



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

27 May 2014

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. 26132B
(Alan Springer, Ph.D.,
University of Alaska Fairbanks)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

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. Springer is requesting authorization to conduct research activities on walruses in Bristol Bay, Alaska, during a three-year period.

The objectives are to investigate diet and foraging ecology of walruses. Dr. Springer and his co-investigator, Mr. John Maniscalco, are proposing to collect biopsy samples from up to 50 adult male walruses during the three-year period. The researchers would approach any animal cautiously, wearing camouflaged clothing, from downwind, and from behind either a blind or rocks. They would target walruses at the edges of groups to minimize disturbance. If animals are disturbed, the researchers would cease further biopsy sampling attempts until they return to their normal resting behavior. In addition, if a stampede occurs, no further biopsy sampling attempts would be made with that group. They could harass up to 150 non-target walruses and kill up to two walruses during the three-year period.

Dr. Springer also would obtain blubber, fecal, and stomach content samples from up to 40 walruses each year taken by subsistence hunters¹. Further, personnel from the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary and researchers from the Alaska SeaLife Center² would provide Dr. Springer with scat samples as well. All samples would be sent to the Alaska SeaLife Center and exported to Dalhousie University for fatty acid analysis.

Dr. Springer's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has reviewed and approved the research protocols. He also would coordinate with local walrus hunters as part of a Bristol Bay Native Association contract and with the walrus hunt captain guides prior to sampling.

¹ The Fish and Wildlife Service authorized Dr. Springer to possess the subsistence harvested samples in its 19 September 2013 letter.

² When researchers are installing and retrieving cameras at Cape Seniavin.

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The 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 MMPA.

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to comment on this permit application. Kindly contact me if you have any questions concerning the Commission's recommendation.

Sincerely,

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director