



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



Nothing is more priceless and more worthy of preservation than the rich array of animal life with which our country has been blessed. It is a many-faceted treasure, of value to scholars, scientists, and nature lovers alike, and it forms a vital part of the heritage we all share as Americans.

-President Richard Nixon –
Statement upon signing the
Endangered Species Act,
December 28, 1973

The Endangered Species Act - Protecting Marine Resources

Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on December 28, 1973, recognizing that the natural heritage of the United States was of “esthetic, ecological, educational, recreational, and scientific value to our Nation and its people.” It was understood that, without protection, many of our nation’s living resources would become extinct.

The purpose of the ESA is to conserve threatened and endangered species and their ecosystems. There are more than 1,900 species listed under the ESA. A species is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A species is considered threatened if it is likely to become endangered in the future. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) share responsibility for implementing the ESA. NMFS is responsible for 67 marine species, from whales to sea turtles and salmon to Johnson’s sea grass.

Protection, Conservation, and Recovery

The listing of a species as endangered makes it illegal to “take” (harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to do these things) that species. Similar prohibitions usually extend to threatened species. Federal agencies may be allowed limited take of species through interagency consultations with NMFS or USFWS. Non-federal individuals, agencies, or organizations may have limited take through special permits with conservation plans. Effects to the listed species must be minimized and in some cases conservation efforts are required to offset the take. NMFS’ Office of Law Enforcement works with the U.S. Coast Guard and other partners to enforce and prosecute ESA violations.

NMFS, the Protected Resources Program, and the ESA:

The Protected Resources program conserves and recovers marine resources by doing the following:

- Listing species under the ESA and designating critical habitat (section 4);
- Developing and implementing recovery plans for listed species (section 4);
- Developing cooperative agreements with and providing grants to States for species conservation (section 6);
- Consulting on any Federal actions that may affect a listed species to minimize the effects of the action (section 7);
- Partnering with other nations to ensure that international trade does not threaten species (section 8);
- Investigating violations of the ESA (section 9);
- Cooperating with non-federal partners to develop conservation plans for the long-term conservation of species (section 10); and
- Authorizing research to learn more about protected species (section 10).

Why Save Endangered Marine Species?

Although occasional extinction of species is natural, extinctions are currently occurring at a rate that is unprecedented in human history. Each plant, animal, and their physical environment is part of an ecosystem and part of a much more complex web of life. Because of this, the extinction of a single species can cause a series of negative events to occur that affect many other species. Endangered species also serve as “sentinel” species to indicate larger ecological problems that could affect the functioning of the ecosystem and likely humans as well. As importantly, species diversity is part of the natural legacy we leave for future generations. The wide variety of species on land and in our oceans has provided inspiration, beauty, solace, food, livelihood, medicines and other products for previous generations. The ESA is a mechanism to help guide conservation efforts, and to remind us that our children deserve the opportunity to enjoy the same natural world we experience.

Most of the problems in the current health of our environment are caused by people. However, people can also positively affect changes in our ecosystems and help endangered species recover by learning about the issues and changing behaviors. You can make a difference. To learn more, go to

www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr or www.fws.gov/endangered

Endangered and Threatened Species under NMFS' Jurisdiction

(E = Endangered; T = Threatened; R = Recovered)

(Updated October 2008)

Species	Year Listed	Status	Species	Year Listed	Status
CETACEANS			Puget Sound	1999	T
Blue whale (<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>)	1970*	E	Sacramento River winter-run	1994	E
Bowhead whale (<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>)	1970*	E	Snake River fall-run	1992	T
Chinese River dolphin (<i>Lipotes vexillifer</i>)	1989	E	Snake River spring/summer-run	1992	T
Fin whale (<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>)	1970*	E	Upper Willamette River	1999	T
Gray whale (<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>)			Chum salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus keta</i>)		
Western North Pacific	1970*	E	Columbia River	1999	T
Gulf of California harbor porpoise/vaquita			Hood Canal summer-run	1999	T
(<i>Phocoena sinus</i>)	1985	E	Coho salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i>)		
Humpback whale (<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>)	1970*	E	Central California coast	2005	E
Indus River dolphin (<i>Platanista minor</i>)	1991	E	Lower Columbia River	2005	T
Killer whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>)			Oregon Coast	2008	T
Southern Resident	2005	E	Southern Oregon & Northern CA coasts	1997	T
North Atlantic right whale (<i>Eubalaena glacialis</i>)	2008**	E	Green sturgeon (<i>Acipenser medirostris</i>)		
North Pacific right whale (<i>Eubalaena japonica</i>)	2008**	E	Southern	2006	T
Sei whale (<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>)	1970*	E	Gulf sturgeon (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi</i>)	1991	T
Southern right whale (<i>Eubalaena australis</i>)	1970*	E	Shortnose sturgeon (<i>Acipenser brevirostrum</i>)	1967	E
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>)	1970*	E	Smalltooth sawfish (<i>Pristis pectinata</i>)		
			U.S. portion of range	2003	E
			Sockeye salmon (<i>Oncorhynchus nerka</i>)		
PINNIPEDS			Ozette Lake	1999	T
Guadalupe fur seal (<i>Arctocephalus townsendi</i>)	1985	T	Snake River	1991	E
Hawaiian monk seal (<i>Monachus schauinslandi</i>)	1976	E	Steelhead trout (<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>)		
Mediterranean monk seal			Puget Sound	2007	T
(<i>Monachus monachus</i>)	1970*	E	Central California coast	1997	T
Saimaa seal (<i>Phoca hispida saimensis</i>)	1993	E	Snake River Basin	1997	T
Steller sea lion (<i>Eumetopias jubatus</i>)			Upper Columbia River	1997	E
Western U.S.	1997	E	Southern California	1997	E
Eastern U.S.	1990	T	Middle Columbia River	1999	T
			Lower Columbia River	1998	T
			Upper Willamette River	1999	T
			Northern California	2000	T
			South-Central California coast	1997	T
			California Central Valley	1998	T
			Totoaba (<i>Totoaba macdonaldi</i>)	1979	E
			MARINE INVERTEBRATES		
			Elkhorn coral (<i>Acropora palmata</i>)	2006	T
			Staghorn coral (<i>Acropora cervicornis</i>)	2006	T
			White abalone (<i>Haliotis sorenseni</i>)	2001	E
			MARINE PLANTS		
			Johnson's seagrass (<i>Halophila johnsonii</i>)	1999	T
			DELISTED SPECIES		
			Gray whale (<i>Eschrichtius robustus</i>)		
			Eastern North Pacific	1970*	R
			Caribbean monk seal (<i>Monachus tropicalis</i>)	1967	Extinct
FISH					
Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)					
Gulf of Maine	2000	E			
Chinook Salmon (<i>Onchorhynchus tshawytscha</i>)					
California coastal	1999	T			
Central Valley spring-run	1999	T			
Upper Columbia River spring-run	1999	E			

*Listed in 1970 under the precursors to the ESA.

**Originally listed in 1970 under the precursors to the ESA.