**NOAA FISHERIES**

Southeast Fisheries
Science Center

*Producing societally relevant and exceptional science to have a meaningful impact on marine mammal and sea turtle conservation.*

## WHO WE ARE

*A diverse team of about 35 federal employees and affiliates across a variety of disciplines including analysts, biologists, geneticists, veterinarians, acousticians, and more.*

## LEADERSHIP

Division Director
Mridula Srinivasan, Ph.D.

Marine Mammal Branch Chief
Jenny Litz, Ph.D.

Sea Turtle Branch Chief
Joseph Pfaller, Ph.D.

Operations Manager
Lieutenant (junior grade)
Emily Ruhl

# Marine Mammal and Turtle Division

## Why We Do It

We believe that thriving oceans lead to a thriving society and economy.

## What We Do

We produce high-quality population and ecological information for multiple marine mammal and turtle species to analyze human and environmental impacts and address conservation conflicts. Specifically, we conduct research on whales, dolphins, and sea turtles within the western North Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean Sea. We provide the scientific information and technical advice needed to manage, recover, and conserve marine mammals, sea turtles, and their habitats.

Our team supports implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, as well as several other applicable laws and policies. Our scientists spearhead exciting and productive research collaborations with internal and external partners, both regionally and internationally.

## How We Do It

We collect and synthesize visual, genetic, biological, and acoustics data into modeled products and applications. Specifically, our field-based research includes vessel and aerial surveys (including small uncrewed aircraft systems, or drones), capture-mark-recapture sampling, passive acoustic monitoring, satellite telemetry, tissue collection, water samples, prey, habitat, and environmental data. Our laboratory-based research employs molecular genetics, including genomics and environmental DNA, stable isotopes, skeletochronology (bone dating), near-infrared spectroscopy, and diagnostic health assessments. Our scientists also apply novel and established analytical tools and modeling approaches to generate scientific products and decision-support tools to answer complex research and management questions.
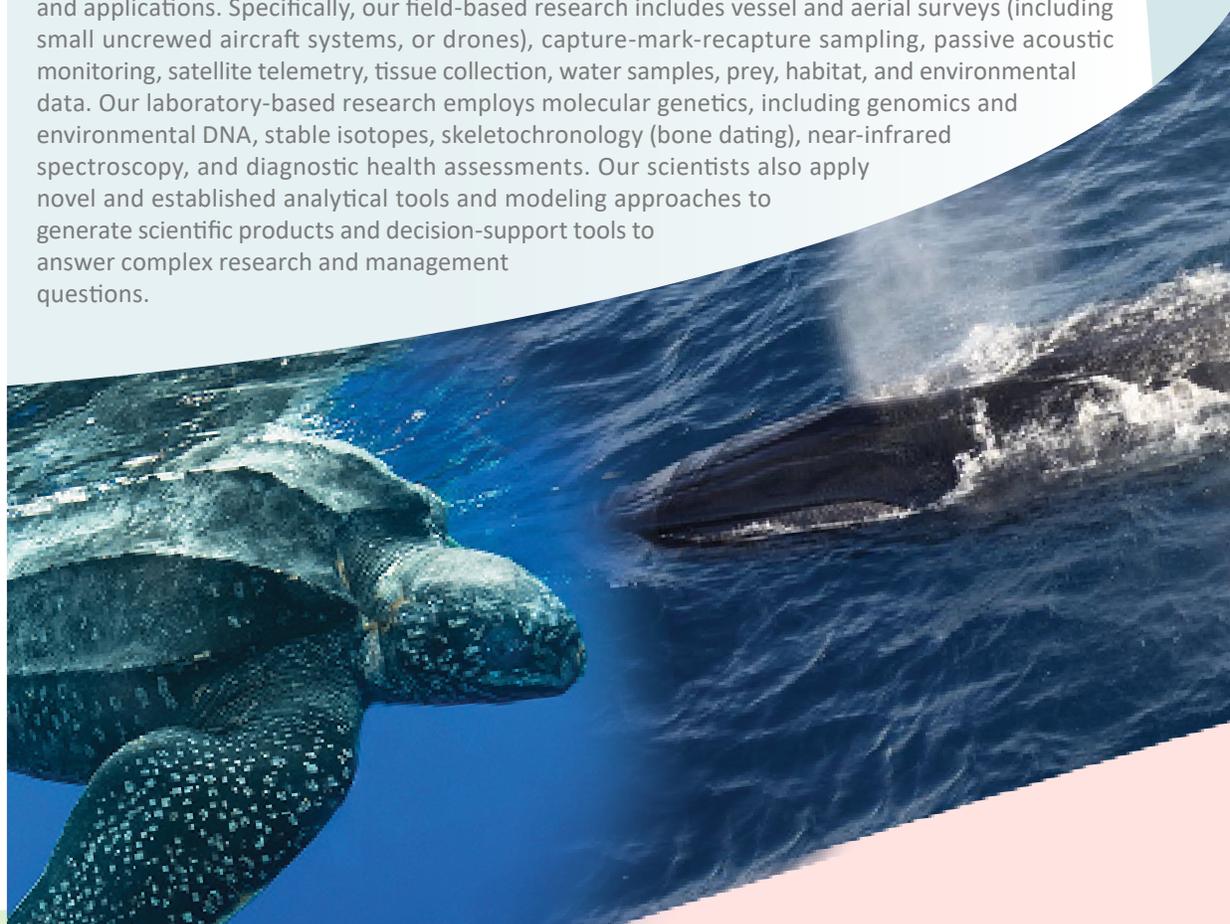
## KEY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Characterize population structure and investigate shifts in distribution and demography

- Estimate population size, density, and evaluate trends in abundance

- Understand animal movements and behavioral responses to human activities, prey, oceanographic conditions, and climate change

- Identify anthropogenic threats and quantify individual and population-level consequences

- Assess the health, causes of illness and mortality of marine mammals and sea turtles

*Permit #21938-03*
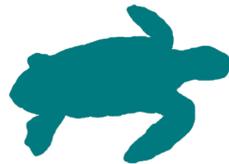
## Strategic Outlook (2021-2025)

### PRIORITY 1
Ensure organizational excellence by creating, supporting, and sustaining a workforce of leaders

### PRIORITY 2
Collect and analyze data and disseminate scientific products to describe population status, trends, distribution, and behavior of marine mammal and sea turtle species

### PRIORITY 3
Short-term and long-term injury assessment, restoration, and monitoring of environmental and anthropogenic events

### PRIORITY 4
Data access, management, and dissemination

**Our research operations—from administrative to scientific activities—support NOAA Fisheries' mission of protecting marine mammals and sea turtles, and helping recover endangered species populations.**

*Permit #594-1759*

U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Gina M. Raimondo

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
Richard W. Spinrad

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
Janet Coit

www.fisheries.noaa.gov

National Marine
Fisheries Service
Southeast Fisheries Science Center