

**SPECIES OF CONCERN:
PROCESS FOR ADDING TO AND REMOVING FROM THE SOC LIST**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) defines a Species of Concern (SOC) as a species that is not being considered actively for listing under the ESA, but for which significant concerns or uncertainties regarding its biological status and/or threats exist (69 FR 19975). All species for which NMFS has potential management authority are eligible to be SOCs. Species of Concern are eligible for funding through the internal NMFS process as well as the [Proactive Species Conservation Grant Program](#). NMFS will consider adding or removing species from the SOC list based on recommendations from NMFS Regional Administrators. The following describes the process that will be followed to promote national consistency and ensure that the best available scientific and commercial information is being used.

HOW TO ADD A SPECIES TO THE SOC LIST:

- 1) The region initiates the evaluation of a species for the SOC list on its own or through other avenues (e.g., public comment, coordination with Science Centers or Fisheries Management Councils, State Agencies, etc). If the species distribution overlaps regional jurisdiction, the region initiating the evaluation should coordinate with the other region and headquarters.
- 2) The region prepares a **draft fact sheet** that includes the rationale for adding a species to the SOC listing (for a template see <http://home.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/programs/concern/>).
- 3) The draft fact sheet is provided to the science center SOC representative, and other experts as appropriate, for review and comment.
- 4) F/PR reviews the draft fact sheet and pertinent literature provided by the region and provides feedback on the draft to the region.
- 5) The region reviews F/PR comments and works with F/PR to make appropriate changes to the draft fact sheet.
- 6) The RA sends a transmittal/decision memo to the F/PR Director, attaching the final draft of the fact sheet, and copies of any additional cited papers or reports not cited in the original draft, and requests that the species be added to the SOC list.
- 7) Based on the information provided, F/PR may either recommend that the F/PR Director make a decision (concur or not concur) or request supplemental documentation from the region as support.
- 8) F/PR Director sends signed decision memo to RA.
- 9) If approved, F/PR adds the species to the SOC list, and prepares final fact sheets for the F/PR website. NMFS SOC representatives and other relevant state governments, councils, and stakeholders are informed as appropriate.

10) F/PR makes a public announcement (website and/or Federal Register notice) to make the public aware of the addition of the species to the SOC list.

11) A species can also be added to the SOC list as a result of a formal Endangered Species Act (ESA) status review when concerns or uncertainties about its status remain and the Decision Memo for the “not warranted” finding recommends the species be added to the Species of Concern list. Addition to the SOC list will be based on the information contained in the status review report and the Federal Register notice announcing the “not warranted” finding – no additional documentation is required. The appropriate regional SOC representative will assist in preparation of fact sheets for the website.

HOW TO REMOVE A SPECIES FROM THE SOC LIST:

The process meant to remove a species from the list requires more stringent criteria in order to provide substantial evidence that the threats and concerns identified when the species was chosen to be an SOC have been mitigated.

1) The region that initially recommended the species for inclusion on the SOC list sends a memo to the F/PR Director, announcing that it will prepare a **draft status report** (for template see <http://home.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/programs/concern/>) to determine whether a species should be removed from the SOC list. The draft status report explains why the species no longer warrants SOC status. All factual information must be cited and copies of cited papers or reports attached.

3) The draft status report is provided to the science center SOC representative, and other experts as appropriate, for review and comment.

4) F/PR reviews the draft status report and pertinent literature provided by the region and provides feedback on the draft to the region.

5) The region reviews F/PR comments on the draft and works with F/PR to make appropriate changes to the draft status report.

6) The RA sends a transmittal/decision memo to the F/PR Director, attaching the final draft of the status report and copies of cited papers or reports not cited in the original draft, and requests that the species be removed from the SOC list.

7) Based on the information provided, F/PR may either recommend that the F/PR Director make a decision (concur or not concur) or request supplemental documentation from the region as support.

8) F/PR Director sends signed decision memo to RA.

9) If approved, F/PR removes the species from the SOC list and uploads the status report to the F/PR website. NMFS SOC representatives and other relevant state governments, councils, and stakeholders are informed as appropriate.

10) F/PR makes a public announcement (website and/or Federal Register notice) to make the public aware of the removal of the species from the SOC list.

11) A species can also be removed from the SOC list as a result of a formal ESA status review provided there are insufficient concerns or uncertainties regarding its status to warrant retention on the SOC list and the Region(s) forward a decision memo requesting SOC removal to F/PR. Removal from the SOC list will be based on the information contained in the status review report – no additional documentation is required.