

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the 1994 amendments of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) were required to generate stock assessment reports (SAR) for all marine mammal stocks in waters within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The first reports for the Atlantic (includes the Gulf of Mexico) were published in July 1995 (Blaylock *et al.* 1995). The MMPA requires NMFS and USFWS to review these reports annually for strategic stocks of marine mammals and at least every 3 years for stocks determined to be non-strategic. The second edition of the SARs (1996 assessments) was published in October 1997 and contained all the previous reports, but major revisions and updating were only completed for strategic stocks (Waring *et al.* 1997). In subsequent annual reports, including this current 2008 edition, updated reports are indicated by the corresponding year date-stamp at the top right corner of the report and are included in the main body of the document. Stock assessments not updated in the current year are included, in full, in Appendix IV. Also included in this report as appendices are: 1) a summary of serious injury/mortality estimates of marine mammals in observed U.S. fisheries (Appendix I), 2) a summary of NMFS records of large whale/human interactions examined for this assessment (Appendix II), 3) detailed fisheries information (Appendix III), and 4) the 1995 USFWS West Indian manatee assessments (Appendix V).

Table 1 contains a summary, by species, of the information included in the stock assessments, and also indicates those that have been revised since the 2007 publication. A total of 42 Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico stock assessment reports were revised for 2008. In addition, a new report was added this year for the Atlantic stock of the rough-toothed dolphin, bringing the total number of reports up to 59. Most of the proposed changes incorporate new information into sections on population size and/or mortality estimates. The revised SARs include 9 strategic and 34 non-strategic stocks.

This report was prepared by staff of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC) and Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC). NMFS staff presented the reports at the January 2008 meeting of the Atlantic Scientific Review Group (ASRG), and subsequent revisions were based on their contributions and constructive criticism. This is a working document and individual stock assessment reports will be updated as new information becomes available and as changes to marine mammal stocks and fisheries occur. The authors solicit any new information or comments which would improve future stock assessment reports.