



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

7 December 2011

Ms. Nadene G. Kennedy
Permit Office, Room 755
Office of Polar Programs
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Ms. Kennedy:

By notice published in the *Federal Register* on 23 November 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 72451), the National Science Foundation sought comments on a permit application from Dr. Daniel Costa, University of California Santa Cruz. Dr. Costa is seeking authorization under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 to collect samples from dead pinnipeds at Cape Evans, Backdoor Bay, and Hut Point, Antarctica. The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the permit request with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Antarctic Conservation Act and offers the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Science Foundation issue the requested permit.

RATIONALE

Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued permit 87-1851 to Dr. Costa to conduct research on numerous pinniped species in Antarctica. Dr. Costa is requesting to collect skin, fur, and one whisker from up to 50 dead Weddell seals caught during the early 1900s by explorers. Those seal remains are found around the historic huts in the Antarctic Specially Protected Areas of Cape Evans, Backdoor Bay, and Hut Point. The purpose of the research would be to determine if a potential shift in diet of Weddell seals has occurred over time using stable isotope signatures. Dr. Costa would compare the stable isotope signatures of the seals collected by historic explorers with those signatures found in Weddell seals in the Ross Sea today. All samples collected during the field season would be imported to the United States.

The Commission believes that the activities in the permit application are consistent with the purposes and policies of the Marine Mammal Protection and Antarctic Conservation Acts.

Ms. Nadene G. Kennedy
7 December 2011
Page 2

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the Commission's recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "T" and "R".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cc: Mr. P. Michael Payne