



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

23 September 2013

Mr. P. Michael Payne, Chief
Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225

Re: Request to Amend Permit No. 14514
(University of Florida,
Aquatic Animal Program)

Dear Mr. Payne:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the MMC), 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 permit 14514 that authorizes it to receive, possess, import, and export samples from cetaceans and pinnipeds during a five-year period. The current permit expires 31 July 2015.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the permit amendment, provided that the current permit conditions remain in effect.

RATIONALE

Permit 14514 authorizes the University to receive, possess, import, and export samples from up to 200 cetaceans and 100 pinnipeds (excluding the walrus) per year. The purpose of the research is to (1) conduct research on diseases including viral pathogens and brevetoxin using various genetic approaches, (2) develop a marine mammal histology database and atlas and marine mammal cell lines, and (3) conduct comparative morphology studies.

To investigate various viruses, the University is requesting to increase the number of samples to be received, possessed, imported, and exported from pinnipeds from 100 to 700 per year. Specifically, the University would obtain samples from 120 California sea lions in the United States and 300 southern fur seals in Peru and Chile to determine the prevalence of adenovirus in the wild population. In addition, the University would obtain samples from up to 140 northern fur seals and 140 California sea lions in California to determine the prevalence of various herpesviruses in those species and to provide insights into the carcinogenic potential of those viruses. Researchers would

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collect all samples (primarily swabs) during health assessments of wild populations, which are authorized under other permits or authorizations. The University would collaborate with researchers from The Marine Mammal Center, the Brookfield Zoo, and Chile. All unused samples would be archived at the University.

The MMC believes that the data would be useful in expanding current knowledge of various viral pathogens and, therefore, recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the permit amendment, provided that the current permit conditions remain in effect.

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

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