

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT ON
NON-TRAWL AREA MANAGEMENT – FINAL PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Habitat Committee (HC) received a presentation from Jessi Doerpinghaus and Brett Wiedoff (Council staff) covering the Non-Trawl Area Management – Final Preferred Alternatives (FPAs). The HC recommends the following Preliminary Preferred Alternatives (PPAs) be included as Final Preferred Alternatives (FPAs), which are consistent with previous HC recommendations in its September, 2022 [report](#):

Alternative 2, Suboption 1d (PPA): Create a non-trawl bottom contact Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Area (EFHCA) that prohibits groundfish and directed halibut fishing in bottom trawl EFHCAs that would otherwise be reopened under this action for Nehalem Bank and Bandon High Spot.

Alternative 2, Suboption 1e (PPA): Create a non-trawl bottom contact EFHCA that prohibits groundfish and directed halibut fishing over the entire bottom trawl EFHCAs for Garibaldi Reef North, Garibaldi Reef South, and Arago Reef.

Alternative 2, Suboption 2 (PPA): Implement a Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA) that prohibits non-trawl groundfish and directed halibut bottom contact gear in the area west of the Heceta Bank EFHCA which would be active when this action is implemented (Figure 14). Adopting this as an FPA would provide protection for all benthic species and habitat in this ecologically important region.

Alternative 3 (PPA): Repeal the Cowcod Conservation Areas (CCA) for Commercial and Recreational Fisheries. The HC supports including Alternative 3 in the FPA because it opens up areas to fishing while protecting important coral habitats.

In addition, the HC supports the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's proposed YRCAs as captured in F.4.a Supplemental REVISED Report 1 because they would offer protection for rocky habitat for yelloweye rockfish and provide additional habitat protection for all benthic species if, and when, they are implemented.

The HC appreciates the Council's consideration of continued protection for sensitive habitat within EFHCAs under this action until the next Groundfish EFH review when a more thorough evaluation can be conducted.