



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

15 April 2013

Mr. P. Michael Payne, Chief
Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225

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

Dear Mr. Payne and Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal Commission has become aware that some of its general recommendations regarding research and photography permits are considered standard permit conditions. The Commission believes that it does not need to continue making those recommendations if the Services continue to include them as standard conditions in issued permits. Those recommendations include—

- require the applicant to minimize the potential impacts to female-pup or female-calf pairs by exercising caution when approaching those pairs and stopping such an approach if there is evidence that the activity may be interfering with female-pup or female-calf behavior, nursing, or other vital functions;
- require the applicant to make observations sufficient to detect possible short- and long-term effects of the research activities (e.g., biopsy sampling, tagging) and report the effort made and the information collected to the Service;
- ensure that the activities to be conducted under this permit and those of other permit holders who might be conducting research on the same species in the same areas are coordinated and, as possible, data and samples are shared to avoid duplicative research and unnecessary disturbance of animals; and
- require the applicant to (1) monitor and report all cases when filming activities lead to sufficient disturbance that the marine mammals alter their behavior or otherwise exhibit strong response to filming activities and (2) cease filming a particular marine mammal if it appears to be unduly disturbed by the activity.

If either Service plans to amend its permit conditions, please inform the Commission of the changes so that the Commission can determine whether it needs to resume or modify its recommendations.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen".

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director