



SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

⊖ At-Risk Native Marine Species

What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important?

This indicator will report on the relative risk of extinction of native marine species, both plants and animals. The risk categories are based on such factors as the number and condition of individuals and populations, the area occupied by the species, population trends, and known threats. Degrees of risk to be reported here range from very high (“critically imperiled” species are often found in five or fewer places or have experienced very steep declines) to moderate (“vulnerable” species are often found in fewer than 80 places or have recently experienced widespread declines). Species ranked as “secure” or “apparently secure” would not be reported. The data would also be presented on a regional basis for estuaries and coastal waters out to 200 miles.

Species are valued for a variety of reasons: they provide products, including food, fiber, and genetic materials; they are key elements of ecosystems, which themselves provide valuable goods and services; and many people value them for their intrinsic worth or beauty.

Why Can't This Indicator Be Reported at This Time?

Data are available on the status of only a relatively small number of marine species, including those of commercial interest (see p. 82) and those that are listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. However, these programs do not address the status of a broad cross-section of marine species, as is needed for this indicator.

NatureServe and its member natural heritage programs (see www.natureserve.org) report on the status of about 22,000 U.S. species (see the forest (p. 124), freshwater (p. 144), grasslands and shrublands (p. 168), and core national (p. 52) at-risk species indicators). These programs provide a useful framework for reporting on marine species, but so far their datasets contain information on only a relatively small number of marine species.

There is no technical note for this indicator. The technical note for the core national indicator for at-risk species (p. 214) describes NatureServe’s natural heritage programs.

