



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Navy Approval to Use Low Frequency Sonar Will Kill Ocean Wildlife**

**Boston, MA:** On Tuesday, July 16, the National Marine Fisheries Service approved use by the Navy of Long Range, Low Frequency Active Sonar (LFA) in the ocean. This sonar is known to damage and even kill marine animals. After testing mid-range sonar in 2000, four different species of whales and dolphins were beached in the Bahamas. NMFS determined the cause was undeniably the use of the mid-range sonar. At least one whale species that had been stranded has all but disappeared from the area. The Navy proposes to use the sonar, between 100 and 500 Hertz, to locate submarines. However, to protect marine wildlife from coming into contact, the Navy proposes to merely look for marine wildlife that may be in danger, including using a high frequency sonar, and monitor behavior of marine wildlife before and during sonar transmissions.

“This is hardly sufficient action to take to protect marine wildlife from such a damaging force,” said James McCaffrey, Director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club. “The long range abilities of this sonar will be able to damage all marine wildlife. No species will go untouched.”

In their approval of the sonar, NMFS has barely taken into account the risk to endangered marine species like the North Atlantic Right Whale by creating zones in which the sonar cannot be used. However, in reality, endangered species are likely to wander outside of the designated zones. “The North Atlantic Right Whale is not a predictable animal,” Megan Amundson, chair of the Massachusetts Sierra Club’s North Atlantic Right Whale Task Force stated. “Many North Atlantic Right Whales have been tracked to other continents entirely. Restrictions on small areas will not prevent the North Atlantic Right Whale or any other endangered species from coming into contact with the sonar.”

Although NMFS has determined that the sonar will cause a negligible effect on marine wildlife, many experts differ, including Jean-Michel Cousteau, founder and president of Ocean Futures Society, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Joel R. Reynolds, attorney and director of NRDC's marine mammal protection project. In an editorial they jointly wrote in 2000, they stated, “While we can't afford to ignore our national defense, neither can we afford to accept blindly the Navy's assurances that active sonar -- and, in particular, LFA -- is essential to our national security and harmless to our global ecosystem. Especially given the strandings' stunning confirmation of the risks, we cannot allow the Navy to play Russian roulette with our oceans.”

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