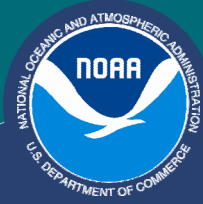


Species of Concern Program 2009 Report

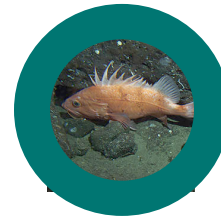


NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Inside this Issue:

Species	1
Grants	1
What are Species of Concern	1
Outreach	2
Partnerships	2
Regional Accomplishments	3 - 4
Publications and Presentations	3

NOAA



Species

There were 4 changes to the Species of Concern list in Fiscal Year 2009: The Cook Inlet beluga whale, black abalone, and Gulf of Maine Atlantic salmon were all listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and removed from the program, while ribbon seals were added. There are now 39 Species of Concern. Atlantic sturgeon and cusk are candidate species for ESA listing.

External Grants

Two new projects were funded to study sand tiger shark habitat use in Delaware bay and extend bumphead parrotfish and humphead wrasse status surveys to Guam (with additional funding by the Pacific Region). Four ongoing projects for saltmarsh topminnow, rainbow smelt, bumphead parrotfish, humphead wrasse and Atlantic sturgeon received continuing funding. Regional offices funded 5 additional projects (see page 3).

Internal Grants

Internal funding of \$300,000 was competitively awarded to 9 of the 21 projects submitted by NMFS Science Centers and Regions. These included projects for cowcod conservation, Atlantic sturgeon tracking, Pacific hake growth and movement, Hawaiian coral genetics, ribbon seal toxins, Warsaw grouper life history, insecticides as a threat to coho salmon, and green abalone culturing and out-planting. Funds were also to hold a west coast workshop with program partners. For more information on any of these projects contact the Program Coordinator (see pg. 4).



Ribbon seal, *Histiophoca fasciata*. NMFS.

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. NOAA Fisheries believes it is important to highlight species for which additional information and management 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 external and internal grant programs to fund such efforts.



Program Activities

Outreach

The national program coordinator presented the program to attendees at the Ecological Society of America, International Marine Conservation Congress, the National Marine Educators Association and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies conferences. Over 1000 people were introduced to the program and 1700 pieces of Species of Concern literature (brochures, species lists, and fact sheets) were distributed.

Staff provided training to Regional Fishery Management Council members on the Species of Concern program and SOC species that overlap with those considered by the Councils' to be overfished or undergoing overfishing.



Thorny skate, *Amblyraja radiata*.
Courtesy B. Ueberschauer.

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

105,000 copies of fact sheets were downloaded this year!!

Fact Sheets

Web hit statistics show that the fact sheets were downloaded a total of about 105,000 times during the year, an incredible 75% increase. Downloads grew from about 7500 a month at the beginning of the year to 17,900 a month at the end of the year.

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

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



Chinook salmon, *Onchorhynchus tshawytscha*. Courtesy Jeff Kozlowsky.



Partnerships

A strategic plan is in development to guide the program

Collaborated with Wildlife Conservation Society to make Species of Concern eligible for funding under their Action Opportunities Fund.

The national coordinator collaborated with the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program to develop 8 fact sheets for SOCs that

Partners have been essential to the accomplishments of the SOC program!

occur in estuaries. These can be found on estuaries.gov.

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

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.

A new webpage for funding, training, and technical resources for stakeholders partners was developed.



Inarticulated brachiopod (*Lingula reevis*) husbandry tank at Waikiki Aquarium. Waikiki Aquarium.



Regional and Science Center Accomplishments

Pacific Coast workshop: The Northwest and Southwest Regions hosted a two day Species of Concern Workshop in Seattle, WA. The workshop was attended by Federal, state, tribal, and NGO partners as well as academics. NOAA staff provided information on the SOC program and shared funding opportunities with the participants. The group discussed West Coast abalone conservation and new research on these species. Three fishes were considered as possible additions to the program.

Northwest

Green sturgeon: 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.

Cowcod: Staff initiated an evaluation of stock structure in archived cowcod tissues using DNA techniques and otolith microchemistry.

Coho salmon: Began studies of insecticides as a limiting factor for coho salmon conservation and recovery in urban streams.

Georgia Basin Pacific hake: Staff initiated a study of growth and natal origin of Pacific hake based on analysis of elemental composition of new and archived otoliths. Staff continued a survey of abundance, age-at-maturity, and genetic population structure in Puget Sound in collaboration with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Southwest

Green abalone: supported a culturing study at Redondo SEA Lab for future outplanting attempts.

Black abalone: staff helped prepare the final ESA status report and listing rule. Staff also continued to participate in long-term monitoring, habitat, and movement studies.

Outreach: supported the Long Beach Aquarium in the development of an abalone exhibit and abalone culturing facilities.

New species: staff worked with stakeholders to analyze information and develop proposals for new additions to the program.

Pacific

Inarticulated brachiopod and Hawaiian reef coral:

Funded University of Hawaii for the project: "Spatially predictive modeling of potential habitat for two NOAA Species of Concern (*Lingula reevii* and *Montipora dilatata*) in Kaneohe Bay, Oahu, Hawaii.

[Continued on next page](#)



Publications and Presentations

Popular Articles

Meadows, D. Conserving species before they need the ESA. *Endangered Species Bulletin* 34(2):36-37.

Scientific Publications

Carlson, J. *et al.* An update on the status of the sand tiger shark in the NW Atlantic Ocean. NOAA Tech. Memo NMFS-SEFSC-585.

Eytan, R.I. *et al.* Nuclear sequences reveal mid-range isolation of an imperiled deep-water coral population. *Mol. Ecol.* 18:2375-2389.

Heublein, J.C. *et al.* Migration of green sturgeon in the Sacramento River. *Env'tal. Biol. Fish.* 84:245-258.

Mora, E.A. *et al.* Do impassable dams and flow regulation constrain the distribution of green sturgeon in the Sacramento River, CA? *J. Applied. Ichthyol.* 25 (S2):39-47.

Waikiki Aquarium. Create a live animal outreach and education exhibit for two Species of Concern: the Hawaiian reef coral and the inarticulated brachiopod, and support genetic analysis of recently collected *Montipora* fragments. Final report to NOAA Fisheries.

Presentations

Meadows, D. Species of Concern Program. Ecological Society of America, International Marine Conservation Congress.



Cowcod, *Sebastes levis*. Courtesy HSWRI.



NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources

For more information on any of these activities please contact:

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1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 301-713-1401
Fax: 301-427-2523



Hawaiian reef coral, *Montipora dilatata* (c) Keoki Stender.

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 (cont'd)

Continued successful husbandry of inarticulated brachiopods and asexual propagation of Hawaiian reef corals in Waikiki Aquarium.

Outreach:

Continued successful partnership with the Waikiki aquarium to highlight SOC issues with their guests.

Northeast

Cusk: Drafting ESA status review.

Barndoor skate: Conducted SOC status review.

Alaska

Ribbon seal: Optimized procedures and tested ribbon and other ice seals for domoic acid and saxitoxin.

Southeast

Largetooth sawfish: A petition was received to list this species under the Endangered Species

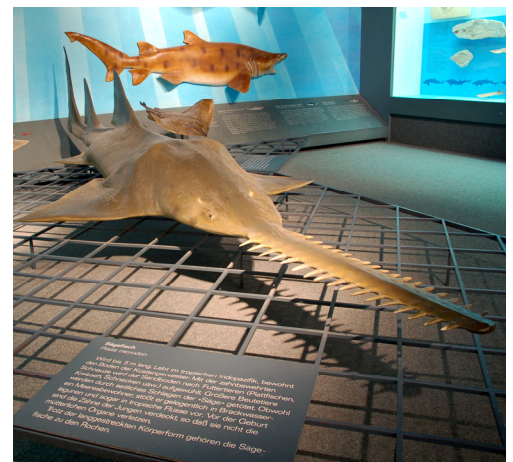
Act. Program staff evaluated the petition and developed a positive 90-day finding that ESA listing may be warranted. Staff are currently conducting a status review to determine if the species should be proposed for listing in early 2010.

Sand tiger shark: NMFS' Southeast Fisheries Science Center completed a status update for the species which concluded that the species should be retained as a species of concern because of its low productivity.

Oculina coral: A petition was received to list this species under the Endangered Species Act. A 90-day finding determined that the petitioned action was not warranted.

Outreach: Updated species fact sheets and region website (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/SpeciesofConcernProgram.htm>).

Atlantic sturgeon: A petition was received to list this species under the Endangered Species Act. Staff contributed to the development of the 90-day finding (issued January 6, 2010) that concluded that the requested listing action may be warranted. Both the Southeast and Northeast Regions worked on the listing determination for the species.



Largetooth sawfish, *Pristis perotetti*. WikiMedia Commons.