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NOAA Requests Comment on Fish Imports and Marine Mammals

NOAA is requesting public comment on options for implementing parts of the Marine Mammal Protection Act that address the incidental catch of marine mammals in foreign fisheries, including species such as whales and dolphins.

The [Federal Register notice](#) describes the options the United States is considering for assessing whether foreign fisheries whose products are exported to the United States meet U.S. standards to protect marine mammals while fishing. The notice also describes options for working with countries to reduce their fisheries' effects on marine mammals through capacity building, training, and technology transfer.

"A large portion of the fish Americans consume is imported," said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "With this notice, we are looking for ways to lessen the effects of fishing on marine mammals worldwide, and to level the playing field for our own fishermen, who take many protective measures when fishing to ensure the survival of marine mammal species."

Commercial fishermen in the United States must comply with the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and other laws and regulations that often specify what kind of fishing gear they can use, as well as how, when, and where fishing can take place, in order to reduce the number of marine mammals killed or injured by fishing gear. However, marine mammals are found around the world and interact with a wide variety of fisheries. International collaboration through exchange of technology and information may help control and minimize effects on marine mammals.

In this initial phase, NOAA is looking to gather as much information on the subject as possible. If NOAA moves forward in creating regulations on this subject, the public will have opportunities to comment.

Members of the public are invited to comment by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on June 29, 2010 via electronic comment at www.regulations.gov, fax (301-713-2313) or mail (mail to: Director, Office of International Affairs, Attn: MMPA Fish Import Provisions, NMFS, F/IA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910).

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