

Examples of 679 letters received on groundfish Amendment 28

Dear Chair Lowman and Council Members,

Thank you for your past work to protect ocean habitat. As you consider revisions to the groundfish management plan, I hope you will now increase protections for important Pacific Ocean habitat on the shelf, slope, and seafloor.

Please take the next step toward implementing a bottom trawling closure in deepwater areas beyond 3,500 meters off the California coast to protect this pristine region and the fragile deep-sea corals known to exist there. Such an action is within the authority of the council and would be consistent with its forward-thinking, ecosystem-oriented management approach.

I also encourage the Council to develop a broad range of alternatives for new or modified bottom trawling closures on the continental shelf and slope. Fishing activity taking place here may be affecting vulnerable habitats that could otherwise be protected without undue impact on fishermen. These alternatives should include a conservation package to ensure that effective protections are not lost and that important marine habitats are safeguarded and enhanced. I support reopening areas that can be fished sustainably without adverse effects on habitat, but vulnerable areas of corals and sponges within any long-standing closures must remain closed.

Healthy marine habitats along the U.S. West Coast help ensure a sustainable supply of fish for commercial and recreational fisheries and build a legacy we can pass to future generations. Again, please move comprehensive habitat protection forward for the Pacific shelf, slope, and seafloor.

Sincerely,
Gail Stern
Tarpon Springs FL 34689
United States

From: jhop-90@earthlink.net <jhop-90@earthlink.net>
Date: Wed, Feb 17, 2016 at 10:48 AM
Subject: Now is the time to protect pacific groundfish and deepwater ocean habitat
To: pfmtc.comments@noaa.gov

Dear Chair Lowman and Council Members,

Thank you for your past work to protect ocean habitat, including the recently concluded five-year review of Essential Fish Habitat for groundfish. The Council is now well positioned to find many win-win possibilities for habitat protection and the fishing economy, thanks to a stakeholder-driven process in the five-year review along with ongoing collaborative discussions between fishermen and conservation advocates.

In considering the upcoming amendment to the management plan for groundfish, I urge the Council to advance the following:

- Closure to bottom trawling of the deepwater areas (beyond 3,500 meters) off California south of the Mendocino Ridge.
- A coastwide scope for potential changes to the groundfish management plan.
- Potential designation of new Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).
- Potential creation of new EFH Conservation Areas or adjustment of current EFH Conservation Areas.
- Inclusion of all remaining stakeholder proposals as potential alternatives.
- Adjustment of area-based management measures such as the Rockfish Conservation Area to improve fishing

while also protecting habitat.

- Measures to address bottom contact by midwater trawl fishing gear.
- Designation of key prey species of groundfish.

Healthy marine habitats ensure a sustainable supply of fish for commercial and recreational fisheries. But these essential places—which contain deep-sea corals, sponges, and seamounts—can be damaged by fishing gear such as bottom trawls. I urge the Council to move habitat protection forward and seek a broad set of solutions for fishing communities and a healthy ocean.

Thank you for your time,
jeff hopkins
Lindenhurst IL 60046-7912
United States

From: **Chris Lish** <lishchris@yahoo.com>

Date: Tue, Feb 23, 2016 at 10:52 AM

Subject: Please support the Essential Fish Habitat “Comprehensive Conservation Proposal”

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Subject: Please support the Essential Fish Habitat “Comprehensive Conservation Proposal”

Dear PFMC Chair Lowman and NMFS Administrator Stelle:

I write in support of the Essential Fish Habitat “Comprehensive Conservation Proposal” submitted by Oceana, Natural Resources Defense Council, and Ocean Conservancy in 2013 to protect important ocean habitats off the U.S. West Coast from bottom trawling.

“Our duty to the whole, including to the unborn generations, bids us to restrain an unprincipled present-day minority from wasting the heritage of these unborn generations. The movement for the conservation of wildlife and the larger movement for the conservation of all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose and method.”

-- Theodore Roosevelt

The proposed new and modified Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Areas are in crucial areas such as the Southern California Bight, Farallon Escarpment, Cape Arago, Astoria Canyon, and the Olympic Coast. The proposal also includes the deep-water conservation area in waters beyond 3,500m (11,484 feet) off California, which remains largely pristine and unexplored. These proposed areas to be protected include hotspots for corals, sponges, rocky reefs, underwater canyons and other unique and sensitive seafloor habitats that support healthy ocean ecosystems. These areas provide habitat essential to the survival and recovery of recreationally and commercially important fish species like rockfish as well as many non-commercial species like sea stars and octopuses.

“It is our task in our time and in our generation, to hand down undiminished to those who come after us, as was handed down to us by those who went before, the natural wealth and beauty which is ours.”

-- John F. Kennedy

Bottom trawling, the practice of dragging large nets, steel doors and rollers along the seafloor to catch commercially important fish, is widely known to destroy and flatten seafloor habitats. Intact and biologically diverse seafloor habitats are essential to managed fish species and to the health and biodiversity of ocean ecosystems. The essential fish habitat areas included in coast-wide conservation proposal should be off limits to bottom trawling.

“As we peer into society’s future, we—you and I, and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.”

-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

This proposal represents a balanced management approach that protects living seafloor habitats while maintaining vibrant fisheries for a healthy, sustainable ocean ecosystem. The proposal incorporates the most recent scientific findings on where important habitats occur, including newly identified coral and sponge observations and bycatch hotspots as well as locations of sensitive rocky reefs that were not known in 2005 when the current EFH Conservation Areas were established. Additionally, other areas that were off limits to trawling in 2015 through the Trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs) are now being considered for reopening as part of the scope of this action. It is critical that known sensitive habitat types within the RCAs remain closed to bottom trawling as EFH Conservation Areas. The Comprehensive Conservation Proposal demonstrates how the Pacific Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service can protect essential fish habitat, while meeting the requirements of the law and minimizing economic burdens on the fishing industry.

“Every man who appreciates the majesty and beauty of the wilderness and of wild life, should strike hands with the farsighted men who wish to preserve our material resources, in the effort to keep our forests and our game beasts, game-birds, and game-fish—indeed, all the living creatures of prairie and woodland and seashore—from wanton destruction. Above all, we should realize that the effort toward this end is essentially a democratic movement.”

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Specifically I ask that you fully analyze, adopt, and implement the “Comprehensive Conservation Proposal” in its entirety through a regulatory amendment to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Protecting ocean habitats is a critical part of responsible fishery management. As you are aware, habitat conservation helps ensure long-term sustainable and productive fisheries, vibrant coastal communities, and healthy marine ecosystems. Thank you for ensuring living seafloor habitats are protected from bottom trawling.

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”

-- Aldo Leopold

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn about future developments on this issue from other sources.

Sincerely,
Christopher Lish
San Rafael, CA

Dear NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator Will Stelle and Pacific Fishery Management Council Chair Dorothy Lowman,

Thank you for your past work to protect ocean habitats. I am writing today to encourage additional habitat protections as you consider action on Amendment 28 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Specifically, there are three actions that will increase protections for important Pacific Ocean habitat on the continental shelf, slope, and deep-sea abyssal plain that will help ensure healthy fisheries in the future:

1. Support a bottom-contact closure in areas deeper than 3,500 meters off the West Coast.
2. Support a net effective gain in habitat protection on the continental shelf and slope of the Pacific Ocean.
3. Include a diversity of habitat types for protection throughout the region.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) and NOAA Fisheries have an opportunity to take a precautionary approach and close areas deeper than 3,500 meters off the West Coast to fishing gear that contacts the bottom. This action will protect this pristine and vulnerable area, including the deep sea corals known to exist there. This action is also consistent with the basic tenets of ecosystem-based fishery management, which is a stated goal for both the PFMC and NOAA Fisheries. Please include consideration and analysis of this closure in the Environmental Impact Statement, and also identify this measure as a preliminary preferred alternative at the Council's April meeting.

Amendment 28 should also result in a net effective gain in overall habitat protections on the continental shelf and slope of the Pacific Ocean. It is reasonable to consider re-opening habitat that is effectively protected now by other closures provided it can be fished sustainably. However, vulnerable or recovered habitats like corals and sponges within long-standing closures should remain closed and new closures created so that the outcome improves habitat protection. To this end, all of the current alternatives (including the seven stakeholder proposals) should be retained for analysis with the exception of the option that only calls for re-openings without any new protections.

Finally, I ask that you prioritize the following habitat types for protection: areas that have not been fished recently or have never been fished, including areas beyond 3,500 meters and areas in the Southern California Bight; living habitat such as corals and sponges; hydrothermal vents and hydrocarbon seeps (unique features that science shows are critical to the function and health of our oceans); a diverse array of habitat representing different depths, seafloor types, and coastal regions; and where possible, large habitat closures forming a "corridor" (connecting shelf to upper slope to lower slope).

Healthy marine habitats along the U.S. West Coast help ensure healthy fish populations and a sustainable supply of fish for commercial and recreational fisheries. This is a legacy we should pass to future generations. Again, please move comprehensive habitat protection forward for the Pacific shelf, slope, and abyssal plain seafloor.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Callie Riley
Citrus Heights, CA
956102514
United States