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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMERCE**  
**NEWS**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20230

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NOAA04-R111  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
March 15, 2004

**NOAA FISHERIES IMPLEMENTS NEW REGULATIONS FOR  
LONGLINE FISHING OFF WEST COAST**

The U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) today published a final rule prohibiting shallow longline fishing for swordfish by U.S. fishing vessels operating from the West Coast in order to protect endangered and threatened sea turtles. The regulation will become effective April 12, 2004.

This regulation applies to U.S. longline fishing vessels based in California, Oregon, or Washington that operate on the high seas east of 150 degrees west longitude, or generally the area between the West Coast and Hawaii. U.S. longline vessels based in Hawaii and the Western Pacific are currently prohibited from longline fishing for swordfish.

Longline fishing for swordfish consists of laying sets of fishing line that can stretch 20 or more miles with squid-baited hooks. The lines are set at depths of less than 100 meters to target swordfish but also may inadvertently catch or entangle loggerhead or leatherback sea turtles that are protected under the Endangered Species Act. NOAA Fisheries estimates that the West Coast-based longline fishery would result in the annual capture of up to 195 loggerheads and 57 leatherbacks.

"This is one action we can immediately take to help protect sea turtles that are threatened or endangered," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries. "We also are encouraged by the results of recent studies conducted in the Atlantic Ocean which indicate that new hook and bait technologies can reduce the bycatch of leatherback and loggerhead turtles by 65 to 90 percent."

Hogarth said NOAA Fisheries will work with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to develop future fishery management proposals that make use of this new technology. The agency also is working internationally to share these new turtle conservation technologies developed in concert with the pelagic longline fleet in the North Atlantic.

The Federal Register notice containing the new regulations may be found at: [http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/news/shallowsets\\_prohibition.pdf](http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/news/shallowsets_prohibition.pdf)

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

NOAA's Fisheries Service: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)