

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
GROUNDFISH ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH) ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT: FINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES**

Alternative A.2: Depths less than 3500m

California supports the EFH Alternative 2 plus those seamounts within the EEZ in waters deeper than 3,500m. This provides for the greatest extent of known habitat supporting the ecosystem in which groundfish flourish or could flourish. This would provide habitat consideration and protection to all groundfish habitats within this zone. California supports adding or removing such habitat descriptions as information becomes available.

Alternative B.7: Areas of interest

California supports HAPC designations for the following areas only:

Seamounts within state borders - Unique, sensitive habitats which support rich communities of invertebrates and serve as habitat for some groundfish.

Monterey Canyon - Unique and diverse habitats in the largest submarine canyon off California.

Specific areas of the Cowcod Conservation Area (as designated on DFG proposed map) - Invertebrate (Gorgonian and coral) concentrations have been identified in four areas in and around the CCAs during recent submersible surveys. These include the Eastern CCA, Cherry Bank, Potato Bank, and Kidney/Hidden Banks. These are the only actual location data for concentrations of these invertebrates that are currently available.

Federal Waters MPAs in the CINMS as designated on DFG proposed map – (see further discussion below under C.14)

Cordell Bank - A productive high relief rocky reef area that is important to a number of overfished species including Canary rockfish.

Mendocino Ridge - An extensive high relief rocky reef area extending across depth zones in a transition area between biogeographic regions.

Alternative B.8: Oil Production Platforms

California is supporting HAPC designation for those platforms that show consistent high abundances of various groundfish living on or around these structures. Several PFMC designated “overfished species” are found in measurable concentrations on specific platforms. Currently, this would include 13 such structures in the Santa Barbara Channel area. Other platforms may be considered on a case-by-case basis as more information on their relationship to groundfish becomes available.

Alternatives C.4.1: C.9.6: C.10; C.12; C.13; and C.14

California supports alternatives to minimize adverse impacts on EFH due to fishing as the following prohibitions:

Alternative C.4.1: Prohibit geographic expansion of fishing

Trawl foot print designation – Use 700 fm as the outer boundary of the trawl foot print for areas north of Pt. Conception and 300 fm for areas south of Pt. Conception. These isobaths include nearly all recent trawl tracks and would also leave some “unfished” areas within that zone which would provide future opportunities for fishery flexibility, while closing all areas in deeper waters to protect habitats from future expansion of trawl fishing. Future justifiable requests could be considered to modify these boundaries to allow beyond these depths. This might involve establishing a process involving technical and regulatory review committees to consider and make recommendations on such proposals.

C.9.1: Gear restrictions: prohibit roller gear larger than 15”

Roller gear larger than 15” to prevent damage from trawl gear to high relief rocky reefs and sensitive attached invertebrates.

C.9.5: Gear restrictions: prohibit dredge gear

Dredge gear to prevent damage to soft bottom substrates and sensitive invertebrate communities. (This gear is currently not allowed in California.)

C.9.6: Gear restrictions: prohibit beam trawl gear

Beam trawl except for San Francisco Bay bait shrimp fishery – long established fishery in highly altered habitat. Prevents damage to soft bottom communities, low relief rocky substrates, and sensitive attached invertebrates.

C.9.8: Gear restrictions: prohibit dingle bar gear

Dingle-bar gear to prevent damage to rocky reefs and sensitive attached invertebrates

C.10: Central California no-trawl zones

Support the most up to date collaborative version of the agreement between the Nature Conservancy and Industry areas 1,2,and 3 off central California between Point Sur and Point Conception including Davidson seamount.

C.12: Close ecologically important areas to bottom trawl

Trawl gear prohibition - Oceana revision maps including the Trawl industry maps (version 8 am 6/15/2005) as follows: (N to S)

Areas of agreement – In federal waters accept all areas of agreement between the Oceana/ Industry proposals and any other areas of agreement in state waters (e.g. Monterey Bay, state waters extend 3 miles seaward of a line between Pt. Santa Cruz and Pt. Pinos in this area). This would provide protection to areas of known or expected sensitive habitats while limiting the economic impacts to those acceptable to the fishery.

These include the areas of substantial overlap between the Oceana and Industry proposals for:

Northern and Southern California -

Crescent City Deep Biogenic Area (32)
Eel River Canyon (34) with state modification
Blunts Reef (35)
Mendocino Ridge (36)
Delgado Canyon (37)
Tolo Bank (0)
Point Arena Offshore (39)
Biogenic Area 12 (40)
Cordell Bank (41)
Farallon Is./Fanny Shoal (42)
Half Moon Bay (42) with state modification
Monterey Bay/Canyon (45) with state modification
Point Sur Deep (44)
TNC/ED areas between Pt. Sur and Pt. Conception

Southern California - California proposes fishing gear closures for the areas designated as MPAs in state and federal waters in the CINMS, trawl gear closures in three sub areas in the Cowcod Conservation Area West (CCA) and the CCA East based on their designation as HAPC, and an area surrounding Catalina Island (51) proposed by Oceana. This would protect large areas of rocky habitat, a submarine canyon and occurrences of some deep water invertebrates.

CCA West Sub-Areas (from 50):

 Potato Bank (50-1)
 Cherry Bank (50-2)
 Hidden Reef/Kidney Bank (50-3)
Catalina Island (51)
CCA East (52)

C.13: Close ecologically important areas to bottom-contacting gear

Davidson Seamount – Support prohibiting all bottom contact fishing gear to prevent damage from future fishing or other resource exploitation activities.

Cordell Bank - Support prohibiting all bottom contact fishing gear in depths shallower than 50 fm.

C.14: Close ecologically important areas to fishing

Implement federal waters portions of Channel Islands MPAs.

The Channel Islands MPAs are a proportional representation of habitat types that occur in a unique area of high productivity, biodiversity and biogeographic and oceanographic mixing. This would be the completion of the federal waters phase of the Channel Islands MPA process which implemented MPAs in state waters that were designed to protect habitat and resources in that region. This was a six-year partnership process between the state and the CINMS involving extensive stakeholder input and involvement and continues as a multi-party collaborative effort. All MPAs except the western Anacapa Island marine protected area would be complete no take areas. With the exception of the proposed "Foot Print" MPA in Federal waters all others would be contiguous with existing state MPAs.

Alternative D.1: No Action

California supports the no action alternative which continues to collect fishery monitoring data through a trawl logbook program, the groundfish observer program, and vessel monitoring systems. California does support continued identification of important data gaps for effective management of the groundfish fisheries and efforts to identify and commit funding to adequately address those research needs.

Alternative D.2: Expanded logbook program

California has concerns about the practicality, logistical requirements, and funding needed to implement an industry-wide logbook program and ability to productively use the data generated from such a program.

Alternative D.4: Research Reserve System

A separate research reserve system is not be needed since the proposed MPAs in the CINMS and other proposed gear closures which may be implemented could serve that function, especially on issues of fished and non-fished habitat comparisons.

CDFG-proposed modifications to four areas proposed for closure under C.12

The following provide descriptions of modifications proposed by CDFG in Figure 1 (depicted by an asterisk (*)) to address areas where discrepancies occur between Oceana and Trawl Industry proposals under C.12.

Crescent City Deep Biogenic Area (32):

Modification: Adopt Oceana Area boundaries westward of Trawl Industry-proposed western boundary.

Concerns addressed: The eastern portion proposed for removal is frequently trawled and would make compliance with the closure boundary difficult.

Eel River Canyon (34):

Modification: Adopt Trawl Industry proposal seaward of the deep RCA boundary and adopt Oceana proposal shoreward of the deep RCA boundary.

Concerns addressed: Provide enforceable size closure in shoreward area and extend habitat protection along canyon and into deeper waters.

Half Moon Bay (42):

Modification: remove area shoreward of line proposed by Oceana (see figure)

Concerns addressed: Eastern section is sandy habitat that is needed for a trawl corridor. Easternmost tip offers rocky habitat that may be too small to enforce as a separate closure.

Monterey Canyon (45):

Modification: Adopt Oceana proposed boundaries in western half of area; adopt Trawl Industry proposed boundaries in eastern half along canyon and southeast.

Concerns addressed: Trawling for California halibut occurs along areas that would otherwise be closed if the entire Oceana area was adopted.

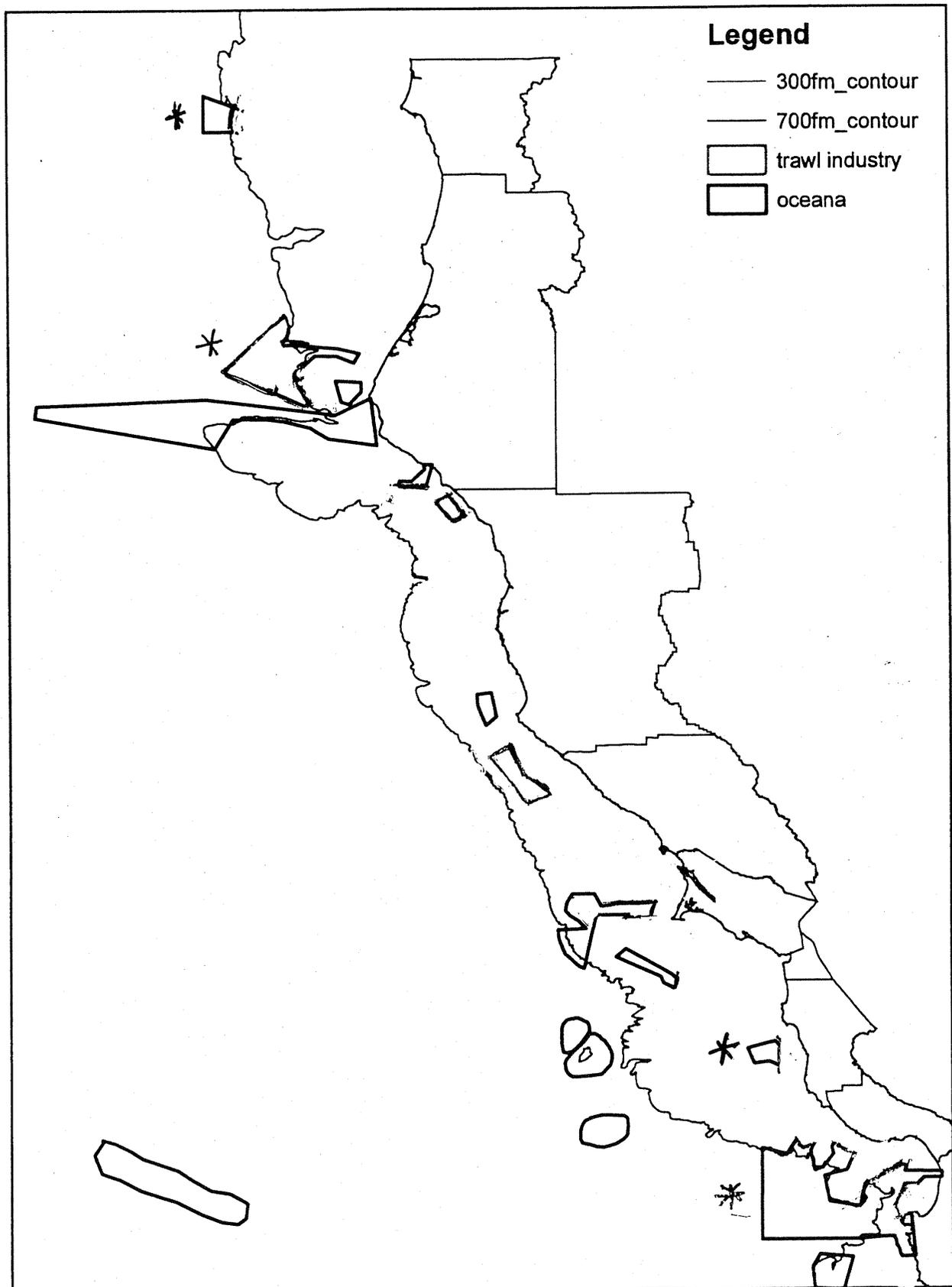


Figure 1: CDFG-supported proposed trawl closure areas under C.12
Boundaries represent areas agreed upon by Oceana and the Trawl Industry.
Areas with an asterisk (*) represent CDFG-modified proposed boundaries where discrepancies occur.

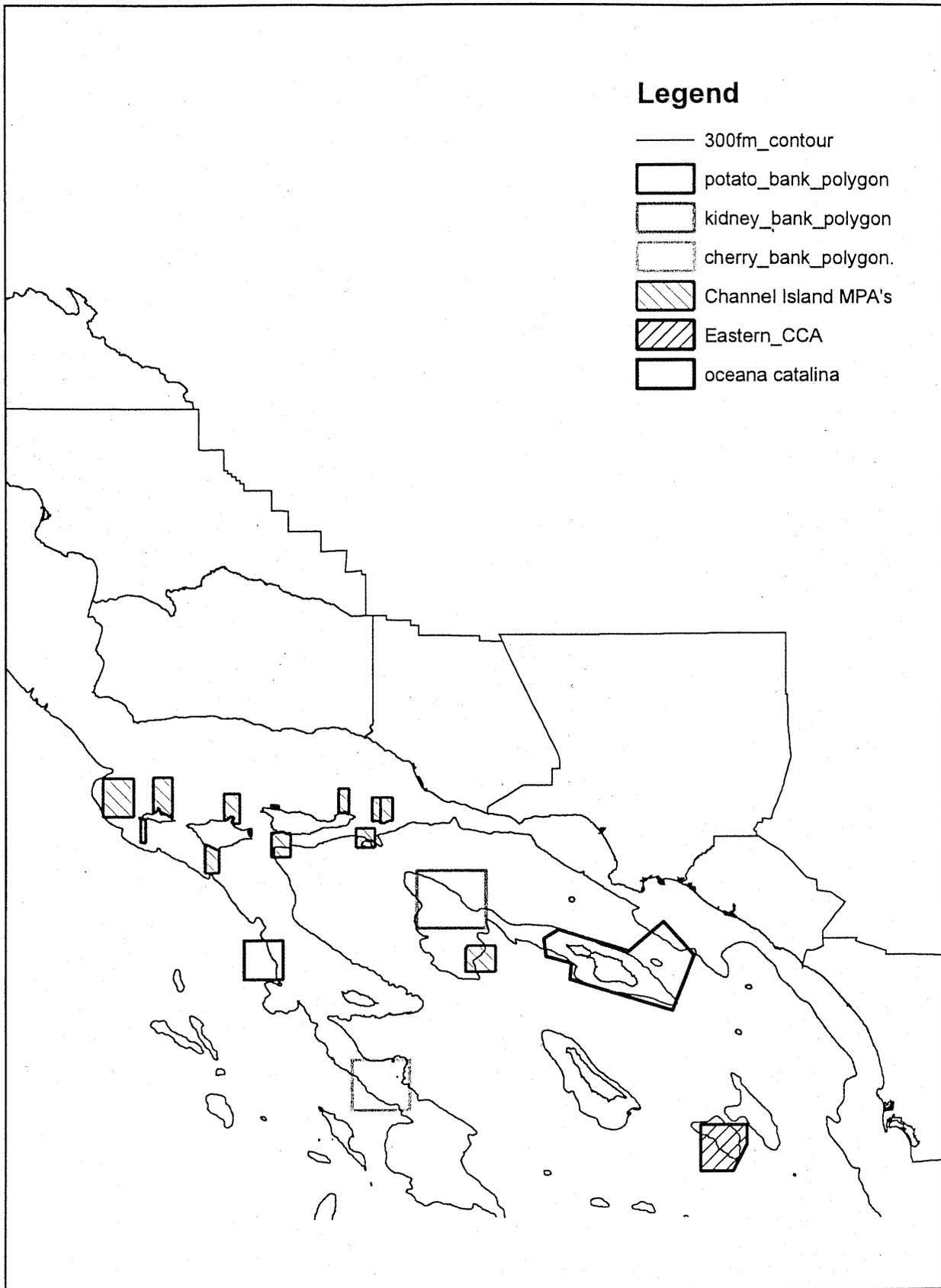


Figure 2: CDFG-supported proposed trawl closure areas under C.12
Boundaries represent areas agreed upon by Oceana and the Trawl Industry.
Areas with an asterisk (*) represent CDFG-modified proposed boundaries where discrepancies occur.