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Officials to consider putting white marlin on endangered list

Associated Press

KEY WEST, Fla. - Federal officials are considering putting the white marlin, a popular Florida Keys sport fish, on the Endangered Species list.

The National Marine Fisheries Service announced the decision Thursday as part of a legal settlement with an environmental group. They will be accepting public comments for the next 60 days. The review could take up to a year.

The review was triggered by a lawsuit filed against the government by **the Center for Biological Diversity** and Turtle Island Restoration Network. The group sued after the agency denied an earlier request to give the white marlin protected status.

"Our goal is not to ban sport fishing," said **Brendan Cummings, a project coordinator with the Center for Biological Diversity**. "We want to protect spawning areas from long-line fishing."

Scientists have said overfishing is threatening the white marlin, but fisherman said the elusive fish is doing fine.

"If a fisherman catches three in a season, he is usually the top angler," Islamorada charter boat Capt. Steve Leopold said. "We are catching the same number of them as we always have."