

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT



NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 provides for the conservation of endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and plants throughout all or a significant portion of their range, and the conservation of the ecosystems on which they depend.

A species is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction through all or a significant portion of its range. A species is considered threatened if it is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.

There are approximately 1,927 species listed under the ESA. Of these species, approximately 1,353 are found in part or entirely in the United States and its waters; the remainder are foreign species.

NOAA's Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (<http://www.fws.gov/endangered/>) share responsibility for implementing the ESA. In general, USFWS manages land and freshwater species, while NOAA's Fisheries Service manages marine and "anadromous" species. Anadromous species such as salmon, shad and some types of herring live their adult lives in the ocean but move into freshwater streams to reproduce.

NOAA's Fisheries Service has jurisdiction over approximately 67 species that have been listed as endangered. This

list includes 20 marine mammals, eight sea turtles, 33 fish species and four invertebrates or plants.

How species are listed as endangered or threatened


NOAA's Fisheries Service may initiate a status review of a species. Any U.S. citizen or organization may petition NOAA's Fisheries Service to list a species as threatened or endangered.

A species must be listed if it is threatened or endangered due to any of the following five factors:

- Present or threatened destruction, modification or curtailment of habitat or range
- Overuse for commercial, recreational, scientific or educational purposes
- Disease or predation
- Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms
- Other manmade or natural factors affecting its continued existence

The ESA requires that the listing determinations be based solely on the best scientific and commercial information available. The law prohibits the consideration of economic impacts in making a determination. As part of a listing, NOAA's Fisheries Service must also designate critical habitat (<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/habitat.htm>) for the species no later than a year after the final listing, as long as it is prudent to do so and the critical habitat is able to be determined.

When a species is listed as endangered, certain prohibitions on taking the species are automatically applied to the species. When a species is listed as threatened, NOAA's Fisheries Service must issue protective regulations under the law in order to extend any prohibitions on the taking of the species.

For more information, please visit the NOAA's Fisheries Service ESA Web site at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/esa/>. 



NOAA scientists observe a young killer whale in its natural habitat.