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NATIONAL
OCEANIC AND
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**NOAA FISHERIES REMINDS SHRIMPERS THAT NEW REGULATIONS ARE
IN EFFECT AND BEING ENFORCED**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announced amended turtle excluder device (TED) regulations on February 21, 2003 that will enhance TEDs' effectiveness in reducing sea turtle deaths that result from shrimp trawling in the southeastern United States. The modifications apply throughout the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico and affect shrimp fishermen who use bottom trawl gear in state and federal waters. The regulations took effect on April 15, 2003, in the Atlantic and on August 21, 2003, in the Gulf of Mexico.

An erroneous report generated by the Associated Press today and disseminated widely by news outlets stated that "Gulf of Mexico shrimpers have been given three more months to fit their trawl nets with larger devices to protect endangered sea turtles from getting trapped." This is not correct.

"Shrimpers in the Gulf of Mexico must understand that we have been working closely with our state and federal partners to ensure that the new rules are being enforced," said Roy Crabtree, administrator of NOAA Fisheries' southeast region. "Let there be no misunderstanding that full compliance with the rules is expected and NOAA Fisheries will diligently work to ensure they are enforced."

All sea turtles that occur in U.S. waters are listed as either endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). The Kemp's ridley, leatherback, and hawksbill turtles are listed as endangered. The loggerhead and green turtles are listed as threatened, except for breeding populations of green turtles in Florida and on the Pacific coast of Mexico, which are listed as endangered.

"Our agency has worked closely with shrimpers to develop the new design, and conducted intensive and comprehensive outreach to ensure that everyone involved in the industry is fully informed of this change," said Crabtree.

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Diagrams and construction guidelines for these TEDs are available at:

<http://www.mslabs.noaa.gov/teds.html>

Printed copies of the specifications for all the TEDs authorized under these rules are available from NOAA Fisheries at the above address or by calling (301) 713-2332.

The text of the Federal Register notice for this rule can be viewed at:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/prot_res/PR3/regulations.html

Questions about this rule can be sent to: NOAA Fisheries' Office of Protected Resources, Attn: Chief, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282. You may also call Bob Hoffman or Dennis Klemm at (727) 570-5312.

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 habitats. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

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. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

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