



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Notice of Permit Modification Received Under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978

AGENCY: National Science Foundation.

ACTION: Notice of Permit Modification Request.

SUMMARY: The National Science Foundation (NSF) is required to publish a notice of requests to modify permits issued to conduct activities regulated under the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978. This is the required notice of a requested permit modification.

DATES: Interested parties are invited to submit written data, comments, or views with respect to this permit application by **[INSERT 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**. Permit applications may be inspected by interested parties at the Permit Office, address below.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be addressed to Permit Office, Office of Polar Programs, National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Nature McGinn, ACA Permit Officer, at the above address, 703-292-8030, or ACAPERMITS@NSF.GOV.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Science Foundation, as directed by the Antarctic Conservation Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-541), as amended by the Antarctic Science, Tourism and Conservation Act of 1996, has developed regulations for the establishment of a permit system for various activities in Antarctica and designation of certain animals and certain geographic areas requiring special protection. The regulations establish such a permit system to designate Antarctic Specially Protected Areas.

Description of Permit Modification Requested: The Foundation issued a permit (ACA 2019-001) to Ron Naveen, Oceanites Inc., on August 7, 2018. The issued permit allows the

permit holder and agents to engage in take and harmful interference, as well as to enter Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs), to continue data collections activities conducted to support the Antarctic Site Inventory. Visitor site surveys may include censusing penguin and seabird colonies throughout the Antarctic Peninsula. There is the potential for slight disturbance of the birds during surveying and censusing. This permit addresses the potential for infrequent, minimal take or harmful interference of the several penguin and other seabird species. While conducting visitor site surveys and censuses, the permit holder and agents may enter a number of ASPAs in the Antarctic Peninsula region. Now the permit holder proposes a modification to his permit to collect samples from adult gentoo penguins (*Pygoscelis papua*) for genetic analysis in order to study range expansion, colonization of new areas, and gene flow. A research team member with significant bird handling experience would conduct and oversee activities that include capturing the penguins by hand or handheld net, temporary restraint, plucking of five feathers, and sampling blood from the foot or flipper. Penguins will only be captured as they return from foraging trips at sea to ensure that an adult penguin remains on or near the nest. The permit holder also proposes to opportunistically salvage muscle tissue samples from penguin chicks found dead. Feather, blood, and tissue samples would be transported to laboratories in the UK and USA for analysis.

Location: Antarctic Peninsula region

Dates of Permitted Activities: December 1, 2019 – August 31, 2023.

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Office of Polar Programs

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