

Management Area Coordination

April 2011 Council Meeting

January 2011 Council Meeting

- Under both Habitat and GF Reports the Council discussed possible initiation of a new GF action to consider eliminating the GF mortality closed areas
- Ultimately, a motion passed to table this discussion until the April meeting.
- Council requested that staff summarize the issues of these overlapping areas and present potential ways to address this problem
- Document #6 behind Tab1

Marine Management Areas in the Northeast -

What changes should be made?

Part 1 – Overview of the relationships between current groundfish mortality closures, current and proposed EFH closures, and access to fishery resources

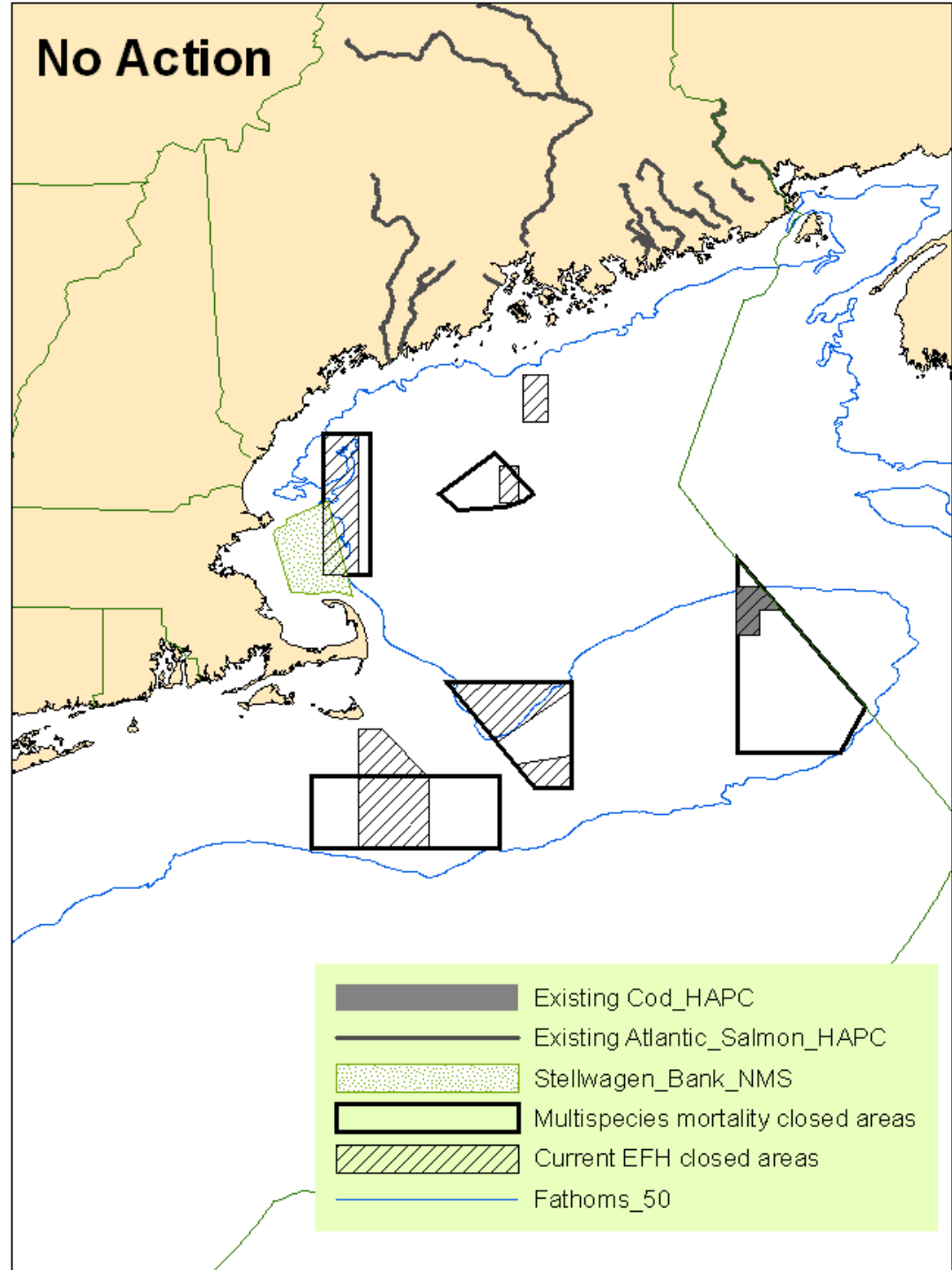
Part 2 - Discussion of four options to evaluate the effectiveness of these areas and consider modifications – 4 options developed

Part I

The two current HAPCs do not have any fishing restrictions.

Fishing with mobile bottom tending gear is not permitted in the cod HAPC on the northern edge because that is also a habitat closed area, not because it is an HAPC.

After A15 is approved, hatched areas will be the only remaining EFH closures – all mobile bottom tending gears.



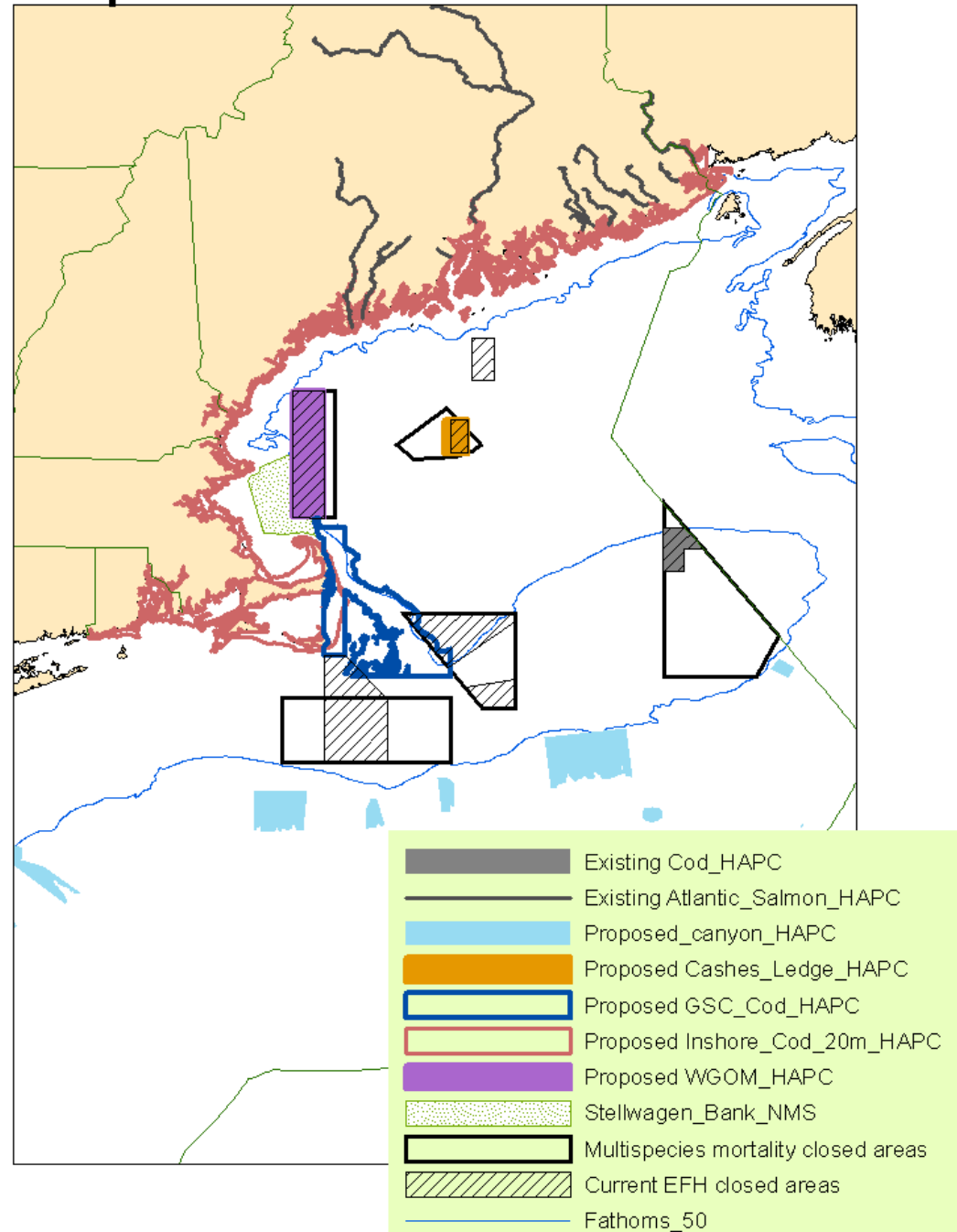
Proposed under EFH Phase I

EFH Phase I

Phase I has approved 5 new HAPCs.

So far there are NO fishing restrictions associated with the 5 new proposed HAPC areas, or 2 existing HAPC areas.

Phase I of EFH A2 has only identified them as HAPCs, with no specific fishing restrictions.

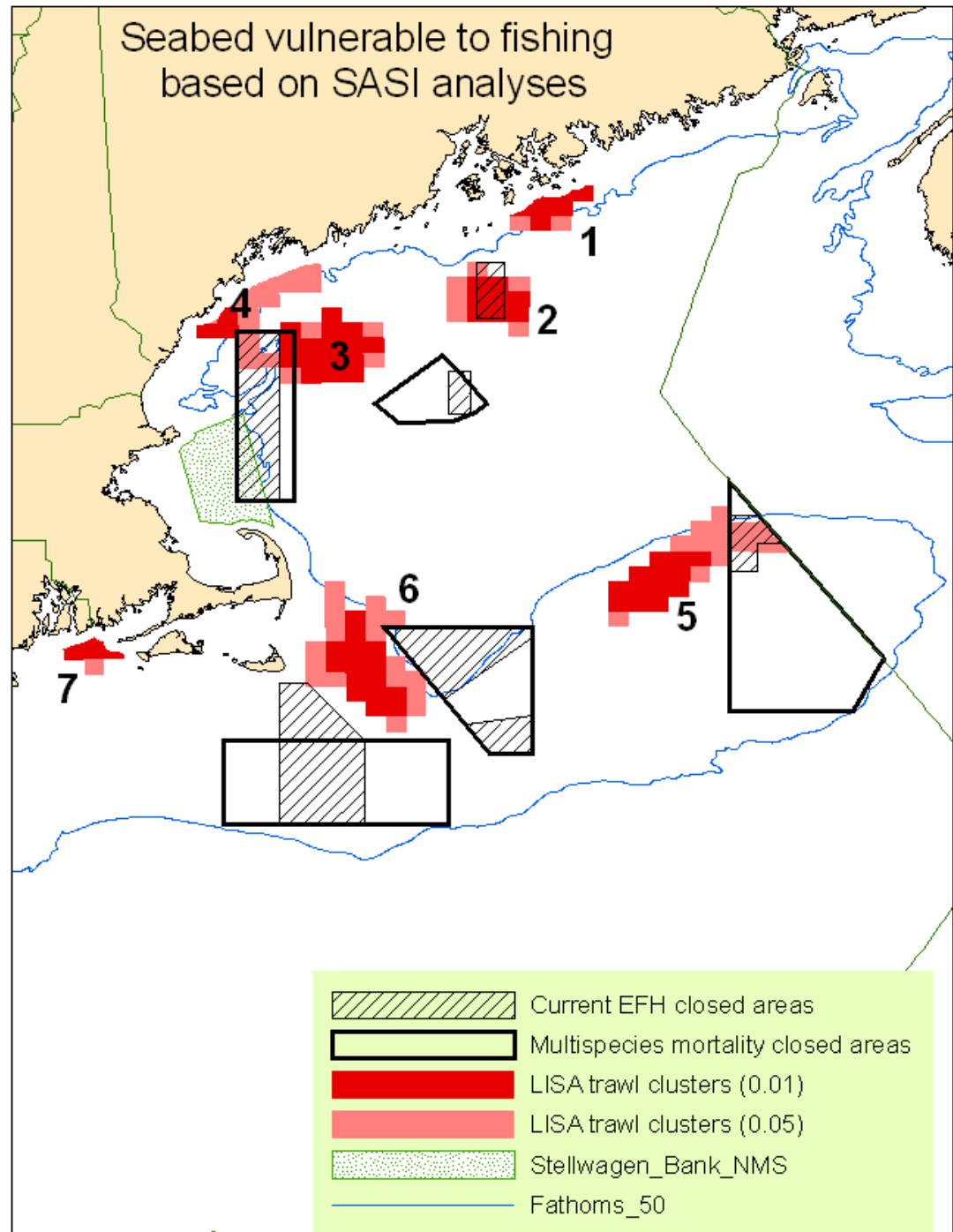


EFH Phase II

The Habitat Cmte has not developed specific measures related to these clusters yet. More focus on darker areas so far, but they may still be refined by depth or other factors.

For example, clusters 5-7 may have some level of fishing restrictions akin to a habitat closed area, but they may not.

As for clusters in the GOM (1-4), the Committee is exploring gear restrictions over closed areas, if anything.

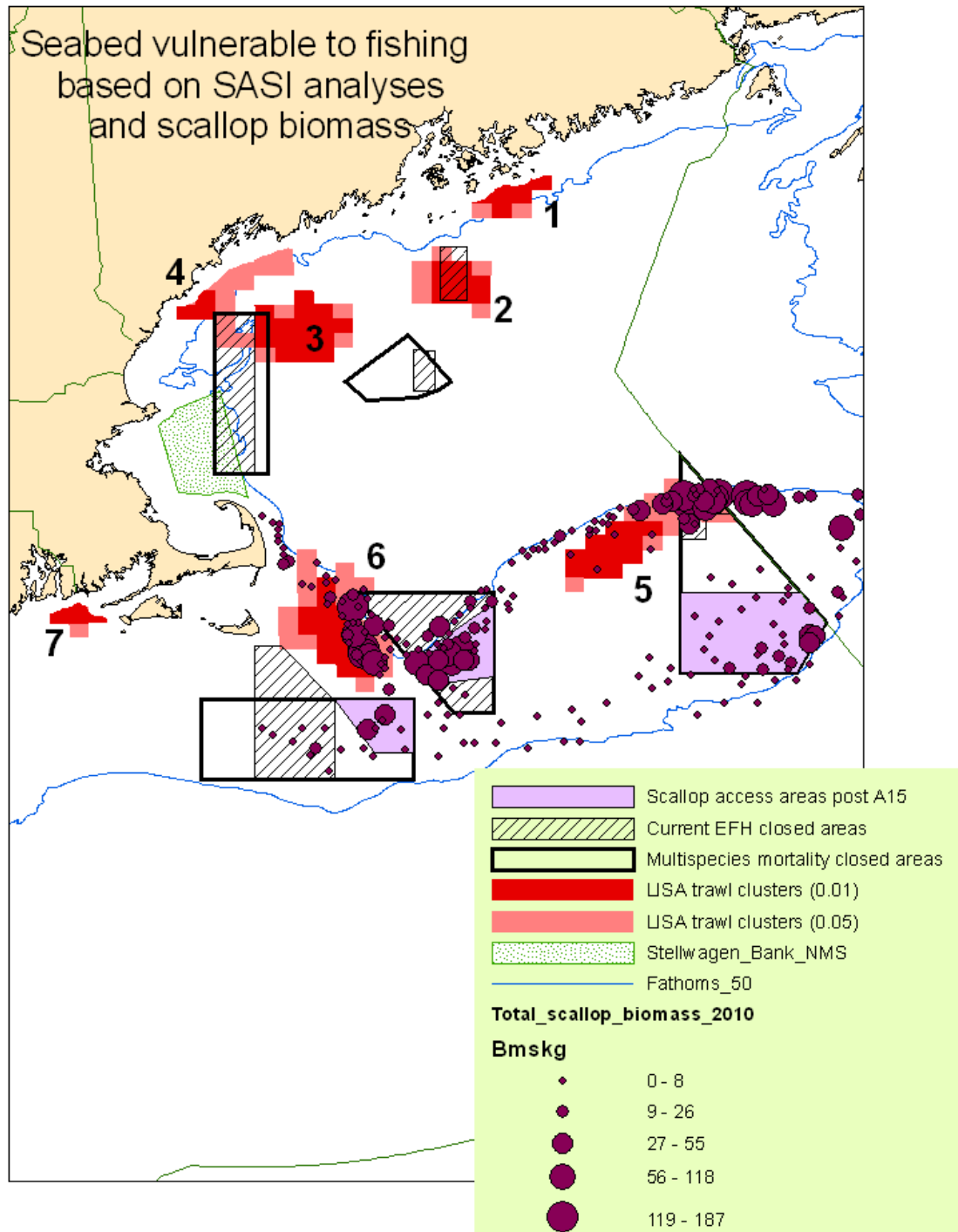


Fishery Access

The scallop fishery has been granted limited access into portions of GF closed areas, but not EFH areas.

There is interest in accessing more of CA2, especially if that EFH closed area is modified.

As the Council considers more specific locations and levels of fishing restrictions in potential EFH areas, fishery access plays an important role in the overall practicability of those measures.



Part II

Options for management area coordination

- Staff identified four different options
- Pro, cons, and timing constraints of each summarized in Table 1 (Doc.#6)
- Overall staff recommendation – Option 2

Option 1

Proceed with selection of EFH measures, but delay implementation, and initiate GF action in 2012

- Pros – Phase II stays on track, but implemented later.
- Cons – Current EFH closed areas effective longer, if modified; controlled access in GF closed areas limited to non EFH areas only for longer; potentially more resources for two actions compared to Option 3.
- Timing – if EFH areas change and GF areas are modified the earliest they would be effective is May 1, 2013, or later (compared to EFH areas potentially being modified around August 2012).

Option 2

Complete EFH action first and implement changes, and initiate GF action in 2012

- Pros – Phase II stays on track and EFH changes implemented sooner (August 2012); separate actions could be “cleaner” in terms of responsibilities and resources; increased potential for additional fishery access in current EFH closures for FY2013.
- Cons – Council has to make decisions about EFH areas without knowing status of GF closures; potentially more resources needed to get two (or three) actions through the process, compared to Option 3.
- Timing – similar to Option 1, but Council could develop action for fishery access for FY2013 (GF and scallops) in portions of GF closed areas that are no longer closed to EFH, if EFH areas are modified in August 2012.

Option 3

Expand scope of EFH action to include modification of GF closed areas

- Pros – Less actions to get through process; could be implemented slightly faster than Option 1 and 2 if more resources used on expanded EFH action; less unknowns when identifying EFH measures.
- Cons – Extends EFH timeline and effective date for all EFH related measures (Phase I and II further delayed); may need to re-scope for action; more coordination needed between Cmtes and PDTs; increased chance of overlooking issues because scope of action so large and pressure to get it done, so less time to evaluate details.
- Timing – Best case scenario early 2013, several months before Option 1 and 2 if limited to GF mortality closures only. If expanded to include other GF areas like rolling closures likely to take the same amount of time.

Option 4

Proceed with EFH action and forward modification of GF closed areas to larger Ecosystem process

- Pros – Most holistic approach to consider where closed areas, if any, should be placed for wider range of purposes.
- Cons – Likely take much longer; lots of coordination needed and possible restructuring of Cmtes, APs and PDTs; may end up revising EFH areas again; adding specific charge to review GF closures could constrain EBFM process since that issue is time sensitive.
- Timing – EFH measures effective August 2012, or Council could defer decision about EFH measures to Ecosystem process all together; if large scope this action expected to take several years, maybe 2014 best case scenario.

Summary

- Fastest option for modifying EFH areas – Option 2.
- Fastest option for modifying GF areas – Option 3 several months before Options 1 and 2.
- Option 4 may be most holistic way to coordinate all closed areas in this region, but will take substantially longer.
- Staff has concerns about Option 3 to expand EFH action. Already great pressure to get that action completed, so less time to evaluate details and impacts of eliminating GF closed areas.
- If Council is serious about getting this work done in 2012, priorities discussion in Nov has to be realistic.

Council Action Today

- Tabled motion from January 2011 Meeting:

5c. Mr. Leary moved to amend the substitute and Mr. Odlin seconded:

the Habitat Committee is considering options to modify the habitat closed areas in Georges Bank/SNE based on information provided in the SASI model. Given that the groundfish fishery is now managed with annual catch limit and accountability measures under Amendment 16, it is the Council's intent to prioritize a groundfish management action in the near future that would eliminate or modify the groundfish mortality closures.

- Does the Council want to pursue an action to modify existing GF closed areas (year round and/or rolling)?
- By what action? 1) initiate new action as a 2012 priority, or 2) expand existing EFH action.