

SWSS Panel Discussion: Recommendations/Questions



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Recommendations for Priority Research GOM Sperm Whales

- Priorities should be determined by requirements for management and need to understand biological significance
- Conduct power analysis to determine the most effective methods to provide all of the required information

One Pressing Short Term Question: After 2005 ...

- Where are our core whales?
- Have they returned? Been replaced?
- Does the picture we built up pre-2004 still hold?
- More general need to understand and quantify natural variability

Preliminary Areas for Recommendations

- Basic Population Information
 - Population parameters: population size, structure and trends
 - Whole NE, NW, Dry Tortugas, deep water Gulf, Mexican Gulf
 - Distributions: build and test predictive models of relative density
 - Population structure over different time scales: genetics, coda analysis, mark recapture

Preliminary Areas for Recommendations

- Basic Population Information
 - Breeding and calving seasonality and behavior
 - Reproductive outputs: calving rates
 - Assessment of feeding successes, movement patterns, defecation, creak rates
 - Foraging studies, active acoustics, understanding of the sperm whale food web
 - Why are GOM whales so small? Were they always?

Preliminary Areas for Recommendations

- Behavioral Response Studies (CEEs or other techniques)
 - Develop cost effective approaches, increase replicates
 - Capitalize on opportunistic scenarios
 - Extend to areas outside central NE Gulf
 - Increase db testing levels safely
 - Follow for extended time periods, before, during, and after exposure
 - Instrument groups of animals
 - Monitor prey field before, during, and after airgun exposure

Preliminary Areas for Recommendations

- Continue to enhance telemetry capabilities
- Continue “traditional” research studies to monitor populations over extended time periods
- Extend and enhance photo-ID database for mark-recapture studies