



NOAA
FISHERIES

NOAA's Proposed ESA Listing Determinations for 82 Coral Species

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Overview
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Outline

- ESA Triggers Action on Corals
- Action & Analysis to Date
- NOAA's Nov. 30 Announcement
- Opportunities for Public Engagement
- What if Species are Listed?
- For More Information
- Questions

ESA Triggers Action

- NOAA received petition to list 83 species of reef-building corals under the ESA from the Center for Biological Diversity
- That petition triggered the ESA process
- The Endangered Species Act protects species and also "the ecosystems upon which they depend."
- A species is characterized as 'endangered' when it is **currently** in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
- A species is characterized as 'threatened' when it is **likely to become** endangered throughout all or a significant portion of the species' range within the foreseeable future

NOAA Initiates Status Review of 82 Species

- NOAA convened a Biological Review Team ; developed a peer-reviewed *Status Review Report*
- NOAA developed a *Draft Management Report*
- NOAA conducted extensive public engagement April-July 2012 ; additional info available online in new *Supplemental Information Report*
- Determination Tool developed, applied to 82 species
- All of these steps formed the basis of our proposal we are announcing today

Status Review

- The Biological Review Team was composed of 7 federal scientists (5 NOAA, 1 USGS, 1NPS)
 - Four members had primary expertise in coral ecology, two in climate change, and one in population viability analysis
- The Status Review Report reviews general threats to corals, their life history and ecology, gives a profile summarizing specific information known for each of the individual 82 species
 - >500 pages with >1000 scientific citations

Staus Review, cont'd

- The Biological Review Team used this best available info on threats and species status to estimate extinction risk for each of the 82 species
- The report **did not** make listing recommendations
- The report was peer-reviewed by three international experts under the auspices of the Center for Independent Experts

Management Report

- The ESA requires the agency to consider whether existing laws, conservation efforts, and other regulatory mechanisms are adequate to protect the species
- The management team took on this analysis (vs. the Biological Review Team) because they had the expertise to compile and review regs

Supplemental Information Report

- New information was identified as part of NOAA's Public Engagement process (April-July 2012)
 - NOAA was provided or we identified approximately 400 relevant scientific articles, reports, or presentations either produced since the *Status Review Report* was finalized or not originally included in the report
 - NOAA gathered approximately 42,000 public comments
- *Supplemental Info Report* available online

The Determination Tool

- This tool is a replicable method to distill relevant information from the *Status Review Report* and subsequent input that contributes to each species' extinction risk and listing status
- Uses 3 categories of information:
 - demographics (e.g., abundance, trends)
 - spatial structure (e.g. geographic distribution, depth distribution, oceanic basin)
 - vulnerability to threats
- Provides consistency in making 82 separate determinations

What We Announced on Nov 30

- Late last month, NOAA proposed listing 66 coral species and reclassifying two under the ESA
 - Of the 66 species, 54 are proposed as threatened and 12 as endangered
 - 2 Caribbean species – elkhorn and staghorn corals – are being proposed for reclassification from threatened to endangered
 - 16 of the 82 species contained in the original petition are not warranted for listing under the ESA

Species Proposed for Listing by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	# Proposed Endangered	# Proposed Threatened
Florida	7	2
Puerto Rico	7	2
US Virgin Islands	7	2
Hawai'i	0	3
Guam	0	27-30
CNMI	1	28
American Samoa	3	41-43

Public Engagement to Continue

- NOAA is currently *proposing* to list or reclassify these species and before making a final decision, we are asking for comments from all interested parties
- NOAA has opened a 90-day public comment period on the proposed rule
- National stakeholder call set for Dec 19
- Agency will hold 18 public hearings on proposal in Pacific Islands and Southeast regions (Jan-Feb 2013)

What if Species are Listed under the ESA?

- If a species is listed:
 - NOAA will designate critical habitat if determinable and prudent
 - NOAA may:
 - Identify specific regulations for the conservation of *threatened* species
 - Develop recovery plan(s)
 - Other actions:
 - Consult with federal agencies on actions that they carry out, fund, or authorize that “may affect” listed corals to ensure the action does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species
 - Issue permits for actions that may result in the “take” of a listed species

NOAA to Work with Communities, Partners

- We want communities to understand how a potential listing may/may not affect them.
- We will work with our partners to continue to ensure that appropriate coral research continues.
- Important note: Listing species does not prohibit activities generally, like fishing or diving.

For More Information

- Online - NOAA Fisheries websites
 - Fisheries homepage – <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2012/11/82corals.html>
- What's available there:
 - Supporting documents
 - How to make a public comment
 - Information for National Stakeholder call
 - Information on public hearings
 - Contacts for questions

Questions