

## Black abalone could be endangered

Staff report

The National Marine Fisheries Service today announced in the federal register its finding that black abalone (*Haliotis cracheroidii*) may warrant listing as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

This finding comes after a formal petition was filed to list black abalone by the Center for Biological Diversity in December of 2006. NOAA Fisheries' review of the petition found that there is substantial scientific information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. The agency is also requesting information from the public pertaining to this species, including information on what might constitute critical habitat, and recommendations of qualified individuals to evaluate the agency's status review report.

Black abalone is a marine mollusk that once ranged from at least northern California to Southern Baja California. The species was intensely harvested in the 1800's, yielding four million pounds in 1879 alone.

Commercial harvesting was banned in the early 1900's, but resumed again in 1968. In the mid-1980s, black abalone populations were again severely reduced and then subjected to a disease known as Withering Syndrome. The disease is known to have reduced populations of black abalone in the Channel Islands by as much as 90 percent.

NOAA Fisheries will make a determination whether a listing of black abalone is warranted under the ESA by December 27, 2007.