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Dated: May 8, 1998.

Elbert W. Friday, Jr.,

Assistant Administrator, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 050698A]

Marine Mammals; File No. 782-1455 and File No. 738-1454

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Receipt of applications.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Douglas P. DeMaster, Ph.D., National Marine Mammal Laboratory, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070, has applied in due form for a permit to take Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*), Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*), and California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) for purposes of scientific research. In

addition, Carole Conway, Genomic Variation Laboratory, Department of Animal Science, Meyer Hall, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-3322, has applied in due form for a permit to import blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) skin samples from Canada for purposes of scientific research.

DATES: Written or telefaxed comments must be received on or before June 12, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The application and related documents are available for review upon written request or by appointment: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**.

Written comments or requests for a public hearing on this application should be mailed to the Chief, Permits and Documentation Division, F/PR1, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13705, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Those individuals requesting a hearing should set forth the specific reasons why a hearing on this particular request would be appropriate.

Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (301) 713-0376, provided the facsimile is confirmed by hard copy submitted by mail and postmarked no later than the closing date of the comment period. Please note that comments will not be accepted by e-mail or by other electronic media.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ruth Johnson or Sara Shapiro, 301/713-2289.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The subject permits are requested under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 *et seq.*), the Regulations Governing the Taking and Importing of Marine Mammals (50 CFR part 216), the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), the regulations governing the taking, importing, and exporting of endangered fish and wildlife (50 CFR 222.23), and the Fur Seal Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1151 *et seq.*).

Dr. DeMaster (File No. 782-1455) seeks authorization to: monitor the status of the northern fur seal population (*Callorhinus ursinus*); evaluate the condition of pups from each cohort (health or strength of year-class); monitor the diet of fur seals in the Bering Sea during the summer; document the movement patterns and foraging behavior of various age and sex classes of fur seals; and incidentally disturb Steller sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) and California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*) while conducting the above-listed activities.

Carole Conway (File No. 738-1454) requests a permit to import blue whale

(*Balaenoptera musculus*) skin samples from Canada over a 5-year period. The samples are necessary for a global study of the genetic structure of populations which will provide critical information for conservation management of this species.

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), an initial determination has been made that the activity proposed is categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Concurrent with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register**, NMFS is forwarding copies of this application to the Marine Mammal Commission and its Committee of Scientific Advisors.

The application and related documents submitted by Dr. DeMaster may be reviewed in the following locations:

Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289);

Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 7600 Sand Point Way, NE, BIN C15700, Bldg. 1, Seattle, WA 98115-0070;

Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213; and

Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

The application and related documents submitted by Ms. Conway may be reviewed in the following locations:

Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Room 13130, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301/713-2289); and

Regional Administrator, Southwest Region, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200, Long Beach, CA 90802-4213.

Dated: May 7, 1998.

Ann D. Terbush,

Chief, Permits and Documentation Division, Office of Protected Resources, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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