Frequently Asked Questions

Proposed Listing of 66 Reef-building Coral Species Under the Endangered Species Act

NOAA FISHERIES
Pacific Islands Region

corals

For more information visit:

Pacific Islands Regional Office
www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_coral.html

Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
http://www.pifsc.noaa.gov/cred/reas.php

*Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring and Overview Reports

The Latest Findings:

- NOAA is proposing to list 66 species under the ESA—54 as threatened and 12 as endangered.
- The agency found that 16 of the 82 species in the original petition do not warrant listing under the ESA.
- The threats to these proposed coral species are global and local.

Q. Why did NOAA start the evaluation of these coral species?

NOAA Fisheries' coral status review is a response to a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity to list 83 species of coral under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). After a comprehensive biological review of the different coral species in the petition, NOAA decided to propose 66 of these species as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

Q. When will NOAA make a final decision on the listing status of the proposed coral species?

A decision on this proposed action is due in December 2013.

Q: What are the primary threats to these coral species?

The three most severe threats to corals:

- Rising ocean temperatures
- Ocean acidification
- Coral disease

Overall, NOAA identified 19 threats, including the ecological effects of poor land-use, and destructive fishing practices. Threats to corals are expected to increase over time.

Q. What is the difference between a threatened and endangered species?

The difference between endangered and threatened species is the time scale at which they are at risk of extinction. Under the ESA, an endangered species is a species that is currently at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range; whereas, a threatened species is one that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future. When NOAA Fisheries lists a species as endangered, it automatically receives certain protections under Section 9 of the ESA, including the prohibition for anyone under the jurisdiction of the U.S. to "take" (e.g., harm, injure, kill, capture, etc) the species. When a species is listed as threatened, those same

protections are not automatically transferred to the species. In accordance with 4(d) of the ESA, NMFS may propose and publish a special rule to issue protective regulations and exceptions that it finds necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of a threatened species. These special rules may be referred to as 4(d) rules.

Q: How could corals be in danger of extinction if there are so many of them?

Although in some parts of the world it may appear that corals are still plentiful, coral reefs world-wide have declined significantly. For example, some individual coral species have declined by up to 98% of their former abundances. Further, there are many threats facing corals that are severe and likely increasing.

Q: Aren't we already protecting corals and coral reefs in the United States?

Yes. There are many federal, state, territorial, county, and other laws that directly and indirectly protect corals and coral reefs. However, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is a law that affords unique protections to species once they have reached a threshold of being in danger of extinction.

Q. Will I still be allowed to recreate on or near coral reefs if the species are ultimately listed under the ESA?

Yes, as long as it doesn't harm or injure a listed coral species. A final listing does not automatically restrict recreational activities like fishing, swimming, or diving, etc. Rather, it only prohibits harm or injury of an endangered species.

Q. Will fishing be banned on coral reefs?

No, as long as it doesn't harm or injure a listed coral species. A final listing does not automatically ban fishing activities on or around coral reefs. Rather, it only prohibits harm or injury of an endangered species.

Q. How can I submit comments?

- **In person**
  Provide verbal testimony at this hearing or submit a comment card
- **Online**
  Go to www.regulations.gov and enter 0648-XT12 **or** NOAA-NMFS-2010-0036 into the keyword search
- **By Mail**
  Mail comment card and/or any other supporting documents to
  NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office
  1601 Kapiolani Blvd., Ste. 1110
  Honolulu, HI 96814
  Attn: Listing corals under the Endangered Species Act

For more information visit:
www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_coral.html#submit_comments

Declining Coral Populations

Coral reefs world-wide have declined significantly due to a variety of factors ranging from ocean warming to land-based pollution.

Threats to Corals

The three most severe threats:

- Rising ocean temperatures
- Ocean acidification
- Coral Disease

Overall, NOAA identified 19 threats, including ecological effects of fishing and poor land-use practices. It's likely that threats to coral will increase over time.

Impact of Coral Loss

When corals are degraded or destroyed, losses include: reduced shoreline protection; loss of habitat for a variety of species, including commercially important fish; and lost jobs and business through tourism and recreation.

corals