

HABITAT COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON
CORALS AND LIVING SUBSTRATE

The Habitat Committee (HC) is concerned about the protection of deepwater corals as vulnerable habitat that may provide important fishery (and other) benefits. As noted during the agenda item on legislative issues (B.2.a, Attachment 4), a new coral protection act (SB 1953) has been proposed in Congress to close selected areas to “mobile bottom-tending gear.” The proposed coral protection areas would include specific areas known to harbor coldwater corals and sponges or areas that had not experienced bottom trawling during the three-year period ending November 1, 2003. The apparent objective of the legislation is to protect areas that likely contain corals. The areas closed to bottom trawling by the Council may or may not have significant corals. The HC recommends the Council review the wording of this legislation to make sure there are no unintended consequences related to the identified time period (2001, 2002, 2003).

PFMC
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