writing (see Attachment B), no later than 30 days after responding to the stranding event. If requested by the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and if feasible, the Participant shall provide preliminary data (verbal or written) from the Level A - Marine Mammal Stranding Report within 24 hours.
2. As resources are available and upon request, collect additional Level B and Level C data, including skin or other samples, to assist NMFS with stock assessments (16 U.S.C. 1386) or other mandates under the MMPA.
3. The Regional Stranding Coordinator may require:
  - a. Necropsies be conducted by a Necropsy Team Leader or other identified personnel;
  - b. A specific sampling protocol be followed;
  - c. Samples are stored in a certain manner or location; or
4. That there are additional and expedited reporting (verbal or written) of Level A, B and C data such as analytical results and necropsy reports if available. NMFS will not reproduce, modify, distribute, or publish data collected under this section without consent of the Participant unless required to release the data under Federal law or order (such as the Freedom of Information Act), Collect and make available any samples, gear, debris, or other objects (*e.g.*, tissues, swabs, bullets, arrows, net, webbing, etc.) recovered from a stranded marine mammal that may provide evidence of human interaction or may otherwise be necessary for law enforcement or Federal litigation. The Participant must comply with chain of custody procedures or any other instructions as specified and supported by NMFS [*insert Region*] and/or NMFS Office of Law Enforcement personnel.

**E. Parts Disposition.**

1. Diagnostic parts, tissue samples, fluid specimens, parts or cells may be transferred to labs within the United States for diagnostic use without any additional authorizations.
2. As a Temporary Facility, no parts may be retained by or transferred from this

organization for purposes other than diagnostic use (*e.g.*, scientific research or archival) without authorization and direction from the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator. Disposition instructions will be provided by NMFS for any parts that are collected while your Temporary Facility is in operation.

- F.** Site cleanup. The Participant shall make every reasonable effort to assist in the cleanup of beach areas where their activities (*e.g.*, necropsy, euthanasia, specimen collection) under this Agreement that may contribute to soiling of the site.

## **Article VIII: Participant's Authorized Personnel [and Designees]**

### **A. Personnel and Volunteers**

1. Taking of marine mammals authorized in this Agreement may only be directed by the Participant's personnel and trained volunteers identified by the Participant in writing to the NMFS Regional Administrator. The Participant may use other (*i.e.*, not previously identified to NMFS) volunteers to carry out activities in this Agreement only if they are under the close direction of previously identified trained personnel or volunteers. The Participant may not delegate authority to take marine mammals to another person except as provided in this article.
2. In the event of changes in key personnel, the prospective Participant shall notify the NMFS Regional Administrator in writing (see Attachment B) and provide a description of the experience of new key personnel for review and approval by NMFS within 30 days.
3. If changes in key personnel will result in the Participant's failure to meet the Evaluation Criteria, the Participant will notify the Regional Administrator immediately. New key personnel must meet the qualification terms identified in the *NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release - Evaluation Criteria for a Marine Mammal Stranding Agreement*.

### **B. Untrained Citizens**

1. If the Participant requests the assistance of untrained citizens (*e.g.*, during a mass stranding), the Participant is responsible for the actions of those citizens during the response; must take precautions against injury or disease to those volunteer citizens; and must ensure that the citizens' actions do not cause unnecessary harassment of marine mammals.
2. The Participant and their volunteer citizens shall indemnify and hold harmless the United States Government from any and all losses, damages, or liability - or claims therefore - on account of personal injury, death, or property damage of any nature whatsoever, arising out of the activities of the Participant, his/her/its employees, his/her/its qualified representatives, designees, subcontractors, volunteers, or agents. Liability for person(s) acting under this agreement is addressed in sections 406(a) and (b) of the MMPA [16 U.S.C. 1421(e)].

### **C. [RESERVED or] Designee Organizations**

1. Authorization for Designee Organization(s)
  - a. The Participant may designate an organization or institution to act on behalf of the Participant as a Designee in accordance with this Agreement. For purposes of this Agreement, the term "Designee" does not refer to individual personnel/volunteers of the Participant's

organization, or to individual personnel/volunteers of the designee organization or institution.

- b. Any designation requires prior written approval from the NMFS Regional Administrator (Appendix A).
  - c. Any organization or institution so designated shall be deemed an agent of the Participant and NMFS, and is subject to ALL applicable provisions of this Agreement as well as applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines.
  - d. The Participant must provide oversight of their Designee organization(s).
  - e. Any breach of the provisions of this Agreement by a Designee of the Participant shall be deemed a breach by the Participant.
2. Purpose of Designee Organization(s)
- a. The purpose of a designee organization(s) is to assist the Participant with improved sub-region coordination, response, and/or rehabilitation capability within the Participant's geographic area of responsibility. The ability to train and oversee Designees helps create new organizations and build the Stranding Network capacity.
  - b. NMFS will evaluate designee organizations based on the Participant's justification for geographic need, enhancement of response capabilities, and level of experience provided by the designee organization.
3. Terms and Conditions for Adding Designee(s)
- a. To request the addition of a Designee organization to the Participant's Stranding Agreement, the Participant must submit a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Participant and the Designee (see below and Attachment D, *NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release - Evaluation Criteria for a Marine Mammal Stranding Agreement*).
  - b. The signed MOU must be received at least 30 days prior to any prospective designation by the NMFS Regional Administrator for review.
  - c. NMFS will respond within writing to the Participant's request to add a Designee within 30 days of the receipt of the request with an approval, rejection, or request for more information.
  - d. The request to add a Designee organization must contain:
    - 1. Complete name and contact information for the Designee organization or institution.
    - 2. Resumes or CVs of all key personnel for the Designee organization, including evidence of relevant training.
    - 3. Justification statement for designation.

4. Geographic coverage area for response (or role of Designee).
  5. For rehabilitation facilities, a facility operation plan including personnel, veterinary care, equipment list, and other requirement stated under any applicable NMFS laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines. The Designee must also have all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitation facilities.
  6. Oversight plan, including how the Participant will monitor the activities of the designee under the Agreement.
  7. A copy of the written and signed MOU between the Participant and the Designee that must state that the Designee has agreed to abide by all the terms and conditions in the Participant's Stranding Agreement, as well as any other policies or protocols that the two organizations are establishing.
4. A Designee organization may not be authorized for activities exceeding those contained in the Stranding Agreement of the Participant.

## **Article IX: Rights of States, Tribal, and Local Governments**

Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to affect the rights or responsibilities of other Federal, state, tribal, or local government officials or employees acting in the course of their official duties with respect to taking of marine mammals in a humane manner (including euthanasia) for protection or welfare of the marine mammal, protection of public health and welfare or non-lethal removal of nuisance animals (MMPA Section 109(h)).

## Article X: Effective Date, Renewal, and Application Procedures

- A. Effective Date – The terms of this Agreement shall become effective upon the signature of both [Participant acronym] and the NMFS [Region] Regional Administrator.
- B. Period of Agreement
1. Duration – Unless terminated as provided in this Agreement, this Agreement shall expire at the end of the following applicable period [insert expiration date]:
    - a. [As needed for response to a temporary situation (Article VII)]
    - b. Up to 1 year for new Provisional Stranding Network Participants (new participants)
    - c. Up to 4 years for a live animal responder/rehabilitator (Articles IV, V, VI)
    - d. Up to 6 years for a dead animal only responder (Article III only)]
  2. Stranding Agreement Renewals
    - a. No later than 90 days prior to the expiration date of this Agreement, NMFS will provide the Participant with a written notice of expiration, and prescribe information needed from the Participant for renewal (see *NMFS Evaluation Criteria for Marine Mammal Stranding Agreements*).
    - b. No later than 60 days prior to the expiration date, the Participant shall indicate in writing to NMFS (see Contacts, Attachment B) that a renewal of this Agreement is requested and shall provide the prescribed information.
    - c. Following NMFS review of the submitted information to determine if Participant meets applicable requirements, the Agreement may be renewed if agreed to in writing by both parties.
    - d. **If no written renewal request is received from the Participant, this Agreement becomes null and void upon the above expiration date.**
  3. Denial of Stranding Agreement Renewal
    - a. The decision to renew or deny a Stranding Agreement is solely at the discretion of the NMFS Regional Administrator and is not compelled by the Participant’s adherence to the Stranding Agreement criteria.
    - b. If the NMFS Regional Administrator denies a renewal request, the denial will be issued in writing by certified mail from the NMFS Regional Administrator to the Participant within 30 days of the Participant’s submission of a completed application.



- c. Any denial will be based upon the Regional Administrator's judgement of:
  - 1. The past performance of the Participant;
  - 2. The existing capabilities of the Participant; or
  - 3. Geographic and programmatic needs of NMFS' stranding program.
  
- d. **A Stranding Agreement renewal request which is denied by the NMFS Regional Administrator becomes null and void upon the above expiration date.**

## **Article XI: Review, Modification, and Termination**

- A. Review** – The NMFS [Region] ARA for Protected Resources shall review this Agreement from time to time for performance adequacy and effectiveness.
- B. Modification**
1. A request for a modification to the Stranding Agreement can be initiated by the Participant or the [REGION] Regional Administrator. Modifications can include, but are not limited to, procedural or administrative changes, such as a change in contact information, and a request for expansion or reduction of activities (including opting-out of response during hazardous waste spills or other disaster responses) authorized by this Agreement.
  2. A request for authority for additional activities may require submission of information identified in NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release - Evaluation Criteria for a Marine Mammal Stranding Agreement.
  3. NMFS will review and issue or deny proposed modifications and increases or reductions in authority within 30 days of receipt of a completed request. The Participant and the NMFS Regional Administrator may determine that a new Stranding Agreement is warranted, rather than amendment of a prior Agreement.
- C. Suspension or Termination Request by Participant**
1. The Participant may request suspension of all or part of this Stranding Agreement for a stated period of time (not to exceed 1 year).
  2. The Participant may terminate this Agreement, upon 30 days written notice to the NMFS Regional Administrator.
  3. NMFS will reply and confirm the suspension or termination of all or part of this Stranding Agreement within 30 days. NMFS may also include conditions by which this Agreement is to be terminated or how it may be reinstated.
  4. Suspension of the authorization of activities at the request of the Participant may be given without prejudice to the reinstatement of authorization or renewal of a Stranding Agreement and will not prevent the Participant from being in “good standing”.
  5. Upon suspension or termination of the Agreement, NMFS may request that the Participant transfer items to other network members. These can include, but are not limited to, equipment purchased with Federal funds, marine mammal parts, samples, and data. These transfers may extend beyond the official termination date of this Stranding Agreement, per conditions set forth by NMFS when

confirming the suspension or termination of this Stranding Agreement.

**D. Non-Compliance with Stranding Agreement or Violations of Law by Participant**

1. If the Participant fails to satisfy the terms and condition of this Agreement or violates any laws, regulations, or guidelines applicable to this Agreement, or Federal, state, tribal, or municipal laws related to stranding network operations, NMFS shall provide the Participant, in writing, with notice and an opportunity to correct any deficiencies within a time period specified by NMFS.
2. NMFS may immediately suspend or terminate this Agreement in cases of willfulness, or those in which animal welfare, public health, interest, or safety requires immediate action.
3. NMFS may take the following actions based on the circumstances:
  - a. Probation
    1. The Participant may be put on probation (not to exceed 1 year) if deficiencies are not corrected.
    2. The NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator and the Participant will develop a timetable with reasonable and measurable milestones that must be achieved to correct deficiencies during the probation period.
    3. Probation requires annual reviews of the Participant's activities for up to three years.
    4. A participant on probation is not in "good standing" with the Stranding Network.
  - b. Suspension
    1. The NMFS Regional Administrator may suspend the Participant's authority, or any portion of their authority, as appropriate (*e.g.*, suspend rehabilitation authority, but not live or dead animal response), with 30 days written notice, for up to 1 year.
    2. If the Participant's Stranding Agreement is suspended while animals are in rehabilitation, NMFS reserves the right either to confiscate the animals or to arrange for another participant to take over rehabilitation or take custody of the animals.
    3. A notice of suspension listing deficiencies and a timetable with reasonable and measurable milestones required to correct those deficiencies will be issued in writing, delivered in person or by certified mail, from the NMFS Regional Administrator if, in the judgment of the Regional Administrator, the Participant has:
      - a. Submitted false information or statements in applications or reports;
      - b. Not satisfied the terms and conditions of the Agreement;
      - c. Failed to correct deficiencies in a timely manner; or Violated applicable Federal, state, tribal, or municipal laws, regulations, guidelines, or other requirements.
    4. A participant on NMFS-initiated suspension is not in "good standing" with the Stranding Network.

c. Immediate suspension

1. The NMFS Regional Administrator may require immediate suspension of authorization under a Stranding Agreement, or any part of the Agreement, without prior notice if, in the judgment of the Regional Administrator, suspension is needed:
  - a. To protect marine resources;
  - b. In cases of willfulness; or
  - c. As otherwise required to protect animal welfare, public health, welfare, interest, or safety.
2. During the suspension period, the NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may ask other Stranding Network participants to respond in the Participant's area of geographic coverage.
3. If the Participant's Stranding Agreement is suspended while animals are in rehabilitation, NMFS reserves the right either to confiscate the animals or to arrange for another participant to take over rehabilitation or take custody of the animals.
4. A written notice of immediate suspension will be issued in person or by certified mail.
5. A participant on immediate suspension is not in "good standing" with the stranding network.

d. Termination

1. The NMFS Regional Administrator may terminate this Agreement, or any part thereof, upon at least 30 days written notice to the Participant, delivered in person or by certified mail.
2. The Agreement may be terminated for any reason, including the Participant's:
  - a. Submission of false information or statements in applications or reports;
  - b. Failure to satisfy the terms and conditions of the Agreement;
  - c. Failure to correct deficiencies in a timely manner; or
  - d. Violation of applicable Federal, state, tribal, or municipal laws, regulations, guidelines, or other requirements.
3. The NMFS Regional Stranding Coordinator may ask another Stranding Network participant to respond in the Participant's area of geographic coverage.
4. If the Participant's Agreement is terminated while animals are in rehabilitation, NMFS reserves the right to either confiscate the animals or to arrange for another participant to take over rehabilitation of or to take possession of the animals.
5. Termination of the Agreement for any reason shall automatically terminate any designations by the Participant to any Designee organizations under this Agreement.

e. [Reserved for SAs with Designees: Violations by Designees]

1. Violations by the Participant's Designee organization are considered to be violations by the Participant.

2. NMFS will address violations by Designees directly with the Participant according to this Article.
3. NMFS may use the remedy of terminating the designation.]

## Signature Page

Pursuant to the terms and conditions described above in this Stranding Agreement between NMFS [REGION] and [Participant], the Participant is authorized [insert applicable authorizations]:

- Under Article III to respond to strandings of dead marine mammals *{reserve for taxa}*;
- Under Article IV to provide first response to live stranded marine mammals;
- Under Article V to rehabilitate and release live stranded marine mammals
- Under Article VI for short-term holding of live stranded marine mammals
- Under Article VII as a temporary facility for the activities listed within]

This Stranding Agreement is entered into and made effective this

Date:

Date:

---

Regional Administrator  
NMFS [REGION]

---

Authorized Representative  
[Stranding Network Organization]

This Stranding Agreement remains in effect until: [Expiration date]

## Appendix A: Designee Signature Page

Designees: Statement of Agreement for designation of authority and responsibilities to any organization or institution to act as agents under this agreement.

### AGREEMENT

I have read the conditions as stated above for participating in the Stranding Network as an agent of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Stranding Network Organization) under its Agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service [REGION] and agree to abide by all applicable provisions of the Agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service [REGION] and \_\_\_\_\_ (Stranding Network Organization).

NMFS Region

Stranding Organization

Designee Organization

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Regional Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title

Title

NMFS [REGION]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation

Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Expiration Date:

**Evaluation Criteria for  
Marine Mammal Stranding Agreements**

**New Applicants and Renewals**





## Table of Contents

Purpose and Application.....	3
General Evaluation Criteria for Article III-VII Authorization <sup>(1, 2)</sup> .....	4
Evaluation Criteria for Article III Authorization: Response to Dead Stranded Marine Mammals – First Response <sup>(1, 2)</sup> .....	7
Evaluation Criteria for Article IV Authorization: First Response, Triage, and Transport of Live Stranded Marine Mammals <sup>(1, 2)</sup> .....	10
Evaluation Criteria for Article V Authorization: Rehabilitation and Release of Live Marine Mammals <sup>(1, 2)</sup> .....	12
Evaluation Criteria for Article VI Authorization: Live Animal Response: Short-Term Holding <sup>(1, 2, 3)</sup> .....	16
Evaluation Criteria for Article VII: Temporary Participation in the Stranding Network <sup>(2)</sup> .....	20
Evaluation Criteria for Designee Organizations.....	21

**Shaded text denotes reserved text at the discretion of the NMFS Regional Administrator.**

<sup>(1)</sup> To renew an existing Stranding Agreement, the applicant (existing Participant) must demonstrate past compliance with the terms and responsibilities of their Stranding Agreement, including reporting requirements and deadlines.

<sup>(2)</sup> Referenced evaluation criteria may be waived based on the discretion of the NMFS Regional Administrator for the purposes of:

- Network development or expansion of stranding response capabilities in geographically remote or low coverage areas [e.g., Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii, and American Territories (i.e., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands)];
- Network development or expansion of stranding response capabilities to fill an emergency gap in coverage (e.g., due to the loss of a pre-existing stranding agreement holder); or
- Due to an ongoing large-scale emergency [e.g., oil spill or natural disaster]

<sup>(3)</sup> If long-term care is not feasible, a plan for disposition of live marine mammals at alternate care facilities must be submitted.

## Purpose and Application

These minimum evaluation criteria have been developed to assist the National Marine Fisheries Service [Region] Region (NMFS) in its evaluation of Stranding Agreement renewal requests and new Stranding Agreements proposals. Prior to issuing new Stranding Agreements, the NMFS [Region] Regional Administrator must determine there is a programmatic and/or geographic need for a Stranding Network Participant in the proposed area of response. Geographic or programmatic needs are based on, but not limited to, the following factors: the historic number of stranded marine mammals in an area, the amount of personnel and resources of stranding network participants with existing agreements in the proposed response area, the geographic extent of the proposed response area, and the proximity of the existing and prospective stranding network participants to the proposed response area.

The decision to enter into an Agreement under which an organization may take species under the Marine Mammal Protection Act for the purpose of stranding response is solely at the discretion of the NMFS [Region] Regional Administrator. NMFS [Region] Region is not compelled to enter into or to decline to enter into a Stranding Agreement based on an interested party's adherence with these criteria. NMFS weighs the geographical need, programmatic need, level of expertise, stranding related activities, cooperation, and criteria listed below when making its determination in determining whether to issue a new Stranding Agreement.

## General Evaluation Criteria for Article III-VII Authorization <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

- A. General Information - The existing or prospective Participant should provide the following information to NMFS as part of their request to obtain or renew an existing Stranding Agreement with NMFS, as well as upon any significant changes to the information:
1. Participant Contact Information. This should include:
    - a. Mailing address, phone number, and e-mail for all official correspondence
    - b. Physical address and location of the facility
    - c. Name, title, and contact information for an authorized representative with signatory authority for the organization (e.g., Executive Director, Director, President, CEO, etc.)
    - d. Contact numbers including office, home, and/or cell phone numbers of primary responders, key personnel/volunteers, and veterinarians
    - e. Public hotline
  2. Description of Organizational Goals, Capability, and Experience. This should include:
    - a. Brief summary of the existing or proposed organization's mission, goals, and objectives and how these complement objectives for the [Region] Regional Stranding Network
    - b. Brief summary on history and type of organization (e.g., university, governmental agency, non-profit, aquarium, museum, etc.)
    - c. Description of any past or current collaboration with NMFS, other Stranding Network participants, relevant government agencies (e.g., Federal, state, tribal, or local conservation agency), scientific researchers, or the public
    - d. Summary of relevant organizational experience with response to live/dead stranding events and /or rehabilitating marine mammals within the past four years
    - e. An overview of general capabilities to conduct stranding response
  3. Proposed Scope and Area of Geographic Response. This should include:
    - a. Brief summary of the existing or proposed scope of the stranding program
      1. Species or taxa (e.g., all species of cetaceans, pinnipeds or certain taxa/species only);
      2. Size/age class; and
      3. Type of response: dead animals only, live and dead animals, short-term holding, and/or rehabilitation
    - b. Justification and description of the existing or proposed geographic area of coverage and why the area of response is appropriate for the organization (e.g., the amount of personnel/volunteers and resources available, relative to shoreline covered, historic number of stranding events, etc.). Latitude and longitude of proposed geographic area and maps are especially helpful
  4. Description of organizational structure. This should include:
    - a. An overview of staffing, personnel, volunteers, veterinarians, the primary representative, and primary responders, including organizational charts, titles, and position descriptions as appropriate
    - b. Brief summary of relevant training, experience, and qualifications for key stranding response personnel, including primary responders, veterinarians and volunteers as appropriate
    - c. Description of how personnel/volunteers will collect, report, and maintain Level

- A stranding data and conduct basic (Level B) tissue sample collection. This should also address requirements for accurate and timely reporting
- d. Description of how volunteers are trained and monitored to ensure quality data collection
  - e. Description of how the organization will keep NMFS informed about any changes in key personnel, geographic area of coverage, or capabilities
5. Equipment and resources. This should include:
    - a. Description of resources, supplies and equipment currently available to conduct stranding response (live and/or dead)
    - b. Types and availability of specialized equipment as applicable (*e.g.* necropsy equipment, freezers, trucks, tagging equipment, stretchers, vessels, triage equipment, transport equipment, temporary and/or permanent pools, etc.)
  6. Rapid response and investigation procedures. This should include (as applicable, based on the type of authorization requested):
    - a. Procedures for stranding response for dead/live stranded marine mammals
    - b. Human health and safety precautions implemented
    - c. How necropsies will be coordinated and conducted
    - d. Capabilities and general rescue plan, and plans for animal care (*e.g.*, on-site veterinary care) for live animal response including triage, transport, and euthanasia
    - e. Protocols for decision-making when responding to a live animal
    - f. Procedures/plan for internal communication plans. How calls are handled, availability (*e.g.*, 24-hour or a different schedule, staffed hotline vs. voicemail, etc.), and which personnel will respond
    - g. Procedures/plan for network communications: Description of how the organization will communicate and coordinate with other Stranding Network members, NMFS, interested entities, and other agencies for responses within their jurisdiction (*e.g.*, National or state parks, state and federally-recognized Native American tribes, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and other indigenous Pacific islanders, and other aboriginal peoples)
    - h. Procedures/plan for external/public stranding event communications, which should include:
      1. How the organization drafts (including how the activities are authorized), reviews, clears, and posts information on emergency events (including social or traditional media)
      2. The procedures/plan should also include identification of organization's official social media account handles
      3. Primary and secondary media points of contact
  7. Any other relevant documentation (permits, authorizations, agreements, etc.) for review prior to entering into any Stranding Agreement and at any subsequent time as requested by the [Region] Regional Administrator, or when additional documentation is obtained that may become relevant to performance under the Agreement
  8. Documentation of experience, ability, and knowledge (*e.g.*, CV, resume, certificates, letters of recommendation, etc.) of key personnel (*e.g.*, primary representative, primary responder). Experience can be obtained through paid employment, internships, volunteering, course work, and/or NMFS approved training
  9. For prospective Participants, demonstrate experience working under the direct supervision of an existing Stranding Network Participant in good standing or NMFS for at least three years or equivalent case load.<sup>(2)</sup> The prospective Participant may apprentice as a "designee" organization under a Stranding Agreement holder to obtain this experience

10. Letter(s) of support from peers such as other stranding network organizations (Stranding Agreement/Designee organizations), universities/researchers, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, professional organizations, etc. For new Stranding Agreement applicants, such letters of support could also be provided from the current Stranding Agreement holder under which the Participant received experience and include assurances that the prospective Participant can support programmatic and geographic needs in the area
- B.** General Evaluation Qualifications for Articles III, IV, V, VI, and VII – NMFS will evaluate existing and prospective participants based on their demonstrated track record and their capabilities in the following areas as described in their request
1. Ability to provide description of on-call coverage for the proposed geographic area of response (e.g., established “hot-line” number, voicemail box, app, text messages, staffed pager, etc.)
  2. Demonstrated ability to comply with standard instructions and collect Level A and human interaction data from stranded marine mammals according to established protocols
  3. Ability to conduct full post-mortem exams, including obtaining histopathology samples and other biological samples (if feasible and requested by NMFS).
  4. Willingness and ability to communicate in a professional manner, and demonstrated ongoing cooperation with NMFS (including communications staff), other network members, the general public, local, tribal, federal, and state agencies.
  5. Willingness and ability to cooperate with authorized marine mammal researchers.
  6. Ability to address health and safety when responding to dead or live stranded marine mammals, or marine mammals in rehabilitation or short-term holding (e.g., a description of the organization’s operational safety plan or protocols).
  7. Demonstrated experience specific to the marine mammal species that are most likely encountered in the proposed area of geographic response.
  8. Willingness and ability to comply with all Stranding Agreement requirements.
9. Willingness and ability to comply with photo/video sharing requirements and guidelines provided by NOAA, including researchers (for photo-identification) and media

## Evaluation Criteria for Article III Authorization: Response to Dead Stranded Marine Mammals – First Response <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

In addition to the General Criteria in Section A, Participants proposing to respond to dead stranded marine mammals should provide information that shows the Participant's plan for implementing Article III of the Stranding Agreement, and present evidence that the Participant has the skills, resources, and organizational capabilities to be successful.

### A. Information for Article III Authorization

#### 1. Key Personnel

- a. The prospective Participant should have and maintain one **Authorized Representative** and at least two **Primary Responders**, at least one of whom will be on-site or supervising when dead animals are being examined or handled and is responsible for the day to day operations (Primary Responders may be staff, or experienced lead volunteers, interns, etc.).<sup>(2)</sup>
- b. The **Authorized Representative** has signatory authority for the stranding organization and may be the signatory of the stranding agreement (e.g., Executive Director, President, CEO, etc.)
- c. Additional personnel may be necessary, commensurate with the proposed geographic area of response and frequency of stranding events

#### 2. Equipment list

- a. The prospective Participant should demonstrate they have and maintain equipment appropriate to dead animal stranding response
- b. Minimally, this should include items necessary for Level A and human interaction data collection

### A. Qualifications for Article III Authorization

1. Key Personnel (Primary Responders and any other necessary personnel to provide coverage) should have experience or comparable training to collect Level A and human interaction data and if possible to collect Level B data (i.e., complete necropsy)
2. Minimal key personnel qualifications are:
  - a. Experience conducting or observing complete necropsies on a minimum of [six] marine mammals with at least [three] of those necropsies on Code 2 animals.<sup>(2)</sup>
  - b. Ability to identify species of marine mammals in the field (Code 2).
  - c. Ability to accurately identify code condition of marine mammals in the field (Code 1-5).
  - d. Ability to obtain accurate Level A and human interaction stranding data and if possible, to conduct basic tissue sample (Level B) collection.
  - e. Knowledge and experience complying with Level A and human interaction data reporting requirements.
  - f. Knowledge and experience complying with sampling protocols, sample processing, and shipping procedures.
  - g. Knowledge of marine mammal anatomy and physiology.

- h. Knowledge of human health and safety precautions including potential zoonotic marine mammal disease.
- i. Knowledge of federal, tribal, state, and local disposal policies and rules  
Evaluation Criteria for Article IV Authorization: First Response, Triage, and Transport of Live Stranded Marine Mammals <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

In addition to criteria in sections I and II, prospective Participants proposing to conduct response to live stranded marine mammals should provide information that shows the Participant's plan for implementing Article IV of the Stranding Agreement, and present evidence that the Participant has the skills, resources, and organizational capabilities to be successful. Applications should be specific to the types and extent of activities being proposed for live animal response and care (e.g., extent of veterinary treatment).

**A. Information for Article IV Authorization**

1. Key Personnel

- a. The prospective Participant should have and maintain one Authorized Representative and at least two Primary Responders, at least one of whom will be on-site or supervising when animals are being examined or handled and is responsible for the day to day operations (Primary Responders may be staff, or experienced lead volunteers, interns, etc.).<sup>(2)</sup>
- b. The Authorized Representative has signatory authority for the stranding organization and may be the signatory of the stranding agreement (e.g., Executive Director, President, CEO, etc.)
- c. Additional personnel may be necessary, commensurate with the proposed geographic area of response

2. Veterinary Support

- a. The prospective Participant should identify an attending veterinarian and identify at least one backup veterinarian or have a contingency plan for when the attending veterinarian is not available.
- b. In some cases, identifying a remote veterinarian may be acceptable, provided that the veterinarians can provide telemedicine and are willing to consult with Participant's responders in the field. <sup>(2)</sup>

**B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization**

1. Key personnel should have experience or comparable training in all aspects of live animal response:

- a. Experience responding to a minimum of [five] live marine mammal stranding events (note: a mass stranding is considered to be one event).<sup>(2)</sup>
- b. Experience providing triage and/or transport for a minimum of [three] live stranded marine mammals during separate stranding events.<sup>(2)</sup>
- c. Knowledge and experience monitoring marine mammal vital signs.
- d. Ability to assess the condition of stranded marine mammals and make recommendations concerning immediate release, rehabilitation, or euthanasia.
- e. Ability to accurately identify species of marine mammals in field conditions.
- f. Ability to [draw blood and] make basic measurements (e.g., length).
- g. Ability to tag a marine mammal (e.g., for situations that involve immediate release following assessment).
- h. Ability to communicate professionally with other members of the Stranding Network, federal, state, tribal or other local authorities that have jurisdiction within the Participant's area of operations and take direction from NMFS and other on-site coordinators or local authorities.

- i. Preferred but not required - Experience responding to at least one cetacean mass stranding event
2. Attending veterinarians should meet the following criteria:
  - a. Be on-call 24-hours [or during the operational hours of the Participant].
  - b. Have experience in monitoring marine mammal vital signs.
  - c. Ability to assess the condition of stranded marine mammals and make recommendations concerning immediate release, rehabilitation, or euthanasia.
  - d. Ability to draw blood from a marine mammal.
  - e. Have the appropriate registrations and licenses (e.g., registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration for handling controlled substances) to obtain the necessary medications and euthanasia drugs.
  - f. Ability to perform humane euthanasia on marine mammals.
  - g. Demonstrated familiarity with marine mammal triage and transport.
  - h. Access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal expertise to consult with if needed.
  - i. Compliance with any applicable state requirements for veterinary practice on stranded marine mammals.
3. The prospective Participant should demonstrate knowledge of Federal, state, tribal, and local/municipal laws relating to live animal response.
4. The prospective Participant should have provisions for, and willingness to conduct, euthanasia when appropriate, if euthanasia is included in the proposed activities of the Participant.
5. Equipment List.
  - a. The prospective Participant should have and maintain equipment appropriate to the proposed extent of live stranding response, i.e., those items necessary for triage, transport, and/or euthanasia.
  - b. A complete list of equipment available shall be provided by the prospective Participant



## **Evaluation Criteria for Article IV Authorization: First Response, Triage, and Transport of Live Stranded Marine Mammals <sup>(1, 2)</sup>**

In addition to criteria in sections I and II, prospective Participants proposing to conduct response to live stranded marine mammals should provide information that shows the Participant's plan for implementing Article IV of the Stranding Agreement, and present evidence that the Participant has the skills, resources, and organizational capabilities to be successful. Applications should be specific to the types and extent of activities being proposed for live animal response and care (e.g., extent of veterinary treatment).

### **A. Information for Article IV Authorization**

#### **1. Key Personnel**

- a. The prospective Participant should have and maintain one Authorized Representative and at least two Primary Responders, at least one of whom will be on-site or supervising when animals are being examined or handled and is responsible for the day to day operations (Primary Responders may be staff, or experienced lead volunteers, interns, etc.).<sup>(2)</sup>
- b. The Authorized Representative has signatory authority for the stranding organization and may be the signatory of the stranding agreement (e.g., Executive Director, President, CEO, etc.)
- c. Additional personnel may be necessary, commensurate with the proposed geographic area of response

#### **2. Veterinary Support**

- a. The prospective Participant should identify an attending veterinarian and identify at least one backup veterinarian or have a contingency plan for when the attending veterinarian is not available.
- b. In some cases, identifying a remote veterinarian may be acceptable, provided that the veterinarians can provide telemedicine and are willing to consult with Participant's responders in the field. <sup>(2)</sup>

### **B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization**

#### **1. Key personnel should have experience or comparable training in all aspects of live animal response:**

- a. Experience responding to a minimum of [five] live marine mammal stranding events (note: a mass stranding is considered to be one event).<sup>(2)</sup>
- b. Experience providing triage and/or transport for a minimum of [three] live stranded marine mammals during separate stranding events.<sup>(2)</sup>
- c. Knowledge and experience monitoring marine mammal vital signs.
- d. Ability to assess the condition of stranded marine mammals and make recommendations concerning immediate release, rehabilitation, or euthanasia.
- e. Ability to accurately identify species of marine mammals in field conditions.
- f. Ability to [draw blood and] make basic measurements (e.g., length).
- g. Ability to tag a marine mammal (e.g., for situations that involve immediate release following assessment).
- h. Ability to communicate professionally with other members of the Stranding Network, federal, state, tribal or other local authorities that have jurisdiction

**C.** within the Participant's area of operations and take direction from NMFS and other on-site coordinators or local authorities.

**D.** Preferred but not required - Experience responding to at least one cetacean mass stranding event

**E.** Attending veterinarians should meet the following criteria:

1. Be on-call 24-hours [or during the operational hours of the Participant].

2. Have experience in monitoring marine mammal vital signs.
  3. Ability to assess the condition of stranded marine mammals and make recommendations concerning immediate release, rehabilitation, or euthanasia.
  4. Ability to draw blood from a marine mammal.
  5. Have the appropriate registrations and licenses (e.g., registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration for handling controlled substances) to obtain the necessary medications and euthanasia drugs.
  6. Ability to perform humane euthanasia on marine mammals.
  7. Demonstrated familiarity with marine mammal triage and transport.
  8. Access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal expertise to consult with if needed.
  9. Compliance with any applicable state requirements for veterinary practice on stranded marine mammals.
- F.** The prospective Participant should demonstrate knowledge of Federal, state, tribal, and local/municipal laws relating to live animal response.
- G.** The prospective Participant should have provisions for, and willingness to conduct, euthanasia when appropriate, if euthanasia is included in the proposed activities of the Participant.
- H.** Equipment List.
1. The prospective Participant should have and maintain equipment appropriate to the proposed extent of live stranding response, i.e., those items necessary for triage, transport, and/or euthanasia.
  2. A complete list of equipment available shall be provided by the prospective Participant

## Evaluation Criteria for Article V Authorization: Rehabilitation and Release of Live Marine Mammals <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

In addition to the criteria in sections II, III, and IV (if applicable), Participants requesting authorization to conduct rehabilitation of marine mammals should provide information that shows the Participant's plan for implementing Article V of the Stranding Agreement, and present evidence that the Participant has the skills, resources, and organizational capabilities to be successful. The NMFS document, "*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*," provides additional detailed guidance for preparing Stranding Agreement requests. This document can be found at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-protection-act-policies-guidance-and-regulations>. Facility operations should be consistent with applicable NMFS policies, guidelines, directives, regulations, and other applicable State and Federal policies, guidelines, directives, regulations, and laws.

- A. Information for Article V Authorization: The prospective Participant should provide information on the following:
1. Facility Capabilities and Procedures. This should include, but not be limited to:
    - a. Information on facilities
      1. Pool type (or housing/pool for pinnipeds) design, description, and dimensions.
      2. Type of available shelter and/or shading.
      3. Maximum holding capacity. Description of facility's maximum holding capacity based on minimum standard space requirements and number of animals housed in each holding area and the availability of qualified personnel as provided in the NMFS document, "*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*".
        - Water Quality. Description of water, source, quality, and how it is maintained, including how water is tested and frequency of tests.
        - How the facility/rehabilitation area is secured from public access.
        - How other wild and/or domestic animals will be kept isolated from marine mammals.
        - How animals will be isolated or quarantined if necessary.
    - b. Information on procedures for:
      1. Food handling and sanitation.
      2. Human health and safety throughout the rehabilitation facility.
      3. Maintenance of medical, husbandry, and other relevant records for each animal. Samples of record forms are helpful.
      4. Efforts to reduce disease transmission.
      5. Humane animal care, routine medical procedures, and euthanasia.
  2. Key Personnel
    - a. The prospective Participant should have and maintain one **Authorized Representative**, an **Attending Veterinarian**, an **Animal Care Supervisor**, and at least one additional primary animal care specialist, all with experience in marine mammal care and rehabilitation.
    - b. The Attending Veterinarian:
      1. The prospective Participant should identify an attending veterinarian with experience with marine mammal rehabilitation
      2. Identify at least one backup veterinarian or have a contingency plan for

when the attending veterinarian is not available.

- c. The Animal Care Supervisor:
    1. Is responsible for overseeing prescribed treatments, maintaining hospital equipment, and controlling drug supplies
    2. Should be adequately trained to deal with emergencies until the veterinarian arrives
    3. Be able to direct the restraint of the animals,
    4. Be responsible for administration of post-surgical care
    5. Be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records
    6. communicates frequently and directly with the attending veterinarian to ensure that there is a timely transfer of accurate information about medical issues
    7. Preferred but not required – be a licensed veterinary technician or animal health technician who reports to, or is responsible to, the attending veterinarian
  - d. Additional personnel may be necessary, commensurate with the maximum holding capacity.
  - e. Information regarding Key Personnel should include:
    1. Overview of staffing plan and capabilities for the rehabilitation facility (e.g., veterinary technicians, food preparation, record keeping, volunteer/shift coordination, facility maintenance, etc.), including the back-up veterinary coverage
    2. Description of on-site experienced personnel who are caring for the animals, including resumes or CVs of all key personnel (at minimum: Authorized Representative, Attending Veterinarian, Animal Care Supervisor(s), any other primary animal care specialists) and documentation of relevant training, experience, and licensing (if applicable)
    3. Description of how new personnel and volunteers are trained and monitored
3. Contingency Plans
    - a. Provide a copy of contingency plans for protection of or relocation of rehabilitating marine mammals in case of
      1. Emergency events (hurricanes, fires, other natural disasters)
      2. Unusual mortality events
      3. Planned events such as construction
    - b. Provide any other facility contingency plans
  4. Copies of all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitation facilities.
  5. General protocols and procedures for release and post-release monitoring of marine mammals in rehabilitation, including:
    - a. How animals will be assessed for release determinations and who makes the assessment and final recommendation.
    - b. How the prospective Participant will follow the NMFS Standards for Release of Rehabilitated Marine Mammals (available at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/marine-mammal-protection-act-policies-guidance-and-regulations>).
    - c. How the prospective Participant will conduct tagging, release, and post-release monitoring
  6. Resources – demonstrate sufficient physical and financial resources:

- a. To maintain appropriate animal care for the duration of rehabilitation
- b. To cover costs associated with release (e.g., long term rehabilitation, transport to release site, post release monitoring) or transport to another facility

**B. Qualifications for Article V Authorization – requests should be evaluated based on the following:**

1. Key personnel should have experience or comparable training in all aspects of marine mammal rehabilitation. Requests should address key personnel qualifications for each evaluation criteria below:
  - a. Experience or education leading to an understanding of the life history, behavior, biology, physiology, and animal husbandry of applicable marine mammals.
  - b. Familiarity with “*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities, Standards for Release of Marine Mammals*”, and applicable regulations.
  - c. Experience in a supervisory role rehabilitating a minimum of [three] separate rehabilitation cases (Note: Multiple animals in rehabilitation from a mass stranding are considered to be one case).
  - d. Ability to humanely restrain a marine mammal to conduct basic medical procedures such as: drawing blood from at least two sites, taking fecal, gastric, blowhole/nasal samples, morphometrics, weighing, injections, and tubing.
  - e. Experience maintaining and operating a facility/pool for marine mammal care, including familiarity with maintaining proper water quality.
  - f. Ability to supervise and coordinate on-site personnel and volunteers.
  - g. Ability to conduct necropsies.
  - h. Experience with record keeping, such as food intake records, daily behavioral records, medical records, and water quality records (e.g., water temperature, salinity, etc.).
  - i. Preferred but not required - Knowledge of how to design and conduct a behavior ethogram
2. Attending veterinarian should meet the following criteria:
  - a. Has an active veterinary license in the United States (means a person who has graduated from a veterinary school accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education, or has a certificate issued by the American Veterinary Graduates Association's Education Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates), or has received equivalent formal education as determined by NMFS Administrator (adapted from the Animal Welfare Act Regulations 9 CFR Ch. 1). Assumes responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, and medical clearance for release or transport of marine mammals in rehabilitation (50 CFR 216.27).
  - b. Ability to provide a schedule of veterinary care that includes a review of husbandry records, visual and physical examinations of all the marine mammals in rehabilitation, and a periodic visual inspection of the facilities and records.
  - c. Be available on a 24-hour basis to answer veterinary-related questions, and be available in case of an emergency.
  - d. Ability to perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on the type(s) of marine mammal(s) most often admitted to the rehabilitation facility (e.g., draw blood, give injections, etc.).
  - e. Has marine mammal experience or be in regular consultation with a veterinarian who has marine mammal experience and have access to a list of expert veterinarians to contact for assistance.
  - f. [Reserved. - Have documented one-year clinical experience working with marine mammals, or have a written consulting agreement with an experienced marine

mammal veterinarian, which assures availability of consultation when needed.]

- g. Ability to conduct full necropsy on marine mammals.
  - h. Has access to the most recent edition of the CRC “Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine.”
  - i. Be familiar with and comply with the standards of veterinary care in the “*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*”.
  - j. Has the appropriate registrations and licenses (e.g., registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration for handling controlled substances) to obtain the necessary medications for the animals housed at that rehabilitation facility.
  - k. Be knowledgeable of species-specific pharmacology.
  - l. Has provisions for performance of humane euthanasia.
  - m. Ability to write and submit timely disposition recommendations for marine mammals in rehabilitation.
  - n. Be knowledgeable of marine mammal zoonotic diseases and appropriate safety precautions.
- 3. A trained staff or volunteer base sufficient to initiate and maintain adequate and appropriate marine mammal care and husbandry and implementation of veterinary direction.
  - 4. Knowledge of national, state, tribal, and local laws relating to live animal rehabilitation.
  - 5. Familiarity with, and a copy of, the most current version of the “*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*” and “*Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*”.

## Evaluation Criteria for Article VI Authorization: Live Animal Response: Short-Term Holding <sup>(1, 2, 3)</sup>

In addition to the criteria in sections II, III, and IV (if applicable), Participants requesting authorization to conduct short-term holding of marine mammals should provide information that shows the Participant's plan for implementing Article VI of the Stranding Agreement, and present evidence that the Participant has the skills, resources, and organizational capabilities to be successful. The NMFS document, "*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*", provides additional detailed guidance for preparing Stranding Agreement requests. Facility operations should be consistent with applicable NMFS policies, guidelines, directives, regulations, and other applicable State and Federal policies, guidelines, directives, regulations, and laws.

- A. Information for Article VI Authorization – The prospective Participant should provide information on the following:
1. Facility Capabilities. This should include, but may not be limited to:
    - a. Pool type (or housing/pool for pinnipeds) design, description, and dimensions.
    - b. Type of available shelter and/or shading.
    - c. Maximum holding capacity. Description of facility's maximum holding capacity based on minimum standard space requirements and number of animals housed in each holding area and the availability of qualified personnel as provided in the NMFS document, "*NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*". The number of animals housed in each pool/pen for short-term holding can exceed the standard for long-term rehabilitation, particularly in extraordinary circumstances. However, the facility must have a written plan for maximum capacity, outlining the following:
      1. Number of animals per pen by species, age class
      2. How to determine cohorts when facility is at maximum capacity
      3. How to handle need for increased transports
      4. How staffing will be provided when facility is at maximum capacity
    - d. Water Quality. Description of water (fresh or salt), source, quality, and how it is maintained, including how water is tested and frequency of tests.
    - e. How the facility/rehabilitation area is secured from public access.
    - f. How other wild and/or domestic animals will be kept isolated from marine mammals.
    - g. How animals will be isolated or quarantined if necessary.
  2. Information on procedures/protocols for:
    - a. Food handling and sanitation
    - b. Human health and safety throughout operations
    - c. Maintenance of medical, husbandry, and other relevant records for each animal. Samples of record forms are helpful
    - d. Efforts to reduce disease transmission
    - e. Humane animal care
    - f. Routine medical procedures
    - g. Euthanasia
  6. Key Personnel. The prospective Participant should have and maintain one **Authorized Representative**, an **Attending Veterinarian**, an **Animal Care Supervisor**, and at least one additional primary animal care specialist, all with experience in marine mammal care and rehabilitation.
    - a. The Attending Veterinarian:

1. The prospective Participant should identify an attending veterinarian with experience with marine mammal rehabilitation
2. Identify at least one backup veterinarian or have a contingency plan for when the attending veterinarian is not available.
- b. The Animal Care Supervisor:
  1. Is responsible for overseeing prescribed treatments, maintaining hospital equipment, and controlling drug supplies
  2. Should be adequately trained to deal with emergencies until the veterinarian arrives,
  3. Be able to direct the restraint of the animals,
  4. Be responsible for administration of post-surgical care
  5. Be skilled in maintaining appropriate medical records
  6. communicates frequently and directly with the attending veterinarian to ensure that there is a timely transfer of accurate information about medical issues
  7. Preferred but not required – be a licensed veterinary technician or animal health technician who reports to, or is responsible to, the attending veterinarian
- c. Additional personnel may be necessary, commensurate with the maximum holding capacity.
- d. Information regarding Key Personnel should include:
  1. Overview of staffing plan and capabilities for the rehabilitation facility (e.g., veterinary technicians, food preparation, record keeping, volunteer/shift coordination, facility maintenance, etc.), including the back-up veterinary coverage
  2. Description of on-site experienced personnel who are caring for the animals, including resumes or CVs of all key personnel (at minimum: Authorized Representative, Attending Veterinarian, Animal Care Supervisor, any other primary animal care specialists) and documentation of relevant training, experience, and licensing (if applicable)
  3. Description of how new personnel and volunteers are trained and monitored
3. Contingency Plans
  - a. Provide a copy of contingency plans for protection of or relocation of rehabilitating marine mammals in case of
    1. Emergency events (hurricanes, fires, other natural disasters)
    2. Unusual mortality events
    3. Planned events such as construction
  - b. Provide any other facility contingency plans
4. Copies of all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for short-term holding facilities
5. General protocols and plans for transfer to long-term marine mammal rehabilitation center
  - a. How it will be determined when animals are ready for transport to a long-term rehabilitation facility.
  - b. How the prospective Participant will follow the NMFS *Cetacean and Pinniped Transport Best Practices* during transport.
  - c. How prospective Participant will conduct transports
6. Resources demonstrate sufficient physical and financial resources:



- a. To maintain appropriate animal care for the duration of short-term rehabilitation
  - b. To cover costs associated with transport to another facility
- B. Qualifications for Article VI Authorization – requests should be evaluated based on the following**
1. Key personnel should have experience or comparable training in all aspects of short-term holding for marine mammal rehabilitation. Requests should address key personnel qualifications for each evaluation criteria below:
    - a. Experience or education leading to an understanding of the life history, behavior, biology, physiology, and animal husbandry of applicable marine mammals.
    - b. Familiarity with NMFS Rehabilitation Standards, NMFS Standards for Release of Rehabilitated Marine Mammals, and applicable regulations.
    - c. Experience in a supervisory role short-term holding a minimum of three separate cases (Note: Multiple animals in rehabilitation from a mass stranding are considered to be one case).
    - d. Experience maintaining and operating a facility/pool for marine mammal care, including familiarity with maintaining proper water quality.
    - e. Ability to supervise and coordinate on-site personnel and volunteers.
    - f. Ability to conduct necropsies.
    - g. Experience with record keeping, such as food intake records, daily behavioral records, medical records, and water quality records (e.g., water temperature, salinity, etc.).
    - h. Ability to humanely restrain a marine mammal and perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on the type(s) of marine mammal(s) most often admitted to the short-term holding facility (e.g., draw blood, give injections, etc).
    - i. Have marine mammal experience or be in regular consultation with a veterinarian who has marine mammal experience and have access to a list of expert veterinarians to contact for assistance.
  2. Attending veterinarians should meet the following criteria:
    - a. Have an active veterinary license in the United States (means a person who has graduated from a veterinary school accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education, or has a certificate issued by the American Veterinary Graduates Association's Education Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates), or has received equivalent formal education as determined by NMFS Administrator (adapted from the Animal Welfare Act Regulations 9 CFR Ch. 1).
    - b. Assume responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, and medical clearance for release or transport of marine mammals in short-term holding (50 CFR 216.27).
    - c. Ability to provide a schedule of veterinary care that includes a review of husbandry records and a periodic visual inspection of the facilities and records.
    - d. Be available on a 24-hour basis to answer veterinary-related questions, and be available in case of an emergency.
    - e. Ability to perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on the type(s) of marine mammal(s) most often admitted to the short-term holding facility (e.g., draw blood, give injections, etc).
    - f. Have marine mammal experience or be in regular consultation with a veterinarian who has marine mammal experience and have access to a list of expert veterinarians to contact for assistance.
    - g. [Reserved. Have documented one-year clinical experience working with marine mammals, or have a written consulting agreement with an experienced marine mammal veterinarian, which assures availability of consultation when needed.]
    - h. Ability to conduct full necropsy on marine mammals.

- i. Have access to the most recent edition of the CRC “Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine.”
  - j. Be familiar with and comply with the standards of veterinary care in the *NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities*.
  - k. Have the appropriate registrations and licenses (e.g., registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration for handling controlled substances) to obtain the necessary medications for the animals housed at that rehabilitation facility.
  - l. Be knowledgeable of species-specific pharmacology.
  - m. Have provisions for performance of humane euthanasia.
  - n. Ability to write and submit timely disposition recommendations for marine mammals in rehabilitation.
  - o. Be knowledgeable of marine mammal zoonotic diseases and appropriate safety precautions.
3. A trained volunteer base sufficient to initiate and maintain adequate and appropriate marine mammal care and husbandry and implementation of veterinary direction.
4. Knowledge of national, state, tribal, and local laws relating to live animal rehabilitation.
5. Familiarity with, and a copy of, the most current version of the *NMFS Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities* and *Standards for Release of Marine Mammals Following Rehabilitation*.

## **Evaluation Criteria for Article VII: Temporary Participation in the Stranding Network <sup>(2)</sup>**

This Article is intended to authorize a facility that does not intend to be a long-term, continuing participant in the marine mammal stranding network, but is instead participating in a short-term capacity. This may be for purposes of response to an anthropogenic event such as an oil spill, a marine mammal event such as an Unusual Mortality Event, or to fill a temporary “gap in coverage.” The intent is to be able to apply for and receive this SA Article in an expedited manner, and for it only to be authorized until the emergency situation is resolved.

Therefore, the Participant may be applying for a range of stranding response roles, typically covered in Articles III, IV, V, and/or VI. Therefore, the Participants should be assessed against the criteria in sections 2, 3, 4, 5, and/or 7, depending upon the specific role they intend to fill in the Stranding Network. The NMFS Regional Administrator may waive specific criteria requirements in those sections for temporary facilities, depending upon the nature of the Participant’s role in the Stranding Network, as long as waiving those criteria will not compromise animal and human health and welfare.

## **Evaluation Criteria for Designee Organizations**

The purpose of a Designee organization is to assist the Participant with sub-region coordination, response, and/or rehabilitation capability within the Participant's geographic area of responsibility and under the Participant's oversight. If a Participant is proposing oversight of a Designee organization(s), the Participant [must] should provide evidence that the Designee organization has the skills, resources, and organizational capability to respond to dead/live stranded marine mammals [or rehabilitate marine mammals]. In some cases, it may not be possible for each proposed Designee organization to meet all of the evaluation criteria listed below. If this is the case, NMFS needs written assurance and details specifying how the prospective Participant will take responsibility for fulfilling specific qualifications lacking for the Designee organization.

### **A. Information for Designee Organizations for Articles III, IV, V, and VI**

1. For each proposed Designee organization, the Participant should provide the same information required in sections II through VI.
2. Justification for Designee. The Participant should submit a justification for the geographic need, and enhancement of response capabilities provided by the Designee organization to the Participant.
3. Copy of a written and signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Participant and the Designee that includes a statement that the Designee organization has read and agreed to the terms of the Participants current Stranding Agreement

### **B. Qualifications for Designee Organizations for Articles III, IV, and V**

1. Each proposed Designee organization will be evaluated according to the same required qualifications listed in Sections II through VI.
2. The MOU provided will be reviewed for completeness

## **Appendix A**

Stranding Agreement application form. This form is not required but may be useful to help organize the information that should be provided to the NMFS Regional Administrator when applying for a new Stranding Agreement or renewing an existing Stranding Agreement.

# General Evaluation Criteria for Article III-VII Authorizations

## A. General Information

### 1. Participant Contact Information

#### Participant Information

Participant Name

Email Address

Phone

#### Mailing Address

Address

Zip Code

City

State

#### Physical Address/Facility Location

Address

Zip Code

City

State

Public Hotline

#### Authorized Representative (Signatory Authority)

First Name

Last Name

Title

Email Address

Home Phone

Office Phone

Cellular

**Primary Responders**

*\*Attach CV and make sure to highlight your experience as listed at the bottom under Section B: Qualifications*

Name	Type	Title	Office, Home, Cellular Phone	Experience, Knowledge,	CV Attached?
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select				Dropdown Select

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

**2. Description of Organizational Goals, Capability, and Experience Participant Contact Information**

**Mission**

**Goals and Objectives collaborating with Regional Stranding Network**

1. Goal  Objective

How does this objective complement the goal for your Regional Stranding Network?

2. Goal  Objective

How does this objective complement the goal for your Regional Stranding Network?

3. Goal  Objective

How does this objective complement the goal for your Regional Stranding Network?

4. Goal  Objective

How does this objective complement the goal for your Regional Stranding Network?

**History**

Organization Type

Dropdown Select

If other, please describe

**Collaboration**

*\*If you would like to include more than 4 collaborators, please attach a list.*

1. Current?

Dropdown Select

Organization Type

Dropdown Select

Describe collaboration

**Collaboration**

2. Current?

Dropdown Select

Organization Type

Dropdown Select

Describe collaboration

**Collaboration**

3. Current?

Dropdown Select

Organization Type

Dropdown Select

Describe collaboration

**Collaboration**

4. Current?

Dropdown Select

Organization Type

Dropdown Select

Describe collaboration

**Organizational Experience** *(Please include 4 examples of responses conducted by your organization within past the past 4 years)*

Event Type

Dropdown Select

Summary of Event

Event Type

Dropdown Select

Summary of Event

Event Type

Dropdown Select

Summary of Event

Event Type

Dropdown Select

Summary of Event



### 3. Proposed Scope and Area of Geographic Response

Brief summary of existing or proposed scope of the stranding response

Species/Taxa	Size/Age Class	Response Type
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select

Geographic area of coverage (attach maps if available)

Geographic Area (existing and/or proposed)

Justification: Why is the area of response appropriate for the organization?

Maps attached?

Dropdown Select

### 4. Description of Organizational Structure (include organizational charts)

Overview of staffing

Name	Type	Title	Position Description	Relevant Training/Experience/Qualifications
	Dropdown Select			
	Dropdown Select			
	Dropdown Select			
	Dropdown Select			
	Dropdown Select			
	Dropdown Select			

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

How will personnel/volunteers collect, report, and maintain Level A stranding data and conduct basic (Level B) tissue sample collection?

Describe how the volunteers are trained and monitored to ensure quality data collection.

Describe how the organization will keep NMFS informed about any changes in key personnel, geographic area of coverage, or capabilities.

## 5. Equipment and Resources

### Description of resources

### Description of equipment

Equipment	Response Type	Availability?
	Dropdown Select	
	Dropdown Select	
	Dropdown Select	
	Dropdown Select	
	Dropdown Select	
	Dropdown Select	

## 6. Rapid Response and Investigation Procedures

*\*if you need more space, please attach a document outlining your procedures*

### Procedures for stranding response for dead/live marine mammals

### Human health and safety precautions implemented

### How are calls handled?

Availability

Responding personnel

### Capabilities and general rescue plan

### Plans for animal care (e.g., onsite veterinary care) for live animal response including triage, transport, and euthanasia

**Protocols for decision-making when responding to a live animal**

Description of how the organization will communicate and coordinate with other Stranding Networks members, NMFS, and other agencies for responses within their jurisdiction (e.g., National or state parks)

**7. Key Personnel Documentation of Experience, Ability and Knowledge**

This information is included in Section 1 in Primary Responders table.

**8. For prospective participants, demonstrate experience working under direct supervision of an Stranding Network participant in good standing with NMFS for at least 3yrs or equivalent case load. The prospective participant as a "designee" organization under a Stranding Agreement holder to obtain this experience**

**9. Letters of support attached?**

Attached letters?

**B. General Evaluation Qualifications for Articles III, IV, V, VI, and VII**

NMFS will evaluate existing and prospective participants based on their demonstrated track record and their capabilities in the following areas as described in their request

**Experience**

- Ability to provide on-call coverage description
- Comply with standard instructions, collect Level A and human interaction data according to established protocols
- Ability to conduct full post-mortem exams and collect samples
- Ability to communicate professionally to other organizations and take direction from NMFS, onsite coordinators, or local authorities
- Willingness and ability to cooperate with authorized marine mammal researchers
- Ability to address health and safety when responding to live or dead marine mammals
- Identify and experience with the species in the field

# Evaluation Criteria for Article III Authorization: Response to Dead Stranded Marine Mammals - First Response

## A. Information for Article III Authorization

### 1. Key Personnel

#### Authorized Representative (Signatory Authority)

First Name

Last Name

Title

Email Address

Home Phone

Office Phone

Cellular

#### Primary Responders

*\*Attach CV and make sure to highlight your experience as listed at the bottom under Section B: Qualifications*

Name	Type	Title	Office, Home, Cellular Phone	Experience, Knowledge,	CV Attached?
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

## 2. Equipment List

Prospective participant should determine they have and maintain equipment appropriate to dead animal stranding response. Describe the equipment and how it will be maintained.

Minimally, this should indicate items necessary for Level A and human interaction data collection

Equipment	Response Type	Availability?
0	Dropdown Select	0
0	Dropdown Select	0
0	Dropdown Select	0
0	Dropdown Select	0
0	Dropdown Select	0
0	Dropdown Select	0

## B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization

### Key Personnel Experience (minimum)

- 6 marine mammal complete necropsies (at least 2 animals are Code 2)
- Identify species in the field (Code 2)
- Ability to accurately identify marine mammal code condition (Code 1-5)
- Obtain accurate Level A and human interaction data with basic tissue sample (Level B) collection
- Experience and comply with Level A and human interaction data reporting requirements
- Experience with complying with sampling protocols, processing and shipping procedures
- Knowledge of marine mammal anatomy and physiology
- Knowledge of human health and safety precautions (including zoonotic marine mammal disease)
- Knowledge of federal, tribal, state, and local disposal policies and rules

# Evaluation Criteria for Article IV Authorization: First Response, Triage, and Transport of Live Stranded Marine Mammals

## A. Information for Article IV Authorization

### 1. Key Personnel

#### Authorized Representative (Signatory Authority)

First Name

Last Name

Title

Email Address

Home Phone

Office Phone

Cellular

#### Primary Responders

*\*Attach CV and make sure to highlight your experience as listed at the bottom under Section B: Qualifications*

Name	Type	Title	Office, Home, Cellular Phone	Knowledge, Abilities	CV Attached?
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

## 2. Veterinary Support

Attending Veterinarian

Backup Veterinarian

Remote Veterinarian

Willing to consult with Participant's field responders? Provide telemedicine?

Dropdown Select

Dropdown Select

Is there a contingency plan for when the attending veterinarian is not available?

Dropdown Select

## B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization

### 1. Key Personnel

#### Experience

5 live marine mammal strandings (minimum)

3 live marine mammal events (separate) providing triage and/or transport (minimum)

Monitoring vital signs

Ability to access animal condition and make recommendations

Identify species in the field

Ability to draw blood and take measurements (e.g., length)

Ability to tag a marine mammal

Ability to communicate professionally to other organizations and take direction from NMFS, onsite coordinators, or local authorities

Experience responding to a cetacean mass stranding (preferred)

### 2. Attending Veterinarians

#### Criteria

On-call 24-hours (or during operational hours of the Participant)

Experience monitoring vital signs

Ability to draw blood

Appropriate registrations and licenses to obtain the necessary medications and euthanasia drugs

Ability to perform marine mammal euthanasia

Demonstrated familiarity with marine mammal triage and transport

Access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal experts to consult with (if needed)

Compliance with any applicable state requirements for veterinary practice on stranding marine mammals

### 3. Demonstrate knowledge of Federal, state, tribal, and local/municipal laws relating to live animal response

### 4. Have provisions for, and willingness to conduct euthanasia (when appropriate), if euthanasia is included in the proposed activities of the Participant

### 5. Equipment List

Have and maintain equipment appropriate to the proposed extent of live stranding response

Complete list of equipment available shall be provided by the prospective Participant

# Evaluation Criteria for Article V Authorization: Rehabilitation and Release of Live Marine Mammals

## A. Information for Article V Authorization

### 1. Facility Capabilities and Procedures

#### Information on facilities

Pool Quantity	Pool Type/Design	Description	Dimensions

#### Type of available shelter and/or shading

Maximum holding capacity

Number of animals housed in each holding area

Availability of qualified personnel

#### Description of maximum holding capacity

#### Description of water, including source and quality

How is it maintained, tested, and frequency of tests?

How the facility/rehabilitation area is secured from public access?

How are other wild and/or domestic animals will be kept isolated from marine mammals?

How animals will be isolated or quarantined if necessary?



**Information on procedures for:**

*\*if you need more space, please attach a document outlining your procedures*

Food handling and sanitation

Human health and safety throughout the rehabilitation facility

Maintenance of medical, husbandry, and other relevant records for animals *(samples of record forms are helpful)*

Efforts to reduce disease transmission

Humane animal care, routine medical procedures and euthanasia

## 2. Key Personnel

### Primary Responders

*\*Attach CV and make sure to highlight your experience as listed at the bottom under Section B: Qualifications*

Name	Type	Title	Office, Home, Cellular Phone	Knowledge, Abilities	CV Attached?
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

## 3. Contingency Plans

Provide a copy of contingency plans for protection of relocation of rehabilitating marine mammals in case of:

Have you provided a contingency plan for emergency events (hurricanes, fires, other natural disasters)?

Dropdown Select

Have you provided a contingency plan for unusual mortality events?

Dropdown Select

Have you provided a contingency plan for planned events such as construction?

Dropdown Select

Provide any other facility contingency plans

## 4. Copies of all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitations facilities

Attached copies?

Dropdown Select

**5. General protocols and procedures for release and post-release monitoring of marine mammals in rehabilitation**

How animals will be assessed for release determinations and who makes the assessment and final recommendations?

How the prospective participant will follow the NMFS Standards for Release of Rehabilitated Marine Mammals?

How the prospective participant will conduct tagging, release, and post-release monitoring?

**6. Resources - demonstrate sufficient physical and financial resources**

To maintain appropriate animal care for the duration of rehabilitation

To cover costs associated with release (e.g., long term rehabilitation, transport to release site, post release monitoring) or transport to another facility

## **B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization**

### **1. Key Personnel**

#### **Experience**

- Experience or education leading to an understanding of the life history, behavior, biology, physiology, & animal husbandry of applicable marine mammals
- Familiar with NMFS Final Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities, Standards for Release of Marine Mammals, and applicable regulations
- 3 separate rehabilitations cases (minimum) in a supervisory role (multiple animals from mass stranding = 1 case)
- Ability to humanly restrain a marine mammal to conduct basic medical procedures
- Experience maintaining and operating a facility/pool for marine mammal care (including proper water quality)
- Ability to supervise and coordinate on-site personnel and volunteers
- Ability to conduct necropsies
- Experience with record keeping
- Knowledge of how to design and conduct a behavior ethogram (preferred)

### **2. Attending Veterinarians**

#### **Criteria**

- Active U.S. veterinary license or has received equivalent formal educations as determined by NMFS Administrator
- Assume responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, and medical clearance for release or transport of rehab marine mammals
- Ability to provide schedule of veterinary care (includes husbandry records, visual and physical exams, and facilities periodic visual inspections)
- Be available for assistance on 24-hr basis (for questions and emergencies)
- Ability to perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on type(s) of marine mammal(s) most often admitted into rehab
- Marine mammal experience or access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal experts to consult with (if needed)
- RESERVED - documented 1yr clinical working marine mammal experience, or written consulting agreement with experienced marine mammal veterinarian (assure availability when needed)
- Ability to conduct full marine mammal necropsies
- Access to CRC "Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine" most recent edition
- Familiar and comply with standards of veterinary care in the NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities
- Appropriate registrations and licenses to obtain necessary marine mammal rehabilitation medications
- Knowledgeable of species-specific pharmacology
- Have provisions for performance of humane euthanasia
- Ability to write and submit timely disposition recommendations for rehab marine mammals
- Knowledgeable of marine mammal zoonotic diseases and appropriate safety precautions

### **3. Trained staff or volunteer base sufficient to initiate and maintain adequate and appropriate marine mammal care, husbandry, and implementation of veterinary direction**

### **4. Demonstrate knowledge of Federal, state, tribal, and local/municipal laws relating to live animal rehabilitation**

### **5. Familiar with (and have copy of) most current version of NMFS Rehabilitation Facility Standards and Standards for Release of Marine Mammal**

# Evaluation Criteria for Article VI Authorization: Live Animal Response: Short-Term Holding

## A. Information for Article VI Authorization

### 1. Facility Capabilities and Procedures

#### Information on facilities

Pool Quantity	Pool Type/Design	Description	Dimensions

#### Type of available shelter and/or shading

Maximum holding capacity

Number of animals housed in each holding area

Availability of qualified personnel

#### Description of maximum holding capacity

#### Description of water, including source and quality

How is it maintained, tested, and frequency of tests?

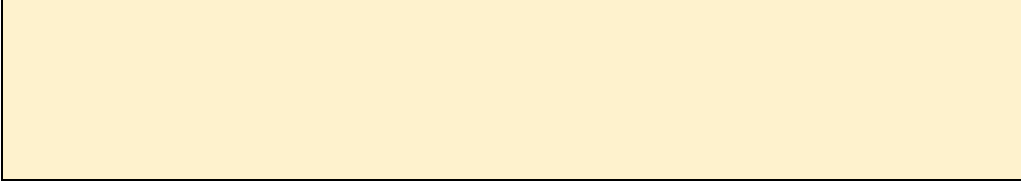
How the facility/rehabilitation area is secured from public access?

How are other wild and/or domestic animals will be kept isolated from marine mammals?

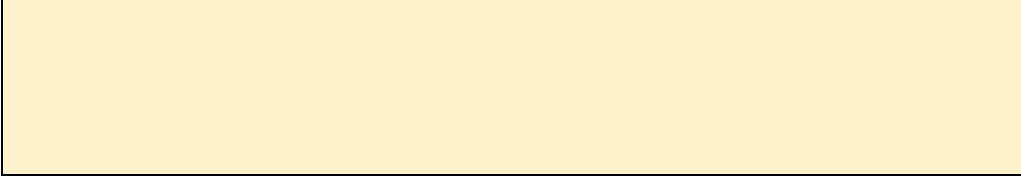
How animals will be isolated or quarantined if necessary?

**Information on procedures for:**

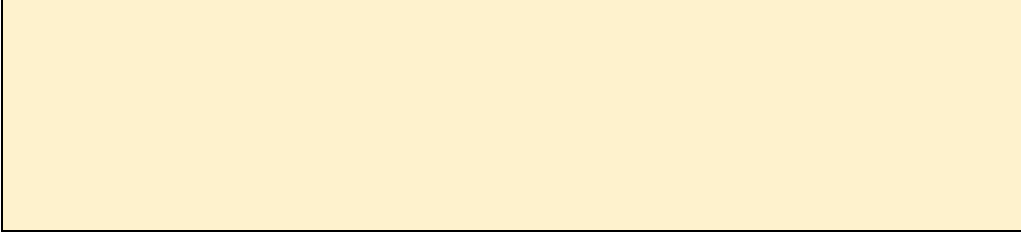
Food handling and sanitation



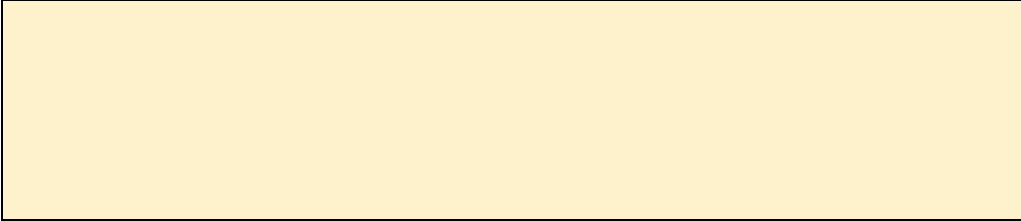
Human health and safety throughout the rehabilitation facility



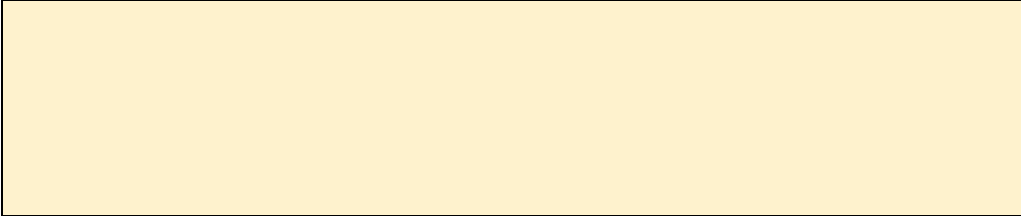
Maintenance of medical, husbandry, and other relevant records for animals *(samples of record forms are helpful)*



Efforts to reduce disease transmission



Humane animal care, routine medical procedures and euthanasia



## 2. Key Personnel

### Primary Responders

*\*Attach CV and make sure to highlight your experience as listed at the bottom under Section B: Qualifications*

Name	Type	Title	Office, Home, Cellular Phone	Experience, Knowledge,	CV Attached?
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select
0	Dropdown Select	0	0	0	Dropdown Select

*\*If you need more room, please attach a list.*

## 3. Contingency Plans

Provide a copy of contingency plans for protection of relocation of rehabilitating marine mammals in case of:

Have you provided a contingency plan for emergency events (hurricanes, fires, other natural disasters)?

Dropdown Select

Have you provided a contingency plan for unusual mortality events?

Dropdown Select

Have you provided a contingency plan for planned events such as construction?

Dropdown Select

Provide any other facility contingency plans

## 4. Copies of all applicable Federal, state, tribal, and local permits for rehabilitations facilities

Attached copies?

Dropdown Select

**5. General protocols and procedures for release and post-release monitoring of marine mammals in rehabilitat**

How animals will be assessed for release determinations and who makes the assessment and final recommendations?

How the prospective participant will follow the NMFS Standards for Release of Rehabilitated Marine Mammals?

How the prospective participant will conduct tagging, release, and post-release monitoring?

**6. Resources - demonstrate sufficient physical and financial resources**

To maintain appropriate animal care for the duration of rehabilitation

To cover costs associated with release (e.g., long term rehabilitation, transport to release site, post release monitoring) or transport to another facility



## **B. Qualifications for Article IV Authorization**

### **1. Key Personnel**

#### **Experience**

Experience or education leading to an understanding of the life history, behavior, biology, physiology, & animal husbandry of applicable marine mammals  
Familiar with NMFS Final Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities, Standards for Release of Marine Mammals, and applicable regulations  
3 separate short-term holding rehabilitation cases (minimum) in a supervisory role (multiple animals from mass stranding = 1 case)  
Experience maintaining and operating a facility/pool for marine mammal care (including proper water quality)  
Ability to supervise and coordinate on-site personnel and volunteers  
Ability to conduct necropsies  
Experience with record keeping  
Ability to humanely restrain a marine mammal to perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on short-term rehabilitation marine mammals  
Marine mammal experience or access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal experts to consult with (if needed)

### **2. Attending Veterinarians**

#### **Criteria**

Active U.S. veterinary license or has received equivalent formal education as determined by NMFS Administrator  
Assume responsibility for diagnosis, treatment, and medical clearance for release or transport of rehab marine mammals  
Ability to provide schedule of veterinary care (includes husbandry records, visual and physical exams, and facilities periodic visual inspections)  
Be available for assistance on 24-hr basis (for questions and emergencies)  
Ability to perform routine diagnostic and medical procedures on type(s) of marine mammal(s) most often admitted into rehab  
Marine mammal experience or access to a list of veterinarians with marine mammal experts to consult with (if needed)  
RESERVED - documented 1yr clinical working marine mammal experience, or written consulting agreement with experienced marine mammal veterinarian (assure availability when needed)  
Ability to conduct full marine mammal necropsies  
Access to CRC "Handbook of Marine Mammal Medicine" most recent edition  
Familiar and comply with standards of veterinary care in the NMFS Best Practices for Marine Mammal Stranding Response, Rehabilitation, and Release - Standards for Rehabilitation Facilities  
Appropriate registrations and licenses to obtain necessary marine mammal rehabilitation medications  
Knowledgeable of species-specific pharmacology  
Have provisions for performance of humane euthanasia  
Ability to write and submit timely disposition recommendations for rehab marine mammals  
Knowledgeable of marine mammal zoonotic diseases and appropriate safety precautions

### **3. Trained staff or volunteer base sufficient to initiate and maintain adequate and appropriate marine mammal care, husbandry, and implementation of veterinary direction**

### **4. Demonstrate knowledge of Federal, state, tribal, and local/municipal laws relating to live animal**

### **5. Familiar with (and have copy of) most current version of NMFS Rehabilitation Facility Standards and Standards for Release of Marine Mammal**

## Evaluation Criteria for Article VII Authorization: Live Animal Response: Temporary Participation in the Stranding Network

This Article is intended to authorize a facility that does not intend to be a long-term, continuing participant in the marine mammal stranding network, but is instead participating in a short-term capacity. This may be for purposes of response to an anthropogenic event such as an oil spill, a marine mammal event such as an Unusual Mortality Event, or to fill a temporary "gap in coverage." The intent is to be able to apply for and receive this SA Article in an expedited manner, and for it only to be authorized until the emergency situation is resolved.

Therefore, the Participant may be applying for a range of stranding response roles, typically covered in Articles III, IV, V, and/or VI. Therefore, the Participants should be assessed against the criteria in sections 2, 3, 4, 5, and/or 7, depending upon the specific role they intend to fill in the Stranding Network. The NMFS Regional Administrator may waive specific criteria requirements in those sections for temporary facilities, depending upon the nature of the Participant's role in the Stranding Network, as long as waiving those criteria will not compromise animal and human health and welfare.

Does the Participant intend to apply as a temporary facility?

[If yes, please fill out the appropriate section for each article you intend to apply for as a temporary facility.](#)

## Evaluation Criteria for Designee Organization

The purpose of a Designee organization is to assist the Participant with sub-region coordination, response, and/or rehabilitation capability within the Participant's geographic area of responsibility and under the Participant's oversight. If a Participant is proposing oversight of a Designee organization(s), the Participant [must] should provide evidence that the Designee organization has the skills, resources, and organizational capability to respond to dead/live stranded marine mammals [or rehabilitate marine mammals]. In some cases, it may not be possible for each proposed Designee organization to meet all of the evaluation criteria listed below. If this is the case, NMFS needs written assurance and details specifying how the prospective Participant will take responsibility for fulfilling specific qualifications lacking for the Designee organization

### A. Information for Designee Organization for Articles III, IV, V and VI

1. Provide same information required in sections II through VI
2. Justification for Designee (for geographic need, and enhancement response capabilities provided)
3. Copy of written and signed memo of understanding (MOU) between Participant and Designee

### B. Qualifications for Designee Organizations for Articles III, IV, and V

1. Each evaluated to the same required qualifications listed in Sections II through VI
2. The MOU provided will be reviewed for completeness

<b>Personnel Type</b>	<b>Size/Age Class</b>	<b>(Y/N)</b>	<b>Type of Response</b>	<b>Collaboration with who</b>
Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
Authorized Representative	Calf	Yes	Dead animals only	NMFS
Primary Responder	Sub-adult	No	Live & Dead animals	Stranding Network
Volunteer	Adult	N/A	Short-Term holding	Federal Agency
Veterinarian	All		Rehabilitation	State Agency
Intern				Tribal
Other Key Personnel				Local conservation group
				Scientific researcher
				Public
				Other

<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>
Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select	Dropdown Select
Live Stranding	Non-profit	Past
Dead Stranding	Governmental Agency	Present
	Aquarium	
	Museum	
	University	
	Other	