

APPENDIX N. CORALS LISTING

This appendix contains a copy of the NOAA Fisheries' Corals Listing press release dated August 27, 2014 and the NOAA Fisheries' Fact Sheet.

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NOAA Lists 20 New Corals as Threatened Under the Endangered Species Act



Orbicella faveolata

In total, 22 species of coral are now protected under the Endangered Species Act, including the two corals (elkhorn and staghorn) listed as threatened in 2006. Fifteen of the newly listed species occur in the Indo-Pacific and five in the Caribbean (see table on reverse for details). None are found in Hawaii.

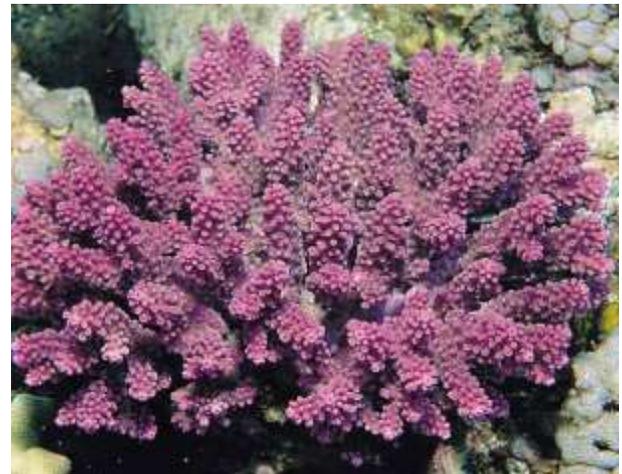
Protecting and conserving biologically diverse coral reefs is essential. The Endangered Species Act gives us some important tools to conserve and recover those corals most in need of protection. The final decision to list these 20 corals is a result of the most extensive rulemaking ever undertaken by NOAA. The amount of scientific information sought, obtained, and analyzed was unprecedented. This information included general reef-building coral biology, habitat characteristics and threats, as well as species-specific spatial, demographic, and other information for the individual coral species in the final rule.

The final decision is a significant change from the proposed rule in November 2012, which proposed listing 66 species (a mix of threatened and endangered). We changed our determinations for many of the species for two general reasons:

- We received and gathered new general and species specific information.
- Public comments helped us refine the way we apply all the available information to determine vulnerability to extinction of each species considered.

What happens next?

- There are currently no prohibitions relating to individual conduct, except for those related to the two previously listed elkhorn and staghorn corals in the Caribbean.
- We will consult with federal agencies on actions that they execute, fund, or authorize that “may affect” listed corals to ensure the action does not jeopardize the continued existence of these corals.
- In the future, we may also identify specific regulations for the conservation of these *threatened* species, because ESA prohibitions against “take” are not automatically applied as they are for species listed as *endangered*.
- We will continue to work with communities to help them understand how the agency’s decision may or may not affect them. The tools available under the Endangered Species Act are sufficiently flexible so that they can be used partnership with coastal jurisdictions, in a manner that will allow activity to move forward in a way that does not jeopardize listed coral.
- We will now work with partners on mitigation measures and recovery strategies for the newly listed corals, building from approaches that have shown success elsewhere.



Acropora globiceps

Threatened Corals	Currently Known in These U.S. Geographic Areas			
	Florida - Atlantic	Puerto Rico	U.S. Virgin Islands	Gulf of Mexico
Caribbean Waters				
<i>Acropora cervicornis (Staghorn)*</i>	X	X	X	
<i>Acropora palmata (Elkhorn)*</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Mycetophyllia ferox</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Dendrogyra cylindrus</i>	X	X	X	
<i>Orbicella annularis</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Orbicella faveolata</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Orbicella franksi</i>	X	X	X	X
Pacific Waters	Guam	Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands	Pacific Remote Island Areas	American Samoa
<i>Acropora globiceps</i>	X	X	X	X
<i>Acropora jacquelineae</i>				X
<i>Acropora lokani</i>				
<i>Acropora pharaonis</i>				
<i>Acropora retusa</i>	X		X	X
<i>Acropora rudis</i>				X
<i>Acropora speciosa</i>			X	X
<i>Acropora tenella</i>				
<i>Anacropora spinosa</i>				
<i>Euphyllia paradivisa</i>				X
<i>Isopora crateriformis</i>				X
<i>Montipora australiensis</i>				
<i>Pavona diffluens</i>	X	X		X
<i>Porites napopora</i>				
<i>Seriatopora aculeata</i>	X			

* Listed as threatened in 2006

About Coral Reefs

Coral reefs are critical to the health of marine ecosystems and they face severe threats. Coral reefs world-wide have declined significantly—some individual species have declined by up to 90 percent. Healthy coral reefs provide shoreline protection for coastal communities and habitat for a variety of species, including commercially important fish. These benefits are lost when corals are degraded.

As part of this rule-making process, NOAA identified a number of threats to coral ecosystems, some of the most serious of which are: impacts related to climate change (rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification, and disease), ecological effects of fishing, and poor land-use practices.

For more information—www.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2014/08/corals_listing.html



Contact: Connie Barclay/Jennie Lyons
301-427-8029/8013
Kim Amendola, SE Region
727-403-6533
Wende Goo, Pacific Islands Region
808-725-5020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 27, 2014

NOAA lists 20 coral species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act

NOAA announced today it will afford Endangered Species Act protections to 20 coral species. All 20 species will be listed as threatened, none as endangered. Fifteen of the newly listed species occur in the Indo-Pacific and five in the Caribbean.

“Coral reefs are one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems on earth, providing habitat for many marine species. Protecting and conserving these biologically rich ecosystems is essential, and the Endangered Species Act gives us the tools to conserve and recover those corals most in need of protection,” commented Eileen Sobeck, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “The final decision is a result of the most extensive rulemaking ever undertaken by NOAA. The amount of scientific information sought, obtained and analyzed was unprecedented.”

Today’s announcement is a significant change from the proposed rule in November 2012. Since that time, many new scientific papers on climate change and coral habitat, distribution and abundance were published so that NOAA was able to consider and incorporate new information into the final decision. NOAA also considered extensive public comments as part of the final rule making. The new information provided after the proposed rule was published strengthened the body of species-specific information available to NOAA for its final determination. The new information also improved the agency’s understanding of coral habitat diversity, abundance, distribution and species-specific exposure to threats and their relative vulnerability or resilience.

“We want to thank our stakeholders and partners for their strong participation at each step of this process, and we look forward to working with the states, territories, commonwealths, local governments and all our stakeholders and partners to conserve these coral species and ensure they remain for future generations to enjoy,” said Sobeck.

NOAA will continue to work with communities to help them understand how the agency’s decision may or may not affect them. The tools available under the Endangered Species Act are sufficiently flexible so that they can be used for partnerships with coastal jurisdictions, in a manner that will allow activity to move forward in a way that does not jeopardize listed coral. Currently no prohibitions exist relating to the newly listed species.

Coral reefs are critical to the health of marine ecosystems, and they face severe threats. Coral reefs world-wide have declined significantly—some individual species have declined by at least 90 percent. Healthy coral reefs provide shoreline protection for coastal communities and habitat for a variety of species, including commercially important fish. These benefits are lost when corals are degraded.

As part of this rule-making process, NOAA identified a number of threats to coral ecosystems. Some of the most serious threats include: impacts related to climate change (rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification and disease), ecological effects of fishing, and poor land-use practices.

NOAA will work with partners on mitigation measures and recovery plans for the newly listed corals. These will likely include approaches that have shown success elsewhere, such as watershed management, to address land-based sediment pollution in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Hawaii, and restoration efforts in the Southeast where NOAA and partners are transplanting corals grown in nurseries to help recover degraded reefs.

More information about the final rule and rule-making process can be found here:
www.fisheries.noaa.gov/stories/2014/08/corals_listing.html

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NOAA): <https://www.facebook.com/NOAA>, [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).