



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

3 July 2012

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

Re: Permit Application No. 17350
(North Slope Borough)

Dear Mr. Payne:

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. The North Slope Borough is requesting authorization to receive, import, and export samples from nine marine mammal species for purposes of scientific research during a five-year period.

RECOMMENDATION

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the permit as requested.

RATIONALE

The North Slope Borough proposes to receive, import, and export samples from bearded seals, ringed seals, spotted seals, ribbon seals, bowhead whales, beluga whales, minke whales, gray whales, and harbor porpoises (see the take table). The purpose of the proposed research is to continue a long-term monitoring study of more than 30 years to investigate marine mammal health in the Arctic. The Borough would obtain samples from domestic and foreign (i.e., Canada and Russia) legal subsistence hunts and from the occasional freshly dead mammal taken by local residents for subsistence use.

The Borough would import, possess, and export samples that include but are not limited to—blood, urine, feces, bone, sensory organs, blubber, epidermis, muscle, heart, liver, lung, lymph nodes, pancreas, spleen, kidney, and gastrointestinal tract. Researchers would store the samples until they are analyzed for histology, contaminants, infectious disease, parasites, and stable isotopes. Samples also would be used for analysis of biological parameters (i.e., age, growth, and reproduction) and sensory function. In some instances, the Borough would archive the samples at the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank or at the University of Alaska Museum. In addition, researchers may export samples to Canada for analysis. The Borough would import and export samples under the permits issued in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora permits.

Mr. P. Michael Payne
3 July 2012
Page 2

The Commission believes it is important to monitor the health of Arctic species, especially those that are taken for subsistence purposes. Therefore, the Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the National Marine Fisheries Service issue the permit as requested.

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 recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Timothy J. Ragen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director