

Judge overrules Bush on Navy sonar ban

by UPI

LOS ANGELES - The Bush administration's exemption of an environmental ban on sonar use by the U.S. Navy was overruled by a federal judge in Los Angeles. In a 36-page ruling, U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper said U.S. President George Bush's exemption on sonar use off the coast of California ordered last month there was no emergency that justified the White House overruling earlier court-ordered protections for whales and dolphins, the Los Angeles Times reported Tuesday. Submarine-locating sonar has been linked to mass deaths of whales in various places around the world but never off Southern California, the newspaper said. Cooper's ruling upholds the earlier courts' decision that sonar can't be used such as within 12 nautical miles of the coast and between Santa Catalina and San Clemente islands and must be turned off if when whales or other marine mammals are seen within 2,200 yards of ships, the report said. The Navy claims the safety of its sailors depends on being well trained to detect potentially hostile vessels. A Navy spokesman contacted by the Times didn't indicate whether an appeal would be filed.

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