

Statement by Frances Gulland
Nominee for Member, Marine Mammal Commission
before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to have been nominated by President Obama to serve as a Member of the Marine Mammal Commission, and I also am honored to appear before you to discuss my nomination and to address your questions. As a veterinarian, I took an oath to dedicate my professional life to the care of animals including marine mammals, so it is a true and special privilege to be considered for this position.

I was born in England and grew up in Italy, where my father worked for the United Nations in international fisheries management. He was a founding member of the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee, so from an early age I was exposed to the sometimes competing demands of fisheries management and whale conservation. My father instilled in me a sense of duty and taught me the value of science-based policy and resource management. My mother received one of the first degrees awarded to women from the University of Cambridge, and she taught me the values of education, respect, and dignity. Both my parents have passed away, but they would have been immensely proud to see me here today as a nominee for the Marine Mammal Commission. I hope to continue to apply the values and principles I learned from my parents to the conservation of marine mammals.

I trained as a veterinarian at the University of Cambridge, where I also completed a Ph.D. in zoology. Thus, I combined my fascination and life-long interest in medicine with scientific research in mammalian ecology. I view the latter to be an essential foundation for conserving mammals. After working at the Zoological Society of London as a surgeon and field researcher, I moved to the United States in 1994 and became a citizen in 2006. Since 1994, I have worked as the Director of the Veterinary Science program at The Marine Mammal Center, a private non-governmental organization dedicated to the veterinary care of marine mammals, research, and education. I have witnessed first hand the changes in marine mammal health over the past two decades, as the Center has treated more than 10,000 sick and injured marine mammals during my employment. In addition to my work as a clinical veterinarian, I have conducted research into the factors impacting the health of marine mammals, such as pollutants and increasing harmful algal blooms. To conduct these studies I have supervised students and collaborated with scientists at a number of universities and from several state and federal agencies, particularly those in the Departments of Commerce and the Interior. To carry out my studies, I have collaborated with scientists from multiple disciplines, such as oceanography, toxicology, epidemiology, ecology,

and marine mammal biology. This research has deepened my understanding of the impacts of changes in coastal waters on marine mammal health and disease, including cancer and impaired reproduction resulting from increasing red tides and pollutants. It also has taught me the value of interdisciplinary investigations and the need for innovative approaches to understand current and future changes in marine ecosystems.

I have served on federal and state advisory teams including the recovery teams for the Hawaiian monk seal and the southern sea otter, the Oiled Wildlife Care Network established by the California Department of Fish and Game, and the California Ocean Protection Council, which was created under California's Ocean Protection Act to coordinate activities of state agencies with ocean-related responsibilities. I have served as a scientific advisor to the Marine Mammal Commission since 2000. Serving on these advisory teams has strengthened my understanding of the factors that pose risks to marine mammals and marine ecosystems and the complex scientific, social, and economic issues that must be addressed to ensure their conservation.

As human populations expand and globalization continues, the demands on marine resources and the impacts on the marine environment are ever increasing. Marine mammals, both as populations and individuals, are valuable indicators of the health of our marine ecosystems in ways that are sometimes obvious, such as whales lacerated by the propellers of large ships or animals entangled and dead in fishing gear, or more subtle, such as animals sickened by the toxins of harmful algal blooms. Many of the risk factors that threaten marine mammals, including environmental contamination and bioaccumulation of harmful chemicals, also pose significant risks to human health and warrant additional research so that we can understand and minimize the potential impacts.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act created a legal framework for addressing these threats as they pertain to marine mammals and, more generally, for conserving marine mammals and their ecosystems. I would be honored to serve as a Commissioner to further the goals and policies of this Act and work with the Administration and Congress, as well as scientists, industries, conservationists, students, and the public, to ensure that marine mammals are conserved for future generations. Solutions will require collaboration from a broad cross-section of society, as well as an understanding of the need to balance the demands of increasing human populations and globalization with ecosystem conservation. One of the greatest challenges for the Marine Mammal Commission is working with the appropriate agencies to coordinate and integrate scientific and management activities to conserve marine mammals while allowing sustainable use of marine resources.

I believe that I have the experience, knowledge, and commitment to serve the Marine Mammal Commission well in these challenging times. If confirmed, I would serve the Commission, and

our nation, to the very best of my abilities. Again, thank you for the honor of appearing before you. I would be pleased to address any questions the Committee may have.