



NOAA FISHERIES

Protected Resources

The purpose of the Recovery Plan for Elkhorn and Staghorn Corals is to rebuild and assure the long-term viability of elkhorn and staghorn coral populations in the wild, allowing ultimately for the species' removal from the federal list of endangered and threatened species.

The recovery approach has three components:

- Research and monitoring
- Reduction or elimination of threats
- Enhancement of the population by actively putting corals back on the reef

Recovery Plan for Elkhorn and Staghorn Corals

What is a recovery plan?

Recovery plans serve as a road map for species recovery. Recovery plans present criteria that are targets by which to gauge recovery. They also present actions necessary to achieve recovery.

Why is a recovery plan necessary for elkhorn and staghorn coral?

Recovery plans are required by the Endangered Species Act for all species listed as threatened or endangered unless they will not aid in conservation of the species.

What are recovery criteria?

Recovery criteria are the targets by which NOAA Fisheries measures the progress of species recovery. They are required by the Endangered Species Act and must be objective and measurable.

Are staghorn and elkhorn corals listed as threatened or endangered?

Staghorn and elkhorn corals were listed as threatened in 2006. In December 2012, NOAA Fisheries proposed to reclassify them as endangered. In September 2014, NOAA Fisheries decided to maintain them as threatened.

Do all the recovery criteria have to be met to delist the species?

Recovery criteria represent the conditions NOAA Fisheries thinks are necessary to recover the species. Paramount to delisting is assessing the status of the species relative to the Endangered Species Act definition of a threatened or endangered species. Delisting could occur without meeting all of the recovery criteria if the best available information indicated that the species no longer meet the Endangered Species Act definition of endangered or threatened.

Who is responsible for implementing the actions identified in the recovery plan?

Implementation of recovery actions is everyone's responsibility but tends to fall largely on federal, state, and local agencies, and conservation organizations. The recovery plan identifies parties who have the authority, responsibility, or expressed interest to implement each action. However, recovery plans are not regulatory and do not require the identified parties to implement the actions or to secure funding for implementing the actions. The President's FY16 budget includes dollars for states to assist in local recovery actions for species listed under the Endangered Species Act, including elkhorn and staghorn corals. We are hopeful the final appropriation will reflect our desire to collaborate with states by supporting their conservation programs.

If global threats such as climate change and disease are harming corals, will reducing local threats make a difference for recovery?

Similar to the higher likelihood of getting sick when you are under stress, corals may be more susceptible to and less able to recover from global and regional threats when they are weakened by other stressors. Reduction of local threats such as pollution and physical damage will lessen stress to corals and will help them better cope with global threats such as climate change and disease.

Does this plan include the newly listed corals?

No, a separate recovery planning process will be undertaken for the coral species recently listed in September 2014. Because coral reefs face similar threats across the range, we anticipate many of the actions and costs associated with the recovery of elkhorn and staghorn corals will also benefit the newly listed corals.

For more information:

Website

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/coral/index.html

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