



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

16 September 2015

Dr. Li Ling Hamady, ACA Permit Officer
Permit Office, Room 755
Division of Polar Programs
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Hamady:

On 18 August 2015 the National Science Foundation (NSF) published a notice (80 Fed. Reg. 50048) requesting comments on a permit application from Dr. Allyson Hindle, Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Hindle is seeking authorization under the Antarctic Conservation Act (the ACA) to conduct research on Weddell seals in Antarctica. The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission), in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the permit request with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (the MMPA) and the ACA.

Dr. Hindle proposes to conduct research on Weddell seals on the Antarctic Peninsula during the austral summers of 2015–2018. The purpose of the research is to investigate the tissue-specific dive response of Weddell seals, including nitric oxide regulation. Dr. Hindle would harass, capture, handle, sedate, weigh/measure¹, and/or collect various samples² from various age classes and both sexes of Weddell seals (see the application for specifics). She would avoid pregnant females and would attempt to work with adult males, or to confirm pregnancy status with imaging ultrasound in adult females prior to sedation. Dr. Hindle also would make all efforts to exclude females nursing unweaned pups. She would import the samples into the United States to conduct various analyses and to produce cell lines. Dr. Hindle also could harass incidentally non-target Weddell seals during the proposed activities, and she requests up to two unintentional mortalities³ per year.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed to issue permit 19439 under the MMPA to Dr. Daniel Costa, which would authorize him to conduct research on numerous pinniped species in Antarctica including Dr. Hindle's proposed activities. Dr. Hindle would be a co-investigator under Dr. Costa's permit. Therefore, the Commission believes that the activities in the permit application are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and ACA and recommends that NSF issue the ACA permit, contingent on NMFS issuing permit 19439 that would authorize Dr. Hindle's proposed activities.

¹ Including morphometrics, blubber depth via ultrasound, and intraocular pressure.

² Blood, blubber, muscle, skin, hair, vibrissae, swabs, umbilical tissue, and/or expended placenta would be collected from live seals and various tissues and bones would be collected from dead seals.

³ Includes euthanasia for humaneness purposes.

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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

Cc: Amy Sloan, NMFS