



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 May 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: Renewal of Permit No. PRT-100361
(Mote Marine Laboratory)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced request for a permit renewal with reference to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The applicant is requesting authorization to take by harassment up to 5,000 manatees annually during aerial surveys and up to 1,000 of those manatees during close approaches for photo-identification and assessment of foraging and other behaviors and collection of skin samples. The skin samples would be collected using epidermal scrapers and, in coordination and collaboration with researchers from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, for use in genetic research. The applicant also is requesting authorization to acquire “discard blood” samples taken opportunistically from two trained manatees currently maintained at Mote Marine Laboratory and other captive manatees, including those that are captured for rescue, telemetry, or health assessments. Authorization also is requested to import annually an unspecified number of anatomical and other specimens (e.g., skeletal materials and preserved soft tissues recovered from dead animals and samples of milk, blood, urine, feces, skin, and blubber) collected from up to 100 free-ranging and captive manatees and dugongs incidental to rescues and captures for tagging. The applicant states that animals would be handled and sampled in foreign countries only after any necessary permits have been obtained. Samples would be imported from the Caribbean basin, South America, the Indo-Pacific, and West Africa. The authorization, if issued, would be valid for five years and would replace expiring Permit No. PRT-100361, currently held by the applicant.

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service approve the requested authorization, provided that—

- the proposed studies have been reviewed and approved by the applicant’s Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee in accordance with § 2.31 of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service’s regulations governing the humane handling, care, treatment, and transportation of marine mammals;
- the Service ensure that the activities to be conducted under this permit and those of other permit holders who might be carrying out research on the same species in the same areas are coordinated and data shared to avoid unnecessarily duplicative research and unnecessary disturbance;

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman
3 May 2011
Page 2

- the applicant maintain detailed records indicating the source of each specimen and the circumstances under which it was collected;
- the applicant periodically provide reports to the Service sufficient to demonstrate that each specimen was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin, was not taken in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act or other applicable U.S. laws, and is being used only for bona fide scientific purposes or incidental educational and public display purposes;
- the permit holder annually provide a report of activities conducted; and
- the applicant has obtained the necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

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 this recommendation.

Sincerely,



Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Cc: Barbara Kohn, D.V.M.