



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

2 May 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. 20951
(Ann Zoidis,
Cetos Research Organization)

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. Zoidis is requesting to conduct research activities on cetaceans during a five-year period—permit 526-1523 authorized similar activities.

Ms. Zoidis proposes to conduct research year-round on numerous cetacean species primarily in the Northern Gulf of Maine. The purpose of the research is to investigate cetacean (1) population structure and life history parameters, (2) distribution and movement patterns, and (3) foraging ecology. Researchers would harass, observe¹, photograph/videotape², and/or biopsy sample³ individuals of numerous cetacean species (see the take table). They would not biopsy sample humpback and fin whale calves estimated to be less than 6 months of age and one-third the length of the female. However, females with calves less than 6 months of age could be biopsy sampled. Only juvenile and adult sei, minke, and blue whales would be biopsy sampled.

Researchers would cease their activities if animals exhibit adverse reactions (e.g., breaching, lobtailing, tail flicks, flipper slaps, sudden changes in orientation, changes in direction or speed of travel, sudden changes in respiration rate, 'wheezy' blows, trumpeting, sudden diving, constant movement away from the vessel, increase in surface activity, etc.). Vessels would approach whales slowly from the side and would not separate females from their calves. To minimize the possibility of biopsy sampling individuals multiple times in a given year, researchers would crosscheck the photo-identification catalog⁴ before biopsy sampling any individual. All encounters would be limited to 30 minutes. Researchers would collaborate with personnel at the Northeast Fisheries Science

¹ Including conducting focal follows.

² Including using unmanned aerial systems to conduct photogrammetry measurements.

³ Samples could be exported for analysis. Twenty percent of each of the five species that would be biopsy sampled could be sampled twice in a given year with at least one week between sampling events.

⁴ Which also includes biopsy sampling histories on each individual.

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Center, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, New England Aquarium, Center for Coastal Studies, College of the Atlantic, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Maine's Department of Marine Resources, University of Maine, and the former Whale Center of New England. 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 long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.,
Executive Director