



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Jim Milbury/562-980-4006
Connie Barclay/301-713-2370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 6, 2006

NOAA Fisheries Service Seeks Comments on Fin Whale Recovery Plan

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA's Fisheries Service) announced the release of a draft Fin Whale Recovery Plan for public review and comment in a notice published in today's Federal Register.

A federal Recovery Plan is required whenever a species is listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The fin whale has been designated as endangered under the United States' Endangered Species Act (ESA) since 1973.

The goal of the plan is to promote actions necessary to eventually take the animals off the endangered species list. The public comment period ends September 5, 2006.

"This is a significant milestone in restoring the Fin Whale throughout its habitat," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service Director and United States Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission. "This draft recovery plan charts a course that will eventually allow this species to thrive."

Fin whales are the second largest whale and are found in temperate waters throughout the world. With the shift to ships fast enough to keep up with this swift whale, commercial whaling was able to drastically reduce numbers to the point that the species was listed as globally endangered in 1973. Commercial whaling was banned in 1987 but aboriginal whaling continues in Greenland.

The Plan's strategy highlights several actions that are especially important to protect, promote and monitor the recovery of fin whale populations in the North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Southern Oceans: (1) Maintain international regulation of whaling for fin whales; (2) determine population discreteness and structure; (3) better estimate population size and monitor trends in abundance; (4) protect important habitat; and (5) reduce or eliminate human-caused injury and mortality; and (6) identify and minimize any detrimental effects of human-generated underwater noise.

-more-

A copy of today's federal register notice may be found at: <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/pdf/E6-10558.pdf>. Comments may be sent by e-mail or mail. For e-mail, send to finwhale.recoveryplan@noaa.gov, include in the subject line the following document identifier: Fin Whale Recovery Plan. E-mail comments, with or without attachments, are limited to five megabytes. For mail, send to Angela Somma, Chief, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD, 20910; (3) Fax: (301) 427-2523. A copy of the Recovery Plan is available from the above address or on-line from <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/>.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries Service, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, over 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

###

On the Web:

NOAA : <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

Fin Whale Recovery Plan: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr>

Federal Register Fin Whale Notice:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/pdf/E6-10558.pdf>

Fin Whale Information: http://ecos.fws.gov/species_profile/SpeciesProfile?sPCODE=A020