



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Monica Allen
301-713-2370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 30, 2008

Landmark Dolphin Agreement Reaches 10-Year Mark

The international pact to save dolphins from being caught in tuna nets has reached its tenth anniversary and is considered one of the most successful agreements in the world governing the conservation and management of living marine resources.

In 1998, the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program was adopted by the United States, the European Union and 11 other countries in response to concerns over the high number of dolphins killed in the Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna purse-seine fishery. Under this program, and its predecessor known as the La Jolla Agreement, dolphin deaths in the fishery have decreased more than 99 percent from historic levels. The goal of the agreement is to achieve zero dolphin deaths in the fishery.

“Governments should be commended for signing the agreement. Praise also should go to the fishing vessel owners, operators and crew members who are working to release dolphins that are incidentally caught in nets,” said Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., NOAA administrator and under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere. “The agreement is a benchmark for multilateral approaches to manage and conserve living marine resources and ocean ecosystems.”

Features that contribute to the agreement’s success include:

- a requirement that all dolphins be released from nets unharmed before bringing the fish on board.
- 100 percent observer coverage on large purse-seine vessels.
- a tuna tracking and verification program.
- species- and population-specific annual dolphin mortality limits.

Among the groundbreaking features of the agreement is the International Review Panel, in which representatives from the environmental community and the fishing industry participate along with government representatives to review potential infractions and request investigation and action by the relevant flag state.

In addition to the United States, parties to the agreement include Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Vanuatu and Venezuela. In recent years, the United States has had only a small number of vessels active in the Eastern Pacific Ocean tuna purse-seine fishery.

The international community has recognized the unqualified success of the agreement. In 2005, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization awarded the prestigious Margarita Lizárraga Medal to the agreement for its exemplary work in promoting responsible fisheries and marine resource management.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the

European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

###

On the Web:

NOAA: www.noaa.gov

NOAA's Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program:

<http://www.iattc.org/IDCPENG.htm>