Groundfish EFH 5-Year Review

Continuing to Lead the Way in Marine Spatial Planning

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2006 EFH Closures

- A huge step forward for precautionary ecosystem-based management by the PFMC
- Protected over 135,000 square miles of habitat while maintaining vibrant fisheries along the U.S. West Coast

Fish eggs attached to California hydrocoral, off Monterey.

Biogenic habitat on Big Sur Bank.

Photos courtesy of Bay Area Underwater Explorers, www.baue.org
Figure 1. NOAA’s precautionary approach to manage bottom-tending gear (BTG), especially mobile BTG and other adverse impacts of fishing on deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems.

Approach to Manage Bottom-Tending Gear (BTG) Impacts

- **KNOWN DEEP-SEA CORAL OR SPONGE AREAS**
  - Mobile BTG currently not allowed
    - Prioritize for Enhanced Monitoring, Surveillance and Enforcement
  - Mobile BTG allowed
    - **OBJECTIVE 1** Protect from Mobile BTG
      - New Deep-Sea Coral or Sponge Areas Identified
        - Map and Characterize
          - Fishable Areas Free of Corals and Sponges Identified
          - Consider Potential for Future Fishing in Areas Free of Corals and Sponges

- **INADEQUATELY SURVEYED AREAS**
  - Mobile BTG currently not allowed
  - Mobile BTG allowed
    - **OBJECTIVE 2** Close to Mobile BTG as a Precautionary Measure “Freeze the Footprint”
    - Recent Use of Mobile BTG (e.g., ≥ last 5 years)
    - No Recent Use of Mobile BTG (e.g., ≥ last 5 years)
      - **OBJECTIVE 3** Enhance Bycatch Reporting and Monitoring

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NOAA Strategic Plan for Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Ecosystems: Research, Management, and International Cooperation

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EFH Policy Objectives

- Minimize trawl footprint
- Prohibit trawling in sensitive habitats within footprint
- Adjust closures over time with new information
- Maintain/enhance economic viability of groundfish fishery
Role of EFH Committee

- Evaluate 2006 EFH measures
- Analyze and define recent trawl footprint
- Compile updated information on coral and sponge areas and seafloor mapping
- Review new studies on trawl impacts
Evaluating Effectiveness of 2006 EFH Management Measures

- Economic impacts of 2006 closures:
  - Evidence of decreased revenue or CPUE?
  - Increased fishing costs?

- Spatial extent of trawling before/after
  - Has trawling shifted to new areas?

- Compare coral/sponge bycatch before and after 2006 closures
  - Are there new bycatch hotspots?
Revisions to Magnuson

- MSA at Section 303(b)(2)(B).
- Council now has authority to close deep waters, as intended in the 2006 EFH Final Motion.

Area deeper than 3500m was out of PFMC jurisdiction in 2006
Near-term Next Steps

- **Formal Data Request to Evaluate 2006 Closures**
  - New trawl footprint
  - Observer data on coral/sponge bycatch
  - Catch data before/after closures
  - Seafloor habitat studies

- **Updated literature review**

- **Craft proposal for revisions to EFH closures**

- **Obtain feedback from fishing community, tribes**

- **Submit and review at EFH Committee**
Oceana’s ROV
Minimize the Footprint

- Minimal area necessary to catch groundfish quotas
- Move toward “runway” approach
- Compare variability in footprint from year to year (how much flexibility/buffer is necessary)
- Many areas may not be necessary to maintain vibrant fishery