



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

12 July 2011

Mr. Timothy J. Van Norman
Chief, Branch of Permits
Division of Management Authority
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203

Re: Permit Amendment No. MA-166346
(Matson's Laboratory, LLC)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

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 and offers the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service approve the permit and maintain the requirement that the applicant obtain all necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora before importing any polar bear teeth.

RATIONALE

Matson's Laboratory, LLC, is requesting authorization to import more than 500 teeth per year, the limit imposed by its current permit (expires 19 April 2013). The teeth are from polar bears that were legally harvested or were taken during government permitted research activities in Canada. The Government of Nunavut, Igloolik, Canada, is responsible for monitoring the age-distribution of the hunted bears and has a backlog of samples that need to be imported for age analysis. To fulfill that responsibility, the Laboratory is requesting authorization to import an unlimited number of polar bear teeth per year for the duration of the permit.

The Commission concurs with the need to assess the age distribution of the bears taken in the harvest. The amendment, if granted, also should ensure that any importation is consistent with international trade agreements. Therefore, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service approve the permit and maintain the requirement that the applicant obtain all necessary permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora before importing any polar bear teeth.

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 and other applicable laws.

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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 large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director