



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA Completes White Abalone Recovery Plan

NOAA's Fisheries Service has made available the final recovery plan for white abalone, a marine mollusk listed in 2001 as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

This recovery plan outlines reasonable actions which are believed to be required to recover and/or protect white abalone, and is required by the ESA as a guideline for the conservation and survival of ESA listed species. The primary goal of this recovery plan is to establish self-sustaining populations of white abalone in a number of locations throughout its historic range.

The plan recommends a number of actions. NOAA scientists will work closely with the state of California, other federal agencies, private organizations and the Mexican government to monitor white abalone. They will use acoustic remote sensing technology to identify and learn as much as possible about potential white abalone habitat and will continue to expand the captive program, so more can be released into the wild.

The white abalone is the first marine invertebrate to be listed as endangered under the act. It was once abundant off the coasts of Baja and southern California, where it thrived in waters from approximately 15 to 200 feet deep, making it the deepest occurring abalone species in California.

Abalone reproduce by releasing eggs or sperm into open water. Usually, large groups of abalone gather in a single location to do this, increasing the chance of fertilization. At the height of the commercial fishery in the 1970s, divers harvested abalone in large quantities - resulting in a decreased population able to reproduce.

Today, scientists' estimates of white abalone densities show much lower numbers than historic estimates. There may be just a few thousand left in southern California. The white abalone population in Mexico is thought to be depleted based on commercial fishery data, but the status of the species in Mexico remains uncertain.

The final plan is available on the web at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov> or by emailing: whiteabalone.recoveryplan@noaa.gov. NOAA made the draft recovery plan available for public comment in 2006.

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On the Web:

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