



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

2 October 2020

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. 23802  
(University of Florida)

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). University of Florida is requesting authorization to import, receive, possess, and/or export samples from cetaceans and pinnipeds during a five-year period—permit 19497 authorized similar activities.

University of Florida proposes to import, receive, possess, and export samples from up to 700 cetaceans and 400 pinnipeds per year. The purpose of the research is to investigate the etiologies and cofactors associated with emerging infectious diseases utilizing standard molecular and next-generation sequencing approaches. The samples could originate from individuals of either sex and any age class from marine mammals (1) killed during legal U.S. or foreign subsistence hunts, (2) stranded alive or dead or that died during rehabilitation in foreign countries, (3) that died incidental to commercial fishing operations in the United States and foreign countries, (4) in captivity where samples were taken as a result of routine husbandry procedures or under separate permit, and (5) that were sampled by other authorized researchers involved in marine mammal research in the United States or abroad. Samples also could be exported to researchers collaborating in marine mammal disease detection or analysis. 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 "Peter O. Thomas".

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