



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Fish and Wildlife Service

[Docket No. FWS–R7–ES–2025–0037; FXES111607MRG01–256–FF07CAMM00]

### Marine Mammal Protection Act; Permit Applications and Issuances

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of permit applications; notice of issuance of permits.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), invite public comment on applications for permits to conduct certain activities involving marine mammals for which the Service has jurisdiction under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition, we announce permits that we have issued recently in response to prior applications.

**DATES:** We must receive comments on the new permit applications by [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

### ADDRESSES:

#### *Obtaining Documents:*

- *Application Materials:* The applications, application supporting materials, and any comments and other materials that we receive are available for public inspection at <https://www.regulations.gov> in Docket No.FWS-R7-ES-2025-0037.
- *Issued Permits:* To access materials pertaining to the permits we have issued, see **Permits Issued by the Service** under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

***Submitting Comments on the Applications:*** You may submit comments containing written data or views concerning the taking or importation proposed in each application by one of the following methods:

- *Internet:* <https://www.regulations.gov>. Search for and submit comments on Docket No. FWS-R7-ES-2025-0037.
- *U.S. mail:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: Docket No. FWS-R7-ES-2025-0037; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters, MS: PRB/3W; 5275 Leesburg Pike; Falls Church, VA 22041–3803.

For more information, see **Public Comment Procedures** under

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.**

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Katrina Liebich, via email at [r7mmmregulatory@fws.gov](mailto:r7mmmregulatory@fws.gov) or by telephone at 907–786–3800. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **I. Background**

With some exceptions, the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.), prohibits the take and importation of marine mammals and marine mammal products absent Federal authorization. In carrying out our responsibilities under the MMPA, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), may authorize such activities via permits after receipt of an application and verification that MMPA statutory and regulatory requirements are met.

Section 104(c) of the MMPA specifies the conditions for authorizing the taking or importation of a marine mammal for purposes of scientific research, public display, or enhancing the survival or recovery of a species or stock under the MMPA.

This notice provides information about two aspects of the MMPA permitting process: application and issuance. In section II, we provide the public with notice of and

the opportunity to comment on applications that we have received from entities or individuals to conduct certain activities with marine mammals for which the Service has jurisdiction under the MMPA. In section III, we announce recently issued MMPA permits to entities or individuals in response to prior applications.

## **II. Applications Available for Public Review**

To help us carry out our conservation responsibilities for affected species, and in consideration of section 104(c) of the MMPA, we invite the public and local, State, Tribal, and Federal agencies to comment on the applications listed below before final action is taken. Concurrent with publishing this notice in the *Federal Register*, we are forwarding copies of these marine mammal applications to the Marine Mammal Commission and the Committee of Scientific Advisors for their review.

### **A. Permit Applications Received**

We invite comments on the following applications:

***Applicant:* U.S. Geological Survey, Anchorage, AK; Permit No. PER19222522**

The applicant requests a modification to their scientific research permit to test methods for a new immobilization protocol for Pacific walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*). The study will occur in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas on wild walruses. This research is required before transmitters could be attached to walrus, which in turn would increase our understanding of walrus biology and inform future conservation actions. This notification covers activities to be conducted by the applicant over a 5-year period.

***Applicant:* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, Anchorage, AK; Permit No. PER18107557**

The applicant requests a renewal and modification of their scientific research permit to conduct scientific research on polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*). Research will involve monitoring and mitigating human-polar bear conflicts on Alaska's North Slope; evaluating the distance at which wild polar bears on the Beaufort seashore respond to

boat traffic; aerial distance sampling of polar bears in the Chukchi Sea; monitoring polar bear physiology via implantable biologgers; and noninvasive DNA sampling of polar bears by collecting hair, scat, and skin cells from paw prints. This notification covers activities to be conducted by the applicant over a 5-year period.

***Applicant: Dr. Puckett, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN; Permit No. PER 14048379***

The applicant requests a scientific research permit to conduct a study on polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) genetics and characteristics of hair and skin using samples collected from wild polar bears and captive-held polar bears. This notification covers activities to be conducted by the applicant over a 5-year period.

## **B. Public Comment Procedures**

### **1. How Do I Comment on Permit Applications?**

Before issuing any requested permit, we will take into consideration any information that we receive during the public comment period.

You may submit your comments and materials by one of the methods in **ADDRESSES**. We will not consider comments sent by email, or to an address not in **ADDRESSES**. We will not consider or include in our administrative record comments that we receive after the close of the comment period (see **DATES**).

When submitting comments, please specify the name of the applicant and the permit number at the beginning of your comment. Provide sufficient information to allow us to authenticate any scientific or commercial data you include. The comments and recommendations that will be most useful and likely to influence agency decisions are:

(a) Those supported by quantitative information or studies; and (b) those that include citations to, and analyses of, the applicable laws and regulations.

### **2. May I Review Comments Submitted by Others?**

You may view public comments at <https://www.regulations.gov> unless our

allowing so would violate the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a) or other Federal law.

### **3. Who Will See My Comments?**

If you submit a comment at <https://www.regulations.gov>, your entire comment, including any personal identifying information, will be posted on the website. If you submit a hardcopy comment that includes personal identifying information, such as your address, phone number, or email address, you may request at the top of your document that we withhold this information from public review. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Moreover, all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public disclosure in their entirety.

### **C. Next Steps for Submitted Applications**

After the comment period closes, we will make decisions regarding permit issuance. If we issue permits to any of the applicants listed above in this notice, we will publish a subsequent notice in the *Federal Register*. You may locate the notice announcing the permit issuance by searching <https://www.regulations.gov> for the permit number listed above in this document. For example, to find information about the potential issuance of Permit No. 12345A, you would go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and search for “12345A”.

### **III. Permits Issued by the Service**

We have issued permits to conduct certain activities involving marine mammals and marine mammal products in response to prior permit applications that we received. This notice informs the public that the Service has issued the permits listed in table 1 below.

The permittees’ original permit application materials, along with public comments we received during public comment periods for the applications, are available for review. To locate the application materials and received comments, go to

<https://www.regulations.gov> and search for the appropriate permit number (e.g., PER12345) or docket number (e.g., FWS--R7--ES--2024--0148) provided in table 1.

<b>TABLE 1—MMPA PERMITS RECENTLY ISSUED</b>			
<b>Permit Number</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Permit Issuance Date</b>	<b>Docket Number</b>
PER12241375	Seattle Aquarium Society	3/5/25	FWS-R7-ES-2024-0148
PER12101045	Pioneer Studios	3/5/25	FWS-R7-ES-2024-0148

#### **IV. Authority**

We issue this notice under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.), and its implementing regulations.

**Peter Fasbender,**  
*Assistant Regional Director,*  
*Fisheries and Ecological Services,*  
*Alaska Region.*

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