

Non-Trawl Area Management: Protecting Habitat While Restoring Groundfish Fishing Opportunities



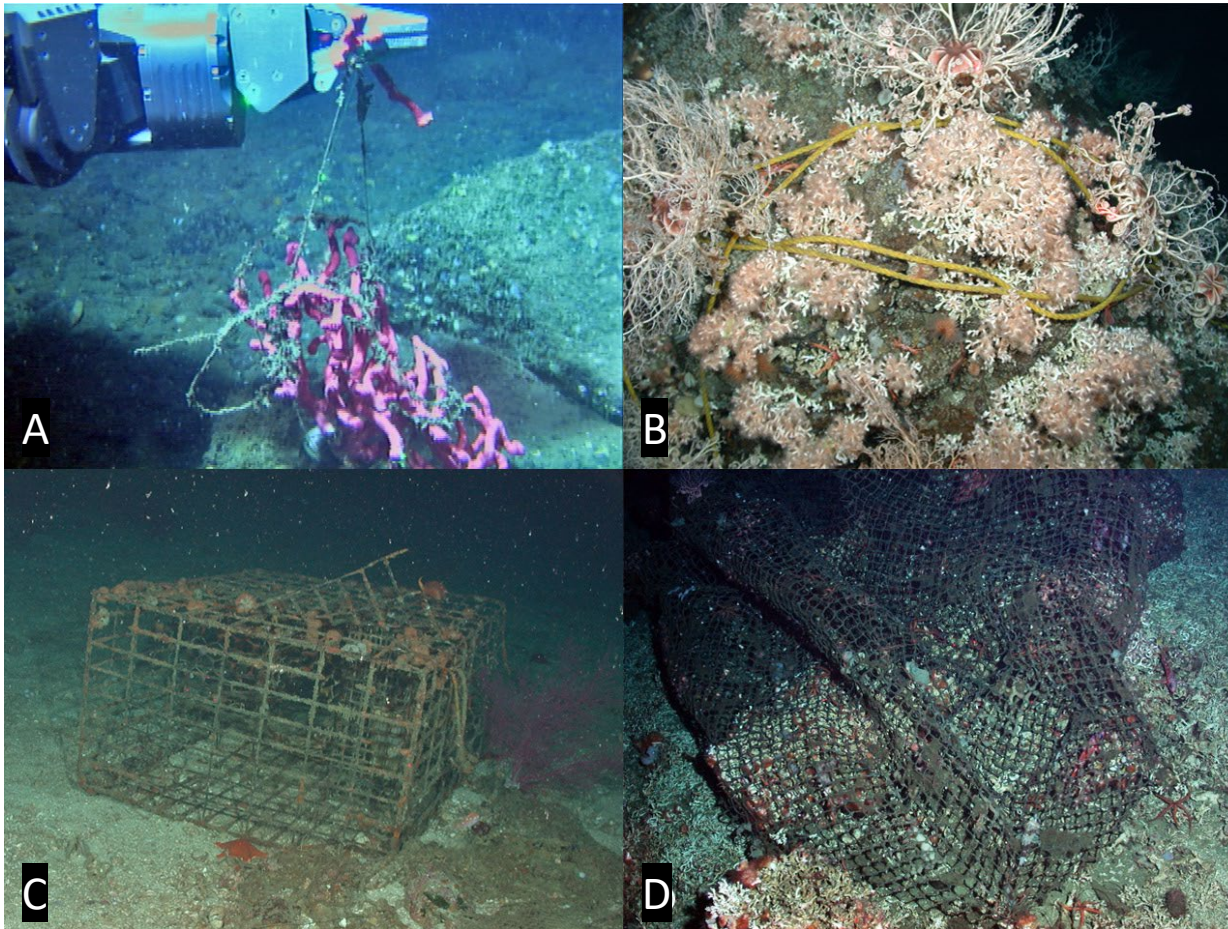
Gold gorgonian coral (*Acanthogorgia sp.*) west of Santa Barbara Island



Gorgonian corals (*Swiftia pacifica*) at Arago Reef, Southern Oregon

Ben Enticknap, Oceana
Agenda Item G.6 September 11, 2022

Effects of Fishing Gear on Deep Sea Coral and Sponge Ecosystems

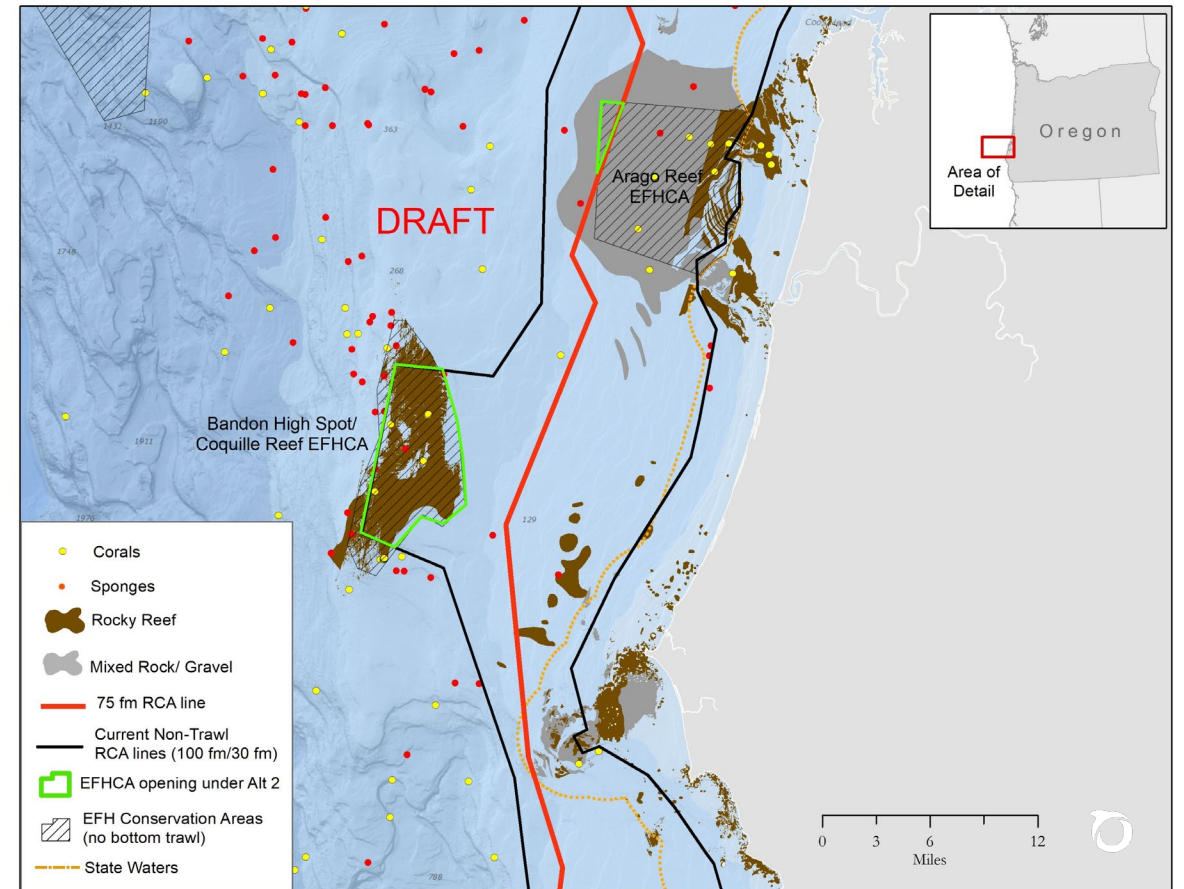
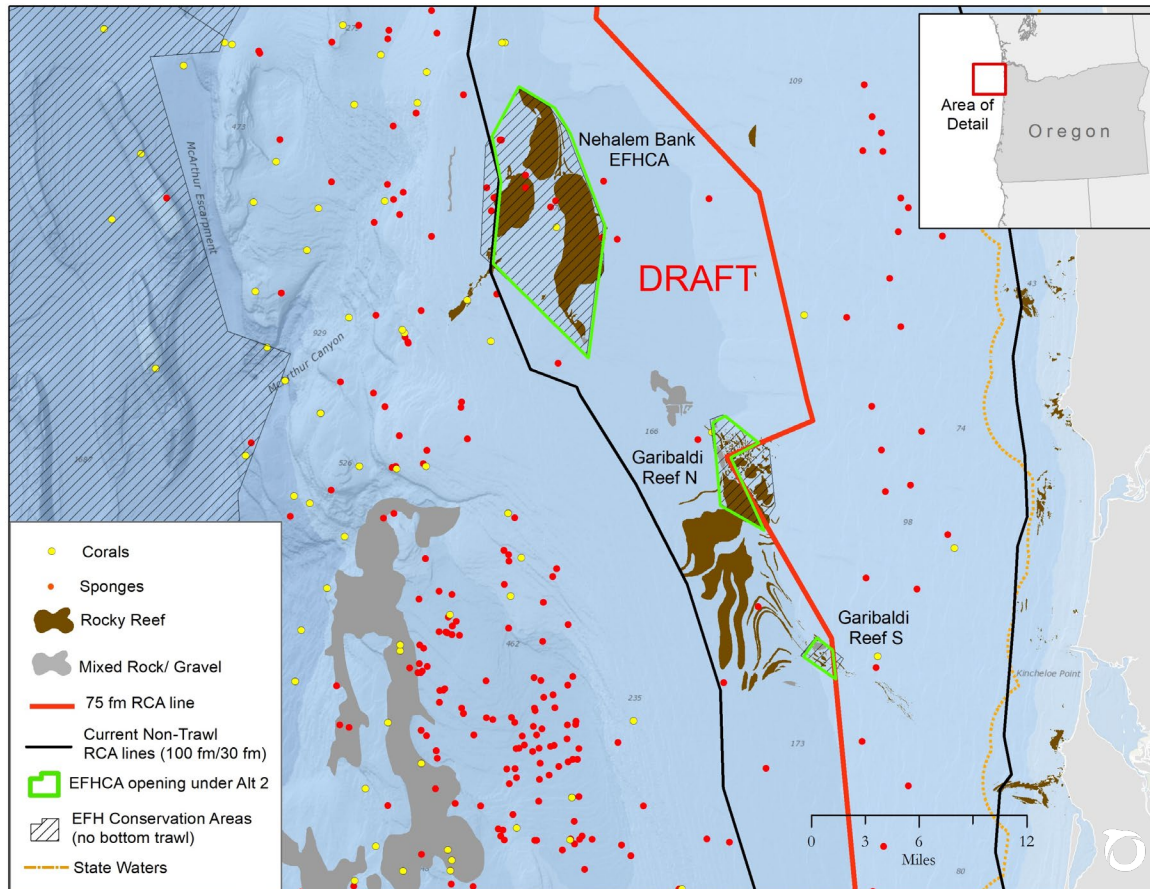


Images of fishing gear from U.S. West Coast ROV surveys:

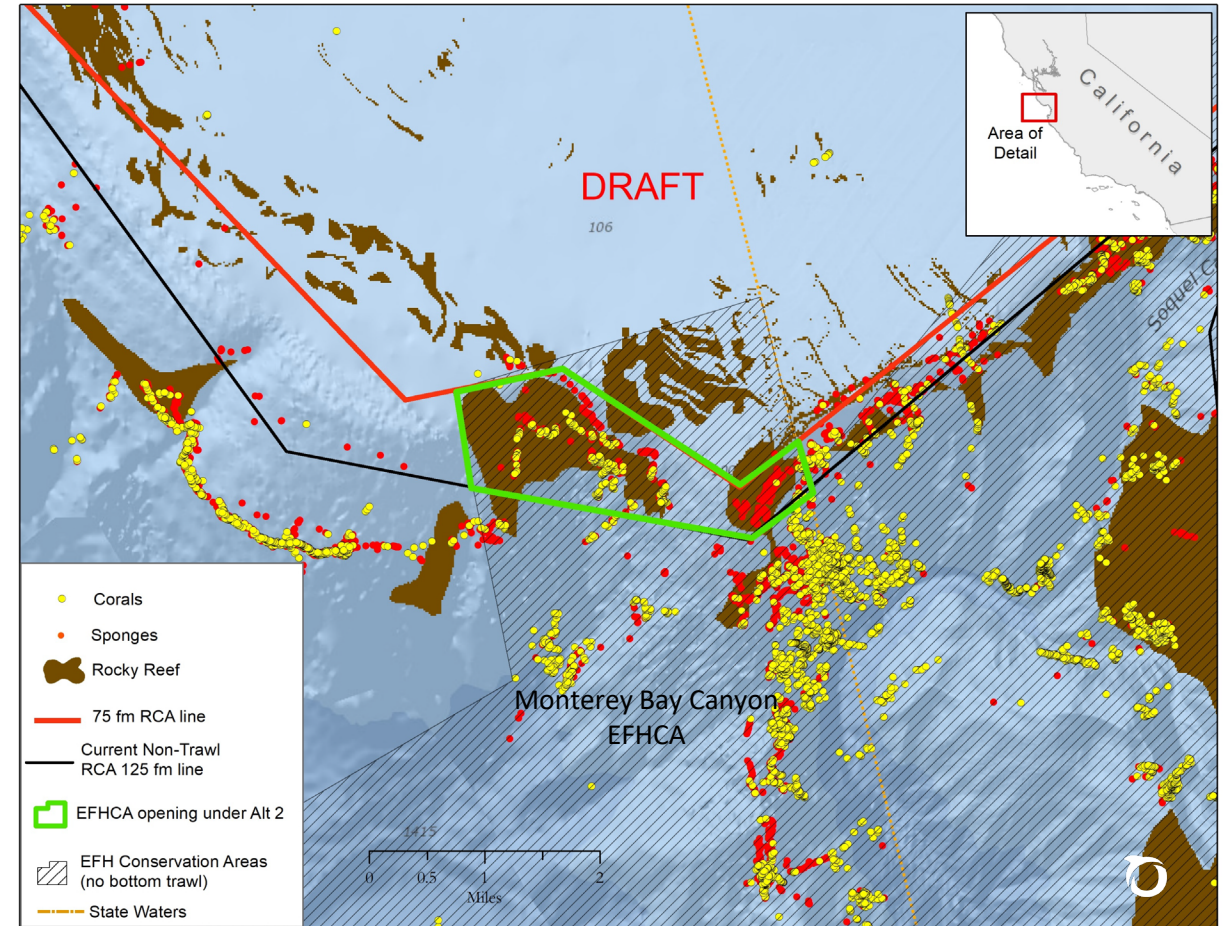
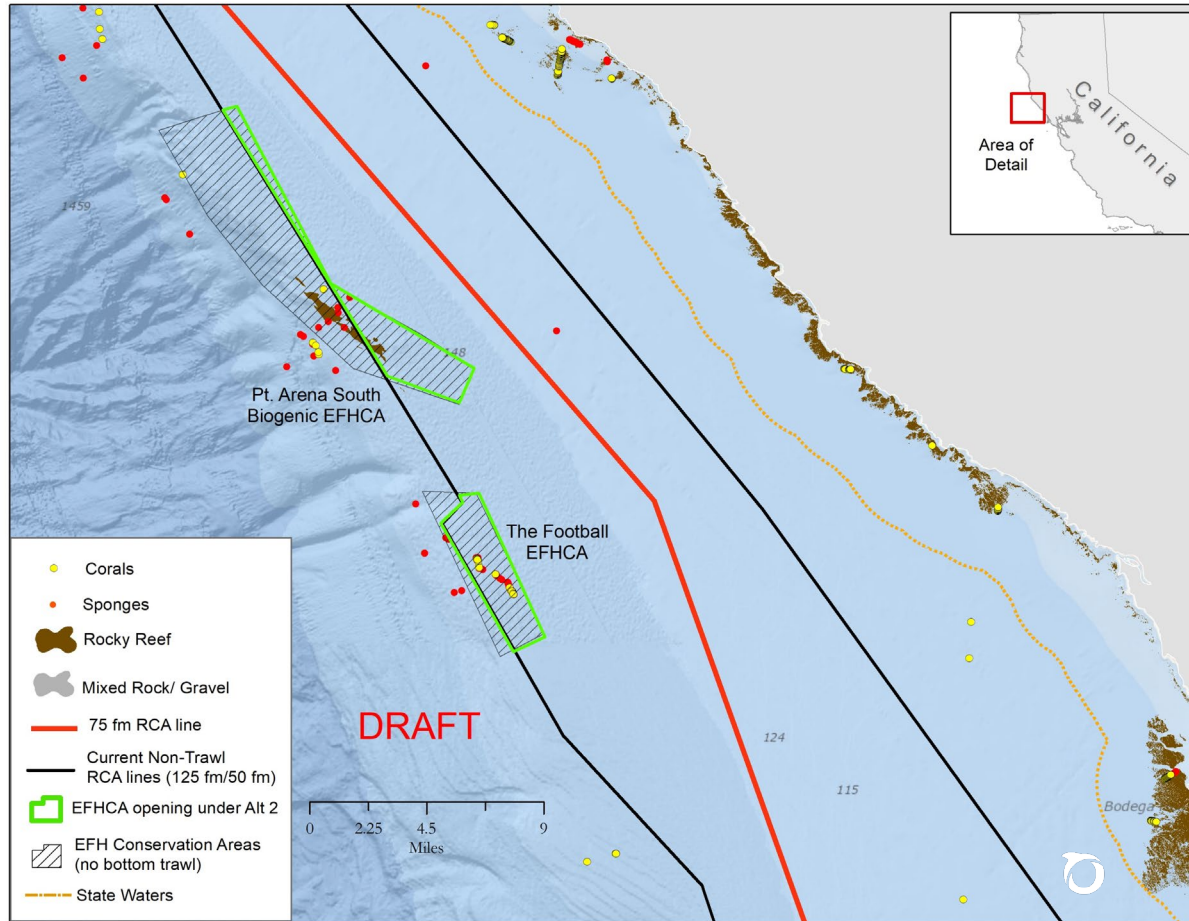
- A. Bubblegum coral entangled in longline gear
- B. Scleractinian coral (*Lophelia pertusa*) with yellow polypropylene line, possibly from an anchor line or a buoy line on fixed gear;
- C. Trap gear and netting (adjacent to a purple sea fan; and
- D. A section of a trawl net wrapped around coral rubble.

Source: Rooper *et al.* (2017) *Effects of Fishing Gear on Deep-Sea Corals and Sponges in U.S. Waters*. Available online: <http://deepseacoraldata.noaa.gov/library>.

Alternative 2: Modify non-trawl RCA with sub-options that protect priority habitats/ EFH conservation areas

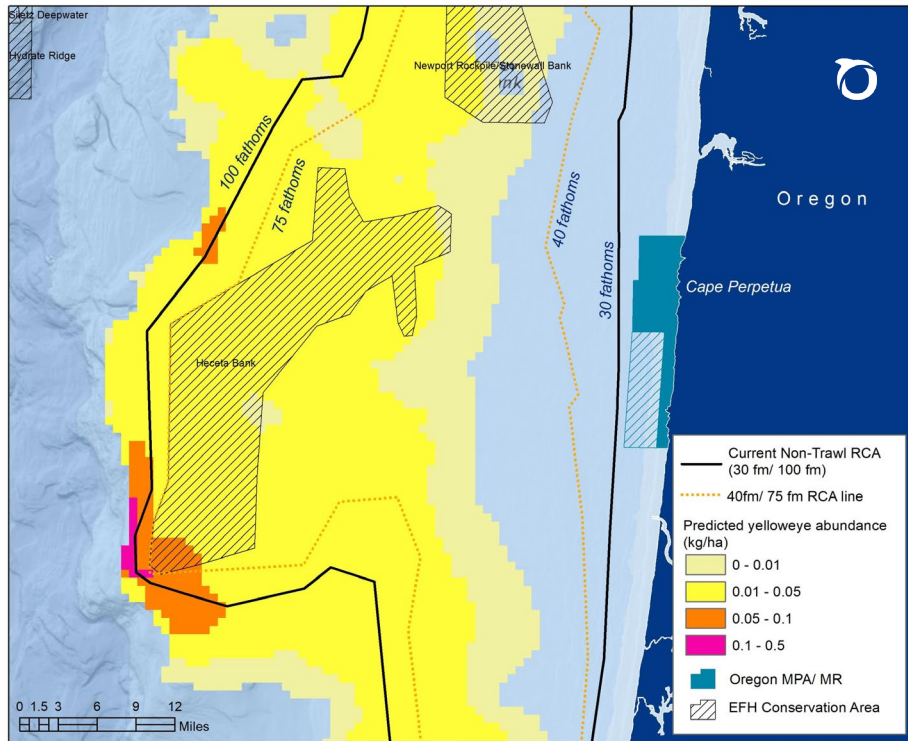


Alternative 2 continued...



Non-trawl RCA changes may increase impacts to long-lived rockfishes

Protect yelloweye rockfish hotspots

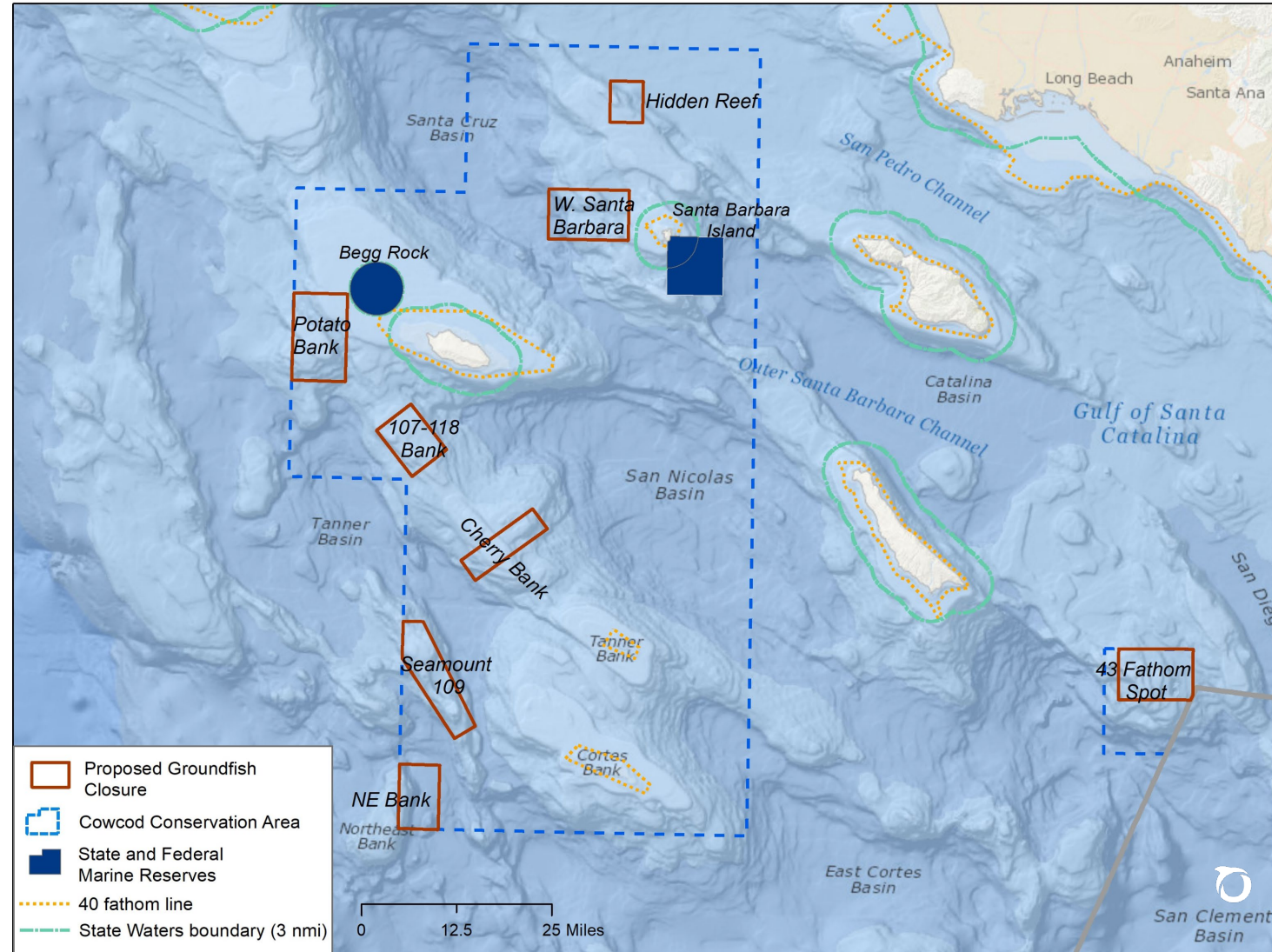
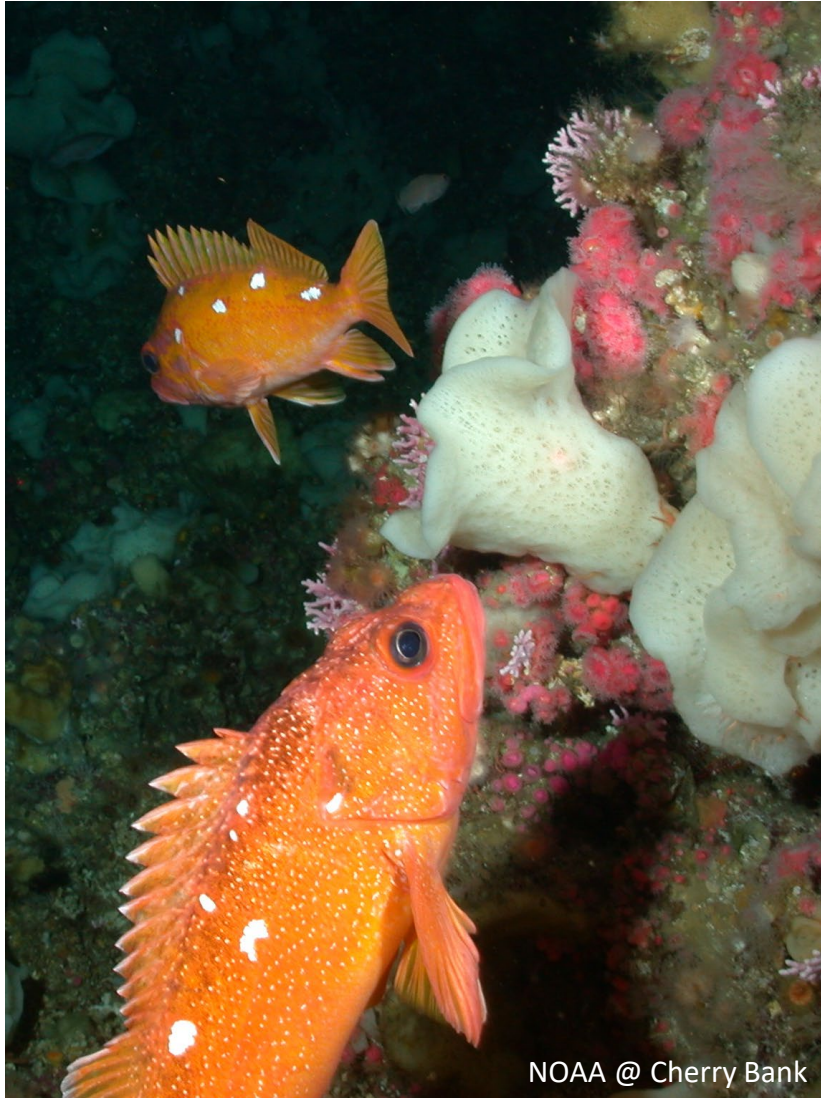


Yelloweye rockfish predicted mean abundance at Heceta Bank. NCCOS model projection. PFMC Agenda Item D.6.b NMFS Synthesis. April 2013

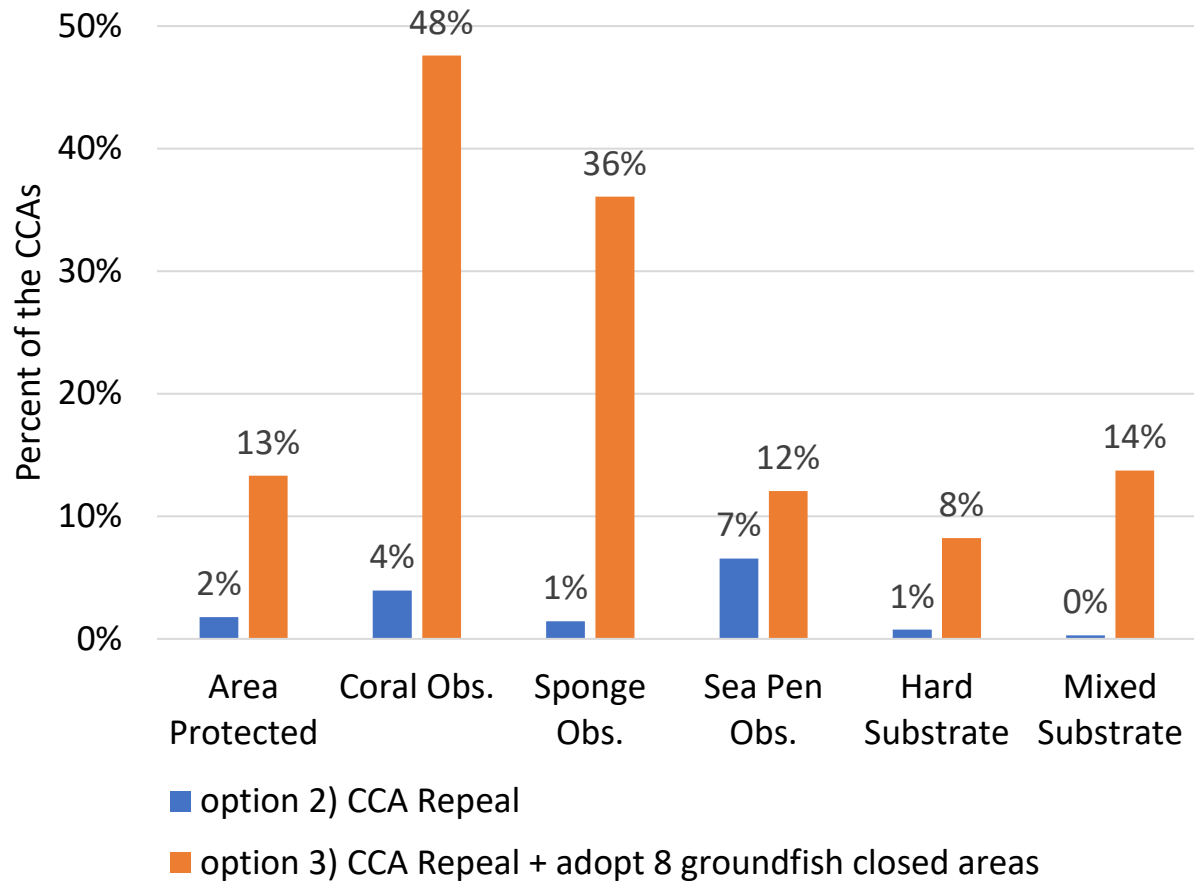


Yelloweye rockfish at Grays Canyon sponge reef. Ocean Exploration Trust

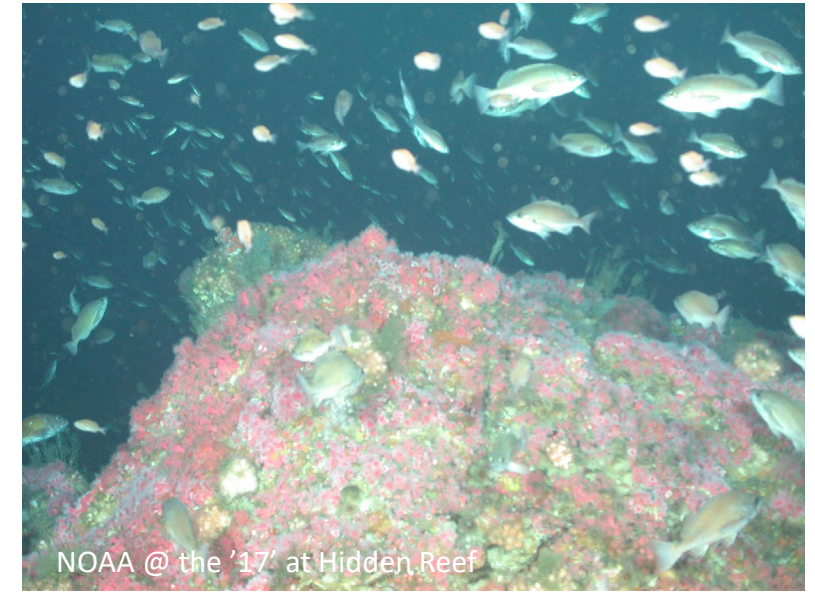
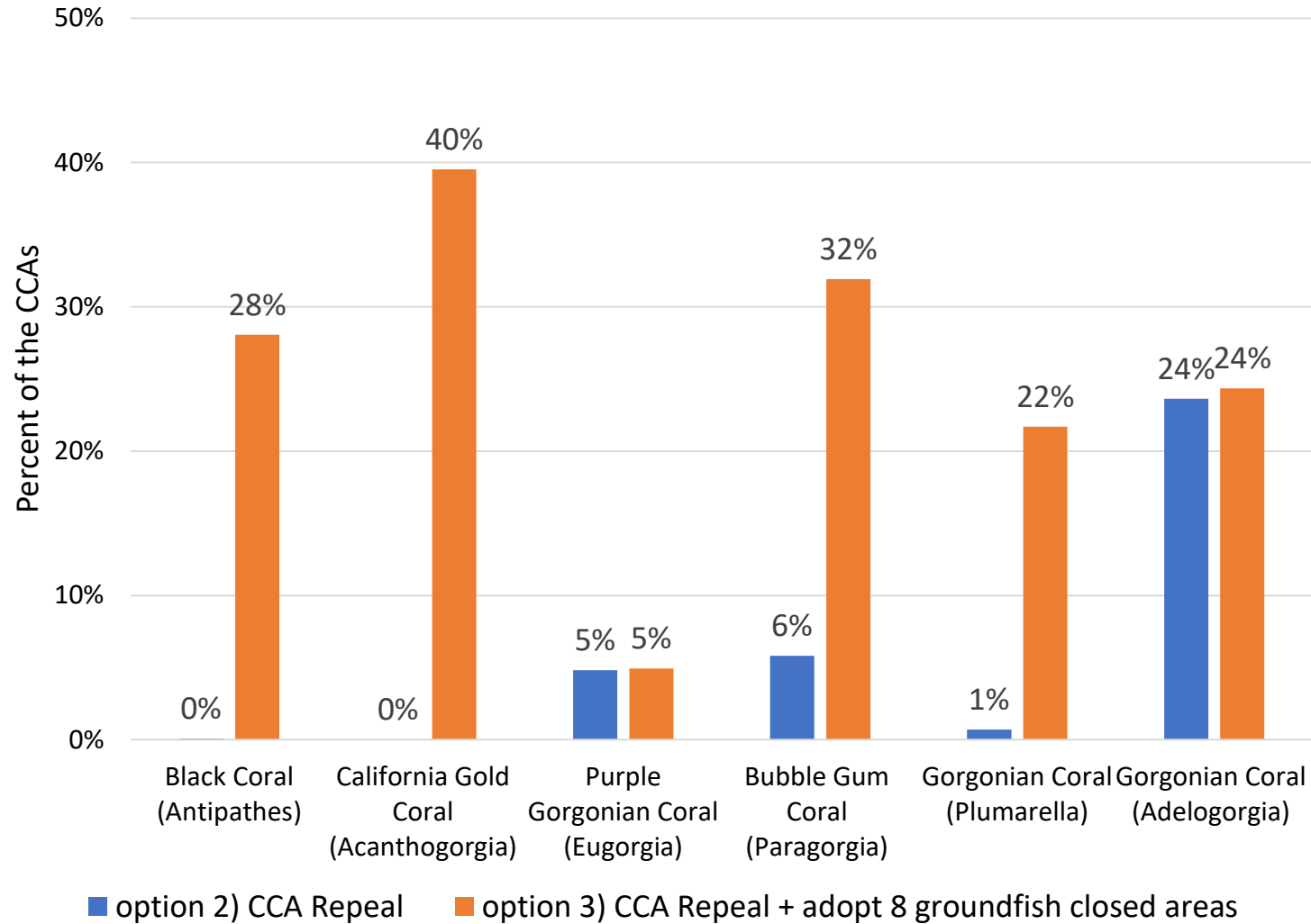
Alternative 3: support Cowcod Conservation Area repeal with adoption of 8 proposed groundfish closed areas



Oceana Analysis: Percent of the CCAs, coral and sponge observations, and physical substrates that remain protected



Oceana analysis: Percent of 'high' coral habitat suitability in the CCAs that remain protected





Recommendations

- Support Alternative 1; open the existing non-trawl RCA to groundfish fishing gears that do not contact the seafloor
- If you move forward with Alternative 2, between now and final action, carefully tailor protections for overlapping EFH conservation areas and yelloweye rockfish hotspots within the range of sub-options.
- Support Alternative 3: Repeal to the Cowcod Conservation Areas off Southern California while implementing the 8 proposed groundfish closed areas designed to protect coral and sponge hotspots.