



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

28 June 2010

Mr. P. Michael Payne, Chief
Permits, Conservation, and Education Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Permits for oil-spill related marine mammal
research in the Gulf of Mexico

Dear Mr. Payne:

The Marine Mammal Commission appreciates the work that the National Marine Fisheries Service is doing to respond to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill event. One part of that response is managing the permits needed for research on marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico. The Commission understands that many researchers are proposing research to help assess the spill's impact on marine mammals, and they should be encouraged to do so. Many of these researchers already have permits for work in the Gulf or on species potentially affected by the spill. However, it is essential in this time of increased environmental stress that any studies of Gulf marine mammals are coordinated to limit the cumulative impact of research to tolerable levels.

The Marine Mammal Commission encourages your office to write to all permit holders already authorized or seeking authorization to work on Gulf marine mammals, informing them that all such requests should be coordinated through your office and asking them to provide specific details regarding their planned research. Such coordination will help the Service ensure that necessary research is being conducted, that unnecessary redundancy is being avoided, and that the added stress from research projects is being appropriately managed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director