



## **Listing Determinations for 10 West Coast Steelhead Populations**

(Dec. 23, 2005)

### Today's Action

Today the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) announced Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing determinations for 10 populations of West Coast steelhead in California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. These findings are part the agency's commitment, begun in 2002, to update all of its West Coast salmon and steelhead listing determinations, consistent with a 2001 court order.

### Background

Beginning in the early 1990s, NOAA Fisheries Service listed 26 populations of salmon and steelhead as either threatened or endangered in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California. In September 2001, an Oregon Federal District Court held that NOAA Fisheries Service improperly treated hatchery stocks in its 1998 listing decision for Oregon Coast coho salmon. In that listing decision, as with nearly all its previous listing determinations for West Coast salmon and steelhead, NOAA Fisheries Service had excluded from the listing those hatchery stocks determined to be part of the population under review, arguing that they were not essential for conservation. In 2002 the agency initiated a new review to update its listing determinations and ensure that they are consistent with the District Court's ruling.

In June 2004, NOAA Fisheries Service proposed listings for 27 West Coast salmonid populations, including proposals to list nine steelhead populations as "threatened" (south-central California, central California coast, California Central Valley, northern California, upper Willamette River, lower Columbia River, middle Columbia River, Snake River Basin, upper Columbia River), and one in southern California as "endangered." In June 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service announced its listing determinations for 16 salmon populations proposed for listing in 2004. The determination for the remaining 11 populations (including the 10 steelhead populations that are the subject of today's action) was extended for six months because of "substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of available data."

The listing determinations and status reviews are based on reports produced in early 2003 by NOAA Fisheries Service's biological review team. Those reports detailed the biological status of naturally spawning populations and the team's assessment of the effects of hatchery programs on population viability. Additional comment periods for steelhead allowed NOAA Fisheries Service to work with its scientists and other federal, tribal, state, academic and non-governmental biologists, scientists, attorneys and policy analysts to review the latest information on these populations. During the initial and extended comment periods, NOAA Fisheries Service received

thousands of public comments and held more than a dozen public meetings and hearings to receive input.

### Highlights of the Final Listing Determinations for 10 Populations of Steelhead

- *The Status of Nine (of 10) Steelhead Populations Did Not Change.* The final determinations for all but one steelhead population remain unchanged from their previous listing status. The upper Columbia River steelhead population is being downgraded from “endangered” to “threatened.”
- *Differentiation was Made between Evolutionarily Significant Units and Distinct Population Segments.* In the June 2004 proposed listing determinations, NOAA Fisheries Service – in keeping with past practice, proposed to apply its evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) policy in delineating Pacific steelhead species for listing consideration. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service disagreed with this approach. It requested that NOAA Fisheries Service make its listing determinations for steelhead consistent with both services’ joint distinct population segment (DPS) policy. Given the shared jurisdiction over *O. mykiss*, NOAA Fisheries Service believes application of the joint DPS policy here is logical, reasonable and appropriate to determine distinct population segments for *O. mykiss*. Use of the ESU policy – originally intended for Pacific salmon – should not be extended to *O. mykiss*, a type of salmonid with characteristics not typically exhibited by other Pacific salmon. Today’s listing actions include only the anadromous form of *O. mykiss*.

More information about the status reviews and listing determinations is available at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.