



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

24 June 2013

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman
Chief, Branch of Permits
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203

Re: Permit Application No. 99215A
(University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit amendment and renewal application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign proposes to import polar bear samples during a five-year period.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit, as requested.

RATIONALE

The University proposes to import samples from up to 60 polar bears per year of either sex and any age class. The purpose of the proposed activities is to develop microsatellites to amplify very short DNA segments, which can be used to study low-quality DNA samples (i.e., polar bear feces). The University would import DNA isolates that have been extracted from skin plugs. Those samples were collected, and would be collected legally in the future, either from wild polar bears by permitted researchers or from captive polar bears in Canada, Russia, Greenland, and Norway. The existing samples currently are housed at the Queen's University in Ontario, Canada. The Commission supports the development of such genetic techniques, which would enable researchers to sample wild polar bears in a less invasive manner. Therefore, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit, as requested.

The Commission believes that the activities for which it has recommended approval are consistent with the purposes and policies of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

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The Commission appreciates the opportunity to review this permit application. Please 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 distinct "Lent" at the end.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director