



New England Fishery Management Council

50 WATER STREET | NEWBURYPORT, MASSACHUSETTS 01950 | PHONE 978 465 0492 | FAX 978 465 3116
John Pappalardo, *Chairman* | Paul J. Howard, *Executive Director*

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 30, 2010
TO: Habitat Committee
FROM: Michelle Bachman
SUBJECT: Omnibus DEIS sections of interest

The primary documents prepared for the January 6, 2011 Habitat Oversight Committee meeting include a draft version of the Omnibus DEIS (combining phase 1 and phase 2 alternatives in one document), and a summary of the methods used to analyze the EFH closed area options. As the draft DEIS is already lengthy, this memo is intended to draw the Committee's attention to sections of the document most pertinent to the meeting:

Section 3.3 – Management options to minimize adverse effects of fishing on EFH

The options are organized as follows:

3.3.1 Measures for Georges Bank habitat closed areas

- 3.3.1.1 Eliminate CAII habitat closed area**
- 3.3.1.2 Eliminate CAI habitat closed area(s)**
- 3.3.1.3 Eliminate NLCA habitat closed area**

The options in this section were evaluated using the SASI model Z_{net} analysis, as described in the additional analysis document. Results from the analysis document are summarized in the DEIS.

3.3.2 Measures for the WGOM habitat closed area

- 3.3.2.1 Eliminate WGOM habitat closed area**
- 3.3.2.2 Change gear restrictions in WGOM habitat closed area**
- 3.3.2.3 Amend boundaries of WGOM habitat closed area**

Option 3.3.2.1 was evaluated using the SASI model Z_{net} analysis, as described in the additional analysis document. Option 3.3.2.2 was evaluated using the $Z_{realized}$ outputs from the SASI model; note that various interested parties (most recently, ASMFC) have requested that the Council consider allowing shrimp gear in the WGOM habitat closure. Option 3.3.2.3 needs to be further developed by the PDT.

3.3.3 Measures for Georges Bank LISA clusters 5, 6, and 7

- 3.3.3.1 Cluster 5 (Georges Shoals)**
 - 3.3.3.1.1 Close to all mobile bottom-tending gear**
 - 3.3.3.1.2 Close to all trawl gear**
- 3.3.3.2 Cluster 6 (Great South Channel)**
 - 3.3.3.2.1 Close to all mobile bottom-tending gear**
 - 3.3.3.2.2 Close to all trawl gear**
- 3.3.3.3 Cluster 7 (Brown's Ledge)**

- 3.3.3.3.1 Close to all mobile bottom-tending gear**
- 3.3.3.3.2 Close to all trawl gear**

The options in this section were evaluated using the SASI model Z_{net} analysis, as described in the additional analysis document. Methods differ slightly from those used to analyze existing habitat closures.

3.3.4 Gear restriction/closure measures for SBNMS

- 3.3.4.1 Closed to all bottom-tending gear**
- 3.3.4.2 Closed to all mobile bottom-tending gear**
- 3.3.4.3 Closed to selected mobile-bottom tending gear**

These measures need to be further developed and analyzed by the PDT.

3.3.5 Measures for the Georges Bank mortality closures

- 3.3.5.1 No action – all current areas remain closed**
- 3.3.5.2 Open non-spawning areas within mortality closures to fishing year round**
- 3.3.5.3 Open mortality closures year round, with specific seasonal spawning closures**

At the November 2010 meeting, the Council voted against prioritizing a management action that would evaluate the removal of the mortality closures, so these options were not analyzed specifically by the PDT. In particular, identification of groundfish spawning areas would require support from the Groundfish Committee and PDT. However, the potential benefits/impacts to habitat that might result from reopening the various mortality closures can be evaluated using the results in the analysis document.

3.3.6 Measures to reduce adverse effects via gear restrictions

- 3.3.6.1 Implement ground gear maximum sizes in cluster areas 1, 3, and 4**
 - 3.3.6.1.1 12 inch maximum diameter**
 - 3.3.6.1.2 20 inch maximum diameter**
 - 3.3.6.1.3 28 inch maximum diameter**
- 3.3.6.2 Implement ground cable length maximum sizes in cluster areas 1, 3, and 4**
 - 3.3.6.2.1 90 m (50 ftm)**
 - 3.3.6.2.2 150 m (80 ftm)**
 - 3.3.6.2.3 225 m (120 ftm)**

The PDT developed definitions for the various gear components that should be reviewed by the committee at this meeting. Analysis of these options has not yet been completed.

3.3.7 Measures to designate Dedicated Habitat Research Areas

- 3.3.7.1 Create a DHRA in SBNMS**
- 3.3.7.2 Create a DHRA on Cashes Ledge (Ammen Rock)**
- 3.3.7.3 Create a DHRA on Jeffreys Bank (trawl LISA cluster 2)**

The PDT has prepared some brief discussion points on the various areas for the committee’s consideration.

Section 3.4 – Alternatives to protect deep-sea corals

The PDT envisioned that the committee would identify coral zones and then develop appropriate restrictions to protect corals in those zones from fishing impacts. There are at least two possible ways in which these options might be considered. First, the committee might select small/narrowly defined coral

zones, and then implement restrictions on one or more types of fishing throughout the zones in their entirety. Alternatively, the committee might select a broadly defined coral zone (e.g. based on a depth range along the shelf/slope), and then consider subsets of that zone for fishing restrictions using a fishery access area model such as the one implemented by the SAFMC.

The options are organized as follows:

3.4.1 Alternatives to define Deep-Sea Coral Zones

3.4.1.1 Shelf-slope area from 200 m (110 ftm) to the edge of the EEZ

3.4.1.2 Shelf-slope area from 100 m to 2000 m (55 ftm to 1100 ftm)

3.4.1.3 All canyon and seamount HAPCs plus some inter-canyon areas

3.4.1.4 All canyon and seamount HAPCs

3.4.1.5 Canyon and seamount HAPCs with known corals, and neighboring inter-canyon areas

3.4.1.6 Canyon and seamount HAPCs with known corals

3.4.1.7 Existing tilefish GRAs

3.4.1.8 Gulf of Maine coral zones

The appropriateness of these zones in terms of the amount and types of corals they encompass needs to be further evaluated by the PDT, bearing in mind that the coral distribution data area somewhat incomplete and generally indicate presence only. In addition, once one or more alternatives are identified as meriting further consideration by the Committee, the boundaries of the zones will need to be refined according to coral distribution as well as practical/enforceability considerations.

3.4.2 Management measures for deep-sea coral zones

3.4.2.1 Gear restrictions

3.4.2.1.1 Status quo

3.4.2.1.2 Prohibition on mobile bottom tending gears

3.4.2.1.3 Prohibition on all commercial bottom-tending gears

3.4.2.1.4 Prohibition on all commercial fishing gear

3.4.2.1.5 Prohibition on all fishing gear

3.4.2.2 Access areas

The level of protection that might be appropriate will depend on the degree of overlap between particular fishing activities and the coral zones, as well as the likely severity of the impact resulting from the interaction between various types of fishing gears and various species of corals. These options can be further developed once the list of coral zones have been narrowed down.

3.4.3 Research recommendations

3.4.3.1 Fully document all coral catch in NEFSC survey data

3.4.3.2 Fully document all coral bycatch during observed fishing trips

3.4.3.3 Additional focused coral surveys

3.4.3.4 Create coral guide to support collection of data during research trips and fishing trips

These recommendations were developed by the PDT, in light of the data gaps related to coral distributions in the region.