



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 August 2015

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 Application No. 61681B
(Florian Schulz)

Dear Mr. Van Norman:

The Marine Mammal Commission (the Commission), in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, has reviewed the above-referenced permit application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (the MMPA). Mr. Schulz proposes to film polar bears in Alaska for four years.

Mr. Schulz is requesting authorization to take up to 24 individual polar bears per day by Level B harassment during filming activities. Filming would occur at the bone pile in Kaktovik, in waters around Barter Island, and at Bernard Spit and Arey Island during a 50-day period from August¹ to November of each year. Mr. Schulz also could take still photographs of the bears. Up to two non-targeted polar bears could be disturbed incidental to the filming activities each day. Polar bears could be of either sex and any age. Mr. Schulz would provide the footage and photographs to the National Geographic Society, museum exhibits, film festivals, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center.

Mr. Schulz would film the bears from small boats and vehicles during daylight hours only. Mr. Schulz has experience videotaping and photographing bears, including polar bears. In addition, local guides would assist him during the activities. Polar bears would be approached slowly with minimal lights in low-light conditions and sound. Mr. Schulz would not approach any bear that appears nervous and would not follow, herd, or chase any bear. During low-light conditions, he would observe the area closely to avoid surprising any bears. However, if the bear(s) becomes aware of his presence or appears disturbed, Mr. Schulz would cease his approach and back away from the animal(s). If the bear(s) does not resume its natural behavior, the bear(s) would not be approached again. Although Mr. Schulz would film females with cubs, he would keep a safe distance and would not separate a female and her cubs. Mr. Schulz also would abide by the Polar Bear Viewing Guidelines and would be in communication with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) biologist.

¹ This year the activities would begin in September.

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The Commission believes that the proposed activities are consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA and recommends FWS issue the permit, as requested. 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