



# MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

27 July 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

Re: Request for Amendment, Permit No. 555-1870-01  
(James T. Harvey, Ph.D.)

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. Permit 555-1870-01 authorizes the permit holder to capture, externally tag, sample, and surgically implant subcutaneous radio transmitters into harbor seals in California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska to study the species' biology and ecology. The permit holder is requesting authorization to modify the sedation and suture protocols for the implant surgeries in a pilot study of six harbor seals that would be brought into captivity for post-implant monitoring. The permit holder also proposes to increase the number of subadult harbor seals that can be captured, sampled, and tagged in the wild from 20 males and 20 females per year to 35 males and 35 females per year. The requested amendment would allow the researchers to test the new surgical protocols before using them in the field and to provide a larger sample size to yield a more robust survival model. The proposed amendment would remain in effect for the duration of the permit, which expires on 15 April 2012.

## RECOMMENDATION

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

- the proposed activities have been reviewed and approved by the permit holder's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee in accordance with section 2.31 of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Animal Welfare Act regulations, and
- the conditions contained in the original permit as amended remain in effect.

The Commission considers the request for a change in sedation and suturing methods to be a reasonable adjustment in study protocols. The Commission also agrees that the addition of 15 males and 15 females will improve the precision of the study results. Obtaining precise estimates of survival is essential for assessing the demographic characteristics of marine mammal populations and their status.

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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 the Commission's recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "T" and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.  
Executive Director