



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

29 January 2010

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 20910-3225

Re: Permit Application No. 14486
(Alaska SeaLife Center)

Dear Mr. Payne:

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. The Marine Mammal Commission offers the following recommendation and comments.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the requested permit, provided that—

- the applicant be required to obtain all necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora before importing or exporting any marine mammal parts;
- the applicant maintains detailed records indicating the source of each specimen and the circumstances under which it was collected; and
- the applicant periodically provides reports to the Service sufficient to demonstrate that each specimen was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin, was not taken in violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act or other applicable U.S. laws, and is being used only for bona fide scientific purposes.

RATIONALE

The applicant is requesting authorization to acquire, possess, import, and export over a five-year period samples from up to 4,000 individual cetaceans and 5,000 individual pinnipeds. Samples would include, but would not be limited to teeth, hair, vibrissae, reproductive organs, vital organs, stomachs or stomach contents, skin, blubber, blood, serum, urine, milk, other fluids, parasites, fetuses, swabs, dorsal fins, or parts of dorsal fins. Samples to be acquired will have been taken legally under the authority of other permits or exemptions, taken opportunistically from dead marine mammals, taken in routine husbandry/medical examinations of public display animals in the United

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States, taken from animals harvested in subsistence hunts, or killed incidental to fisheries. The samples would be imported from and exported to numerous countries including, Canada, Russia, Australia, Japan, Antarctica, Argentina, and the United Kingdom and would be collected under existing permits and authorizations in the countries of origin. The samples would be used for multiple ongoing research programs (e.g., studies of population ecology, diet and nutrition, reproductive physiology, toxicology, and health of marine mammals) at the Alaska SeaLife Center.

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the requested permit (1) provided that the applicant be required to obtain all necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora before importing or exporting any marine mammal parts, and (2) subject to conditions that require the permit holder to collect and report information sufficient to document that each specimen was taken in accordance with the laws of the country of origin, that such taking was consistent with the requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and that specimens are being used only for bona fide scientific purposes.

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,



Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director