



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

6 March 2017

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. 21026
(Dorian Houser, Ph.D.,
National Marine Mammal Foundation)

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). Dr. Houser is seeking to renew his permit to conduct research on cetaceans during a five-year period—permit 16559 authorized the same activities.

Dr. Houser proposes to conduct testing of auditory evoked potentials (AEP)¹ on up to 15 individuals from each cetacean species per year. Individuals from all age classes and both sexes could be tested. AEP testing would occur opportunistically both on stranded animals in waters or on beaches or on animals in rehabilitation facilities in the United States. The purpose of the proposed research is to obtain hearing range and sensitivity data for various species of cetaceans.

Up to six 2-hour sessions could be performed on any individual animal, but only two sessions could occur on any given day separated by at least 2 hours. Dr. Houser may conduct repeat AEP testing on no more than 3 days total if insufficient information regarding the animal's hearing was obtained in prior tests and the animal is deemed sufficiently healthy for testing. Ambient sound conditions and vocalizations also would be recorded. AEP testing would only occur if the attending veterinarian or the stranding facility coordinator deems the animal healthy enough for testing. In all cases, Dr. Houser would cease AEP testing activities if the attending veterinarian determines that the testing is causing undue stress to the animal. Dr. Houser's Institutional Care and Use Committee currently is reviewing the proposed protocols, which have been approved in previous years. Approval would be obtained prior to conducting the proposed procedures. 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.

¹ Including conducting an ultrasound to determine blubber depth for placement of electrodes, when necessary.

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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