



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

15 January 2010

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

Re: Permit Application No. PRT-220509
(Beth Shapiro)

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 application with regard to the goals, policies, and requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. We offer the following recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Fish and Wildlife Service issue the requested permit subject to 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 the samples.

BACKGROUND

The applicant is requesting authorization to obtain and import from Canada 125 blood and tissue samples (small segments of tissue removed during the attachment of an identification tag to each animal's ear) taken from 125 individual polar bears. The samples were collected in Canada by Canadian researchers operating with approval from the Canadian government during studies conducted from 1980 through 2008. The samples come from polar bears in the southern Beaufort Sea, northern Beaufort Sea, and western Hudson Bay populations. The applicant intends to use the samples to examine the population structure of polar bears and the historical effects of climate change on genetic diversity and structuring.

It appears that all of the samples to be imported were taken in accordance with Canadian law. This is something that presumably will be confirmed by Canada through its issuance of export permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Marine Mammal Commission therefore recommends that the requested permit be issued subject to the requirement that the applicant obtain the necessary CITES permits.

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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.

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 prominent upward stroke on the 'T'.

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director