

GREATER FARALLONES AND MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES CORAL RESTORATION AND RESEARCH PLAN- SCOPING

During the March 2023 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) submitted a report under the Non-Trawl Area Management Measures/Amendment 32 agenda item regarding the Draft Restoration Plan to restore resources, habitat and biota resulting from the sinking of the drydock YFD-70 at Pioneer Canyon in the Monterey Bay NMS (MBNMS) ([Agenda Item F.4.a, Supplemental ONMS Report 1, March 2023](#)). The ONMS Report encouraged the Council to “consider pathways to protect coral restoration sites from groundfish bottom contact fishing gear in the future.” The timing did not allow for the Council and ONMS to include any area closures for coral restoration under the Amendment 32 action, but the Council did commit to considering the matter at a future meeting. In June 2023, the ONMS notified the Council that they intended to bring forward proposed coral restoration and research areas at the September 2023 meeting ([Agenda Item C.8.a, Supplemental ONMS Report 1, June 2023](#)). The five locations contain ten areas identified as suitable to meet their coral restoration and research initiative goals.

Agenda Item H.2.a, ONMS Report 1 is a scoping document that describes their proposed action, including the five locations and 10 areas that are options for coral planting and research. A public online mapping tool is under development by ONMS to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to further investigate each proposed area and the potential overlap with their fishery and habitat features. That mapping tool is expected to be publicly available prior to the September Council meeting. Council and ONMS staff scheduled a webinar on August 24th from 2-4 pm to provide an overview of the item for interested Council participants.

Attachment 1 is a supplement to ONMS Report 1 and was developed by Council staff to elicit feedback from advisory bodies on the fisheries that may operate in each of the proposed coral restoration and research areas, and the enforceability of each of those areas. The Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) includes a mechanism (Groundfish Exclusion Areas) to protect sensitive habitats such as coral. However, the other FMPs lack such a mechanism. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act includes discretionary authorities (16 U.S.C. 1853 MSA § 303(b)(2)) that may be used to implement this proposed action.

Questions for Council consideration include:

1. Given the potential fisheries that may interact with the proposed coral restoration and research areas, does the Council want to limit fishing to only groundfish bottom contact gear, all bottom contact gears, or all fishing?
2. Of the potential 10 areas proposed by the ONMS for coral restoration and research, are there any areas that should be removed from the scope due to the degree of impact to industry, enforcement considerations, or other reasons?

At the September Council meeting, the Council and its advisory bodies should consider the ONMS scoping document (Agenda Item H.2.a, ONMS Report 1) and other agenda item materials, provide

guidance on the proposed coral research and restoration areas, and consider to which fisheries these closures should apply.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt the Scope of Fisheries and Areas to be Closed to Promote Coral Restoration and Research within the Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1: Staff White Paper.
2. Agenda Item H.2.a, ONMS Report 1; Scoping Document.
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- H.2 Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries
Coral Restoration and Research Plan- Scoping Kerry Griffin/Jessi Doerpinghaus
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt the Scope of Fisheries and Areas to be Closed to Promote Coral Restoration and Research within the Greater Farallones and Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuaries

PFMC
08/11/23