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## Officials: No Need to Protect Bluefin Tuna Under Species Act

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The Atlantic bluefin tuna, while under pressure from intensive fishing, does not need protection under the Endangered Species Act, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has concluded.

That doesn't mean the species' status as a sustainable fishery is not threatened, of course. There's more on the general situation on Dot Earth. The Center for Biological Diversity, which had used the courts to press for species protection, expressed strong displeasure. Personally, given the big difference between sustaining a fishery and avoiding outright extinction, I see this as another case of trying to deploy the wrong tool for the job.

Here's an excerpt from the news release:

NOAA finds endangered species listing for Atlantic bluefin tuna not warranted. Agency remains concerned; will revisit decision with new science.

After an extensive scientific review, NOAA announced today that Atlantic bluefin tuna currently do not warrant species protection under the Endangered Species Act.

NOAA has committed to revisit this decision by early 2013, when more information will be available about the effects of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill, as well as a new stock assessment from the scientific arm of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the international body charged with the fish's management and conservation.

NOAA is formally designating both the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks of bluefin tuna as "species of concern" under the Endangered Species Act. This places the species on a watchlist for concerns about its status and threats to the species.



An Atlantic bluefin tuna at the dock.

"NOAA is concerned about the status of bluefin tuna, including the potential effects of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill on the western stock of Atlantic bluefin, which spawns in the Gulf of Mexico," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "We will revisit the status of the species in early 2013 when we will have a new stock assessment and information from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment of the oil spill. We will also take action in the interim if new information indicates the need for greater protection."

NOAA's status review, released with today's decision and peer-reviewed by The Center for Independent Experts, indicates that based on the best available information and assuming countries comply with the bluefin tuna fishing quotas established by ICCAT, both the western and eastern Atlantic stocks are not likely to become extinct