



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

2 September 2014

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman, Chief
Branch of Permits, MS: IA
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
5275 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, Virginia 22041-3803

Re: Permit Amendment and Renewal
Application No. 067116
(University of Florida,
Aquatic Animal Health Program)

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). The University of Florida is seeking to amend and renew permit 067116 that authorizes it to conduct research on manatees.

The University of Florida's research focuses on manatee physiology, disease, health, and diagnostics. The University proposed to collect blood, milk, urine, feces, blubber, skin, and/or swabs from up to 250 live manatees each year either in the wild or in captivity (see the Take Table). Those samples would be collected during health assessments of wild manatees or routine husbandry activities for captive manatees permitted under authorizations to the U.S. Geological Survey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Lowry Park Zoo, SeaWorld, Disney, Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, Miami Seaquarium, Columbus Zoo, and Cincinnati Zoo. In addition, the researchers propose to observe and videotape wild and captive manatees opportunistically. Finally, they would collect tissue samples from an unlimited number of dead manatees each year. The University plans to conduct the specified activities on individuals of all age classes and either sex. Samples could be imported or exported for analysis.

The University's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has reviewed and approved the vast majority of the research protocols. Those that have yet to be approved will be approved before those activities begin. To minimize impacts to manatees, researchers would not separate females with calves and would cease any activity if a manatee appears unduly stressed. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit, as requested.

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The Commission believes that the activities for which it has recommended approval are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA. Kindly 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