

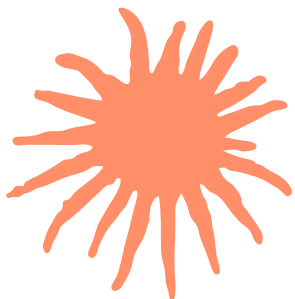


**NOAA
FISHERIES**

Alaska Region

NOAA Fisheries is proposing to list sunflower sea stars (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in response to a 2021 petition from the Center for Biological Diversity. A final listing determination is expected in 2024.

Sunflower sea stars are found along the Pacific coast, from northern Baja California to the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. From 2013-2017 this species was heavily impacted by sea star wasting disease, which dramatically reduced its population numbers (90% in some locations).



Pre-listing Factsheet

Sunflower Sea Stars

What would the new Endangered Species Act (ESA) Listing mean for Alaska Aquaculture?

Population numbers of the sunflower sea star are higher in Alaska than the rest of the proposed listing area, and they are most commonly found in the intertidal zone to 25m deep. There is a high likelihood of aquaculture (and other) projects overlapping with the species. For projects that may affect sunflower sea stars and are not expected to be installed prior to the listing decision, NOAA Fisheries has been strongly encouraging Federal agencies to request a conference consultation on the species to avoid the need to reinitiate consultation, should sunflower sea stars be listed. There are two main consultation pathways Federal agencies can undertake when consulting with NOAA Fisheries under the ESA for the possible sunflower sea star listing: a conference report for actions that are not likely to adversely affect the species, or a formal conference when actions are expected to adversely affect it. Below we walk through each pathway.

Conference Report

- Is a list of advisory conservation measures to avoid adverse effects to the sunflower sea star.
- May contain the following mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects on sunflower sea stars: Diver surveys, ROV surveys, or underwater drop cameras.

Formal Conference

- May take up to the regulatory statute of 135 days to complete once all necessary information has been received.
- Does not require anchor installation surveys.
- Provides coverage under the ESA as long as actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

Questions?

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