



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

16 June 2014

Jolie Harrison, Supervisor
Incidental Take Program
Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225

Dear Ms. Harrison:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission), in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the Glacier Bay National Park's (GBNP) application for authorization under section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (the MMPA) to take small numbers of marine mammals by harassment. The taking would be incidental to conducting seabird surveys in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in Alaska from July through September 2014. The Commission also has reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) 4 June 2014 notice (79 Fed. Reg. 32226) announcing receipt of the application and proposing to issue the authorization, subject to certain conditions.

GBNP plans to conduct up to three ground- and two vessel-based surveys at up to four study sites where marine mammals may be present. The purpose of the surveys is to determine the number and distribution of nesting gulls. Vessel- and research-related sound and the increased presence of humans would be the main sources of marine mammal disturbance.

NMFS preliminarily has determined that, at most, the proposed activities temporarily would modify the behavior of small numbers of harbor seals. It also anticipates that any impact on the affected species and stocks would be negligible. NMFS does not anticipate any take of marine mammals by death or serious injury and believes that the potential for disturbance will be at the least practicable level because of the proposed mitigation and monitoring measures. Those measures include—

- (1) conducting pre-survey monitoring before accessing a study site;
- (2) avoiding a site if (a) more than 25 harbor seals are present, (b) young pups are present, (c) Steller sea lions are present, or (d) killer whales are present offshore;
- (3) accessing each study site slowly to prevent a stampede and selecting a pathway of approach to minimize the number of seals harassed;
- (4) moving slowly when at the study site and using quiet voices in the visual presence of pinnipeds;
- (5) using qualified observers to monitor and record observations of pinnipeds within the vicinity of the proposed study sites;

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- (6) reporting injured and dead marine mammals to NMFS and the local stranding network using NMFS's phased approach and suspending activities, if appropriate; and
- (7) submitting a final monitoring report.

The Commission concurs with NMFS's preliminary finding and recommends that NMFS issue the requested incidental harassment authorization, subject to inclusion of the proposed mitigation and monitoring measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on GBNP's application. Please contact me if you have questions regarding 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".

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director