§ 18.125 Pacific walruses in execution of those activities and you want nonlethal incidental take authorization under this rule, you must apply for a Letter of Authorization for each exploration activity or a Letter of Authorization for activities in each development or production area. You must submit the application for authorization to our Alaska Regional Director (see 50 CFR 2.2 for address) at least 90 days prior to the start of the proposed activity.

(c) Your application for a Letter of Authorization must include the following information:

(1) A description of the activity, the dates and duration of the activity, the specific location, and the estimated area affected by that activity, i.e., a plan of operation.

(2) A site-specific plan to monitor the effects of the activity on the behavior of polar bears and Pacific walruses that may be present during the ongoing activities (i.e., marine mammal monitoring and mitigation plan). Your monitoring program must document the effects to these marine mammals and estimate the actual level and type of take. The monitoring requirements provided by the Service will vary depending on the activity, the location, and the time of year.

(3) A site-specific polar bear and/or walrus awareness and interaction plan. A polar bear interaction plan for each operation will outline the steps the applicant will take to limit human-bear interactions, increase site safety, and minimize impacts to bears.

(4) A Plan of Cooperation (POC) to mitigate potential conflicts between the proposed activity and subsistence hunting, where relevant. Applicants must consult with potentially affected subsistence communities along the Beaufort Sea coast (Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, and Barrow) and appropriate subsistence user organizations (the Eskimo Walrus Commission and the Alaska Nanuq (polar bear) Commission) to discuss the location, timing, and methods of proposed operations and support activities and identify any potential conflicts with subsistence walrus and polar bear hunting activities in the communities. Applications for Letters of Authorization must include documentation of all consultations with potentially affected user groups. Documentation must include a summary of any concerns identified by community members and hunter organizations, and the applicant’s responses to identified concerns. Some of these measures may include, but are not limited to, mitigation measures described in § 18.128.

§ 18.126 What does a Letter of Authorization allow?

(a) Your Letter of Authorization may allow the nonlethal incidental, but not intentional, take of polar bears and Pacific walruses when you are carrying out one or more of the following activities:

(1) Conducting geological and geophysical surveys and associated activities;