



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

25 February 2021

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. 23675
(Briana Witteveen, Ph.D.,
University of Alaska Fairbanks)

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. Witteveen is requesting authorization to conduct research on cetaceans in the Gulf of Alaska during a five-year period—permit 18824 authorized similar activities.

The purpose of the research is to investigate (1) stock structure, (2) life history parameters, (3) social behavior, (4) abundance and (5) foraging dives and prey fields of large whale species. Dr. Witteveen would harass, observe, photograph/videotape, instrument¹, sample², and/or conduct hydroacoustic surveys on prey associated with numerous cetacean species of any age class and each sex (see the take table and application for specifics). Samples from prey remains could also be collected or salvaged. Researchers would use various measures to minimize impacts on marine mammals and also would be required to abide by the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) standard permit conditions. Dr. Witteveen is currently preparing her proposed research protocols for review by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee—the Commission understands that approval would be obtained before the proposed activities begin.

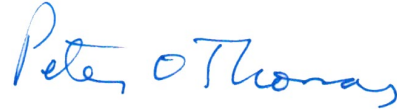
¹ With suction-cup tags.

² Including biopsy samples.

Ms. Jolie Harrison
25 February 2021
Page 2

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

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