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## More help sought for black abalone

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Because the black abalone has suffered decades of population decline, an environmental group is petitioning to have the mollusks put on the endangered species list.

Abalones of all kinds were once thick in the waters off California, including the Channel Islands before a combination of overfishing and disease led the population to crash in the 1990s.

Thursday's petition by [the Center for Biological Diversity](#) is an effort to keep the black abalone populations from slipping even further. The group successfully lobbied to have the white abalone put on the endangered species list, and it became the first marine invertebrate ever to receive that classification.

"Most species protected under the Endangered Species Act are either stable or increasing and it's the most effective tool we have," said [Brendan Cummings, ocean director for the group](#). "For a species like the black abalone, headed toward extinction, it appears to be the answer."

Black abalone can not be harvested now, but, [Cummings said](#), the listing would add a layer of protection for the shallow-water mollusks. It could lead to additional funding to study them and could hold polluters accountable for anything put into the water that affects the abalone.

Kate Faulkner, chief of resources management for Channel Islands National Park, said the listing doesn't always guarantee funding but does give a species a certain cache. She said officials often try other means to help populations rebound besides putting them on the list.

Jim Marshall, a member of the California Abalone Association, said he didn't think it would do much to list the black abalone. The ban on fishing them is enough, he said.

"I think they will be fine if we leave them alone," he said. "But no one can just leave something alone. They have to go in there and try to fix it."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service has 90 days to respond to the petition. The entire process to list a species can take two years if the many hurdles are cleared.

Though there is a growing chorus from some groups to get rid of the Endangered Species Act because they say it is ineffective, [Cummings said](#) he's confident that the list will remain and the black abalone will be on it.

