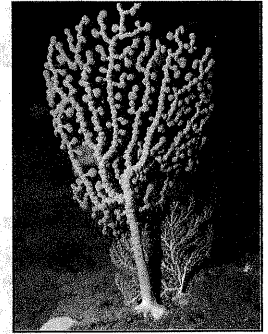


Coral and Sponge Habitat Protection in the Pacific

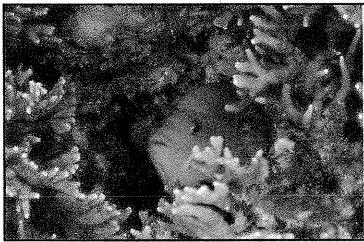
Corals and sponges are found in significant aggregations from the Bering Sea in Alaska to southern California. These living seafloor structures are crucial to the functioning of the marine ecosystems and rich commercial fisheries they support.



What are corals?

Corals and sponges are some of the oldest living creatures on Earth. Living for hundreds to thousands of years, these animals congregate in colonies that can tower more than ten feet tall, yet they grow only fractions of an inch a year.

Why are corals important?



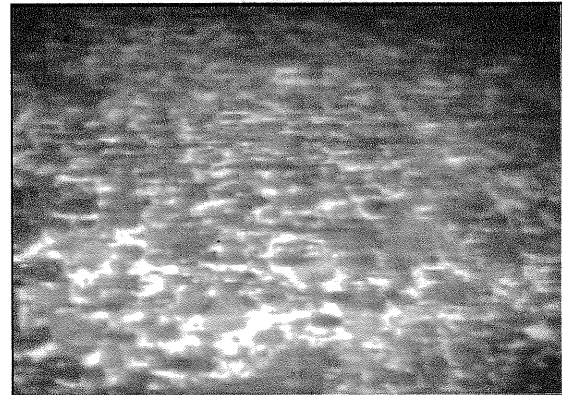
Deep sea corals and sponges are home to many species of commercial fish such as rockfish, sablefish, flatfish, and crabs as well as non-commercial species of starfish, shrimp, and octopuses among others. For these and other species, corals provide essential habitat by providing shelter, protection from currents and predators, breeding areas, spawning areas, nurseries, food, and resting areas. When coral and sponge habitat is destroyed, the many species it supports also disappear.

What is the threat?

Bottom trawling destroys far more ocean habitat than any other fishing practice on the West Coast. In this fishing method, large weighted nets are dragged across the ocean floor, clear-cutting a swath of habitat in their wake. These scars will take centuries to heal. According to the National Academy of Sciences, bottom trawling reduces the complexity, productivity, and biodiversity of benthic habitats--damage is most severe in areas of corals and sponges. When disturbed by bottom trawling, as much as 90 percent of a coral colony perishes, and up to two-thirds of sponges are damaged. Allowing reckless fishing practices to continue on the Pacific Coast is causing irreparable damage to the foundation of its vibrant ecosystems.



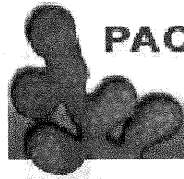
Pristine Coral Seafloor with Rockfish (Oregon)



Trawled Seafloor

What can the Pacific Fishery Management Council do?

- Request NMFS report on corals and sponges
- Incorporate coral/sponge data into EFH EIS
- Implement measures to protect coral and sponge habitats immediately
- Develop and implement long-term coral and sponge protection strategy



PACIFIC DEEP SEA CORALS

The cradle of life in the oceans

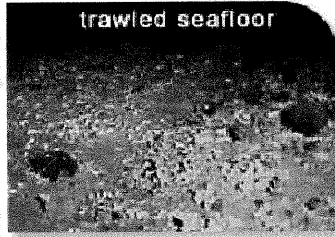


From the Bering Sea in Alaska to the southern tip of California, the Pacific Ocean seafloor coral and sponge habitat is threatened by collapse from irresponsible, destructive bottom trawling.

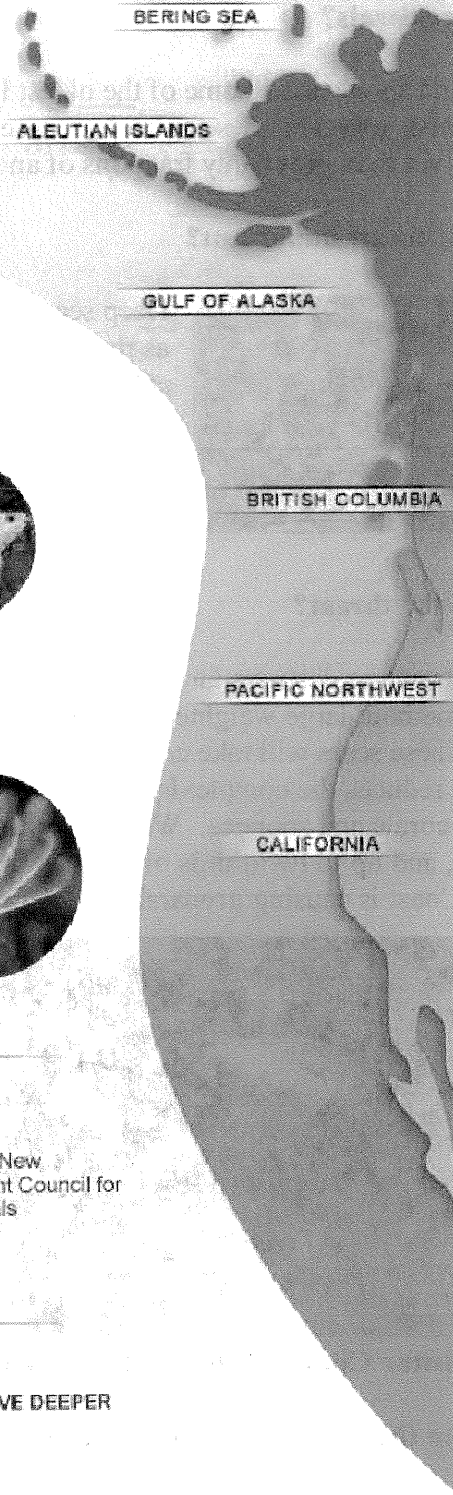
REGIONS AT RISK



untrawled seafloor

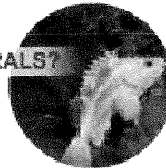


trawled seafloor



WHAT ARE CORALS?

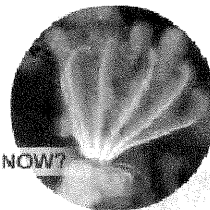
WHY SHOULD WE PROTECT CORALS?



WHAT THREAT DOES TRAWLING POSE?



WHAT IS THE OCEANA APPROACH?



... WHY NOW?

NEWS ON CORALS

[\(click here for more news\)](#)

OCEANA IN THE NEWS

5/12/03: United States Seeks New Riches with Claims to Ocean Floor (Boston Globe)

PRESS RELEASES

05/28/03: Oceana Applauds New England Fishery Management Council for Taking Steps to Protect Corals

CORAL RESOURCES



PHOTOS



MOVIES



MAPS



DIVE DEEPER

SaveCorals.com