

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON NONTRAWL AREA
MANAGEMENT MEASURES – HECETA BANK WEST PROPOSAL

This report presents a proposal from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for an addition to the range of alternatives for nontrawl area management.

The Heceta Bank Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area (EFHCA) and the adjacent area to the west (“Heceta Bank West¹”) between that bottom trawl EFHCA’s seaward boundary and the 100 fathom line (Figure 1) was identified as sensitive habitat and as having a high probability of yelloweye rockfish occurrence (Figures 2 and 3) during the Amendment 28 process.

Alternative 3 would open the area between the 75 fm and 100 fm lines, including Heceta Bank West, to commercial fishing with any nontrawl groundfish gear type. While an existing option would exclude commercial groundfish nontrawl bottom contact gear from any bottom trawl EFHCA that would be reopened under Alternative 3, Heceta Bank West is not inside a bottom trawl EFHCA and would therefore be opened to all nontrawl gear types under the current range of alternatives. While this area is currently open to trawling, the rugose habitat and yelloweye rockfish constraints in the trawl IFQ program may inhibit trawling here, whereas the use of longline and pot gear could be more likely.

Because of the potential for benthic habitat damage and yelloweye rockfish bycatch in this unique area, ODFW proposes development of an option with Alternative 3 for analysis and public input that would exclude commercial non-trawl groundfish fishing with bottom-contact gear (defined at 50 CFR 660.11(1)) from the Heceta Bank West area, between the 75 fm and 100 fm management lines and northern and southern boundaries at new lines illustrated in Figure 3 (coordinates in Table 1).

This would provide precautionary protection of benthic habitat and groundfish EFH in this area from potential adverse effects of fishing gear if Alternative 3 was adopted and implemented. It is expected that the next groundfish EFH review process will include a more comprehensive evaluation. The proposal is also expected to support yelloweye rockfish rebuilding by reducing the potential for bycatch in the nontrawl commercial groundfish sector.

ODFW requests that if possible, Council staff provide options for the most appropriate type(s) of area management measure (e.g., non-trawl RCA polygon, YRCA, etc.) to achieve the desired objective of protecting benthic habitat and yelloweye rockfish from impacts by commercial groundfish nontrawl bottom contact gear, when the Council next considers the nontrawl area management measures item.

¹ The term “Heceta Bank West” was used in a proposal considered by the Council in the Amendment 28 process. The boundaries of the proposed area so named in this report are similar, but not the same.

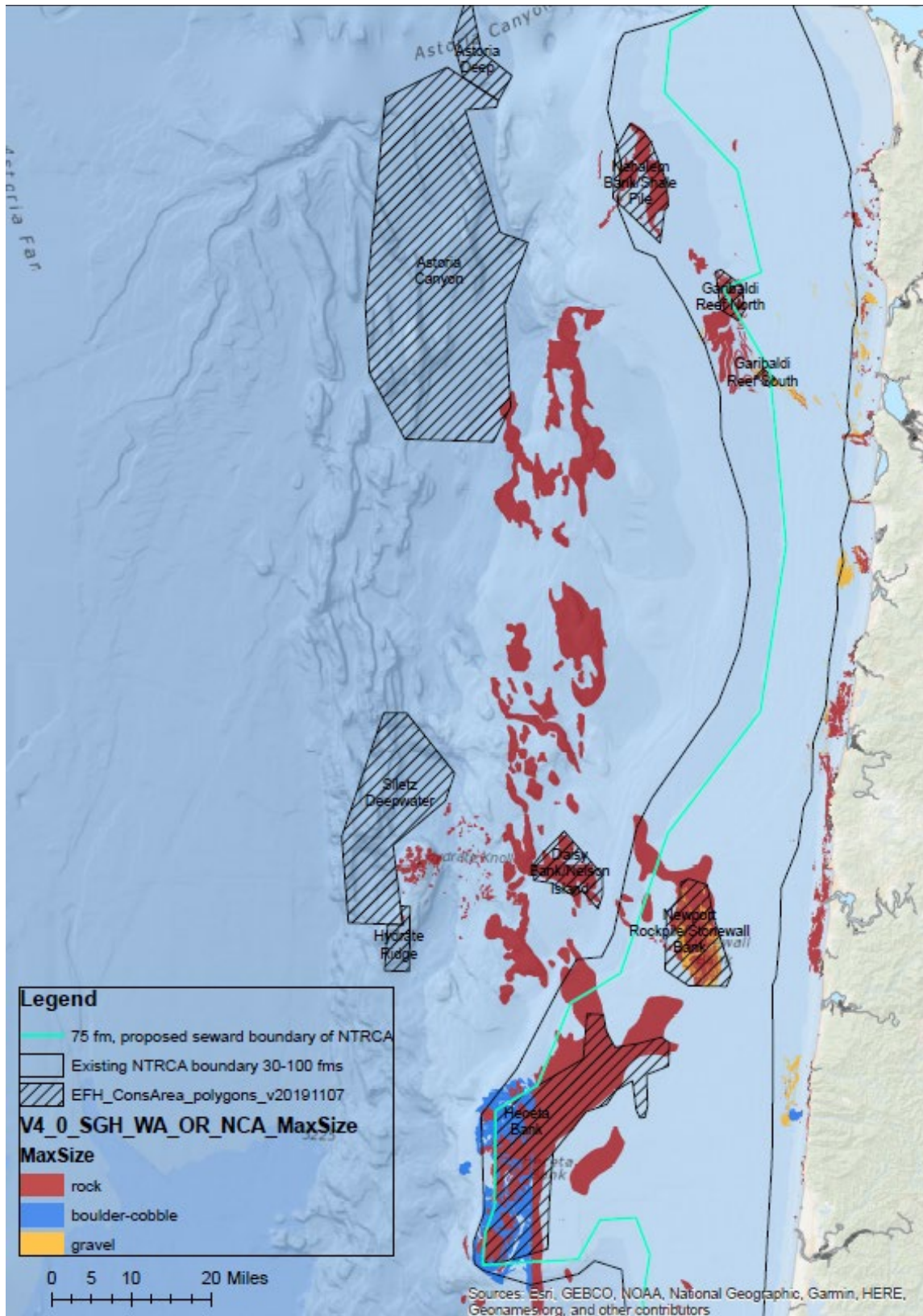


Figure 1. Heceta Bank EFHCA (bottom) in relation to the existing and Alternative 3 proposed seaward boundaries of the nontrawl RCA. EFHCAs shown here are closed to all trawl gear.

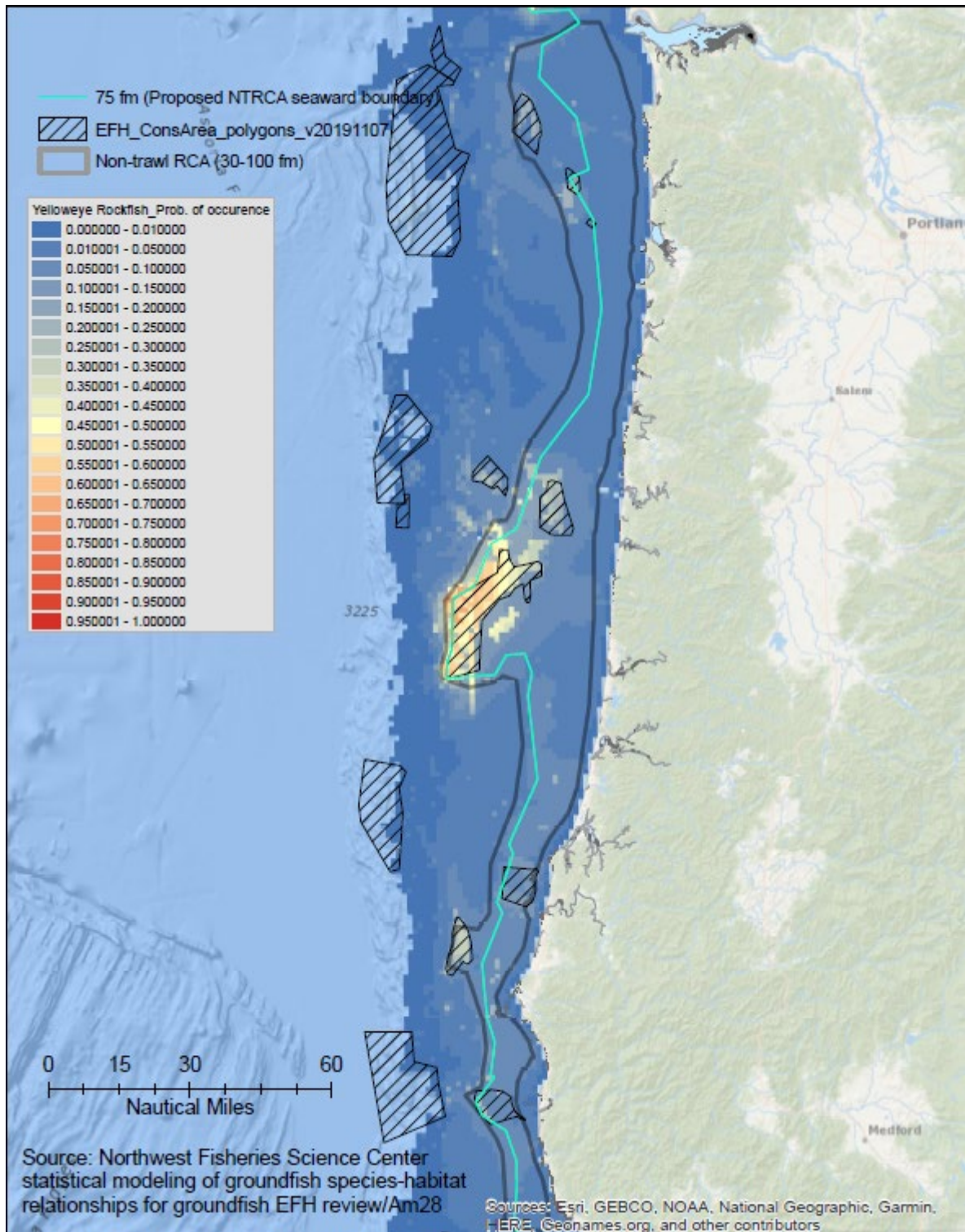


Figure 2. Probability of yelloweye rockfish occurrence off the Oregon coast (from Amendment 28 process), with warmer colors showing high probability of occurrence in the area of the Heceta Bank EFHCA that is closed to trawl gear.

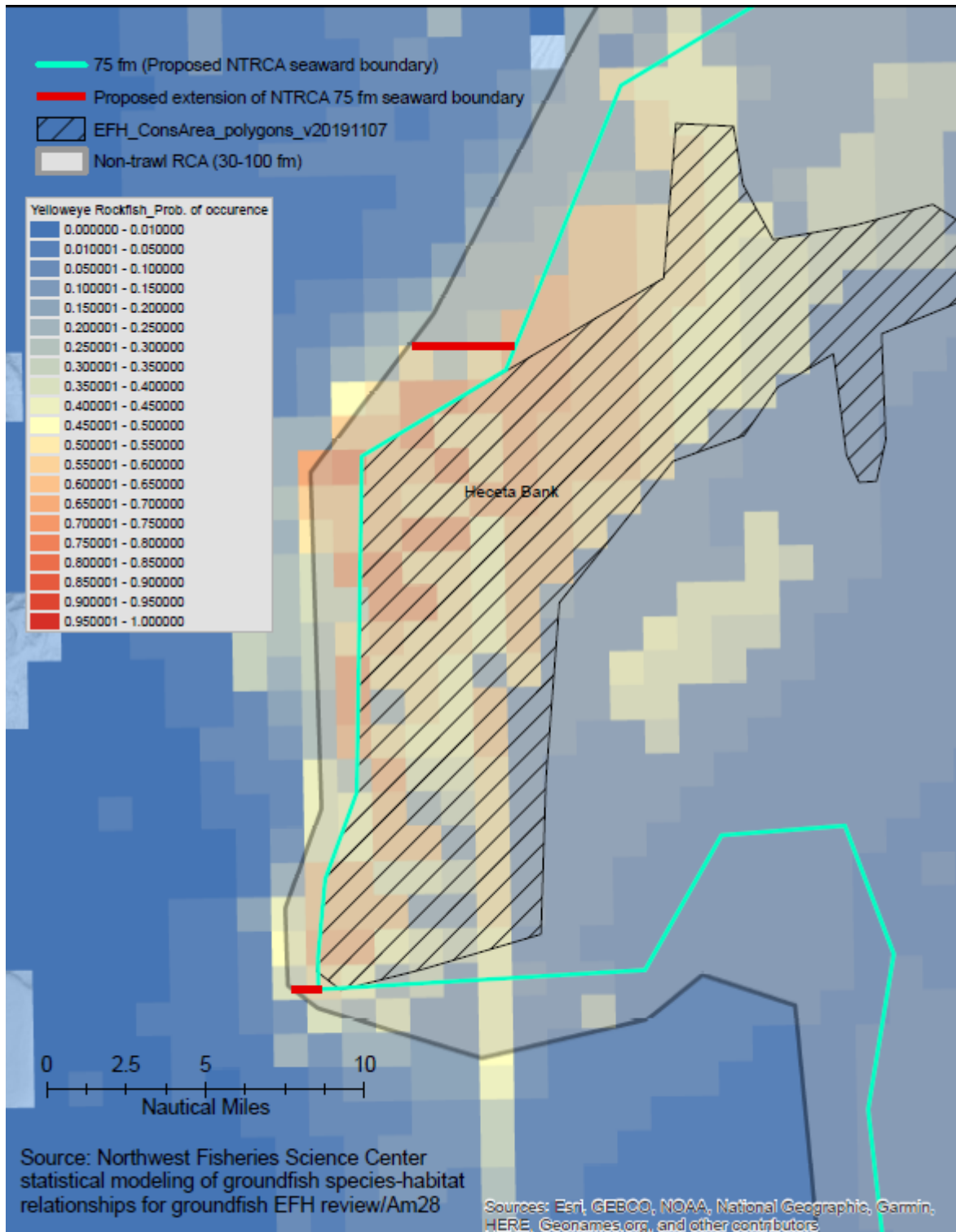


Figure 3. Close-up of Heceta Bank EFHCA and yelloweye rockfish probability of occurrence. Horizontal red lines illustrate potential northern and southern boundaries connecting the 75 and 100 fm lines to create an area in which groundfish bottom contact gear could be excluded (coordinates of these lines provided in Table 1).

Table 1. Coordinates (endpoints) of horizontal red lines shown in Figure 3 connecting 75 and 100 fm management lines

FID	Name	UTM_X	UTM_Y	DD_long	DD_lat
0	S-line	345804.6452	4867481.204	-124.9214457	43.94430202
1	S-line	344106.3373	4867481.204	-124.9425966	43.94394428
2	N-line	357035.3912	4904953.546	-124.7917311	44.28378072
3	N-line	351118.7055	4904953.546	-124.8658448	44.2825938