



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 August 2016

Ms. Jolie Harrison, Chief  
Permits and Conservation Division  
Office of Protected Resources  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225

Re: Permit Application No. 20481  
(BBC Natural History Unit)

Dear Ms. Harrison:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission), in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (the MMPA). BBC Natural History Unit (BBC) proposes to film marine mammals in California during a one-year period.

BBC is requesting authorization to take up to 1,000 California sea lions, 1,000 short-beaked common dolphins, and 1,000 long-beaked common dolphins<sup>1</sup> of any age class or either sex during filming activities in California. Filming would occur during a 10-day period in summer and early fall 2016 from Año Nuevo to the Channel Islands, primarily in Monterey Bay. BBC plans to film large-scale feeding of bait fish during El Niño conditions as part of the documentary, *Ocean*.

Filming would be conducted using high-definition video cameras from shore, from a small boat and underwater pole camera, and by snorkelers/divers. Regional marine mammal experts have served as advisors for past filming activities in Monterey Bay and would continue to serve as advisors, if concerns arise during the proposed filming activities. Filmmakers would cease their activities immediately if an animal is observed to respond adversely to the activities. To avoid interruption of feeding behavior, filmmakers would refrain from positioning the boat in front of the feeding group and would maintain a position off to the side, when possible. Neither hauled-out sea lions nor pups would be targeted for filming. Individuals would be filmed for no longer than 1 hour topside or 30 minutes underwater. For these reasons, the Commission believes that the proposed activities are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the permit, as requested.

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<sup>1</sup> California sea lions are the target species. Dolphins would not be actively approached but could be filmed incidentally when filming the sea lions. The Commission also notes that the two species of common dolphins off California are again considered a single species, *Delphinus delphis* (see <https://www.marinemammalscience.org/species-information/list-marine-mammal-species-subspecies/>).

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca J. Lent". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a distinct "Lent" at the end.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.  
Executive Director