



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

18 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. 18529
(Janice Straley,
University of Alaska Southeast)

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). Ms. Straley is seeking to renew her permit to conduct research on cetaceans in Alaska during a five-year period—permit 14122 authorized the same activities.

Ms. Straley proposes to conduct research year-round on numerous species of cetaceans, primarily in the Gulf of Alaska, Prince William Sound, and southeast Alaska waters. The purpose of the research is to investigate (1) population structure and life history parameters, (2) distribution and movement patterns, (3) foraging ecology, (4) social behavior, and (5) fisheries interactions. Researchers would harass, observe/track¹, photograph/videotape, record acoustically², sample³, and/or instrument⁴ numerous cetaceans of both sexes and various age classes (see the take table). They would not biopsy sample or tag young calves⁵. In addition, researchers could conduct directed fishing operation modification (DFOM) activities⁶ on sperm and killer whales but not on groups of animals with calves of any age. Various species of marine mammals could be harassed incidental to the proposed activities (see the take table).

To minimize impacts during the proposed activities, researchers would cease their activities if animals exhibit adverse reactions (e.g., tail lobbing, peduncle slapping, stress vocalizing, abrupt

¹ Including conducting focal follows.

² Prey fields also would be mapped with echosounders.

³ Including collecting biopsy samples, sloughed skin, feces, exhaled breath, and remains from killer whale predation events. Samples could be exported for analysis.

⁴ Cetaceans could be instrumented with suction-cup and/or dart tags.

⁵ Calves 6 months of age or less for all species except humpback whales which would be 4 months of age or less.

⁶ Operational sounds from a fishing vessel (including the hydraulic system, engine cycling operations that emit cavitation bubbles, the engine sounds themselves, and the echosounder) would be modified for up to 30 minutes during haul back of the gear.

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shifts in direction of movement, apparent displacement⁷, or other agonistic behavior). Ms. Straley would collaborate with personnel at the the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Oregon State University, Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, Florida International University, and Moss Landing Marine Laboratories. The University of Alaska's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has reviewed and approved the research protocols. The Commission believes that the proposed activities are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and recommends that NMFS issue the permit, as requested.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rebecca J. Lent". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director

⁷ Except for DFOM activities.