

MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION
4340 East-West Highway, Room 700
Bethesda, MD 20814-4447

9 June 2009

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. PRT-212570
(National Marine Mammal Laboratory, NMFS)

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.

The applicant is requesting authorization to take by harassment up to 10,000 walrus and 100 polar bears annually while conducting aerial surveys in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas over a five-year period. The proposed aerial surveys would be conducted under protocols developed collaboratively by the applicant, the Minerals Management Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to provide pertinent information on walrus and polar bear behavior, distribution, habitat description, reaction to aircraft, and group size. The proposed research would be carried out opportunistically in conjunction with aerial surveys of bowhead whales and other marine mammal species in the Alaska Arctic.

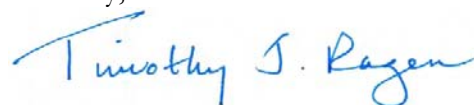
RECOMMENDATION

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

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,



Timothy J. Ragen, Ph.D.
Executive Director