



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

22 February 2018

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. 21966
(Mystic Aquarium)

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). Mystic Aquarium is requesting authorization to collect, import, receive, possess, and/or export samples from cetaceans and pinnipeds during a five-year period—permit 17298 authorized the same activities.

Mystic Aquarium proposes to collect¹, import, receive, possess, and/or export various samples from up to 5,000 pinnipeds and 5,000 cetaceans per year. Samples could be obtained from marine mammals (1) killed during legal subsistence hunts, (2) held in research and public display facilities, (3) captured during permitted research activities, and (4) killed incidentally in legal commercial fishing operations in the United States and in foreign countries. Samples also could be obtained from marine mammals stranded dead or alive in foreign countries. The purpose is to assess neuroimmunology, microbiomes, and diving physiology of marine mammals. The Commission believes that the proposed activities are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and therefore 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 "Peter O. Thomas".

Peter O. Thomas, Ph.D.,
Executive Director

¹ Samples would be collected directly by Mystic Aquarium only from subsistence-hunted animals in the United States.