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Critical Habitat

Overview

The [Endangered Species Act \(ESA\)](#) requires the Federal government to designate "critical habitat" for any species it lists under the ESA. Critical habitat is defined as:

1. Specific areas within the geographical area occupied by the species at the time of listing, if they contain physical or biological features essential to conservation, and those features may require special management considerations or protection; and
2. Specific areas outside the geographical area occupied by the species if the agency determines that the area itself is essential for conservation.

Species & Critical Habitats

(All links below are PDF files.)

Please note that the critical habitat maps provided here are for illustrative purposes **only**. Textual descriptions of critical habitats, which are provided in the associated *Federal Register* notices (see below), are the definitive sources for determining critical habitat boundaries.

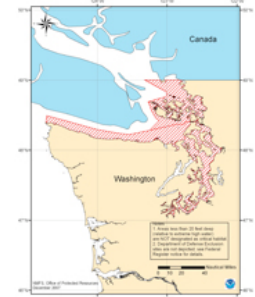
- ▣ [Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to Designate Critical Habitat for Cook Inlet Beluga Whales](#) [pdf]

Marine Mammals

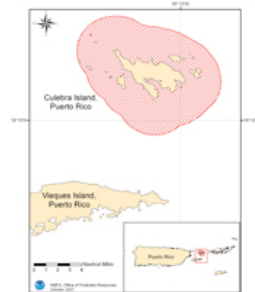
Map	Year	Federal Register
Proposed Beluga Whale (Cook Inlet)	2009	74 FR 63080
Hawaiian Monk Seal	1988, 1986	53 FR 18988 , 51 FR 16047
Killer Whale (Southern Resident)	2006	71 FR 69054
North Pacific Right Whale	2008, 2006	73 FR 19000 , 71 FR 38277
Steller Sea Lion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▣ Alaska ▣ California-Oregon 	1993	58 FR 45269

Sea Turtles

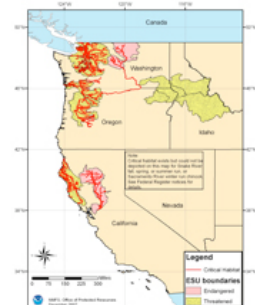
Map	Year	Federal Register
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Killer Whale (Southern Residents)
Northwest U.S.

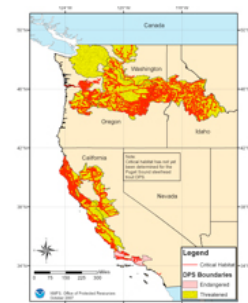


Green Turtle
Culebra Island, Puerto Rico



Chinook Salmon
California, Oregon, Washington

Green Turtle	1998	63 FR 46693
Hawksbill Turtle	1998	63 FR 46693
Leatherback Turtle	1979	44 FR 17710
Proposed Leatherback Turtle (areas of CA and WA) *Public Comment Period Extended Until 04/23/2010	2010	75 FR 319



Steelhead Trout
California, Oregon,
Washington, Idaho

Marine and Anadromous Fishes

Map	Year	Federal Register
Atlantic Salmon	2009	74 FR 29300
Chinook Salmon (multiple ESUs*)	1993- 2005	various
Chum Salmon (multiple ESUs*)	2005	70 FR 52630
Coho Salmon (multiple ESUs*)	1999- 2008	64 FR 24049 73 FR 7816
Green Sturgeon (Southern DPS*)	2009	74 FR 52300
Gulf Sturgeon	2003	68 FR 13370
Sockeye Salmon (multiple ESUs*)	1993- 2005	various
Smalltooth Sawfish	2009	74 FR 45353
Steelhead Trout (multiple DPSs*)	2005	70 FR 52630

*Under the ESA, "species" includes subspecies, or, for vertebrates only, "[distinct population segments \(DPSs\)](#)". Pacific salmon are listed as "[evolutionarily significant units \(ESUs\)](#)", which are essentially equivalent to DPSs for the purpose of the ESA.

Marine Plants & Invertebrates

Map	Year	Federal Register
Elkhorn Coral	2008	73 FR 72210
Staghorn Coral	2008	73 FR 72210
Johnson's seagrass	2000	65 FR 17786

Critical Habitat Designations

Critical habitat designations must be based on the best scientific information available, in an open public process, within specific timeframes.

A critical habitat designation does not set up a preserve or refuge. It applies only when Federal funding, permits, or projects are involved. Under Section 7 of the ESA, all Federal agencies must ensure that any actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species, or destroy or adversely modify its designated critical habitat.

Critical habitat requirements do not apply to citizens engaged in activities on private land that do not involve a Federal agency.

Before designating critical habitat, careful consideration must be given to the economic impacts, impacts on national security, and other relevant impacts. The Secretary of Commerce may exclude an area from critical habitat if the benefits of exclusion outweigh the benefits of designation, unless excluding the area will result in the extinction of the species concerned.

More Info

[Code of Federal Regulations: 50 CFR 226 - Designated Critical Habitat](#) [pdf]
[Geographic Information Systems \(GIS\) Data on Critical Habitat](#)



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