



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

6 October 2015

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 Application No. 68000B
(John Downer Productions Ltd.)

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). John Downer Productions Ltd. (Downer Productions) proposes to film northern sea otters in Alaska in 2016. The applicant would use footage as part of a BBC and PBS documentary investigating animal behavior.

Downer Productions is requesting authorization to take up to 20 northern sea otters per day of any age class¹ and either sex by Level B harassment during filming activities in Kachemak Bay, Alaska. Filming would occur during a 3-week period in summer 2016. Filming could be conducted from (1) shore using a blind, beach cameras that mimic driftwood or rocks, and remotely-operated all terrain vehicles, (2) a remotely-operated underwater 'kelp cam', and (3) a small boat. Some of those devices were used to film northern otters a few years ago, and others were used to film polar bears and penquins more recently.

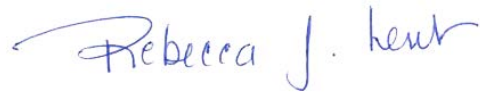
Dr. Angela Doroff would serve as Downer Productions' field consultant to ensure the filming activities cause minimal disturbance. If any of the filming activities disrupt an otter that is feeding, breeding, or nursing, the filmmakers would cease their activities immediately and slowly move away from the otter. If an otter moves away from the filmmakers, it will not be pursued. If an otter continually moves away from them or is disturbed more than twice on a given day, the filmmakers would back off and discontinue filming that otter. In addition, the filmmakers would not separate a female and her pup and would not film an individual otter for longer than 3 hours per day. For these reasons, the Commission recommends that Fish and Wildlife Service issue the permit, as requested.

¹ Pups would be at least 3 weeks of age.

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The Commission believes that the proposed activities 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, sweeping initial "R".

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director