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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA Determines White Marlin Not Threatened or Endangered

NOAA Fisheries Service announced today that the Atlantic white marlin, a billfish highly prized by recreational anglers, does not warrant listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Based on the biological status of the species and consideration of the ESA listing factors, the species is not in danger of extinction.

“All indications are that the white marlin stock has grown since we last estimated the stock size in 2002,” said Dr. Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries Service’s southeast regional administrator. “With reduced fishing mortality the population should remain stable or continue to increase.”

A 2006 stock assessment showed a population increase since 2002, likely due to improved compliance with international requirements to reduce the catch of the species. Total Atlantic-wide white marlin landings from longline fisheries have declined annually between 2000 and 2004, from 1,242 metric tons to 610 metric tons. The United States accounts for about three percent of that total.

In 2002, NOAA determined that an ESA listing of white marlin was not warranted, but there were still concerns about the species’ population. NOAA committed to conducting a new status review of the white marlin once the 2006 stock assessment was completed by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the international body that manages white marlin and other tuna-like species.

Atlantic white marlin have historically been landed as incidental catch of foreign and domestic commercial pelagic longline fisheries, or by recreational and artisanal fishermen. Domestically, it is illegal to retain, land, or sell white marlin in a commercial manner, reserving the species for recreational anglers. The fish is highly-prized among recreational anglers in the United States, Venezuela, Bahamas, Brazil, and many countries in the Caribbean Sea and west coast of Africa.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

Frequently Asked Questions about White Marlin <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>
Atlantic White Marlin Status Review <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>