



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **NOAA to Review Status of 82 Species of Coral**

*Center for Biological Diversity has asked to list corals under Endangered Species Act*

NOAA's Fisheries Service today announced the agency will evaluate the status of 82 species of stony coral that the Center for Biological Diversity has asked to be listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

The center said that the habitat of these coral species in the Caribbean and Indo-Pacific region is threatened by rising seawater temperatures, increasing ocean acidification, intensifying storms, changes in precipitation, and sea-level rise—all linked to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the center, these threats are made worse by local activities such as ship traffic, dredging, coastal development, pollution, and agricultural and land use practices that increase sediment and nutrient runoff into the ocean. The petition says this combination of threats has already affected coral reef ecosystems on a global scale, and that these threats are becoming more severe and will greatly reduce the quantity and quality of coral reef ecosystems in the next few decades.

Stony corals are marine invertebrates with skeletons of calcium carbonate. They build shallow tropical reefs, which provide habitat for myriad other species, including commercially important fish and marine invertebrates such as shellfish, and serve as food for a variety of animals.

Among the information NOAA's Fisheries Service is soliciting and will look at is the species' historical and current distribution and abundance, the short- and long-term effects of climate change on their condition, and the effects of other potential threats such as dredging and pollution.

NOAA's Fisheries Service will base its findings on a review of the best scientific and commercial information available, including all information received during the 60-day public comment period. The review is expected to be completed by October 20.

Once the status reviews are complete, NOAA's Fisheries Service will determine whether to propose to list any of these species as threatened or endangered. If a listing is proposed, there will be a public comment period before the final determination.

Once a species is listed as endangered, it is illegal to "take" (harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to do these things) the species. If a species is listed as threatened, NOAA would issue regulations needed to conserve the species.

While the center requested that NOAA review 83 species of coral, the agency found the center's petition did not contain information that one species, *Oculina varicosa*, may be threatened or endangered throughout its range.

Of the 82 species that will be reviewed, seven species occur in U.S. Caribbean waters and, according to the petition, 75 occur in U.S. Pacific waters. Many, however, occur more frequently in other countries.

Comments, information or data, identified by RIN 0648-XT12, may be submitted by in any of the following ways by April 11, 2010:

- Electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov>.
- Mail (for Pacific species):  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Protected Resources Division  
NMFS Pacific Islands Regional Office  
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Suite 1110  
Honolulu, HI 96814
- Mail (for Atlantic species):  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Protected Resources Division  
NMFS Southeast Regional Office  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
- Fax (for Pacific species) to 907-586-7012
- Fax (for Atlantic species) to 727-824-5309

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