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

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 below). 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 in 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.



Orbicella faveolata.

Materials and Resources

- [Final Rule \(as delivered\)—08/27/14](#)
- [Final Corals Listing Fact Sheet \(PDF\)](#)
- [Final Corals Press Release \(PDF\)](#)
- [November 2012 Proposed Corals Listing](#)
- [Corals Listed Under the ESA](#)
- [Scientific Permit Information for Corals](#)



Acropora globiceps.

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Threatened Corals	Currently Known in These U.S. Geographic Areas				
	Caribbean Waters	Florida - Atlantic	Puerto Rico	U.S. Virgin Islands	Gulf of Mexico
<i>Acropora cervicornis</i> (Staghorn)*	X		X	X	
<i>Acropora palmata</i> (Elkhorn)*	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			

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 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 of which are: impacts related to climate change (rising ocean temperatures, ocean acidification, and disease), ecological effects of fishing, and poor land-use practices.

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