

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

Management Plan Review

Habitat Protection: Deep-sea Corals and Sponges



Photos: OCNMS

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Pacific Fishery Management Council
Agenda D.1 OCNMS MPR

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“The three dimensional structure of deep corals may function in very similar ways to their tropical counterparts, providing enhanced feeding opportunities for aggregating species, a hiding place from predators, a nursery area for juveniles, fish spawning aggregation sites, and attachment substrate for sedentary invertebrates.”

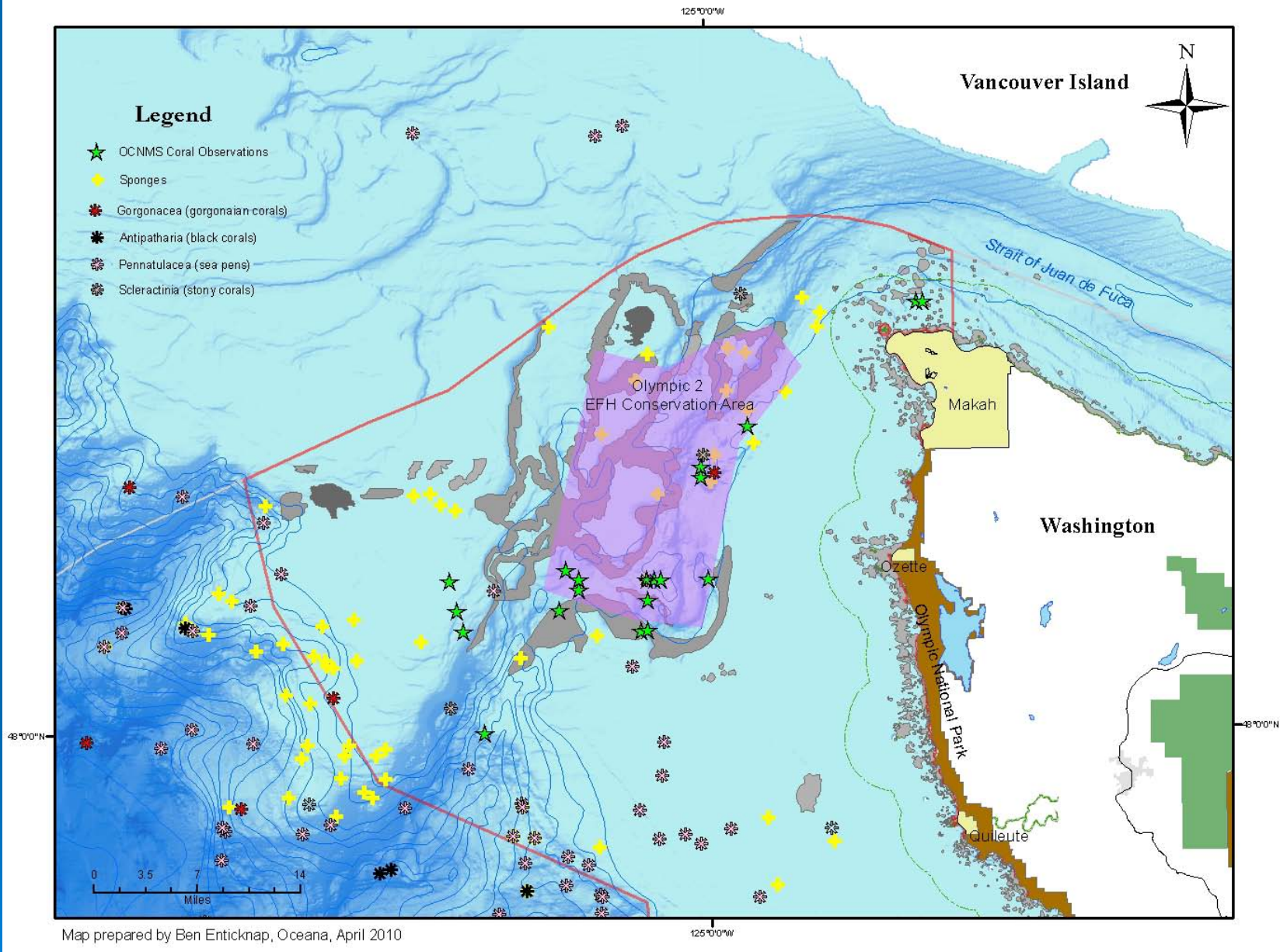
NOAA 2007. State of Deep Coral Ecosystems of the United States



“NMSP intends to initiate deep-sea coral surveys at all national marine sanctuaries, and where appropriate, seek to protect these fragile sanctuary resources through regulation, education, research, monitoring, and enforcement.”

– Federal Register Vol 70. No 131, at 39705. July 11, 2005.





Coral and sponge communities at 14 of 15 dive sites, 17 coral species, reef building sponges, evidence of fishing induced habitat damage

Table 3.3. Ratings of potential fishing gear impacts to deep corals off the U.S. Pacific coast. Each measure of impact is rated as High (H), Moderate (M), or Low (L).

Gear Type	Measure of Impact			
	Severity of Impact	Extent of Impact	Geographic Extent of Use in Region	Overall Rating of Gear Impact
Bottom trawls	H	H	H	H
Midwater trawls	L	L	H	L
Demersal seines	L	M	L	L
Bottom longlines & gillnets	M	M	M	M
Pots & Traps	M	L	L	L
Other hook and line	L	L	L	L

“[f]ishing operations, particularly bottom trawling, pose the most immediate and widespread threats to deep coral communities.”

NOAA. State of Deep Coral Ecosystems in the Pacific Coast Region, at 125

Habitat Protection Action Plan

1. Identify important habitat areas
2. Identify the threats in consultation with co-management authorities
3. Recommend/ implement management measures
4. Monitor and evaluation



Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act

- § 105 “(B) designate such zones in areas where deep sea corals are identified under section 408, to protect deep sea corals from physical damage from fishing gear or to prevent loss or damage to such fishing gear from interactions with deep sea corals, after considering long-term sustainable uses of fishery resources in such areas;