

# Mammal Protection Act Becomes Effective Dec. 21

The Departments of Commerce and Interior announced publication of proposed rule making dealing with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, signed into law by President Nixon on October 21.

An immediate effect of the Act will be to end polar bear and walrus hunting in Alaska on December 21, the date when the law creating a moratorium becomes effective in prohibiting the taking or importation of any marine mammal or marine mam-

al product.

The Department of Commerce is responsible for whales, porpoises, seals, and sea lions, while Interior is responsible for the other marine mammals which are walrus, polar bears, manatees, and sea otters.

Two exceptions to the ban

deal with the taking of marine mammals incidental to commercial fishing operations, and to marine mammals taken for subsistence or for making authentic native handicrafts by Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos.

The Commercial fishing ex-  
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emption is for two years from the date enactment.

These exemptions are subject to regulations which in the case of commercial fishing will be designed to achieve a goal of zero mortality of marine mammals.

The exemption to Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos is subject to restrictions necessary to protect depleted stocks of marine mammals.

In addition, the Pribilof Island fur seal program is not subject to the moratorium, but the program will be studied for possible modification.

Enforcement of the Act will be the joint responsibility of the Commerce and Interior Departments.

The proposed Interior Department regulations were published in the Federal Register on December 1, and by the Com-

merce Department on December

2. Comments from interested parties are requested by December 15, 1972.

It is anticipated that the interim regulations will be promulgated by December 21, effective on that date.

After the effective date the record will remain open for additional comments for a 60-day period expiring February 21, 1973.

Written comments, views, or objections to the proposed regulation, or, after December 15, to the interim regulations, should be made to the Director National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., 20235, or to the Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 2024.