



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 August 2015

Ms. Jolie Harrison, Chief
Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3225

Re: Permit Amendment Application No. 14809
(Doug Nowacek, Ph.D., Duke University)

Dear Ms. Harrison:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission), in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit amendment application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (the MMPA). Dr. Nowacek is seeking to amend permit 14809 that authorizes him to conduct research on cetaceans in the North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Southern Oceans—the current permit expires on 31 March 2019.

Dr. Nowacek is authorized to harass, observe, photograph/videotape, track, record acoustically, conduct playback experiments and photogrammetry on, biopsy sample, collect sloughed skin, instrument with suction-cup tags, and harass incidentally numerous cetacean species of either sex and various age classes (see the Take Tables). The objectives are to (1) document baseline foraging and social behavior of various cetaceans under different ecological conditions, (2) understand those behaviors in a population-level context, and (3) determine how those species respond to various natural sound sources.

Dr. Nowacek is requesting to amend his permit to include instrumenting juvenile and adult Cuvier's beaked whales, short-finned pilot whales, Risso's dolphins, Arnoux's beaked whales, Antarctic minke whales, and humpback whales with dart tags. The number of individuals authorized to be tagged would not change (see the Take Tables). Only Cuvier's beaked whales and short-finned pilot whales¹ could be instrumented with a suction-cup and dart tag concurrently—the other species would be instrumented with only one type of tag. In addition, animals would be instrumented with dart tags only once per year. Dr. Nowacek's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee is in the process of reviewing the new research protocols.

¹ 10 animals of the 40 authorized per year for both species.

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The Commission believes that the activities for which Dr. Nowacek has requested a permit amendment are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and therefore recommends that NMFS issue the permit amendment, provided that the current permit conditions remain in effect. 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 initial "R" and a long horizontal flourish.

Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director