

Species of Concern Program 2008 Report



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

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NOAA



Species

There were no changes to the Species of Concern list in Fiscal Year 2008; there continue to be 42 Species of Concern. However, some species may be removed in Fiscal Year 2009. The Cook Inlet Beluga whale (ESA listed October 2008), black abalone, and Atlantic salmon were all proposed for listing as endangered and final rules are expected in 2009. A status review was completed for Atlantic sturgeon, and reviews are being conducted for cusk and Atlantic wolfish. White marlin were removed from the program in November 2008.



Beluga whale, *Delphinapterus leucas*. NMFS.

External Grants

Three new projects were funded to do conservation work on sand tiger shark habitat use and capture stress response, Alabama shad migratory barriers, and bumphead parrotfish and humphead wrasse status in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Two ongoing projects for saltmarsh topminnow, rainbow smelt, and Atlantic sturgeon also received continuing funding.

Internal Grants

Internal funding of \$320,000 was competitively awarded to 10 of the 18 projects submitted from NMFS Science Centers and Regions. These included projects for the conservation of 3 abalone species, Pacific hake, green sturgeon, dusky shark, and Hawaiian reef coral. For more information on any of these projects contact the Program Coordinator (see pg. 4). Funds were also awarded for outreach and to hold a national workshop with state, territorial, and tribal partners (see next pg.).

What are Species of Concern?

“Species of Concern” are species or vertebrate populations for which there is concern or great uncertainty about their status. Species of Concern are not protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As resources permit, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) conducts a review of the status of each Species of Concern to determine if it warrants listing as an endangered or threatened species under the ESA. NOAA Fisheries believes it is important to highlight species for which listing may be warranted so that federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and the private sector are aware of which species could benefit from proactive conservation efforts. NOAA has a grant program to fund such efforts.



Program Activities

Outreach

The national program coordinator presented the program to attendees at the International Coral Reef Symposium, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual conferences.

Over 700 people were introduced to the program and 1500 pieces of Species of Concern literature (brochures, species lists, and fact sheets) were distributed.

An annual report was created for the first time and is available on the program website (see pg. 4). Program accomplishments were highlighted in the NOAA Ecosystem Goal team report.

Staff provided training to Regional Fishery Management Council members on the Species of Concern program and SOC



Bumphead parrotfish, *Bolbometopon muricatum*. Courtesy John Randall, Bishop Museum.

species that overlap with those considered by the Councils' to be overfished or undergoing overfishing.

Information on the Species of Concern program and individual species was added to the Wikipedia pages for all species in the program.

Over 64,000 copies of fact sheets were downloaded this year.

Fact Sheets

Range maps for all species were added to the online fact sheets.

About half of the fact sheets had other substantive updates this year.

Web hit statistics show that the fact sheets were downloaded a total of about 64,000 times during the year. Downloads grew from about 4000 a month at the beginning of the year to 7000 a month at the end of the year.

Fact sheets are available for download on the program's website (see pg. 4).



Alabama shad, *Alosa alabamae*. Courtesy Jake Schaefer.

Partnerships

A workshop was held with coastal states, territories, and tribal group partners in partnership with the Endangered Species Act Section 6 Cooperation with States program to discuss needs and issues and develop the first strategic plan for the program. Over 50 new species were suggested to be added to the Species of Concern program. Technical assistance needs, multi-state partnerships, and other issues were highlighted and

A national workshop was held to gather program input from all coastal states, territories, and 5 tribal groups.

will be addressed in an upcoming strategic plan.

The national coordinator collaborated with the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program to develop 10 fact sheets for SOCs that occur in estuaries. These can be found on estuaries.gov.

Partnered with NOAA Habitat Conservation, Marine Debris, and Restoration Center programs on grant proposal review and joint program priorities.

Staff served as peer-reviewer for "Conservation Status of Imperiled North American Freshwater and Diadromous Fishes" by Howard Jelks et al. as part of the American

Fisheries Society imperiled species list program.

Northeast Region and Headquarters staff continued to participate in the Gulf of Maine Species of Concern Technical Advisory Committee for conservation of rainbow smelt and Atlantic sturgeon.



Pinto abalone, *Haliotis kamtschatkana*. Courtesy California Fish & Game.



Regional and Science Center Accomplishments

Northwest

Black abalone: Participated on black abalone status review team.

Flat abalone: Engaged the state of Oregon with concerns regarding risks to the species posed by state-permitted commercial harvest of flat abalone.

Green sturgeon: Funded research on the feeding behavior and habitat-use patterns of green sturgeon in Washington bays and estuaries.

Continued to disseminate the best available scientific information regarding the distribution and relative abundance of Northern DPS green sturgeon to inform NMFS' Sec. 7 consultations.

Pinto abalone: Funded research on aquaculture and outplanting methods for restoring depressed pinto abalone populations in Washington.

Pacific hake: Funded and participated in research on the abundance, age-at-maturity, and population structure of Pacific hake in the Georgia Basin.

Southwest

Black abalone: Participated in the preparation of the final status review report and prepared the final rule to list as endangered.

Continued to participate in PIT tagging programs in Channel Islands to examine individual growth, movement and survival.

Supported habitat surveys to inform a future proposal for ESA critical habitat designation.

Supported disease research on the pathogen that causes Withering Syndrome at the University of Washington and the Bodega Bay Marine Laboratory.

Outreach: Supported Long Beach

Aquarium to upgrade its abalone exhibit and create a behind-the-scenes environment conducive to culturing abalone for restoration.

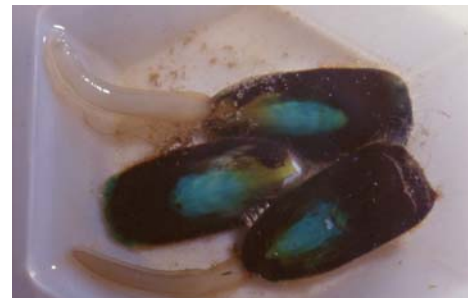
Pacific

Hawaiian spinner dolphin: Proposed adding this species to SOC program (not accepted).

Hawaiian reef coral: Contracted University of Hawaii to determine genetic differences between this species and congeneric corals and develop rapid id methods.

Continued and expanded captive propagation at Waikiki Aquarium.

[Continued on next page](#)



Inarticulated brachiopod, *Lingula reevii*. Courtesy John Hoover.

Publications and Presentations

Popular Articles

Meadows, D. Alewife & blueback herring are Species of Concern . American Currents. 34(1) 3-6.

Somma, A., et al. in press. Conservation and the Endangered Species Act. In: Our Living Ocean. National Marine Fisheries Service, Washington, DC.

Scientific Publications

Carlson, J., et al. The status of the United States population of night shark (*Carcharhinus signatus*). Marine Fisheries Review 70:1-14.

Lindley, S. et al. Marine migration of North American green sturgeon. Transactions of the American Fisheries Society 137:182-194.

Meadows, D., et al. Threatened fishes of the World: *Alosa alabamae*. Environmental Biol. Fishes. 82:173-174.

White Marlin Biological Review Team. 2007. Atlantic White Marlin Status Review. 88 pp.

Presentations

Butler, J. & M. Neuman. Status of Black Abalone Populations in California. Marine Pollution Studies Laboratory, Granite Canyon, CA.

Meadows, D. Species of Concern Program. Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Meadows, D. Species of Concern Program. International Coral Reef Symposium.

Neuman, M. North American Green Sturgeon. NMFS Distinct Population

Segment Workshop.

Neuman, M. & G. VanBlaricom. Status of Black Abalone Populations at the California Channel Islands. 7th California Islands Symposium, Ventura, California.

VanBlaricom, G. & M. Neuman. Large-scale depletion of black abalone in California and Mexico. Society for Conservation Biology.



Green sturgeon, *Acipenser medirostris*. Courtesy NMFS.



NOAA Fisheries
Office of
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For more information on any of these activities please contact:

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Nassau grouper, *Epinephelus striatus*. Courtesy

We're on the Web!

nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/concern/

Goals of the Species of Concern Program

- To increase public awareness about these species;
- To identify those species potentially at risk and in need of protective measures before listing under the ESA becomes necessary;
- To identify data deficiencies and uncertainties associated with a species status;
- To work cooperatively with regional co-managers and concern groups to obtain the information necessary to evaluate species status and threats;
- To identify conservation opportunities; and,
- To work with Federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and the public to act proactively to conserve the species.

Regional Accomplishments (Continued)

Pacific (continued)

Inarticulated brachiopod: A captive husbandry tank was constructed and husbandry work continues on a contract with Waikiki Aquarium.

Outreach: Initiated design work with Waikiki Aquarium to create an outreach and education research exhibit for Hawaiian reef coral and inarticulated brachiopods.

All fact sheets were updated and expanded.

Humphead wrasse and Bumphead parrotfish: Awarded research grant to CNMI.

Southeast

Outreach: 2,500 brochures, regional flyers, and annual reports were distributed to local aquaria, schools, workshops, and events.

Region website created for program.

All fact sheets were updated by regional species experts.

Partnerships: Currently working with NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program in joining grant funding opportunities. Also establishing contacts with The Nature Conservancy and The Ocean Conservancy and initiating programs for SOC habitats.

Atlantic white marlin: Status Review completed December 2007 – not warranted for ESA listing.

Night shark: Status review completed 2008 – suggested removal from SOC program.

Northeast

Atlantic white marlin: Assisted in completion of ESA status review.

Cusk: Drafted ESA status review

that is in revision.

Atlantic sturgeon: drafted ESA listing determination (in review). Funded multiple research projects.

Cohosted workshop (with ASFMC) to develop research protocols.

Hosted workshop at AFS conference on sturgeon research techniques.

Atlantic wolfish: drafted 90 day finding on ESA petition to list this species.

Skates and Atlantic wolfish: participated on working group to deal with data poor situations.

Barndoor skate: hired contractor to conduct SOC status review.

Alewives: funded 2 projects in Maine.

Alaska

No activity to report.