



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

24 August 2011

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman
Chief, Branch of Permits
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203

Re: Permit Application No. PRT42872A
(Iskande Larkin, Ph.D.,
University of Florida)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal 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. Dr. Larkin is requesting authorization to import samples from the West Indian manatee for purposes of scientific research during a five-year period. The manatee samples would be imported from Mexico.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the requested permit but condition it to require that Dr. Larkin obtain authorization for reissuance of the CITES permit before importing any manatee part in subsequent years.

RATIONALE

Dr. Larkin proposes to import manatee samples collected from captive animals at the Dolphin Discovery facility in Quintana Roo, Mexico, to analyze them for immunological, chemosensory, and reproductive parameters. The purposes of the proposed research are to determine (1) baseline parameters of health and (2) naturally occurring fluctuations of those parameters in response to anthropogenic and natural environmental stressors. Dr. Larkin proposes to import up to 300 samples per year that originate from aliquots or surplus samples that are routinely collected during voluntary husbandry or veterinary procedures. Those samples would include milk, blood, urine, feces, tears, placentas, blood clots, and amniotic fluid.

Dr. Larkin has applied for the necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to import the manatee parts. The Service has indicated that they would issue the CITES permit in conjunction with the scientific research permit under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. However, the CITES permit only would be valid for one year but could be reissued as necessary. As such, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the requested permit but condition it to require that Dr. Larkin obtain authorization for reissuance of the CITES permit before importing any manatee part in subsequent years.

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The Commission believes that the activities for which it has recommended approval are consistent with the purposes and policies of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning 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