

MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION
4340 East-West Highway, Room 700
Bethesda, MD 20814-4447

14 May 2009

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: Request for amendment of Permit No. 775-1875
(Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NMFS)

Dear Mr. Payne:

The Marine Mammal Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced request for a permit amendment with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The applicant is seeking an amendment of the current permit to authorize an increase in the number of harbor seals and gray seals that may be harassed during the collection of scats and harbor seal pup carcasses. The applicant states that the increases are necessary because seal populations are rapidly increasing at all major haul-out sites in the vicinity of Cape Cod and Nantucket Sound.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service approve the requested amendment, provided that the conditions currently contained in the permit remain in effect.

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 comments or its recommendation.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Timothy J. Ragen in black ink, followed by the word "for" in a smaller, cursive script.

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director