



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

30 October 2009

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

Re: Request for Amendment of Permit No. 358-1787
(Alaska Department of Fish and Game)

Dear Mr. Payne:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit amendment request with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service approve the requested amendment, provided that the conditions currently contained in the permit remain in effect.

RATIONALE

Permit No. 358-1787 authorizes the permit holder to capture, sample, tag, and release annually up to 1,250 harbor seals, 250 spotted seals, 250 ringed seals, 250 bearded seals, and 250 ribbon seals and to harass an unspecified number of these species during scat collection and aerial survey activities over a five-year period. The overall objective of the proposed research is to collect information on the ecology of these species in Alaska. The permit is valid through 31 December 2011. The research is a continuation of work carried out under the applicant's previous permit (Permit No. 358-1585-04).

The permit holder is requesting that the permit be amended to authorize an increase in the number of ringed, bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals that may be captured from 50 to 100 per year per species (a total of 300 animals of each species annually) to allow for selection of animals of specific age, sex, and molt condition. For these four species, the permit holder also requests authorization to administer diazepam as needed to sedate seals; pull a whisker for stable isotope analyses of diet; and use a dip net from a boat as an additional capture method. The Marine Mammal Commission recommends the National Marine Fisheries Service approve the requested amendment, provided that the conditions currently contained in the permit remain in effect.

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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 Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Please contact me if you have any questions concerning this 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