



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

7 August 2012

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. PRT-130062
(Darlene Ketten, Ph.D.,
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)

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 application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Dr. Ketten is requesting authorization to receive, import, and export samples from nine species of marine mammals for purposes of scientific research during a five-year period. She is seeking to renew permit 116-1691.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit but require Dr. Ketten to (1) provide documentation sufficient to demonstrate that each sample to be imported was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin and was not taken in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act or other applicable U.S. laws and (2) maintain detailed records indicating the source of each specimen and the circumstances under which it was collected.

RATIONALE

Dr. Ketten proposes to receive, import, and export samples from up to 20 dead individuals of numerous marine mammal species per year (see the take table). The nine species include the walrus, polar bear, northern sea otter, southern sea otter, river otter, dugong, West Indian manatee, Amazonian manatee, and West African manatee. All age classes and both sexes could be sampled. The objectives of the proposed research are to continue studying hearing capabilities and loss in marine mammals.

Dr. Ketten proposes to obtain samples from stranded animals that die prior to beaching or that are euthanized on the beach and that die in captive or rehabilitation facilities. Samples would be collected by authorized individuals in the United States and foreign countries. Dr. Ketten would not import samples originating from animals killed incidental to a fishery or in a marine mammal directed fishery. She also could obtain samples from animals that are housed in countries where captive holding is legal.

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Dr. Ketten would receive, import, and export whole carcasses, heads, and temporal bones. Samples could be imported or exported worldwide. After conducting her analyses (primarily computed tomography scanning), Dr. Ketten would return the samples to the lending facility, institution, or researcher.

The Commission believes that studies investigating hearing capabilities and hearing loss are needed, especially for species under the jurisdiction of the Fish and Wildlife Service for which that information is lacking. Therefore, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit but require Dr. Ketten to (1) provide documentation sufficient to demonstrate that each sample to be imported was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin and was not taken in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act or other applicable U.S. laws and (2) maintain detailed records indicating the source of each specimen and the circumstances under which it was collected.

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.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning the Commission's recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "T".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director