

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON NONTRAWL AREA MANAGEMENT MEASURES – NEHALEM BANK LONG-TERM MONITORING SITES

This report presents information from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) on established habitat research sites near Nehalem Bank which could be affected if the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) is adjusted or removed. ODFW does not propose a regulatory closure in these areas at this time, but provides the information, map, and coordinates below for consideration by the Council and other interested parties.

As noted in Agenda Item C.1 Habitat Committee Report 1 April 2022, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife initiated a long-term study of seafloor habitats associated with the shrimp trawl fishery in the vicinity of Nehalem Bank in 2007. Sites within and outside the Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area (EFHCA) provide a before/after control/impact comparison for examining changes in invertebrate abundance between the EFHCA and nearby areas open to shrimp trawling. ODFW conducted ROV transects at these sites in 2007 and 2013, plans to return in spring 2022, and hopes to continue surveying this area in the future. Results are expected to contribute to the understanding of the impacts of trawl gear on benthic habitat and invertebrates, and of recovery after trawl gear was excluded from the Nehalem Bank EFHCA.

Two of the comparison sites outside the EFHCA (Figure 1 and Table 1) are in the commercial nontrawl RCA and have been protected from this sector's gear impacts since the study's inception; however, this area would be opened to all commercial nontrawl fishing if the seaward boundary of the RCA is moved from the 100 fm in to the 75 fm line, or if the nontrawl RCA is removed entirely. It is possible that the use of bottom contact nontrawl gear in this area could confound the data and conclusions obtained from this study. However, these sites are in a soft-bottom habitat and trawling by the pink shrimp fleet is occurring in these sites (as intended in the study design). It is possible that the use of nontrawl bottom contact gear in these sites would not significantly affect the value of the study.

West Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan Section 7.7, Habitat-related Research and Monitoring, recognizes the potential of using research sites unaffected by fishing in comparative studies to better understand the effects of fishing on habitat. A regulatory closure could be considered for the Nehalem Bank comparison sites to exclude nontrawl bottom contact gear. However, the sites are already affected by fishing with trawl gear as described above. In addition, the small size (1.1 nautical miles per side) could make enforcement and compliance challenging. Therefore, at this time ODFW is not recommending development of a regulatory closure.

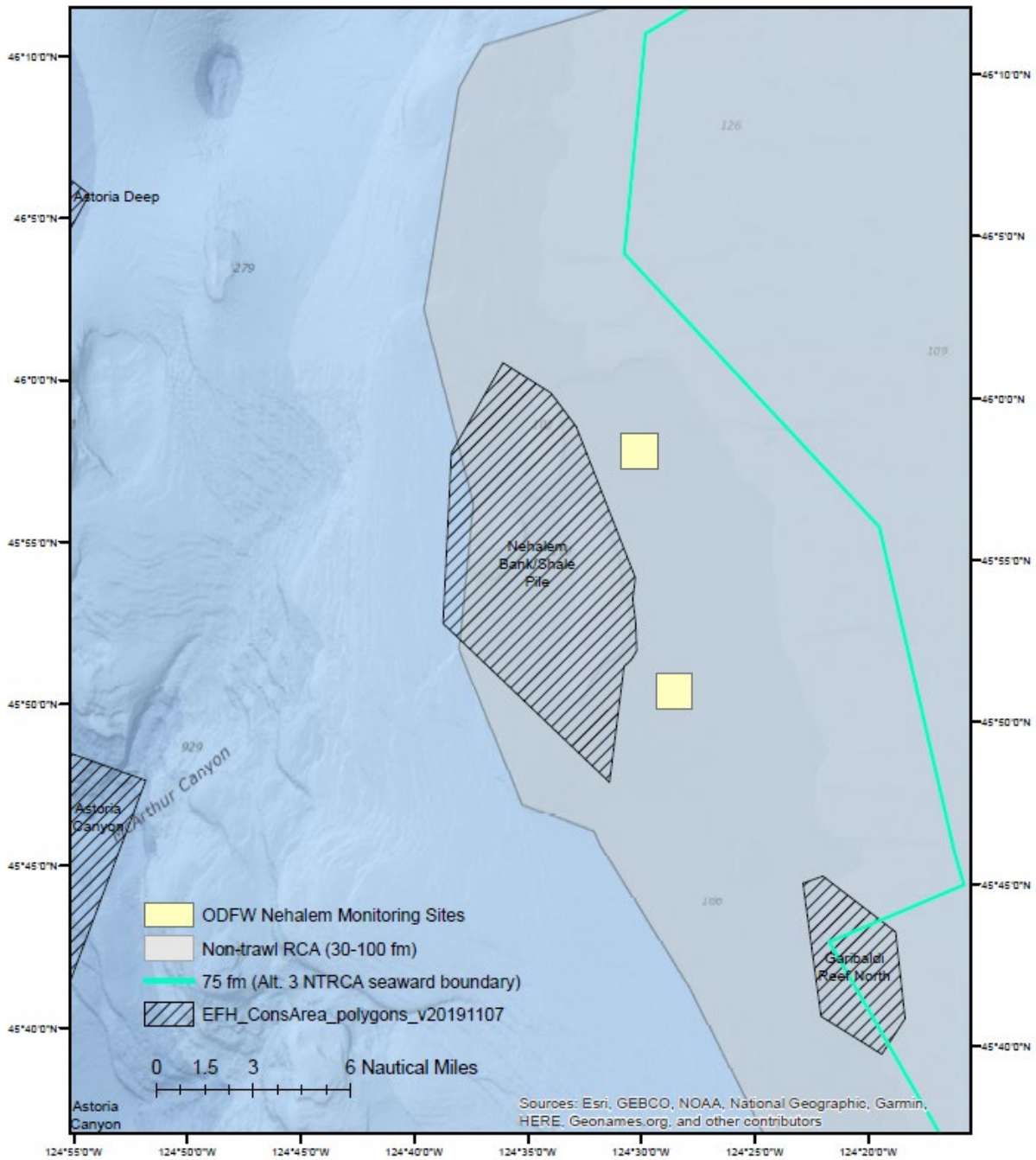


Figure 1. ODFW long-term monitoring sites outside the Nehalem Bank groundfish EFH conservation area (which is closed to all bottom trawl gear).

Table 1. Coordinates of the ODFW long-term monitoring sites illustrated in Figure 1.

FID	Id	Buff_ID	UTM_X	UTM_Y	DecDeg_Lon	DecDeg_Lat	SiteLoc
0	0	4	381931.8418	5092852.83	-124.5242234	45.97908231	North
1	0	4	383964.344	5092852.83	-124.4979936	45.9794292	North
2	0	4	383964.344	5090804.917	-124.4974969	45.96100349	North
3	0	4	381931.8418	5090804.917	-124.523718	45.96065681	North
4	0	4	381931.8418	5092852.83	-124.5242234	45.97908231	North
5	0	7	383946.5014	5079125.951	-124.4949029	45.85591997	South
6	0	7	385979.0036	5079125.951	-124.4687307	45.85625944	South
7	0	7	385979.0036	5077078.038	-124.4682458	45.83783308	South
8	0	7	383946.5014	5077078.038	-124.4944093	45.83749383	South
9	0	7	383946.5014	5079125.951	-124.4949029	45.85591997	South