

ESA Five-Year Reviews for Salmon & Steelhead in NOAA Fisheries Service Southwest Region (California)

Question & Answers/August 2011

What is a five-year review?

Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires NOAA Fisheries to conduct a review of *listed species* at least once every five years. Based on these reviews, we determine whether a species should be delisted, or reclassified from endangered to threatened or from threatened to endangered.

Which species is NOAA Fisheries SWR evaluating as part of its five-year review?

NOAA Fisheries' Southwest Region evaluated five Pacific salmon species evolutionary significant units (ESUs) and one steelhead distinct population segment (DPS) in California. Specifically we completed reviews for Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon, Central Valley spring-run Chinook, Central Valley steelhead, Central California Coast coho salmon, Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon, and California Coastal Chinook salmon. We are continuing to work on a 5-year review for four coastal steelhead DPSs.

What are the reviews' findings?

After considering the best available information, the SWR has concluded that each of these species retain their ESA listing classification. Although many salmon and steelhead populations within these ESUs and DPSs have experienced declines in abundance over the last five years, the comprehensive assessment of their overall status indicates their extinction risk is essentially unchanged since 2005. All the final reports for the SWR may be found at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov/psd/fyr.htm>

What are the causes of the declines?

The declines in salmon and steelhead populations are most likely due to poor ocean conditions and drought. Factors that continue to pose a threat to their survival and recovery include a wide range of activities such as changes in ocean conditions and productivity, drought, and potentially the effects of global climate change.

What are their current listings?

Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon (Endangered)
Central Valley spring-run Chinook (Threatened)
Central Valley steelhead (Threatened)
Central California Coast coho salmon (Endangered)
Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon (Threatened)
California Coastal Chinook salmon (Threatened)

How much money has NOAA Fisheries in the SWR put into salmon restoration in California?

It is extremely difficult to determine the total amount of money dedicated strictly for salmon restoration because funding may come from a variety of sources and overlap other restoration projects. One source of information is the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery (for areas other than the Central Valley) fund report to Congress. The latest report may be found at <http://1.usa.gov/qSUfj2>

With all the money put towards salmon restoration, why aren't we seeing a better increase in salmon numbers?

We would like to have an immediate response to the restoration projects we have been working on. But it takes time for trees to grow, water to cool and for fish to find their way back to historic spawning grounds, among other issues not related to just habitat such as drought and poor ocean conditions. It took time for these species to get in this situation and it will take time for them to improve.

Is NOAA Fisheries going to review the status of the other ESA-listed West Coast salmon and steelhead populations?

Yes. The Northwest Region has reviewed the Oregon and Washington populations. The determinations for these species coincided with the publication of the Southwest Region's review. For information on the Northwest Region's review please see: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/ESA-Salmon-Listings/5-yr-review.cfm>

What is the relationship between a five-year review and a recovery plan?

Recovery plans provide delisting criteria, summaries of species status, descriptions of the threats and limiting factors, site-specific actions, estimates of the time and cost to achieve recovery and research monitoring and evaluation plans. They provide important context for evaluating the status of the species and the listing factors for the five-year reviews. Recovery plans are not regulatory documents and are not the means for making decisions on species status. Recovery plans defer to the five-year reviews or other ESA status reviews as the formal process for considering updated information on the listed species, threats, recovery actions, and protective efforts to determine if a change in listing classification is warranted.