

Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 Habitat Management Options

New England Fishery Management Council
Portsmouth, NH
January 31, 2013

Purpose of today's Habitat Committee report

- Review Habitat Committee and Habitat PDT work completed since the last report to the Council in September 2012, specifically:
 - Updates to habitat management areas and measures for those areas
 - Dedicated Habitat Research Area proposals
- Solicit Council feedback on any of this work
- This report complements an update from the Groundfish Committee on CATT work, which will be followed by a discussion of process/timelines

Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 (OA2) milestones

1996

- MSA reauthorized (SFA), added protection of EFH with detailed specific requirements, including five-year updates

1998

- Original habitat OA to all relevant FMP's designates EFH and HAPCs

2004

- January – Initiation of OA2 with detailed goals and objectives
- May 1 – Multispecies Amendment 13 goes into effect – habitat protected areas layered in with groundfish closures

2005

- OA2 split into Phase 1 (EFH designations) and Phase 2 (adverse effects minimization)

2007

- MSA reauthorization added discretionary provisions to protect corals (section 303(b))
- June - Phase 1 essentially complete, Phase 2 begins. Goal 5, Objective D, judged not doable with available methods; decision made to create appropriate tools leading to the SASI approach

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Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 (OA2) milestones, cont.

2008

- Council motion to work with MAFMC towards coral protection during Phase 2 under 303(b) discretionary authority

2010

- June - SASI/LISA essentially complete; development of habitat management areas begins

2011

- February – Final SASI peer review
- April – OA2 expanded to include evaluation and possible modification of groundfish closed areas

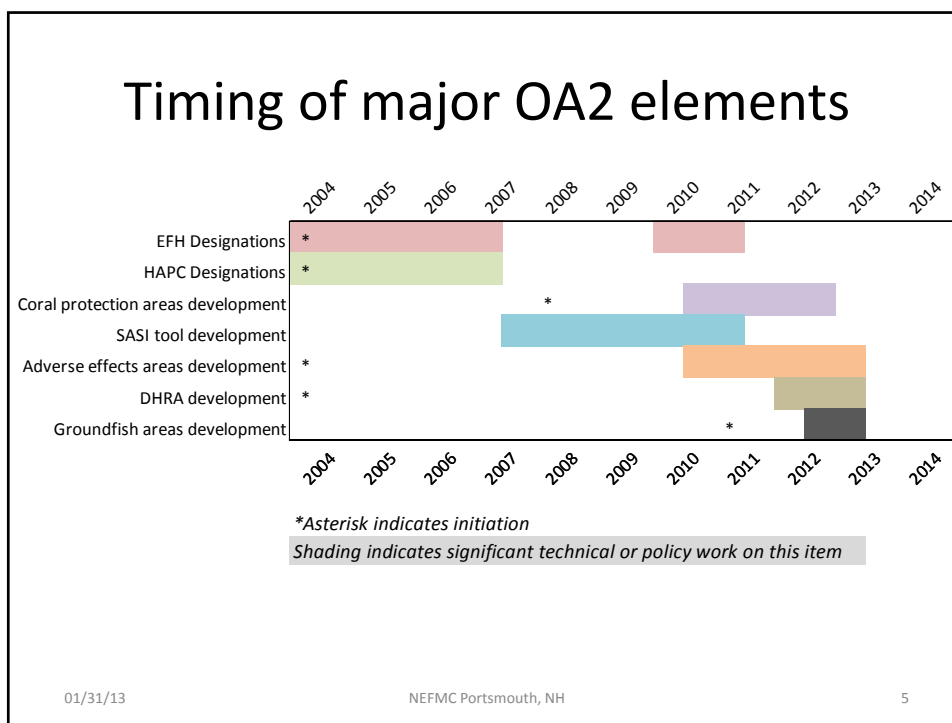
2012

- April – Coral alternatives approved for analysis
- August – Creation of CATT to evaluate groundfish closed areas
- September – Coral alternatives removed from OA2 into a separate Omnibus Action

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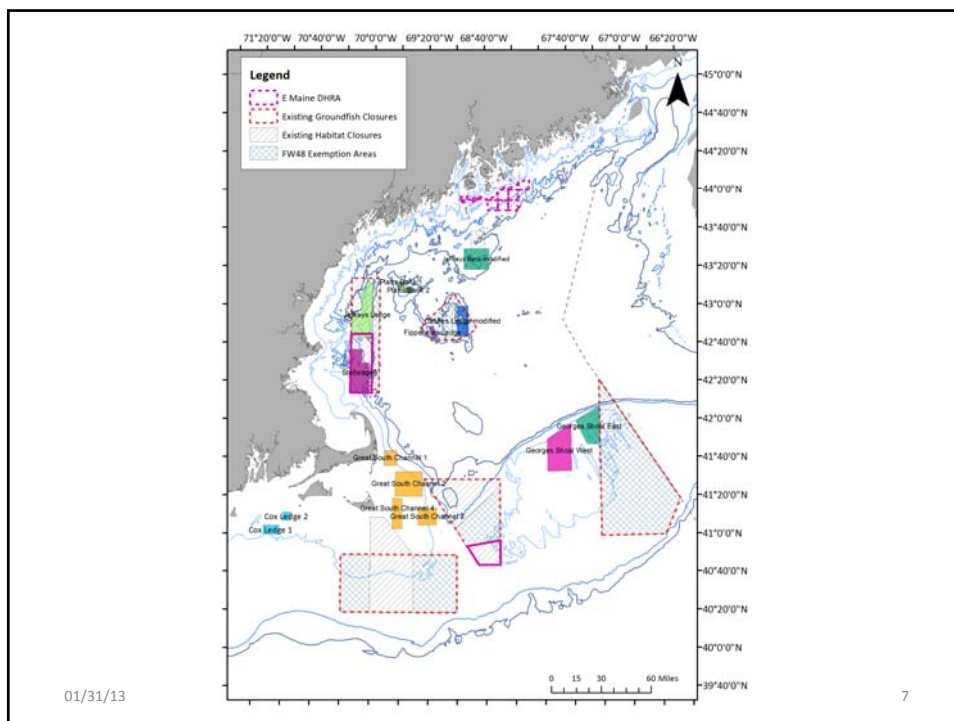
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Individual area-based management options to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on EFH – Habitat Management Areas (HMAs)

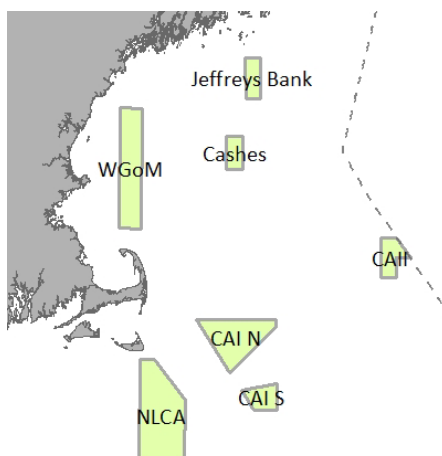
- Developed between summer 2010 and present using Swept Area Seabed Impact model outputs and other sources of information
- Some are based on existing habitat management areas, others in new areas
- Most are proposed as mobile bottom-tending gear closures, except enhanced protection for Ammen Rock area
- Gear modifications for trawls were evaluated by the PDT/AP/Ctte but not moved forward for further evaluation as of 12/04/12
- Will be integrated with groundfish management areas once those areas have been developed and reviewed by the Groundfish Ctte



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Options related to current areas



- **Jeffreys Bank:** maintain or modify
- **Cashes Ledge:** maintain or modify
- **WGOM:** maintain, modify, or eliminate
- **CAII:** maintain or eliminate
- **CAI:** maintain or eliminate
- **NLCA:** maintain or eliminate

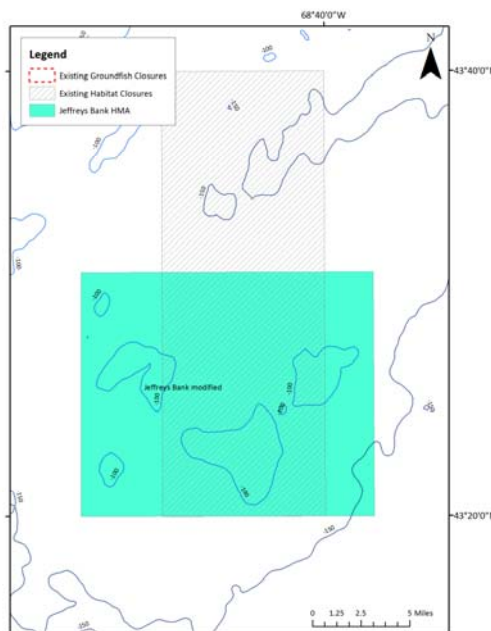
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Jeffreys Bank

- Current habitat area implemented via Amendment 13, or
- Proposed modification designed to encompass the shallowest areas of Jeffreys Bank when cobble and boulder-dominated habitats are most common
- Both areas proposed as mobile bottom tending gear closures
- Have gotten some industry feedback specific to the new area indicating a preference for the existing area



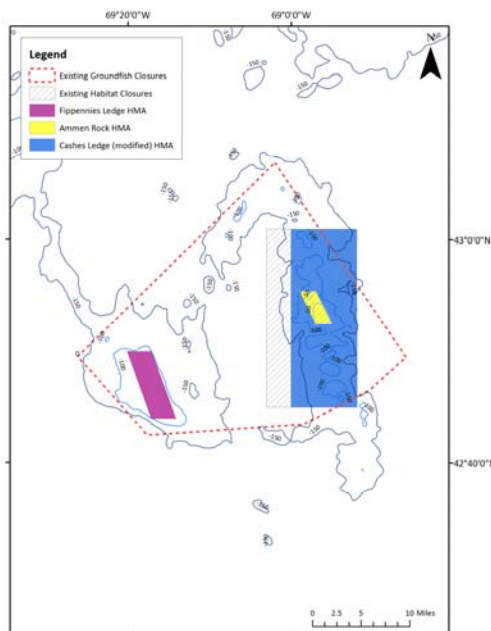
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Cashes Ledge

- Current Cashes Ledge habitat area implemented via Amendment 13, or
- Modified Cashes Ledge area shifts boundary to the east – designed to encompass the majority of the shallower ledge areas and allow fishing access in the deeper western portion
- Fippennies Ledge area designed to focus on portions of the ledge where gravel substrates are present
- Cashes Ledge and Fippennies Ledge proposed as mobile bottom tending gear closures
- Ammen Rock area proposed for enhanced protections – no fishing zone



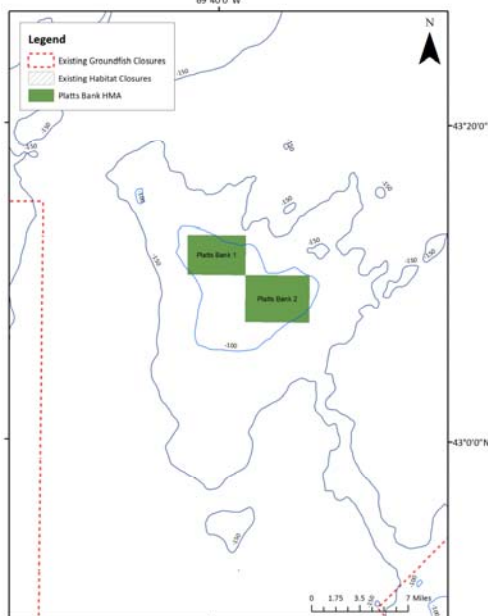
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Platts Bank

- Currently open to fishing
- Platts Bank areas designed to focus on portions of the bank where gravel substrates are present
- Proposed as a mobile bottom tending gear closure



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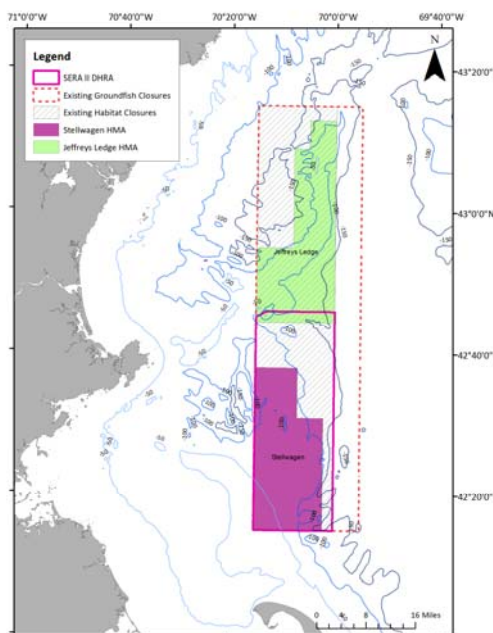
Jeffreys Ledge (green)

- Area designed to focus on shallower ledge habitats and allow fishing access in the deeper, muddier areas in the northwestern portion
- The ledge itself contains gravel dominated habitats more vulnerable to fishing than adjacent soft bottomed habitats
- Proposed as a mobile bottom tending gear closure

Stellwagen (purple)

- Overlaps with Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
- Area designed to encompass gravel dominated habitats more vulnerable to fishing; extent of these habitats documented in multibeam data (extra-SASI)
- Also proposed as a mobile bottom tending gear closure

SERA II (shown in purple outline) is proposed separately as a DHRA



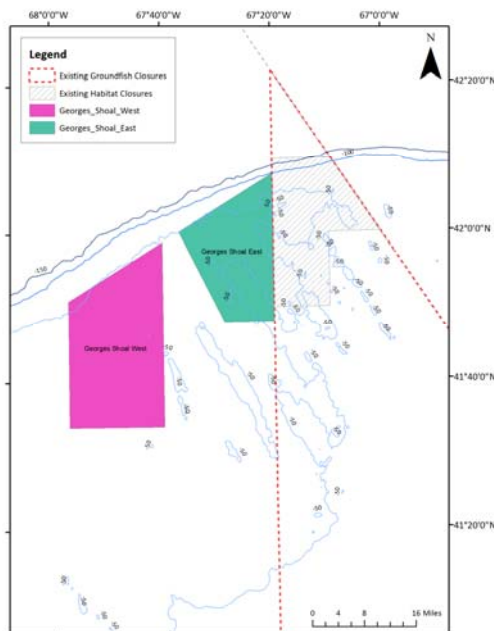
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Georges Shoal

- Currently open to fishing
- Designed to encompass one or more gravel 'hotspots' in and around one of the trawl LISA clusters
- Both areas proposed as mobile bottom tending gear closures



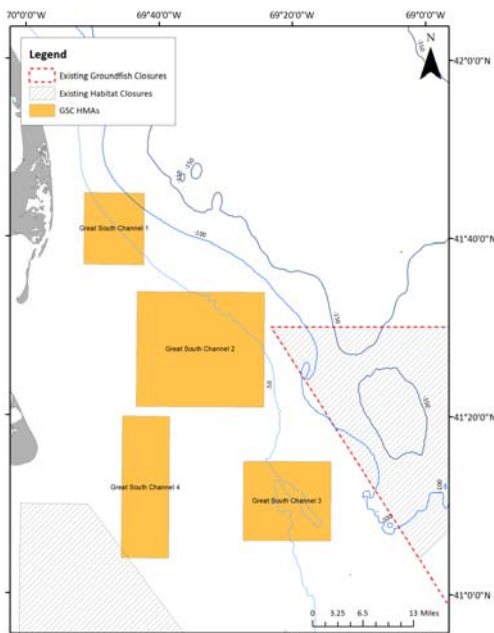
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West of the Great South Channel

- Currently open to fishing
- Designed to encompass one or more gravel 'hotspots' in and around one of the trawl LISA clusters
- All areas proposed as mobile bottom tending gear closures
- Partly due to industry concerns about the overlap of some of these areas with fishing effort, a range of alternate single-area configurations are currently being evaluated and will be reviewed by the Committee at their next meeting
 - Objective is to design a single area that has similar habitat protection value to the four areas



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Cox Ledge

- Currently open to fishing
- Designed to encompass gravel-dominated habitats in and around one of the trawl LISA clusters
- Areas proposed as mobile bottom tending gear closures



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Status of gear modification options

- Committee reviewed possible ground cable gear modifications developed by the Habitat AP with PDT input
 - Measures developed for Georges Shoal, Great South Channel
 - No specific ground cable measures forwarded for other areas
- GS and GSC measures not moved forward for further analysis
- PDT asked to develop a data collection program that would be implemented with OA2 and would facilitate design of gear modification measures to be implemented in future actions
- Committee intent is that gear modification measures in habitat management areas could be implemented via framework

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Individual area-based management options combined into alternatives

Adverse Effects Minimization Alternative 1 (No action)

- Existing habitat areas would remain in place as mobile bottom-tending gear closures

Adverse Effects Minimization Alternative 2

- Remove CAII, CAI, NLCA habitat areas
- Mobile bottom-tending gear closures:
 - Modified Jeffreys Bank, Cashes Ledge, WGOM
 - New areas on Fippennies Ledge, Georges Shoal, W. Great South Channel, and Cox Ledge
- Ammen Rock closed to all fishing

Alternative 3 – TBD subset of Alternative 2

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Next steps for HMAs

- Groundfish Closed Area Technical Team (CATT) completes work to identify management areas to meet groundfish-related objectives
- CATT recommendations go to the Groundfish Committee
- Joint Groundfish/Habitat Committee process to reconcile habitat and groundfish options and identify a range of area-management alternatives for Council approval

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Alternatives to designate Dedicated Habitat Research Areas (DHRAs)

- Research agenda includes four themes: gear impacts, habitat recovery, natural vs. human disturbance, habitat-related productivity
- Research areas would be closed to certain gears as needed with any fishing impacts studies relying on research-directed fishing activities
- Re-evaluation after three years to determine if area is actively being used, and if not, area would sunset
- These areas intended to complement and build on HMA designations and allow for the evaluation of the effectiveness of habitat management areas

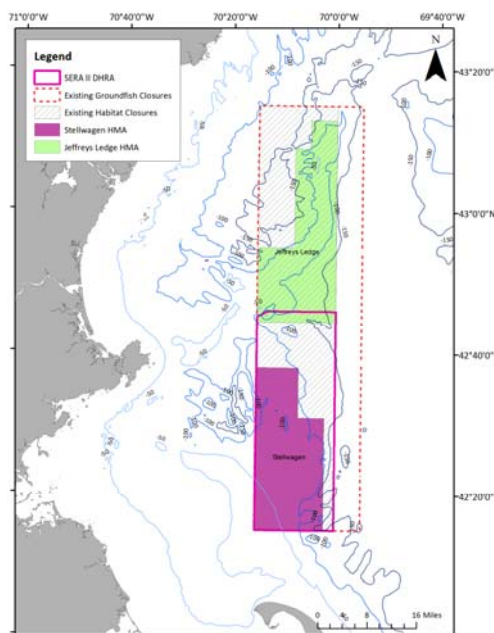
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Sanctuary Ecological Research Area II (SERA II)

- Within existing WGOM habitat closure – encompasses Stellwagen HMA and part of JL HMA
- Nexus to Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
- Multi-stakeholder proposal – SERA concept originated as a Sanctuary proposal and evolved into current design
- Further development will include clarifying goals and objectives specific to this area



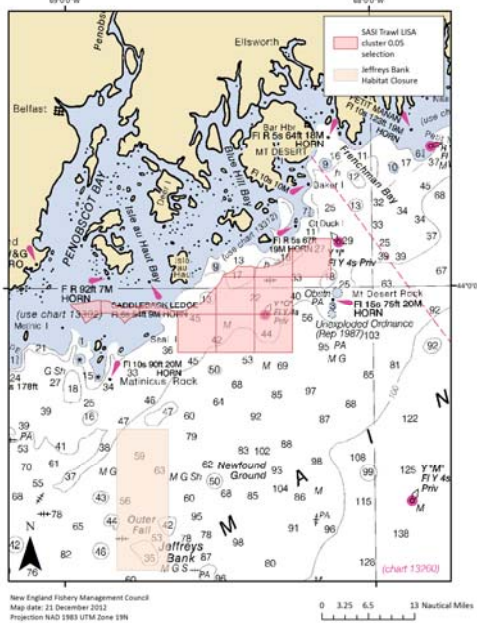
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Eastern Maine DHRA

- Within/adjacent to a cluster habitats highly vulnerable to trawl gears identified by the SASI model
- Focus on links between habitat and groundfish productivity
- Stakeholder proposal
- Exact boundaries being developed by PDT
- Further development will include clarifying goals and objectives specific to this area



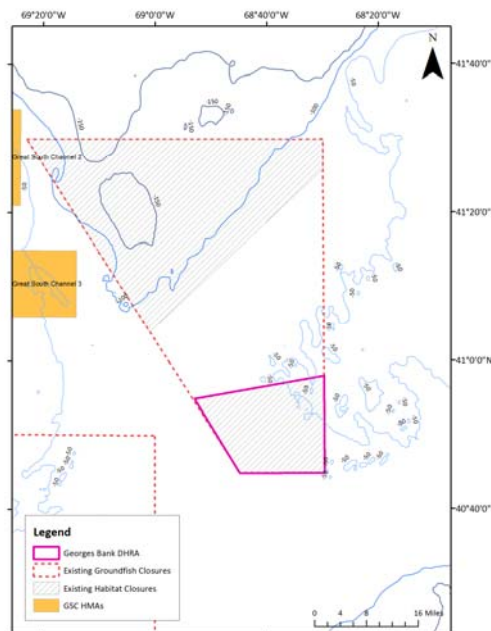
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Georges Bank DHRA

- Within/adjacent to southern part of existing CAI habitat closure
- Focus on scallop productivity issues
- Stakeholder proposal
- Further development will include clarifying goals and objectives specific to this area and evaluating area boundaries



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