

Statement by Michael F. Tillman
Nominee for Member, Marine Mammal Commission
before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
March 18, 2010

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply grateful to President Obama for nominating me as a Member of the Marine Mammal Commission, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss my nomination and to address your questions.

I would like to begin by acknowledging my mother, Margaret Roberts Tillman, who passed away almost 7 years ago at the age of 89. She grew up in a Tlingit Indian village called Klawock on Prince William Island in Southeast Alaska. She had the courage and determination to leave the village, seek a quality education, and forge a better life for herself and, eventually, for her family. She ultimately became a leader of our people in Seattle and a respected elder of the Tlingit Indian Tribe. If she could be here today, I'm sure she would be very proud of this moment and thinking, "See, if provided the opportunity, encouragement and education, we too can be among America's best and brightest." I hope that I have measured up to her expectations.

I retired six years ago after 32 years of service in the National Marine Fisheries Service. For 15-1/2 years I was a Senior Executive, applying science to resolve the difficult issues arising from the national and international management of living marine resources. I hope to serve as a member of the Marine Mammal Commission and continue to apply that experience to the conservation of marine mammals and ecosystems.

I have had a wide and varied career as a scientist and manager. My early research focused on estimating the abundance of marine resources that were taken by commercial and Alaskan Native harvests. I then began advising policy officials on the scientific aspects of issues such as subsistence harvests of northern fur seals, incidental killings by Japanese drift gillnets, commercial harvests of whales regulated by the International Whaling Commission, and Alaska Eskimo hunts for bowhead whales.

Later in my career, as a policy official or as one of the agency's senior scientists, I worked on Pacific Northwest salmon listings, the incidental take of dolphins by tuna purse seiners, the incidental take of sea turtles by Hawaiian longliners, recovery planning for Hawaiian monk seals, and the adoption of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary by the International Whaling

Commission. During these later years, I served as the U.S. Commissioner to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission and the Deputy U.S. Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission. Consequently, I have broad experience regarding the interplay of science, management, and politics in formulating national and international policies pertaining to the conservation of living marine resources.

Although now retired, I continue to work in the conservation arena, advising the U.S. Delegation to the International Whaling Commission and serving as a Research Associate at Scripps Institution of Oceanography's Center for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation. I believe that, if confirmed, I have the experience, knowledge, and broad, strategic perspective to serve the Marine Mammal Commission well in these challenging times.

One of the major challenges facing the Marine Mammal Commission is the globalization of issues affecting the status of marine mammal populations. Marine mammals do not recognize the arbitrary boundaries established by governments, and neither do the issues affecting the health of their stocks, such as climate change, ocean pollution, and anthropogenic noise. For that reason, marine mammal conservation requires an ecosystem approach that transcends borders. In turn, implementation of such an approach will require dedication and new resources to improve our scientific understanding of how ecosystems work. Moreover, the involved agencies must commit themselves to coordinating and integrating their related scientific and management activities. I am pleased that the Ocean Policy Task Force has recognized these needs in its Interim Report.

If confirmed, I would be honored, both professionally and personally, to be a member of the Marine Mammal Commission, to contribute to its mission and goals and, in doing so, to continue my service to this great nation.

Thank you and I would be pleased to address any questions.