



# United States Department of the Interior



## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

5600 American Boulevard West, Suite 990  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458

IN REPLY REFER TO:

February 22, 2016

MBSP/MBPO

Gerrish Township  
Attn: Supervisor, Frank Homola  
2997 E. Higgins Lake Dr.  
Roscommon, MI 48653

Subj: Your email amendment request of December 23, 2015

Dear Mr. Homola,

This letter is to respond to your email request to amend federal permit SPMS MB56627B. Your request has been reviewed and is denied. You specifically asked for three amendments in your email.

### **Amendment Request #1:**

You requested an increase of lethal take of common mergansers from 25 birds to 50 birds. That request is inconsistent with your statements prior to your formal application submitted in early 2015. In a series of emails sent from our agency to you requesting your clarification on issues relevant to the federal permit prior to its issuance I requested your comment and you stated:

- What is the long-term plan? Do you plan to continue to shoot 20-some birds each year? How many mergansers on the lake is acceptable? What metric will be used to measure success?

"I understand that this permit would be for 3 years. The goal for this year would be to take 20+- birds and most likely 10 to 12 the next 2 years. A count will be made during the late spring and summer to get a count of the population."

You provided no justification for doubling the lethal take level. What were you expecting to accomplish by taking more mergansers?

### **Amendment Request #2:**

You also requested an amendment as extracted below from your December 23, 2015 email:

"Amend the permit to allow Dr. Luttonton to take custody of the ducks to Biopsy rather than turning them over to Sicon. Last spring Dr. Luttonton requested samples from Sicon but was only give a small portion of what was requested for his research of the infection and so fourth."

The above amendment request is also inconsistent with your federal application submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received on January 26, 2015. In your application there was no mention of Northpoint Fisheries Management LLC or its employees as your agents or subpermittees under the federal permit. In fact, from the application you stated:

Question 7: Those subpermittees at this time will be myself, Frank Homola) I have twenty (20) years with the U.S. Coast Guard as well as twenty (20) plus years as a Law Enforcement Officers, Lt. Walt Mikula, Retired DNR Law Enforcement, AJ Kory, Deputy Roscommon County Sheriff's Department, Sgt. Greg Patchin, Gerrish Township Police Department.

The following are all licensed hunters: Kirk Lattamore, Jamie Purtell, Caleb Dean, Dan Dean, US Coast Guard Operations Officer, Jeremy Weinel, John Jansen, and Jason Jansen.

Not all the subpermittees will be used at one time.

There is a possibility that we may use Bergs Animal Control firm as well, but funding is not in place for this at this time. See their attached pamphlet.

When our agency issued the permit we believed all of your collaboration and swimmer's itch activity would be conducted with SICON. In fact, we discussed, and you agreed to the permit condition below that states:

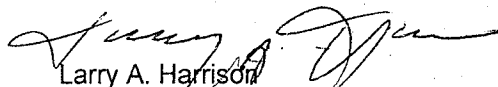
This federal permit is not a special hunting permit for waterfowl or mergansers in Michigan; this permit is issued only to address the problem of swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake in Michigan. Birds taken under the authority of this federal permit will be transferred to Curtis Blankespoor's federal scientific collecting permit for research into swimmer's itch.

The federal permit was issued with the understanding that it required collaboration with Dr. Blankespoor and his work under his separate federal scientific collecting permit related to swimmer's itch research.

**Amendment Request #3:**

" Amend the permit to allow trapping and dispatching of the broods that do hatch next spring. This would not be used if Sicon returns to the lake next year. But there is some question if they will be back as they stated at a recent meeting that was held."

I believe your final amendment request is a moot point. From discussions with the MI DNR and with Dr. Blankespoor, it appears that he and SICON do intend to continue their swimmer's itch research and work on Higgins Lake in 2016.



Larry A. Harrison  
Migratory Birds Permits Chief, Midwest Region  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service