



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

26 September 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. 20341
(Craig Matkin,
North Gulf Oceanic Society)

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). Mr. Matkin is seeking to renew his permit to conduct research on cetaceans in Alaska during a five-year period—permit 15616 authorized the same activities.

Mr. Matkin proposes to conduct research year-round on numerous species of cetaceans from Dixon Entrance in southeast Alaska to the Arctic Ocean. 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) disease and health in cetaceans. Researchers would harass, observe, photograph/vidiotape¹, record acoustically, sample², and/or instrument³ numerous cetaceans of both sexes and various age classes (see the take table). They would not biopsy sample or tag calves of any age or females with calves less than six months of 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., rapid surface swimming away from the vessel, displacement from a feeding site, explosive breaching, evidence of social disruption). They also would not separate a female from her calf. Mr. Matkin would collaborate with personnel at the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre, North Pacific Research Board, and Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Finally, North Gulf Oceanic Society does not have an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and has yet to obtain federal funding for its research activities. However, Mr. Matkin is aware that, if funding is obtained in the future, the proposed research protocols must be reviewed and approved

¹ Including the use of unmanned aerial systems for photogrammetry.

² Including collecting biopsy samples and remains from killer whale predation events.

³ Cetaceans could be instrumented with suction-cup or dart tags.

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by an IACUC. He plans to have a co-investigator's IACUC review the protocols when funding is obtained. 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.

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 with a large initial "R" and a distinct "Lent" at the end.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director