



ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE

*PO Box 3650, Washington, DC 20027-0150 www.awionline.org
telephone: (703) 836-4300 facsimile: (703) 836-0400*

Statement by Ben White, Special Projects Coordinator

to the Advisory Committee on Acoustic Impacts

February 3, 2004

Long involved in the debate over the permitting of intense sounds emitted into the ocean environment, the Animal Welfare Institute is pleased that the Marine Mammal Commission is focusing attention on this important issue. We respectfully request that the protection of marine mammals be embraced as the primary responsibility of the Advisory Committee, and that this focus not be derailed by economic issues or defense matters.

Having carefully participated in the hearing process on the permitting of Low Frequency Active sonar, we are extremely concerned that this advisory process not follow a similar path (hundreds of cogent objections were swept aside due to intense pressure from the Department of Defense). We have come to see that limiting the legal emission of deadly sound into the oceans can draw the ire of powerful foes, specifically the military and the oil industry. For more than two decades the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Mineral Management Service have chosen to allow the emission of sounds known to be harmful to marine mammals and to fish, fish larvae and eggs too. It is vital that this body reverse this trend. Otherwise, the outcome of this expenditure of a million dollars of taxpayer money and thousands of hours will be the continuation of present practices that put the expansion of military hardware and the exploration for oil far above the lives of ocean creatures.

The Animal Welfare Institute will be attending these sessions of the advisory committee. We request an opportunity to speak before the committee and to provide documentation for your consideration. We applaud the Commission and the members of this committee for taking up this critical evaluation.