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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*

March 28, 2011

Ms. Jessica Bradley
Renewable Energy Program Specialist
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement
Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs
381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4090
Herndon, VA 20170

RE: Commercial Leasing for Wind Power on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Offshore Massachusetts – Request for Interest (RFI)

Dear Ms. Bradley:

The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has reviewed BOEMRE's Request for Interest (RFI) – Commercial Leasing for Wind Power on the Outer Continental Shelf Offshore Massachusetts and has three major concerns. First, there is a substantial amount of fishing in the RFI area that would very probably be prohibited near wind power structures. Second, the area includes essential fish habitat (EFH) for many Council-managed species and there is a potential for substantial adverse effects on EFH from wind energy projects. Finally, the Council is concerned that the regional approach for ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning through the establishment of regional planning bodies outlined in Executive Order 13547 has not been followed in developing the RFI area.

Fishing activity in RFI area

The RFI area includes active and important fishing grounds for species including but not limited to cod, winter flounder, yellowtail flounder, monkfish, herring and includes extremely valuable grounds for Atlantic sea scallops (see enclosed maps). The area also includes a number of species not managed by the New England Council but that are important to New England and Mid-Atlantic fisheries. It is not possible, however, for the Council to provide detailed data on fishing in the area in the short time frame provided comments; therefore, we recommend that BOEMRE obtain detailed information on species distribution, fishing effort and fishing revenues derived from the RFI area directly from the National Marine Fisheries Service and include this information in all future documents, particularly in relevant NEPA documents. Additionally, although there is an EFH protection area within the RFI area that is currently closed to some fishing, designation of this area is subject to change and it could become a more active fishing area in the future.

Essential Fish Habitat

The Council agrees with the comments of the National Marine Fisheries Service that the RFI area encompasses EFH for a broad range of federally managed species, and that due to potentially substantial adverse effects on EFH from wind energy, projects in the area and their accompanying NEPA documents should include an expanded EFH impact assessment.

Need for a regional approach for ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning

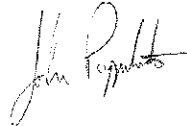
The Council believes that wind energy siting issues should be addressed through the appropriate regional planning bodies to identify competing uses before designating an area for possible wind energy development. At present, the Council has a number of questions including how the RFI area was identified. Could BOEMRE explain the extent to which wind power siting off Southeastern Massachusetts is coordinated with national marine spatial planning initiatives and the degree to which that planning has been and will be transparent?

What approaches were used for identifying the “areas of interest”, minimizing conflicts with and impacts to existing uses and resources and to develop measures for reconciling use conflicts with fisheries? What are BOEMRE’s expectations and intent regarding commercial fishing in wind power sites?

Finally, BOEMRE should formally involve the New England Fishery Management Council in siting initiatives to benefit from the Council’s knowledge of fisheries locations, their importance to the fishing industry and fishery management plan restrictions on fishing activities. We do appreciate that a representative from your agency will attend our April 26-28 Council meeting and look forward to a further exchange of information and comments.

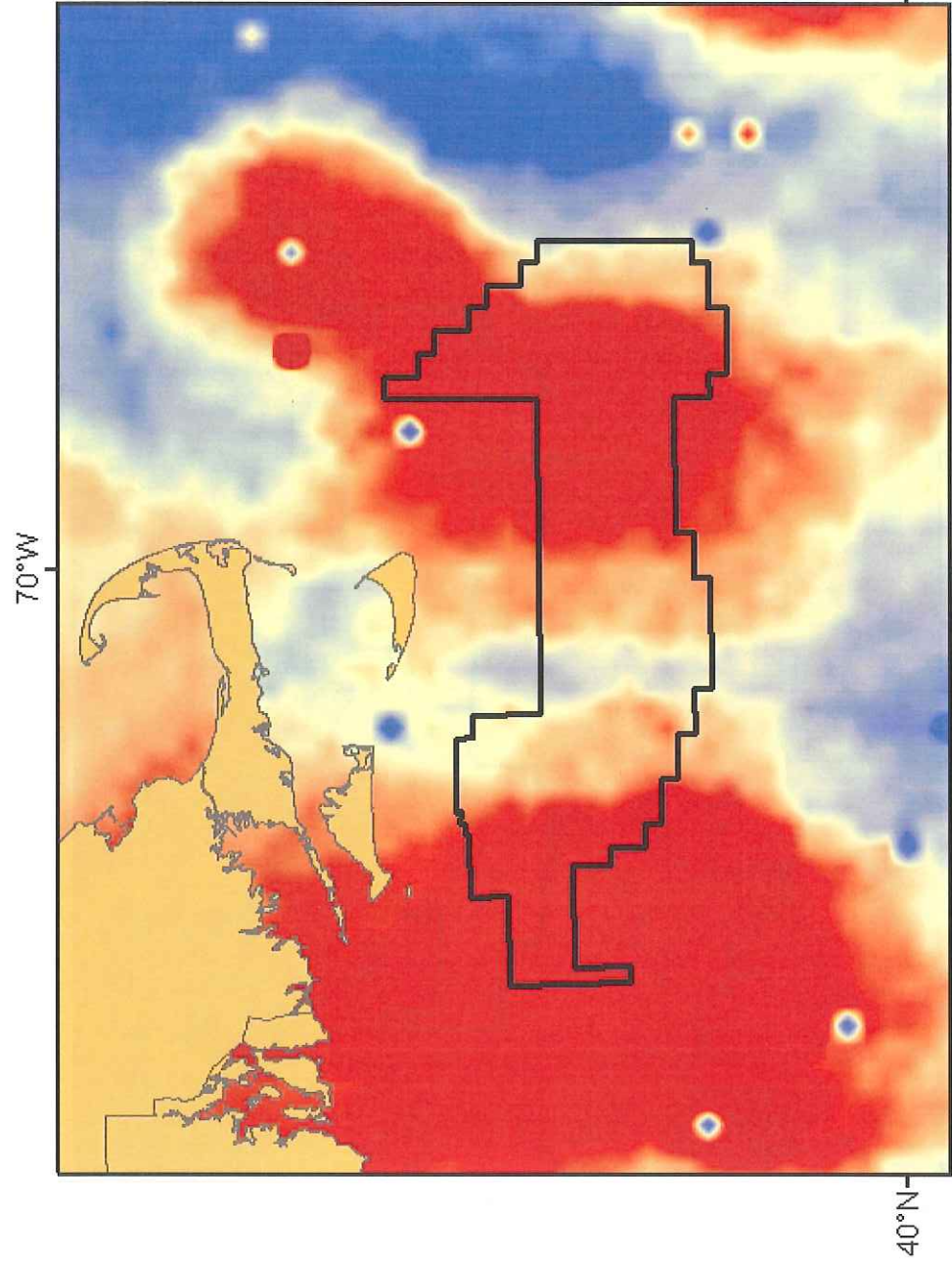
Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, Paul Howard, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



John Pappalardo
Chairman

enclosure



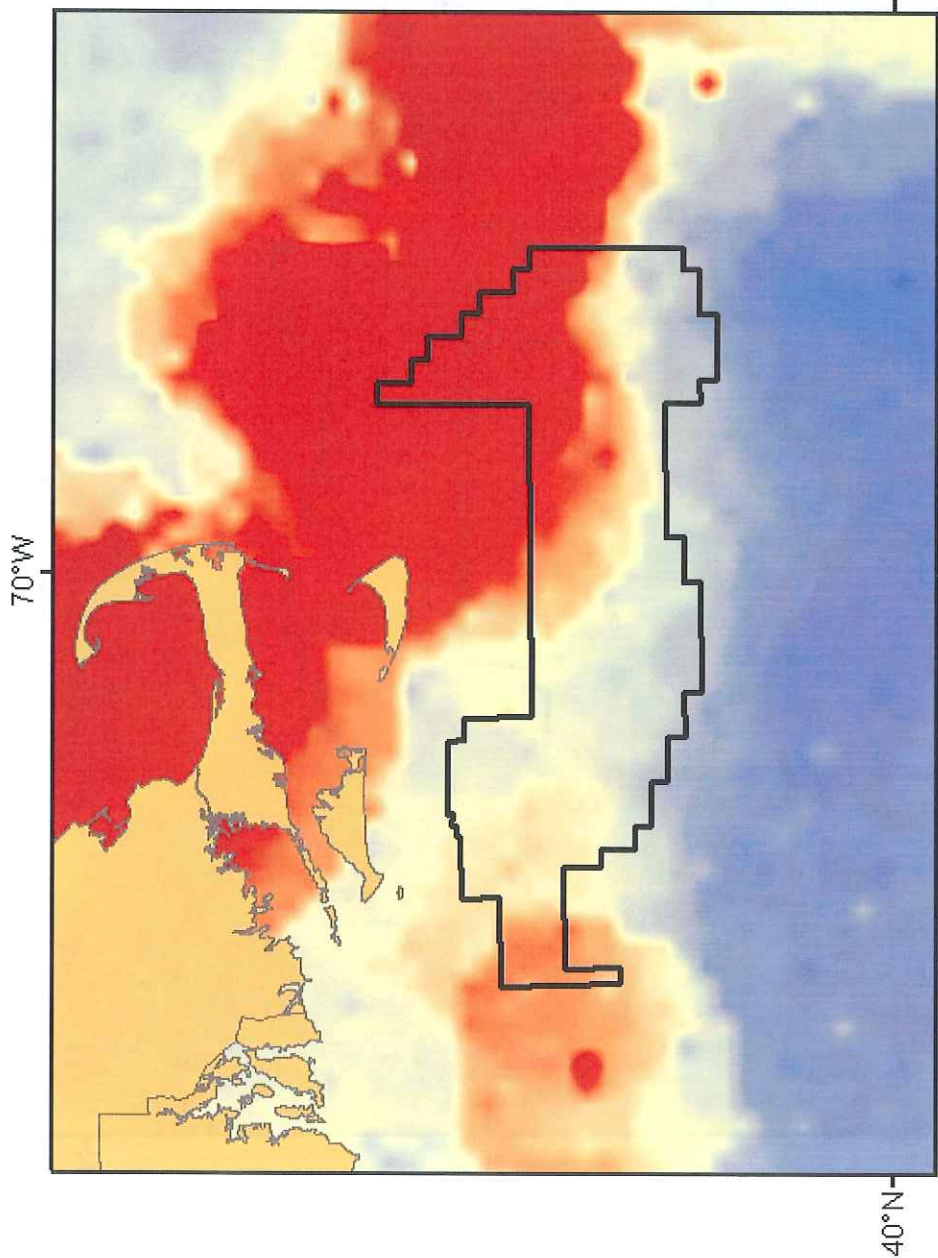
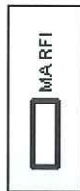
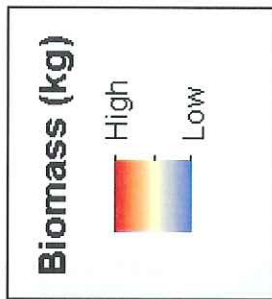
NEFSC Benthic Survey

Species Richness

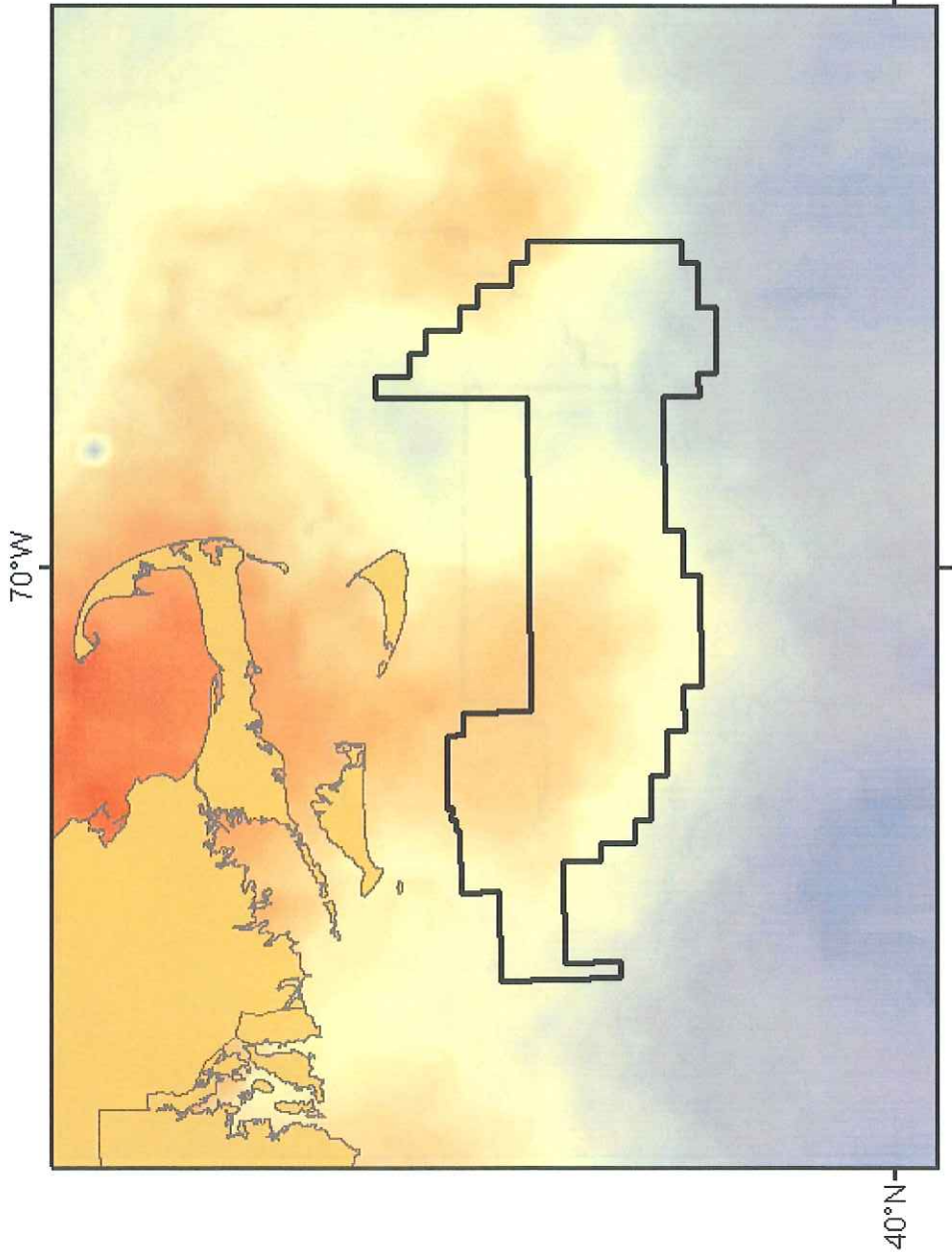
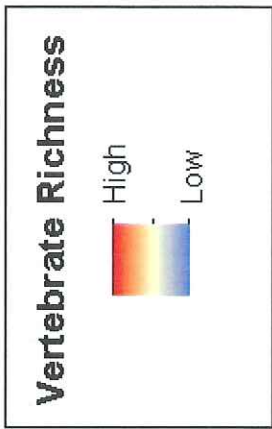
High
Low

MA RFI

NEFSC Autumn Bottom Trawl Survey 2006-2010

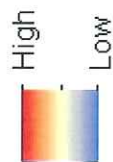


NEFSC Autumn Bottom Trawl Survey 2006-2008

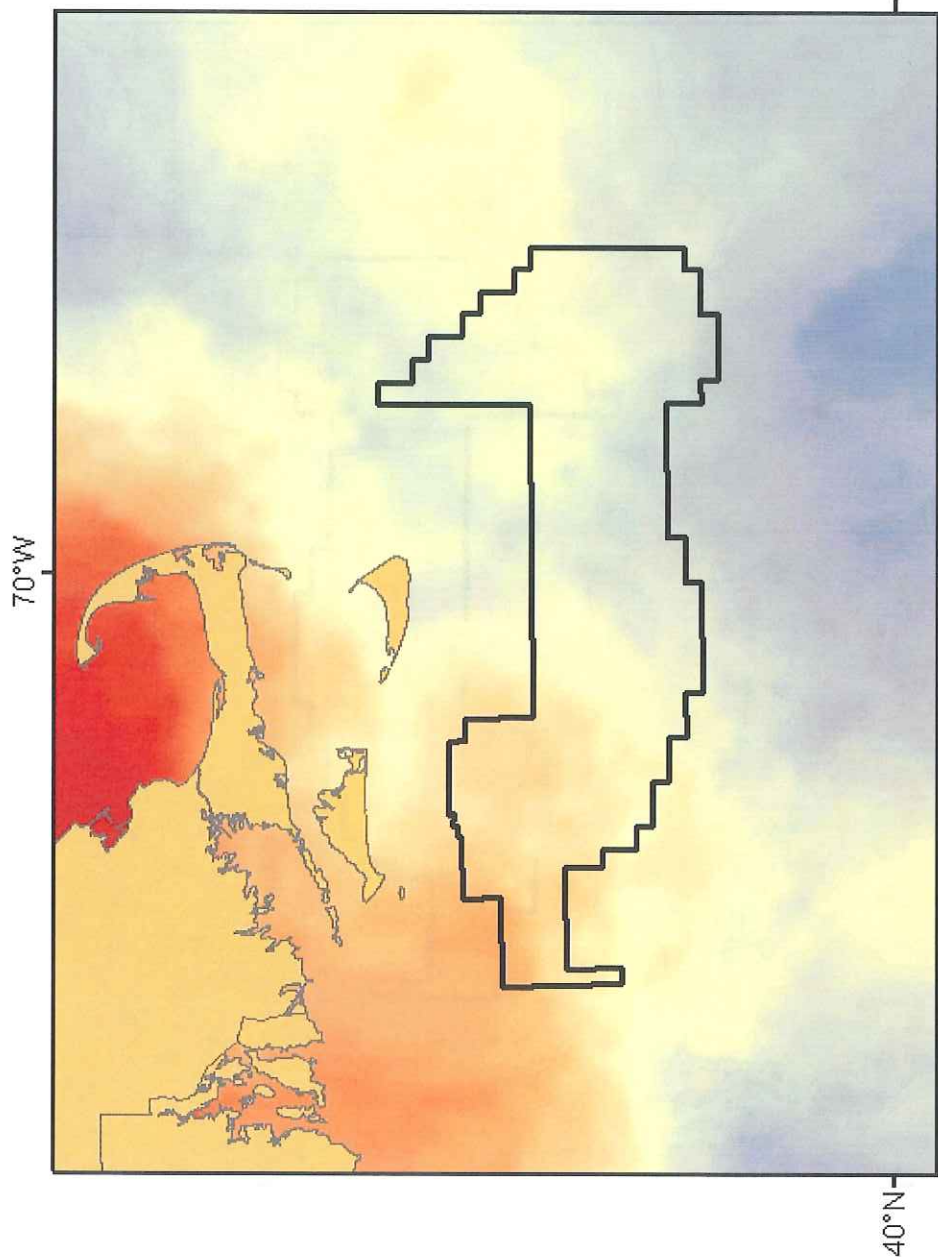


NEFSC Autumn Bottom Trawl Survey 2009-2010

Vertebrate Richness



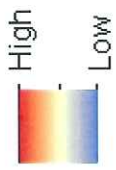
MARFI



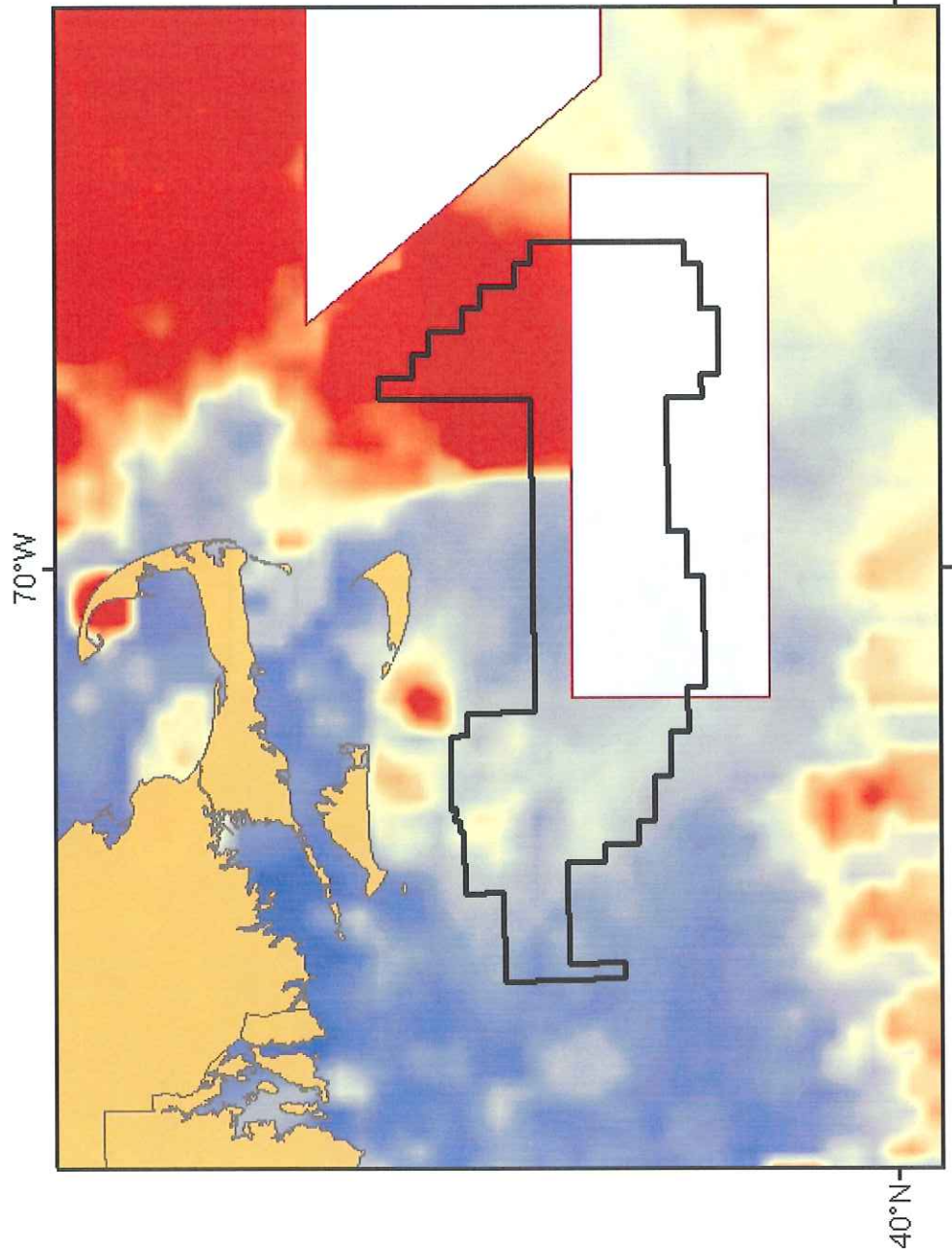
NEFSC Ecosystem Assessment Program

VTR Effort Data 2006-2010 Otter Trawl

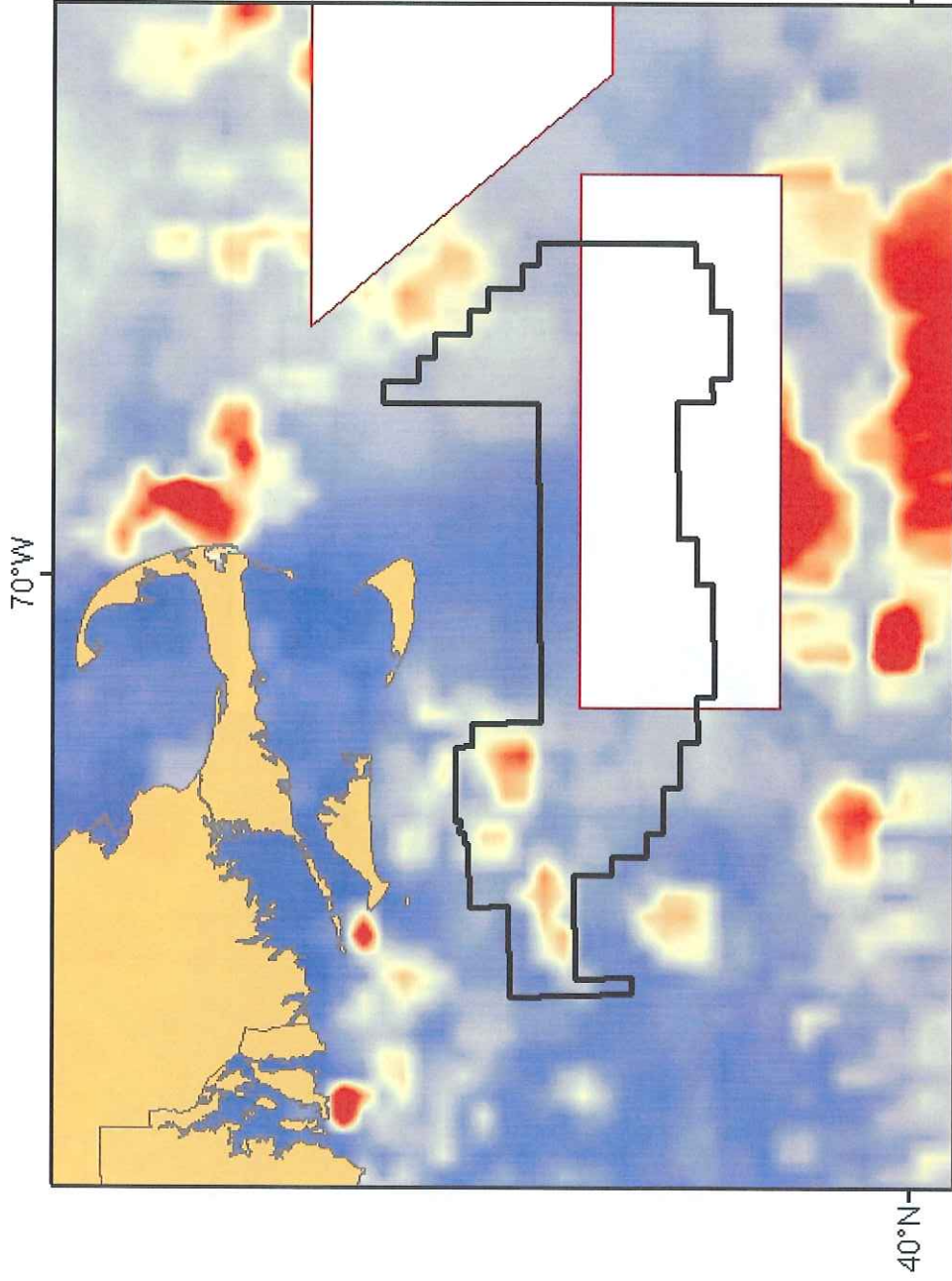
Days Fished



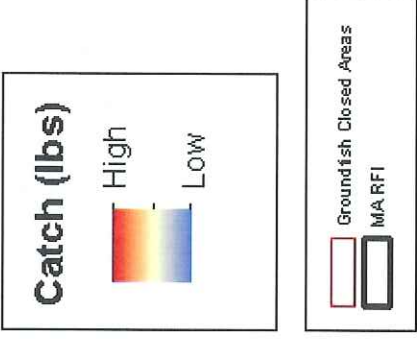
Groundfish Closed Areas
MA RFI

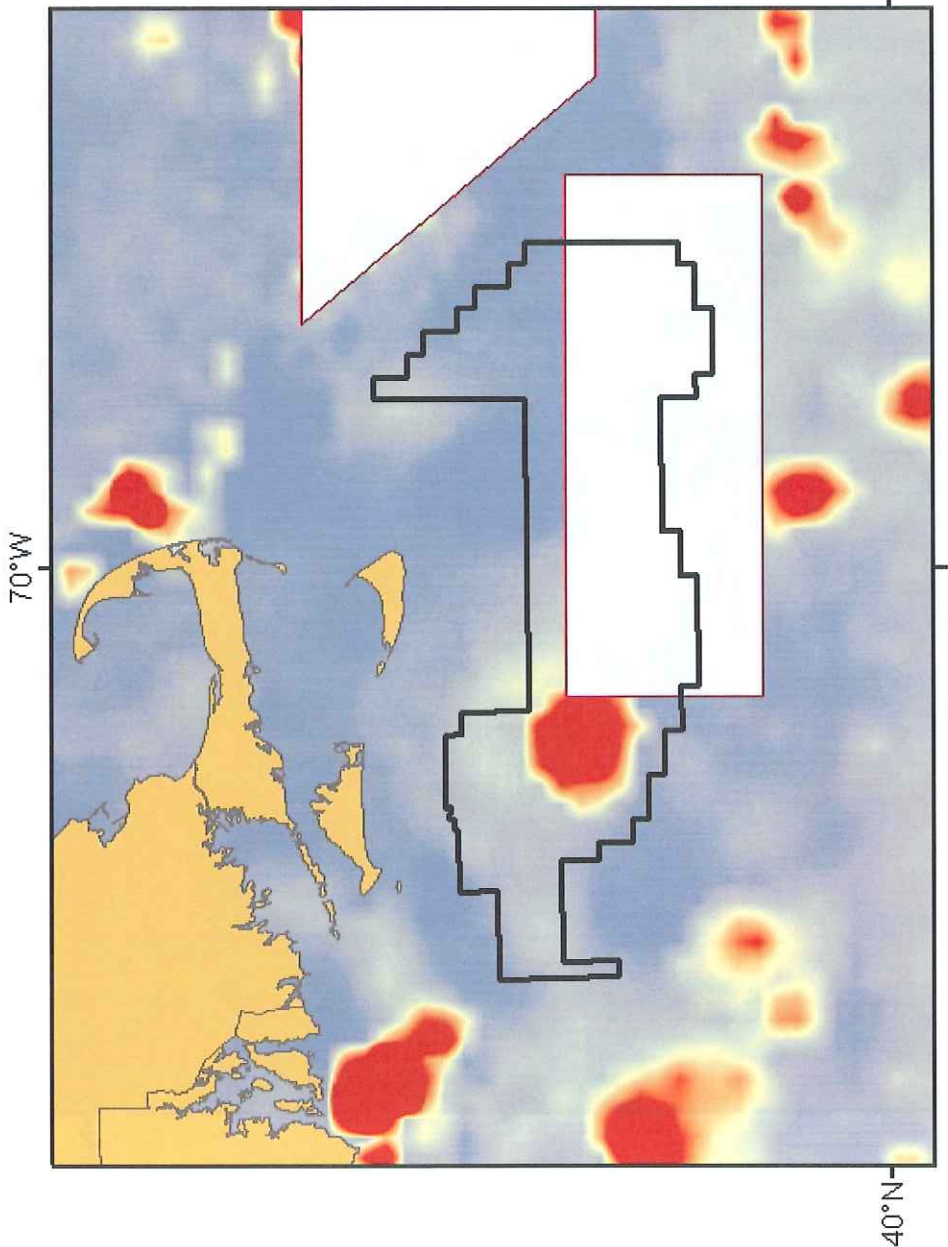


NEFSC Ecosystem Assessment Program

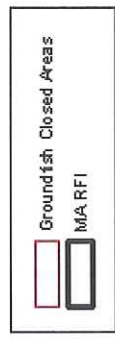
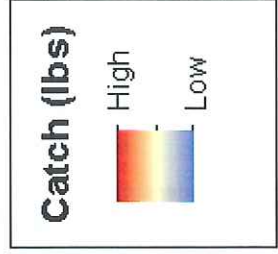


**VTR Catch Data
2006-2010
Otter Trawl**

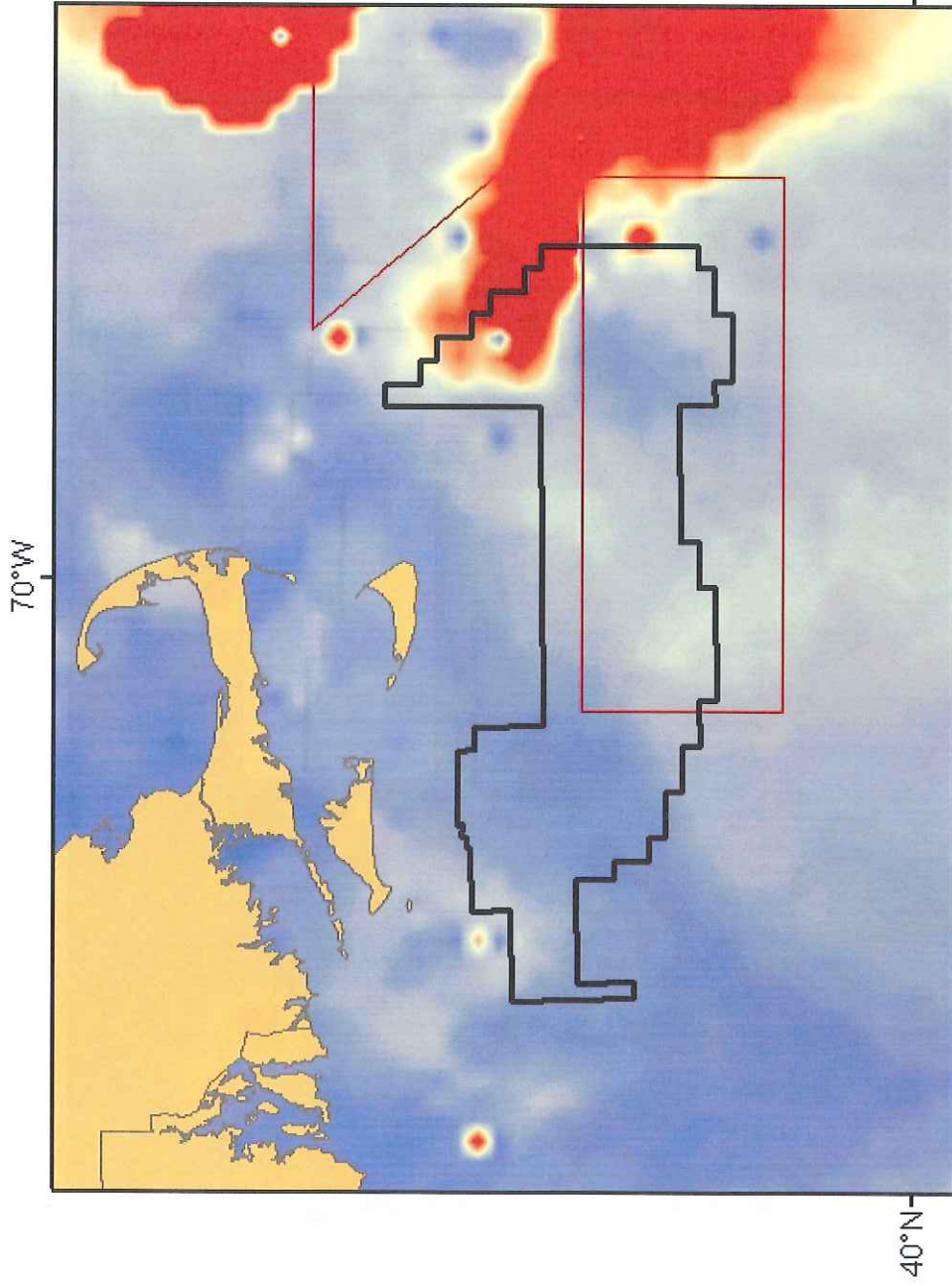
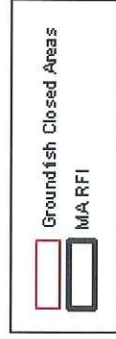
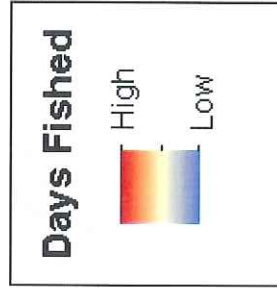




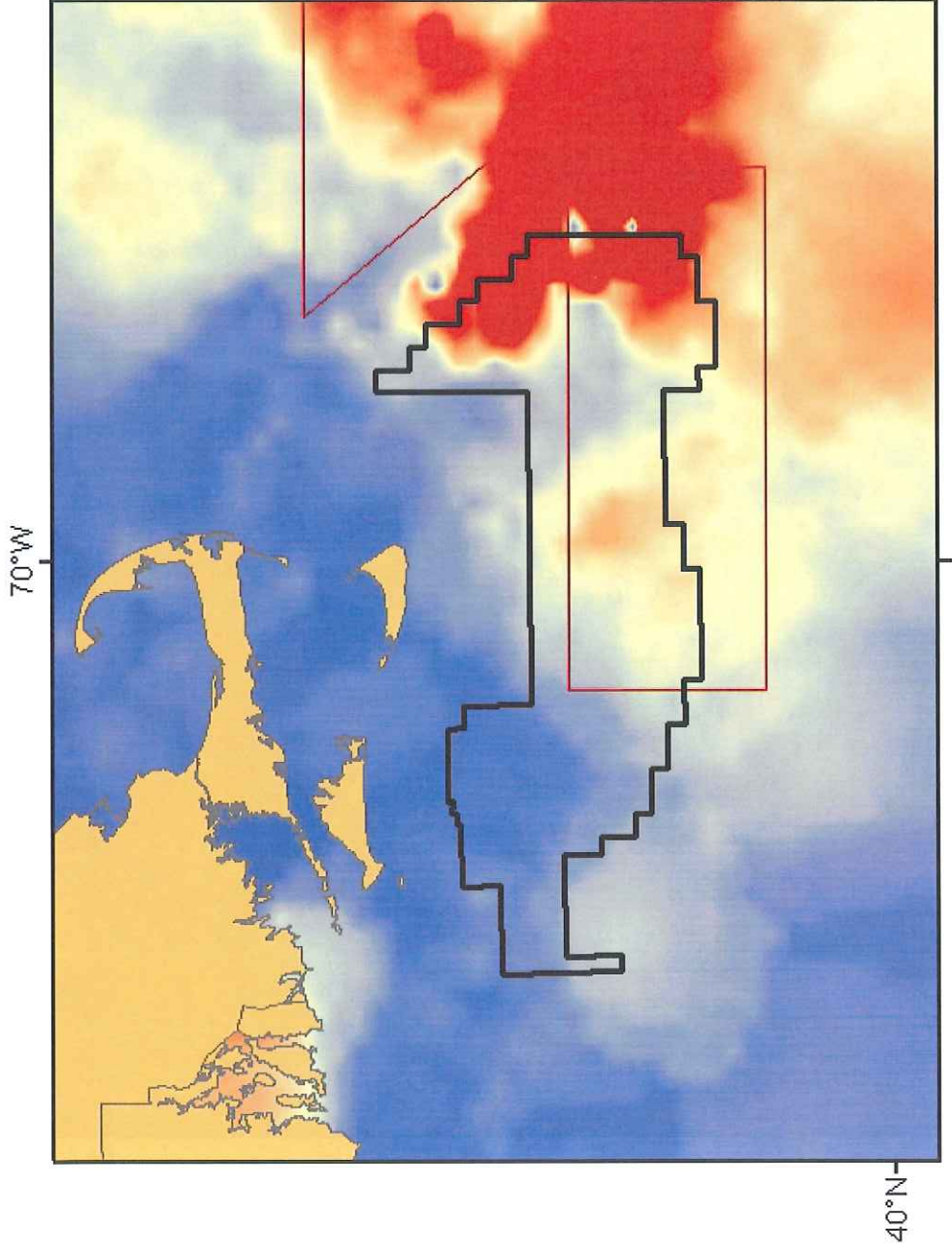
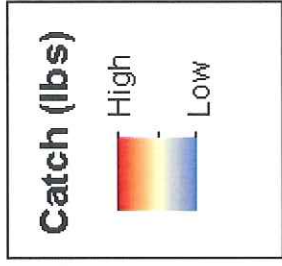
Observer Catch Data 2006-2009 Otter Trawl



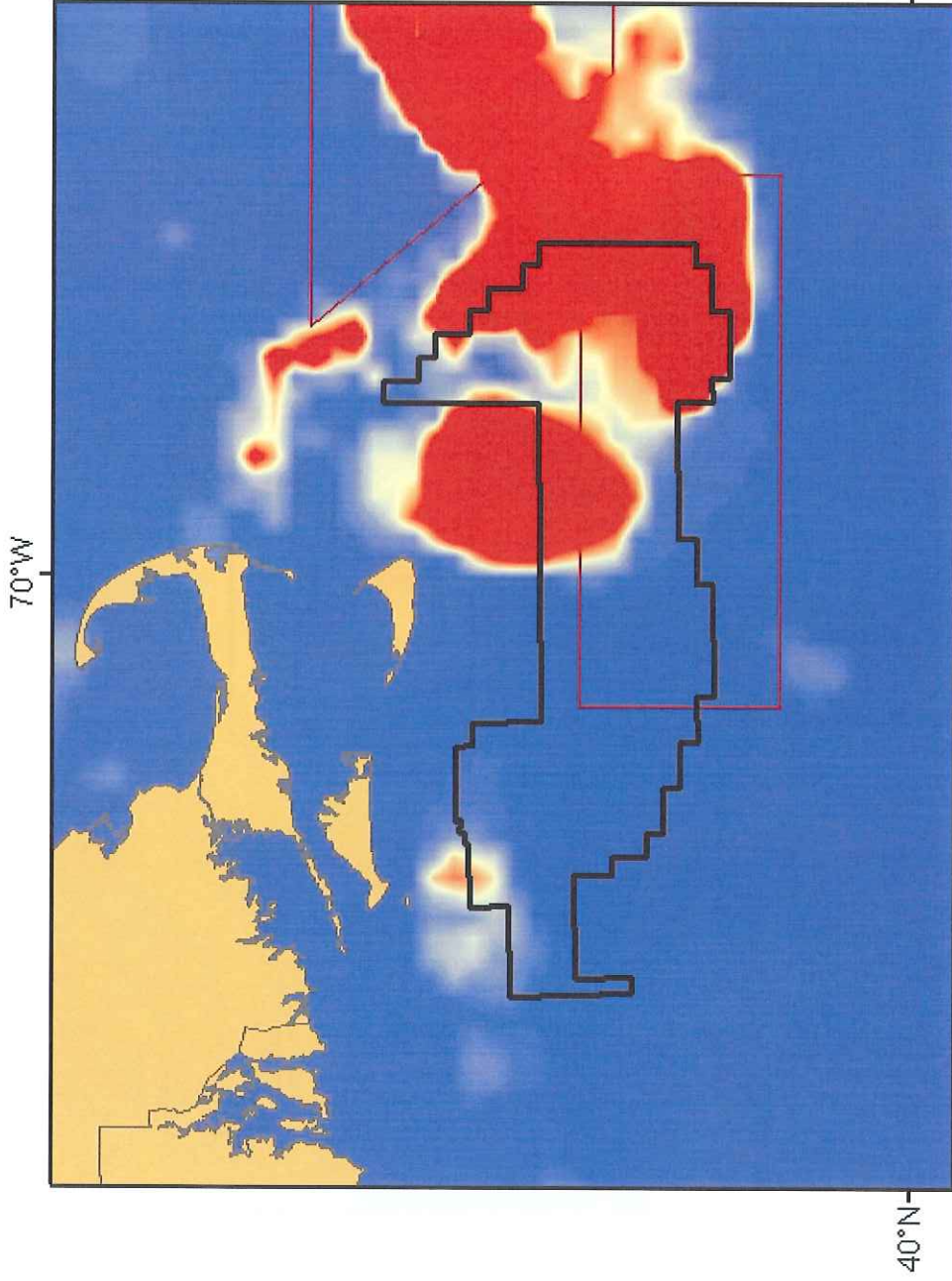
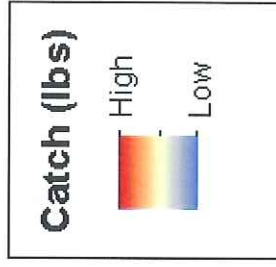
VTR Effort Data 2006-2010 Dredge



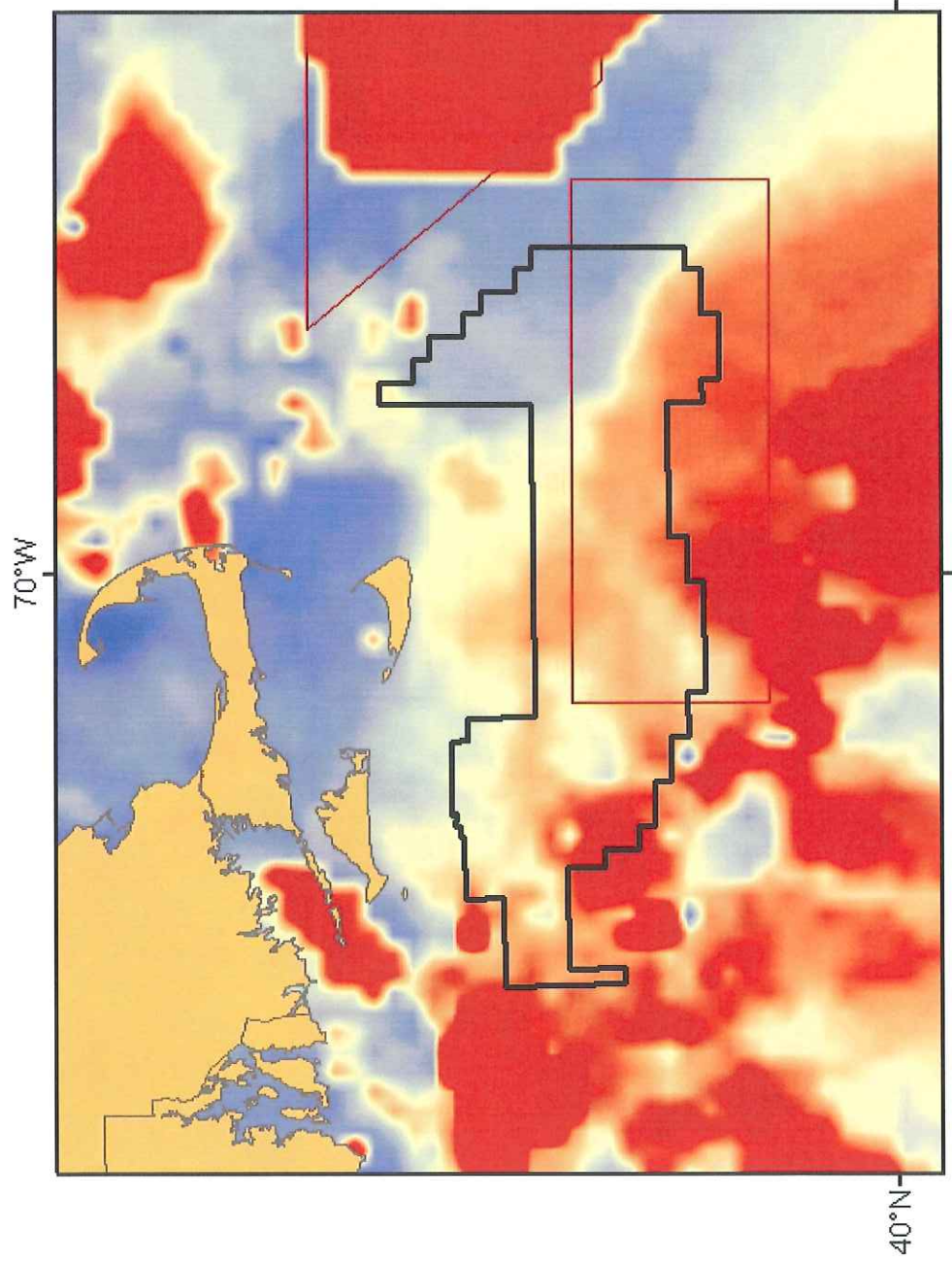
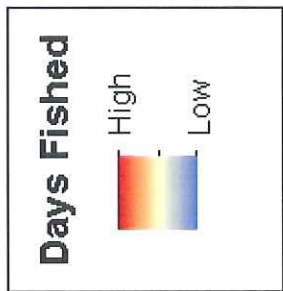
VTR Catch Data 2006-2010 Dredge



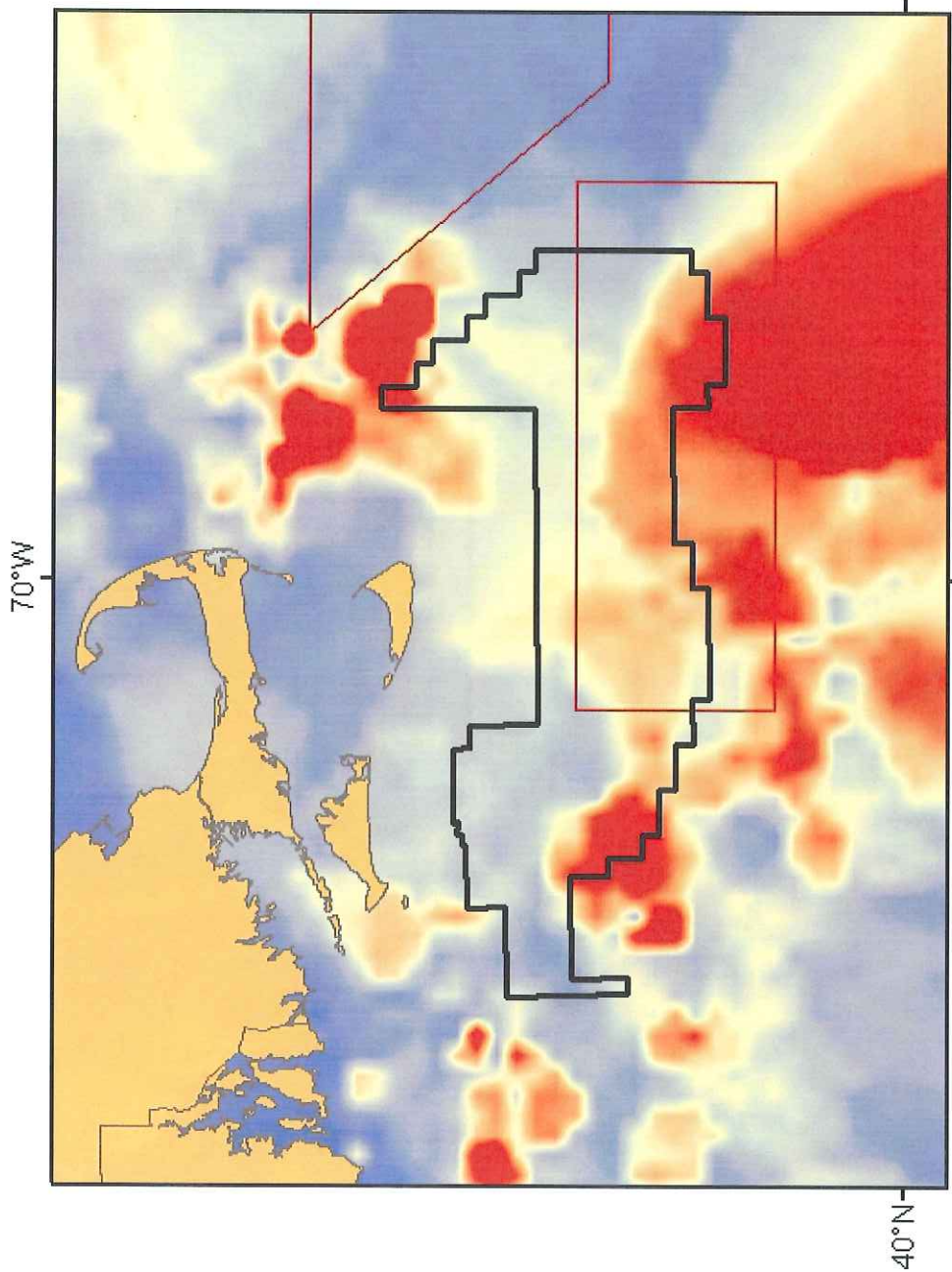
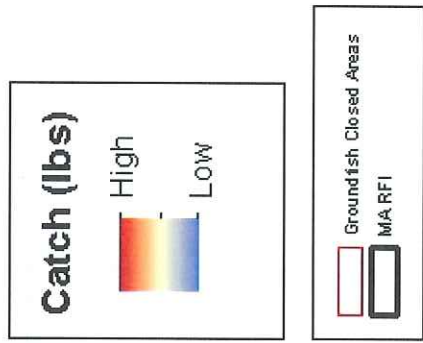
Observer Data 2006-2009 Dredge



VTR Effort Data 2006-2010 Gillnet

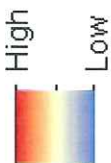


VTR Catch Data 2006-2010 Gillnet

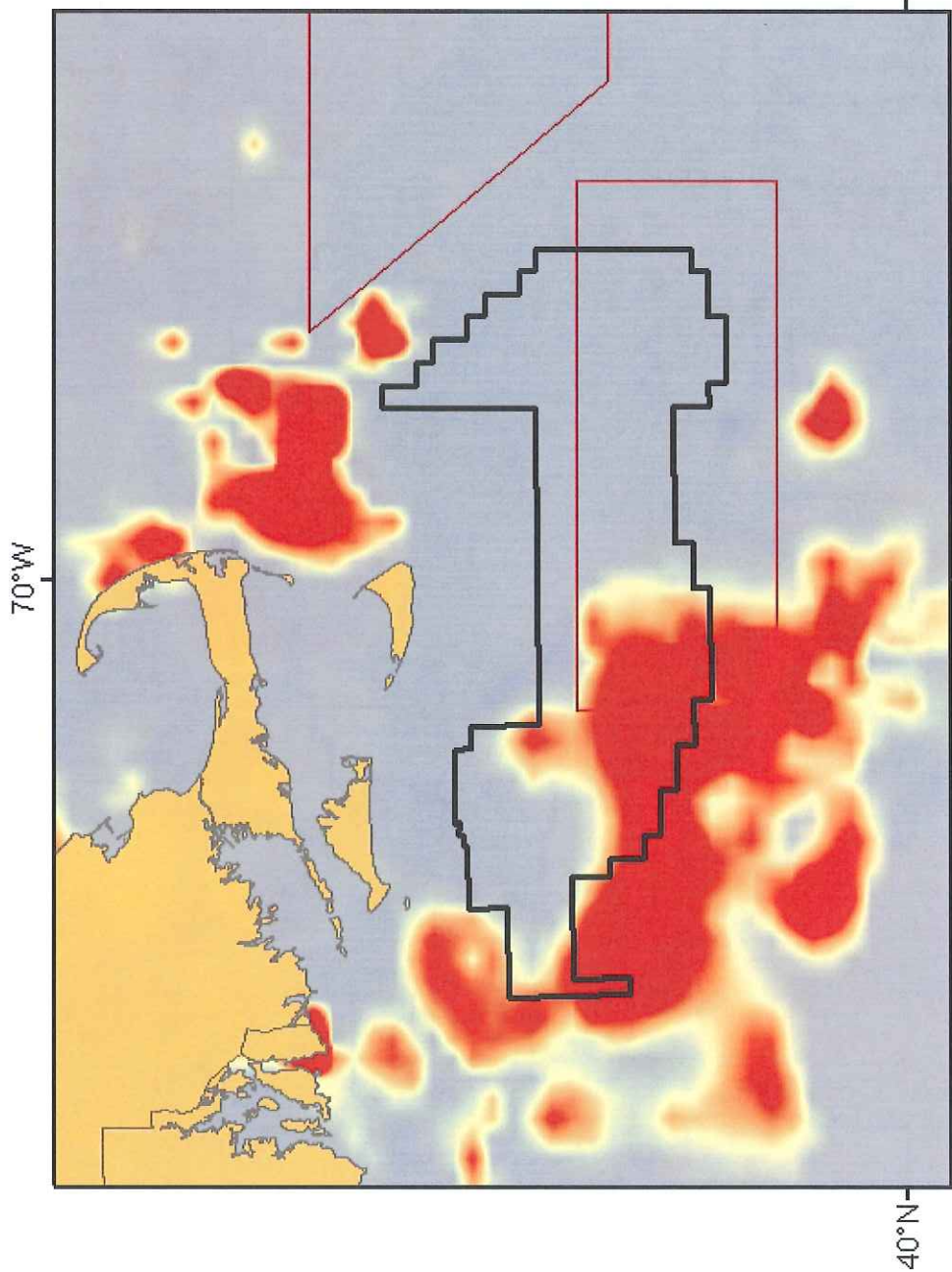


Observer Data 2006-2009 Gillnet

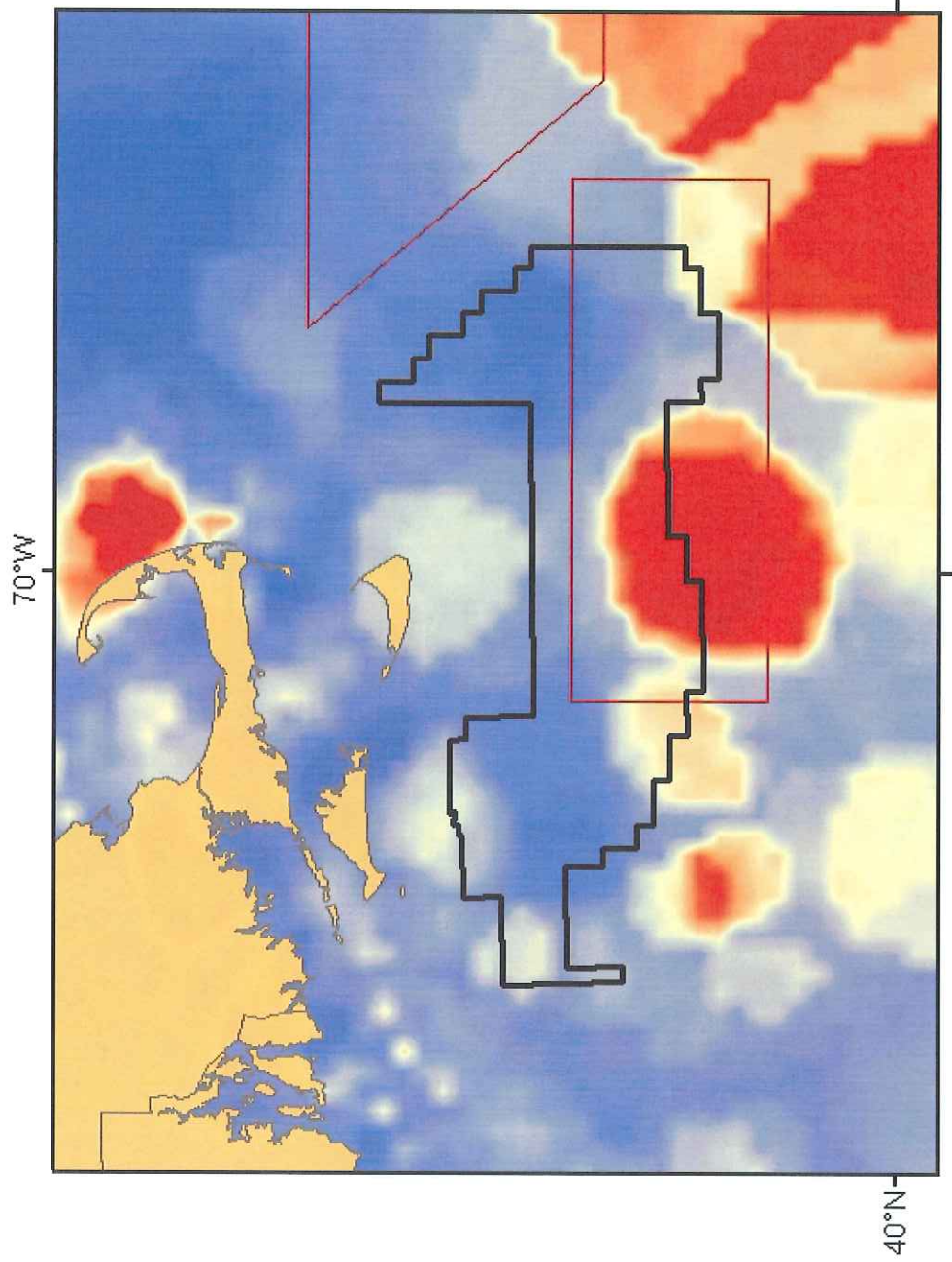
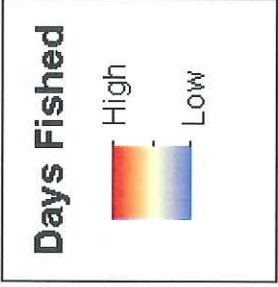
Catch (lbs)



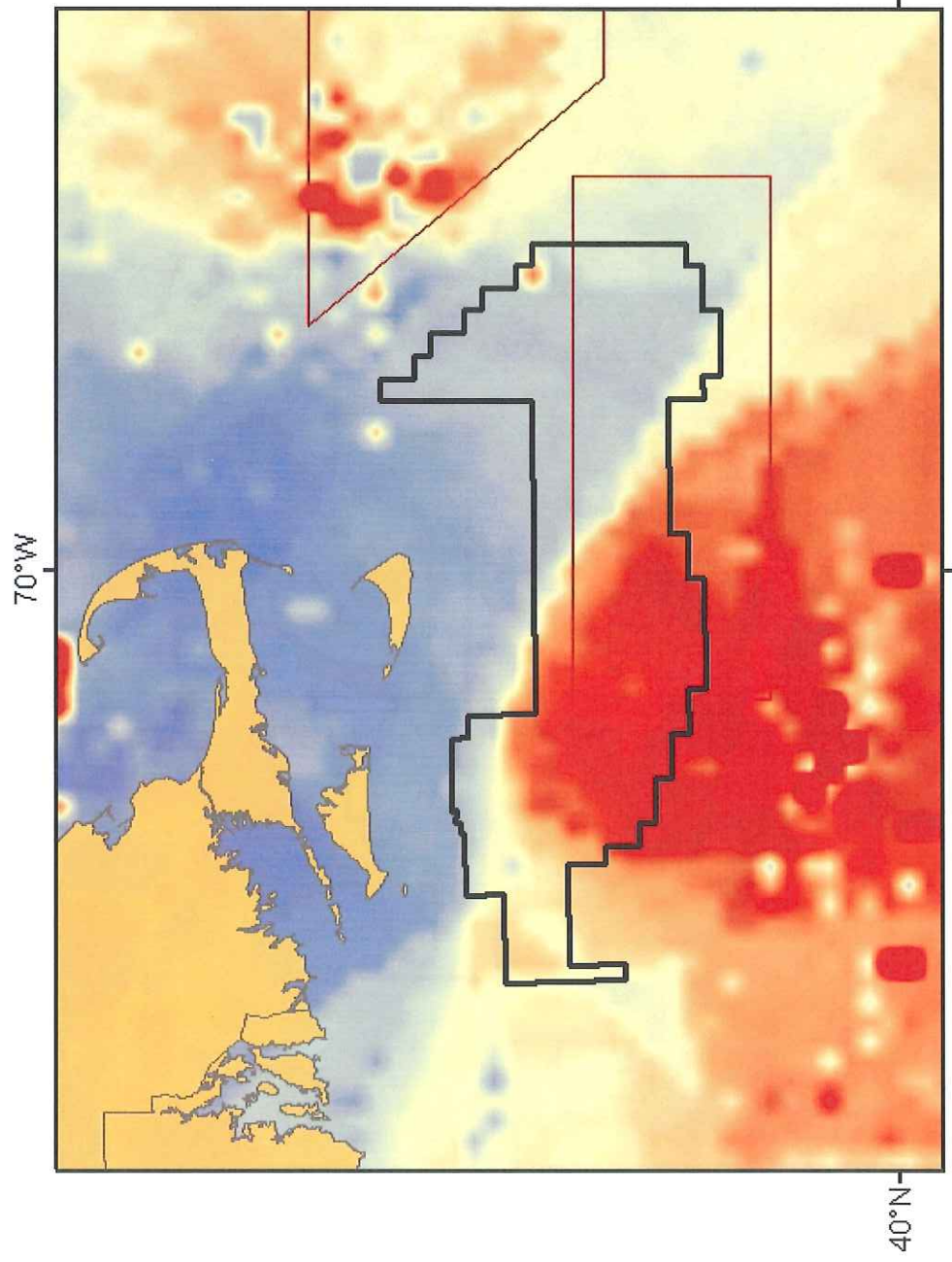
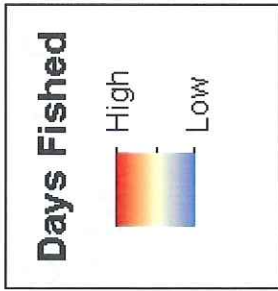
Groundfish Closed Areas
MARFI



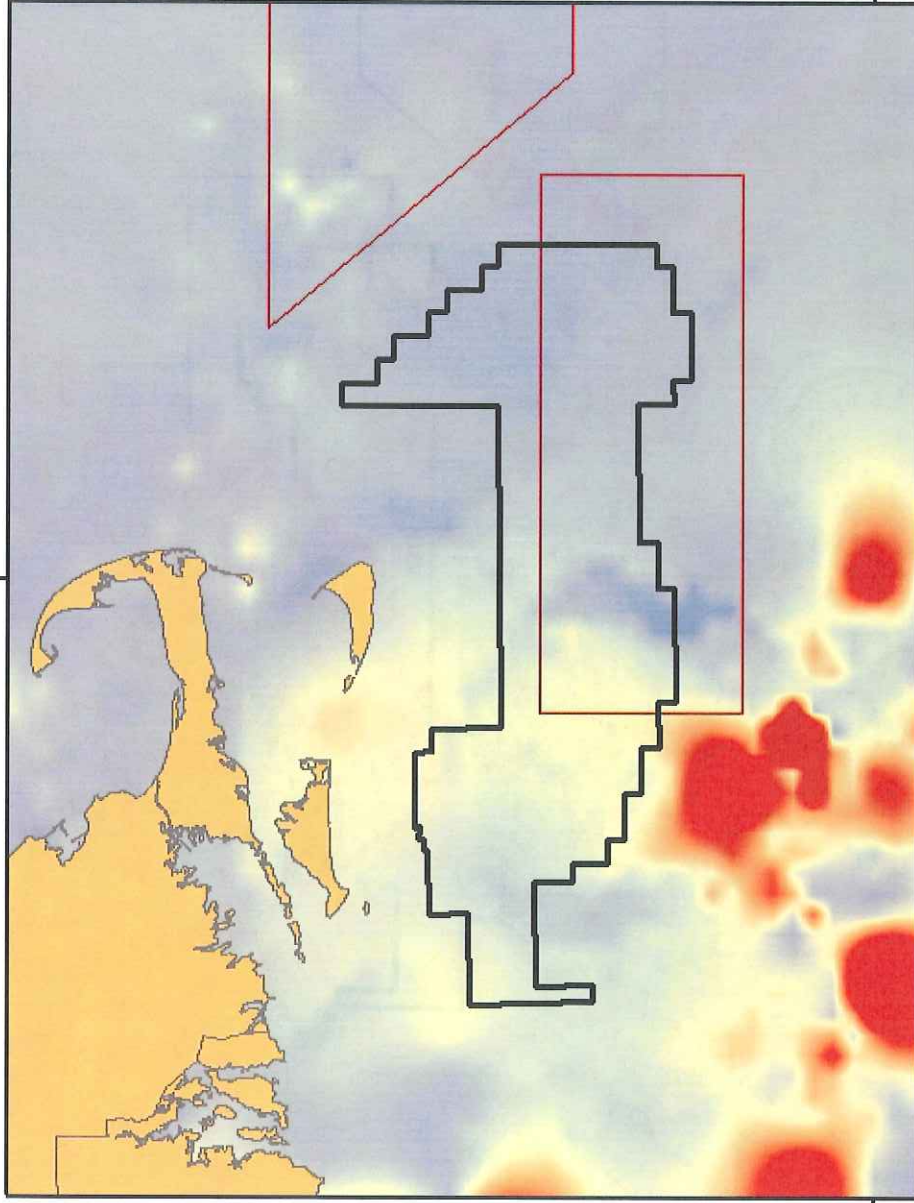
VTR Effort Data 2006-2010 Pot



VTR Effort Data 2006-2010 Longline



70°W

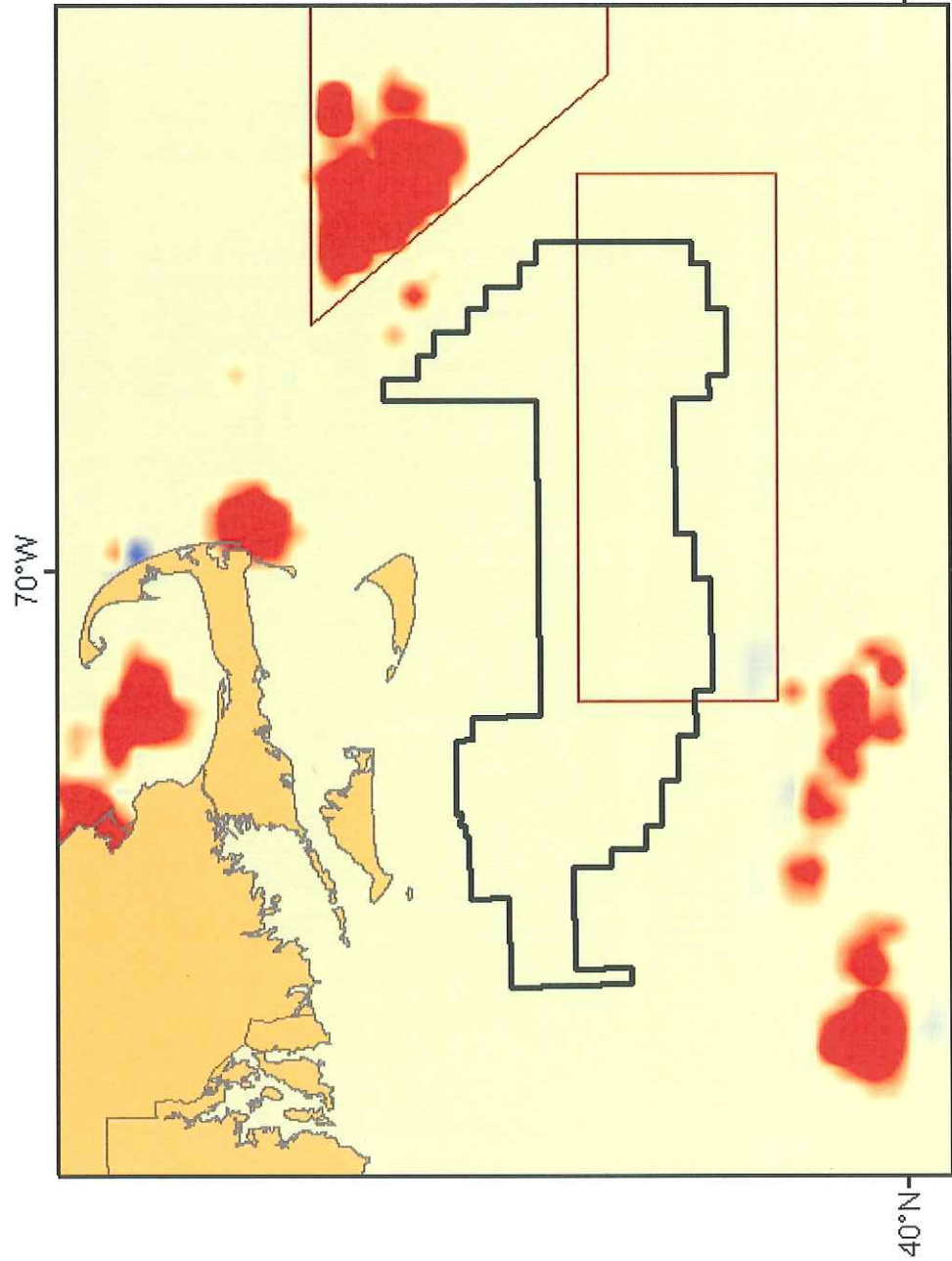


VTR Catch Data 2006-2010 Longline

Catch (lbs)

High
Low

Groundfish Closed Areas
MA RFI



**Observer Data
2006-2009
Longline**

