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# Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## Hope high that Hawaii longline ban will end tomorrow for tuna vessels

HONOLULU (29 March 2001)—The Hawaii seafood industry is hopeful that a ban on longline fishing that has kept the entire Hawaii fleet tied up at the docks for two weeks may be partially lifted tomorrow. According to the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA), US District Judge David Ezra and attorneys for all parties in the lawsuit that led to the longline ban agreed this morning on the new terms of an injunction that will allow Hawaii longline vessels targeting tuna to operate in the Pacific except during April and May in 1.9 million square miles of ocean located between the equator and 15 degrees North latitude and between 145 degrees and 180 degrees West longitude. However, longline fishing by Hawaii vessels targeting swordfish will be prohibited year-round in all waters from the equator to the north pole. These terms reflect the preferred alternative in the final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the fishery presented to the judge earlier this week by the National Marine Fisheries (NMFS). They are expected to reduce the unintended hookup and entanglement of loggerhead turtles by the Hawaii fleet by 100 percent, leatherback turtle takes by 82 to 85 percent, olive ridley turtle takes by 52 to 69 percent and green turtle takes by 89 to 91 percent.

“While we are happy that the Hawaii tuna longline time-area closure is only two months of the year, instead of five months of the year as proposed by NMFS only a few weeks ago, we are overall not happy with the final decision,” said Kitty M. Simonds, executive director of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. “Closing a fishery from operating in half of the largest ocean in the world is unprecedented and unreasonable. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) has been used to circumvent the process approved by Congress to manage US fisheries. Ironically, marine turtle populations may be negatively impacted by this decision, as the US demand for swordfish must now be met by foreign fleets that are known to take up to 30 times more turtles per ton of fish than the Hawaii fleet.”

According to NMFS observer coverage of about 4 percent of the fleet, in the six years between 1994 and 1999 the Hawaii longline fishery targeting swordfish hooked or entangled 147 loggerheads of which one was dead. The fishery also caught eight green turtles, 34 leatherback turtles and 26 olive ridley turtles, of which only two (one leatherback and one olive ridley) were dead.

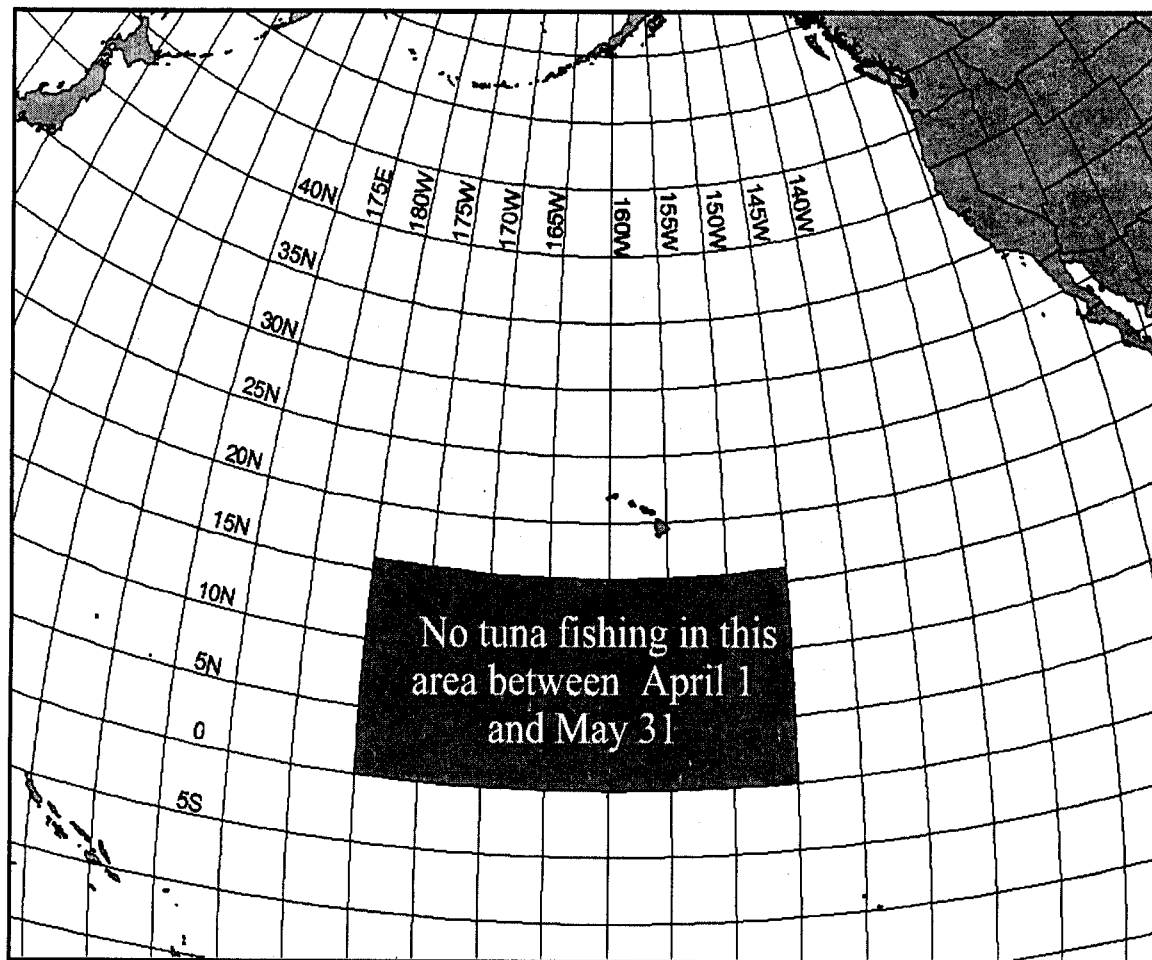
The Council has recommended allowing the Hawaii swordfish fishery to operate on an experimental basis for three to five years to allow for the development of fishing gear and methods that would reduce turtle takes.

“Development of swordfish gear and methods that could be used by both Hawaii and foreign fleets, which account for 97 percent of the Pacific longline effort, would be a true win for the turtles,” Simonds said.

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Final Environmental Impact Statement Preferred Alternative for the Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Ocean

- 1) No longline swordfish fishing (shallow-set) in the North Pacific from the Equator to the North Pole
- 2) No tuna fishing between April 1 and May 31 from the equator to 15 degrees N latitude and west of 145 degrees W and east of 180 degrees longitude



■ (1.9 million square miles)

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, March 2001