



The Natural Resources Defense Council works to protect wildlife and wild places and to ensure a healthy environment for all life on earth.

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**Press Statement**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Statement from Joel Reynolds, NRDC, Regarding Navy LFA Settlement**

SANTA MONICA, CA (October 13, 2003) -- Thank you for coming. My name is Joel Reynolds, senior attorney and director of NRDC's Marine Mammal Protection Project in Los Angeles.

- We will have a series of brief statements, followed by q and a.
- Appearing with me today are: Frederick O'Regan, CEO of the International Fund for Animal Welfare; Jean-Michel Cousteau, Founder and President of Ocean Futures Society; Pierce Brosnan, who needs no introduction.

Here's the background:

Fifteen months ago, the U.S. Navy got an illegal permit [from the National Marine Fisheries Service] to test and train with a new, long distance sonar system over 75% of the world's oceans.

The system -- called Low Frequency Active Sonar -- generates extraordinarily loud sound, ensonifying literally hundreds of thousands of square miles of ocean at one time and, in the process, threatening untold numbers of whales, porpoises, fish and other marine species.

NRDC (the Natural Resources Defense Council), HSUS (The Humane Society of the United States), Jean-Michel Cousteau and others challenged the permit in federal court, and last August the court (1) invalidated the permit, (2) announced its intention to issue a permanent injunction, and (3) directed the Navy and plaintiffs to negotiate a limited area where the Navy could test and train with the system while the permanent injunction is in effect.

Today we are pleased to announce that the negotiation has been successfully completed and an agreement has been reached on the scope of the permanent injunction. Under its terms, the Navy will restrict its use of the system to a defined and limited area of the western North Pacific Ocean; even within that area, the Navy will observe year-round, seasonal, and coastal exclusions to protect migratory species and sensitive coastal ecosystems.

- This result is a victory for citizen action, supported by leading scientists and acousticians from many different countries.
- It is a vindication of the principle of American law that all of us, including the US Navy, are required to comply with our environmental laws.
- It demonstrates again that environmental protection and preparedness for our national defense are not inconsistent, but can be balanced -- just as they have been for decades.
- And it shows that the Navy's pending request to Congress for exemptions from our environmental laws -- including the MMPA (Marine Mammal Protection Act) -- is unnecessary, unwise, and unjustified, and we urge Congress to reject it.

But we recognize that this lawsuit, despite its success, is only a first step in addressing the growing problem of high intensity military sonar.

- It applies only to the U.S. Navy -- not the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Spain, or any other country whose military may be developing and deploying similar systems.
- It addresses only low frequency sonar -- not the mid-frequency sonar systems responsible for the carnage of whales and porpoises stranding on beaches around the world, dying in excruciating pain from the bends or massive hemorrhaging around the eyes and ears.

The problem of high intensity military sonar is truly an international problem whose impacts transcend national boundaries, and it requires an international solution.

Therefore, we are announcing today the initiation of an international campaign to stop the accelerating proliferation of high-intensity sonar in our oceans

- a campaign to limit its use through the development of an international regulatory regime.
- a campaign that will mobilize citizens and scientists from around the world against this destructive technology before it spirals into an arms race that all of us will surely lose.

This is not the first time that NRDC, IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare), Jean-Michel Cousteau, and Pierce Brosnan have joined forces in an international campaign. Several years ago, we took on Mitsubishi's plan to industrialize a World Heritage Site in Mexico, and after a difficult, 5-year fight, the project was abandoned.

We expect to bring the same focus, the same resolve, the same international citizen action and scientific expertise to this battle against high intensity sonar, and we expect to prevail.

Our question to the navies of the world is this:

- Will you choose to serve as an environmental steward or an environmental outlaw?

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- Will you choose to needlessly endanger our oceans or participate in a coordinated international effort to protect them?

Our hope today is they will make the right choice

- not just for whales and other marine species but for us, for our children, for all of us members nationwide, served from offices in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Who depend for our survival on healthy oceans.

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