

**Statement of Tom Webster  
Captain, *F/V Havana***

**Neglected Seaturtles**

My name is Tom Webster. I am the owner and captain of the Hawaii-based longliner *Havana*. I've been operating from Honolulu since 1984. The primary issue concerning longlining today is protected species interaction, including seabirds and seaturtles, most specifically seaturtles.

Currently we are operating within the constraints of area closures. The area from the Equator to fifteen degrees North latitude and from one hundred forty seven degrees West longitude to the International Dateline is closed to us during the months of April and May. Also, recently an indefinite emergency closure has been imposed on us involving the entire Pacific north of twenty six degrees North latitude. These area closures are designed to prevent interaction with seaturtles and apply only to U.S. vessels in possession of a Hawaii longline permit. Presently, a large international longline fleet is operating south of fifteen degrees, in the area closed to U.S. vessels, and the incidence of seaturtle interaction is, of course, unknown.

Presently the only data available concerning longline/seabird interaction has been provided by the U.S. fleet. We're approaching 40% observer coverage, and these interactions are well documented.

Providing data, I feel, provides a valuable foundation for an international management plan, and I do not believe we can depend on the international fleets to gather this information.

Excluding the U.S. fleet from certain areas, I feel, is ultimately detrimental to the welfare of seaturtles.