

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release July 24, 1979

Inez Connor 202/343-5634

WEST AFRICAN MANATEE LISTED AS A THREATENED SPECIES

The West African manatee (Trichechus senegalensis) has been listed as a threatened species by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The rulemaking, published in the July 20, 1979, Federal Register, opens the way for conservation measures that could benefit the species and result in its restoration.

The West African manatee is known from the coastal waters and adjacent rivers of several countries along the west coast of Africa, from the mouth of the Senegal River southward to the mouth of the Cuanza River in Angola. It is sometimes found quite far inland.

Manatee numbers have been seriously reduced by local hunting for subsistence purposes and other factors which may be having a negative impact on the species. Manatees are susceptible to accidental drowning in fish nets, particularly those set for sharks.

The West African manatee also is protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which restricts importation of the species into the United States. Listing the manatee as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act provides an additional prohibition against importation and also restricts transportation or sale in interstate or foreign commerce. Under each Act, permits are available in certain instances for scientific and zoological display purposes.

The West African manatee was proposed for listing in the May 17, 1978, Federal Register, in response to a petition and data submitted by the Marine Mammal Commission.

x x x

INT 5313-79
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR