

**Subject:** Fwd: Close the loophole favoring California longliners  
**From:** "PFMC Comments" <pfmc.comments@noaa.gov>  
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Pacific Fishery Management Council  
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**Subject:** Close the loophole favoring California longliners  
**From:** <jimtinalittle@hotmail.com>  
**Date:** Fri, 17 Jan 2003 11:05:47 -0800

Dear Mr. McIsaac and Mr. Hight,

Pacific leatherback sea turtle populations are crashing, from 80,000 in 1980 to fewer than 5,000 today. Recent scientific studies and legal findings indicate that U.S. and foreign longline fishers jeopardize the survival of these turtles.

Of particular concern are longline vessels operating from the U.S. west coast. Longline fishers based in Hawaii since 2000 have been subject to gear and/or area restrictions to protect leatherback sea turtles. Longline fishers that land their catch in California fish in many of the same areas, but illogically have not been faced with any of these regulations. This has caused some Hawaii-based vessels to relocate and de-register in Hawaii, swelling the number of California-based vessels to 30-40.

The Pacific Fisheries Management Council at its October 28-November 1 meetings passed a plan for highly migratory species that leaves this loophole open, thus unfairly favoring California-based fishers and leaving the turtles open to fishing practices that they cannot withstand. This loophole should be closed at the earliest opportunity, and no later than the March 10-14 Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings in Sacramento.

Please do all that you can to ensure that West Coast-based longline fishers are subject to the same regulations as those in Hawaii, and please reply and let me know what actions you will take.

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