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NOAA Finds Listing of Black Abalone Under the Endangered Species Act May Be Warranted; Seeks Public Input Over the Next 60 Days

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) today announced in the federal register its finding that black abalone (*Haliotis cracheroidii*) may warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

This finding comes after a formal petition was filed to list black abalone by the Center for Biological Diversity in December of 2006. NOAA Fisheries' review of the petition found that there is substantial scientific information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. The agency is also requesting information from the public pertaining to this species, including information on what might constitute critical habitat, and recommendations of qualified individuals to evaluate the agency's status review report.

Black abalone is a marine mollusk that once ranged from at least northern California to Southern Baja California. The species was intensely harvested in the 1800's yielding four million pounds in 1879. Commercial harvesting was banned in the early 1900's but resumed again in 1968. In the mid-1980s black abalone populations were again severely reduced and then subjected to a disease known as Withering Syndrome (WS). The disease is known to have reduced populations of black abalone in the Channel Islands by as much as 90 percent.

NOAA Fisheries will make a determination whether a listing of black abalone is warranted under the ESA by December 27, 2007.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA 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 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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.

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On the web:

90 Day Finding and References may be found at: <http://www.swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service Southwest Regional Office: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr>