OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON
NON- TRAWL AREA MANAGEMENT

This report seeks to inform Council and other interested parties of important issues the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) identified during the review of the information presented in G.6 Attachment 1. ODFW feels that additional consideration is warranted given the impacts of habitat information used for analyses for the Alternative 2 sub options. The source of the information supporting this discussion is Goldfinger, et al. (2014) and Joe Bizzarro (NOAA contractor, personal communication).

First, as presented in Section 3.7.2.1 (Effects of the Alternative 2) the analysis of rocky habitat affected by the Alternative 2 sub options was conducted using the rocky reef Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) dataset. This is a stand-alone dataset that is a subset of the comprehensive seafloor geologic habitat dataset (SGH) developed for the 2006 Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review (SGH Map Version 3.1). SGH v3.1 was updated with substantial amounts of new mapping data off all three states in 2011 (SGH v3.6) for the Groundfish EFH Review and again in 2014 and 2017 (SGH v4.0) in support of a regional seafloor assessment for ocean energy development.

The HAPC dataset used in the analysis of Alternative 2 was not updated beyond SGH v3.1 because the scope of the recent EFH Review did not include evaluation of HAPC. For Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Areas (EFHCAs) such as Garibaldi Reef North EFHCA, Garibaldi Reef South EFHCA, and Arago Reef EFHCA, the analysis underestimates the amount of rocky habitat impacted by the sub options (Figure 1).
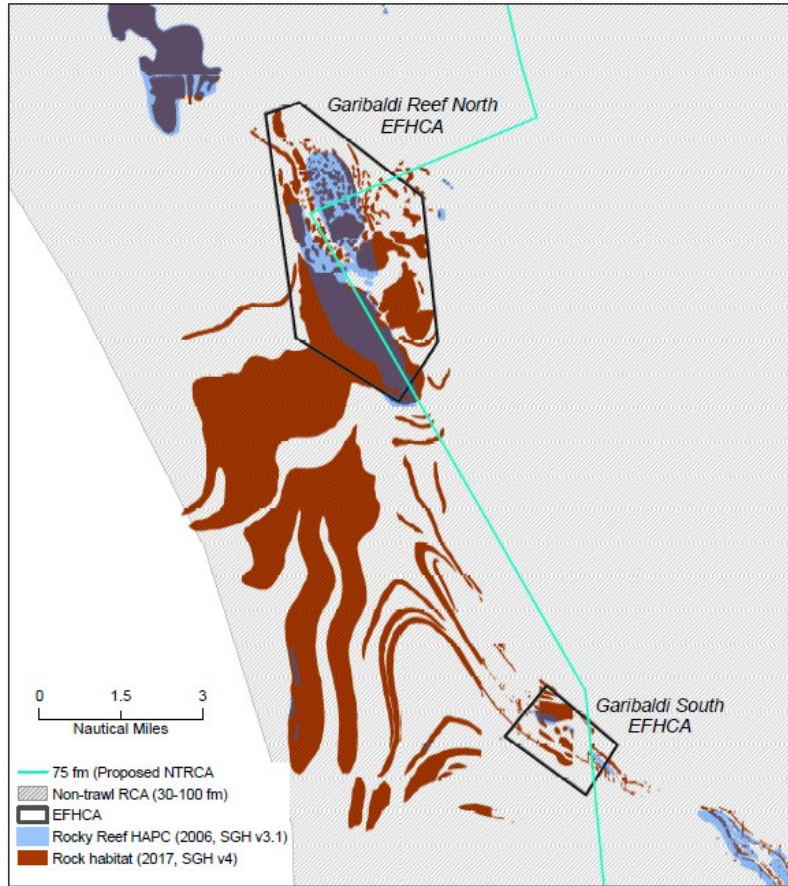
Figure 1. Comparison of rocky habitat in the Rocky Reef HAPC dataset (SGH v3.1) and rocky habitat in the comprehensive habitat dataset (SGH v4.0).

A separate issue with the habitat data used in the Environmental Assessment (EA) has to do with the comprehensive habitat dataset. SGH v4.0 includes important modifications and updates to the underlying attributes and attribute field definitions. One important modification resulted in significant changes to the "mixed" code of the induration classification scheme (hard-mixed-soft). In all instances, the primary substrate type of the updated "mixed" code is rock, boulder, cobble or a rock mix. The three-code scheme (Hard-Mixed-Soft) in SGH v4.0 implies that "mixed" does not contain significant rock (Figure 2A). In fact, the majority of areas classified as "mixed" are nearly entirely rock and with higher rocky habitat diversity (bedrock, boulder, cobble) and ecological value than the "hard" classification (Figure 2B). The two-code induration dataset (hard-soft) appropriately classifies important rocky habitats by merging the hard and mixed classes. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides the two-code induration scheme for this analysis in the NWFSC Non-trawl RCA Map Viewer developed for the non-trawl RCA analysis.
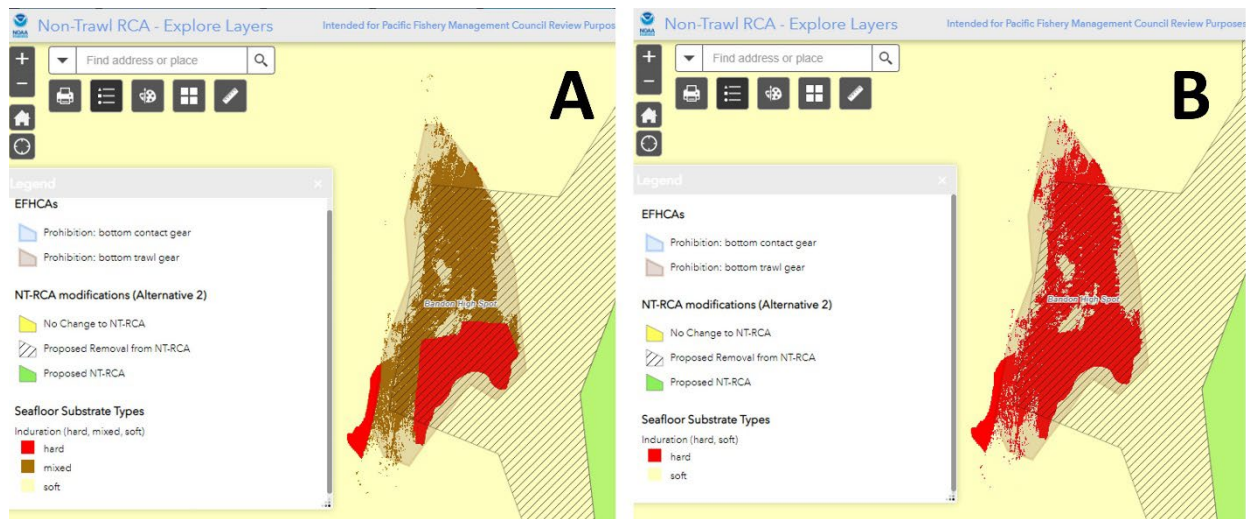
Figure 2: A Substrate Induration Codes (hard, mixed, soft), B Substrate induration codes (hard, soft)

The data quality of the underlying seafloor mapping data is also relevant to the analysis of Alternatives. Seafloor mapping survey footprints were scored based on a combination of factors that determine the data quality, including data resolution, survey scale (local/regional), type of survey data, and ground-truthing (Goldfinger, et al. 2014). Scores below 4 indicate areas where only regional-scale, not local-scale mapping occurred. EFHCAs off Oregon affected by Alternative 2 have high data quality scores with the exception of Rogue River Reef EFHCA and portions of Arago Reef EFHCA. However, new seafloor mapping and remotely operated vehicle surveys conducted by ODFW at Arago Reef EFHCA in 2019 provides added confidence about underlying habitat for these areas.

Given these identified habitat analyses issues, ODFW provides the following recommendations be considered for future analyses:

- Habitat analyses be done using the SGH v4.0 dataset and that the HAPC dataset be updated to SGH v4.0 at the earliest opportunity.
- For analyses intended to identify areas of ecologically important rocky habitat, that analysts use the two-code induration scheme (hard-soft) as it seems most appropriate.
- Data quality of the habitat information be considered to address uncertainty in analyses intended to identify areas of ecologically important rocky habitat.

REFERENCES

Goldfinger C, Henkel, SK, et al. 2014. Benthic Habitat Characterization Offshore the Pacific Northwest Volume 1: Evaluation of Continental Shelf Geology. US Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Pacific OCS Region. OCS Study BOEM 2014-662. 161 pp