



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

2 December 2019

Dr. Mary Cogliano, Chief
Branch of Permits, MS: IA
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, Virginia 22041-3803

Re: Permit Application No. 11219B
(Alaska SeaLife Center)

Dear Dr. Cogliano:

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).

Alaska SeaLife Center (ASLC) is seeking to change the authorization under which non-releasable rehabilitated walrus are maintained by the facility—the previous permit authorized similar activities. Walrus that are maintained under section 109(h) of the MMPA would be transferred to a public display permit. ASLC proposed to hold an unlimited number of Pacific walrus of either sex and of any age class for public display purposes. ASLC is open to the public on a regularly scheduled basis, with access that is not limited or restricted other than by charging an admission fee. Also, ASLC offers an educational program based on professionally recognized standards. ASLC previously held Exhibitor's License 96-C-0024, issued by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), which expired on 4 March 2019. An updated Exhibitor's License for ASLC, as required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) 2017 application instructions, has not been provided¹.

In its initial review of ASLC's application, the Commission sought clarification of ASLC's request to import samples from rescued walrus for diagnostic purposes, which is currently authorized under Letter of Authorization (LOA) 73418B². In its response to the Commission's question about ASLC's request, FWS indicated only that the conditions of LOA 73418B would not change. It is unclear what this statement means. Regardless, the same activity should not be authorized under both an LOA and a permit. Thus, the Commission recommends that FWS (1) not authorize ASLC to import walrus samples under its permit, and (2) only issue a final permit after ASLC has provided an updated Exhibitor's License issued by the USDA under the AWA.

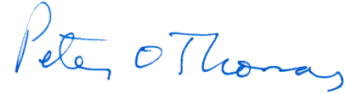
¹ Item 14(h) in the application instructions

² Which expires in September 2022.

Dr. Mary Cogliano
2 December 2019
Page 2

The Commission believes that the proposed activities are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA. 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". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "T".

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