

NEFMC
ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT OMNIBUS AMENDMENT
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
Approved July 2004, except as noted

GOALS:

1. Redefine, refine or update the identification and description of all EFH for those species of finfish and mollusks managed by the Council, including the consideration of HAPCs;
2. Identify, review and update the major fishing activities (MSA and non-MSA) that may adversely affect the EFH of those species managed by the Council;
3. Identify, review and update the major non-fishing activities that may adversely affect the EFH of those species managed by the Council;
4. Identify and implement mechanisms to protect, conserve, and enhance the EFH of those species managed by the Council to the extent practicable;
5. Define metrics for achieving the requirements to minimize adverse impacts to the extent practicable;
6. Integrate and optimize measures to minimize the adverse impacts to EFH across all Council managed FMPs;
7. Update research and information needs;
8. Review and update prey species information;
9. **Protect deep-sea corals and their habitats throughout the Northeast Region from fishing impacts.¹**

OBJECTIVES:

- A. Identify new data sources and assimilate into the process to meet goals (state, federal and other data sources);
- B. Implement review of existing HAPCs and consider modified or additional HAPCs (Goal 1);
- C. Review EFH designations and refine or redefine where appropriate as improved data and analysis become available (Goal 1);
- D. Develop analytical tools for designation of EFH, minimization of adverse impacts, and monitoring the effectiveness of measures designed to protect habitat (Goal 1, Goal 3 and Goal 5);
- E. Modify fishing methods and create incentives to reduce the impacts on habitat associated with fishing (Goal 4);
- F. Support restoration and rehabilitation of fish habitat which have already been degraded (by fishing and non-fishing activities) (Goal 4);

¹ At the 02/04/08 Habitat Committee meeting, the PDT informed the Committee that the 2007 MSA added discretionary provisions that allow the Council to protect corals independent of their role as Essential Fish Habitat. The committee passed a motion that “the Habitat PDT evaluate existing information on deep sea corals and develop management options to protect that habitat. It is understood that such options would be independent of EFH and HAPC designations”.

- G. Support creation and development of fish habitat where appropriate and when increased fishery resources would benefit society (Goal 4);
- H. Develop a strategy for prioritizing habitat protection (Goal 4);
- I. Develop criteria for establishing and implementing dedicated habitat research areas (Goal 7);
- J. Design a system for monitoring and evaluating the benefits of EFH management actions including dedicated habitat research areas (Goal 7);
- K. Consider modifications to groundfish rebuilding closures (Goal 6)²;
- L. Using the discretionary provisions established via the 2007 MSA, develop deep-sea coral protection zones using the best available data on corals and coral habitats, and implement fishing restrictions in those zones as necessary to minimize fishing impacts (Goal 9)³.

² At the 04/28/11 Council meeting, a series of recommended approaches to integrating consideration of the groundfish rebuilding closures with the Omnibus Amendment were presented by staff. After reviewing the possible approaches, the Council moved to “expand the scope of EFH action to include modification of the groundfish closed areas”.

³ See footnote 1.