



# National Marine Sanctuaries Report

## Proposed Deep-Sea Coral Research & Restoration Areas

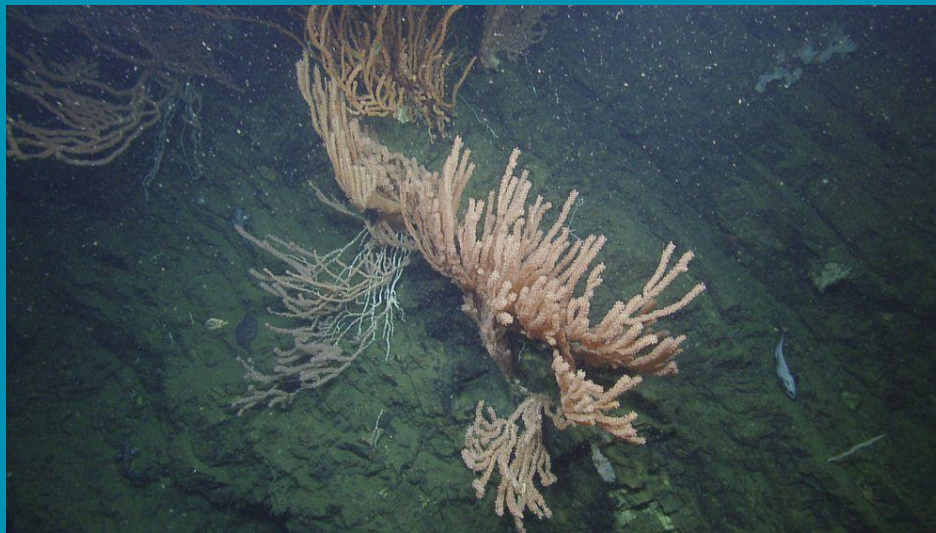
Dr. Lisa Wooninck & Karen Grimmer

June 9, 2024

# Purpose of the areas



The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries long-term need is to conduct Deep Sea Coral research and restoration in areas that would exclude impacts to the seafloor from commercial bottom-contact fishing gear.



Bamboo and Bubblegum corals

*credit: NOAA*

# Criteria



Areas need to be:

- Sufficient size and depth for out-planting of corals, including buffers for propagule dispersal
- Sufficient size and depth to answer research questions related to species and community structure and composition
- Sufficient size for enforcement purposes

# Criteria



## In addition:

- Deep-sea coral habitat has been impacted by lost or sunken vessels and large objects since the establishment of the sanctuaries. The most recent large incident was the sinking of the 523 ft YFD-70 Dry Dock at Pioneer Canyon.
- Deep sea coral restoration, including outplanting, cannot be conducted at the YFD-70 Dry Dock location due to the extreme slope habitat at Pioneer Canyon, as well as sediment movement in the canyon.
- Deep sea coral restoration has proven successful, and is a requirement for restoring natural resource damages in the sanctuaries.
- The intent is to address multiple future scenarios without having to approach the Council each time a sanctuary resource is damaged.

# Process & Timeline

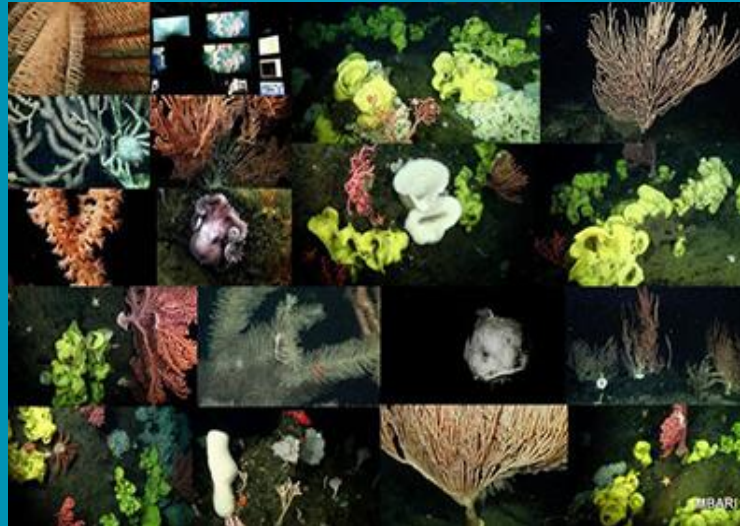


- ❖ Feb 2023 – ONMS letter to PFMC on proposed areas
- ❖ May 2023 – Deep Sea Coral Expert Workshops
- ❖ Aug 2023 – ONMS webinar for PFMC Advisory Bodies
- ❖ Sept 2023 – Scoping initiated at PFMC meeting
- ❖ Dec 2023 – MBNMS public webinar for Stakeholders
- ❖ Feb 2024 – Council staff produce analysis report on fisheries in proposed deep sea coral areas
- ❖ March 2024 – Council meeting to narrow range of alternatives (3 areas moved forward with revisions)
- ❖ April/May – MBNMS continues stakeholder outreach with fishermen; PFMC staff analysis for the 3 revised areas
- ❖ **June 2024 – Final Council Action**

# Area Criteria



- Appropriate range of depths (400 to 853 fathoms)
- Appropriate substrate (hard or mixed)
- Known coral locations (from observations)
- Proximity to source corals for out-planting
- Sufficient in size for research and restoration



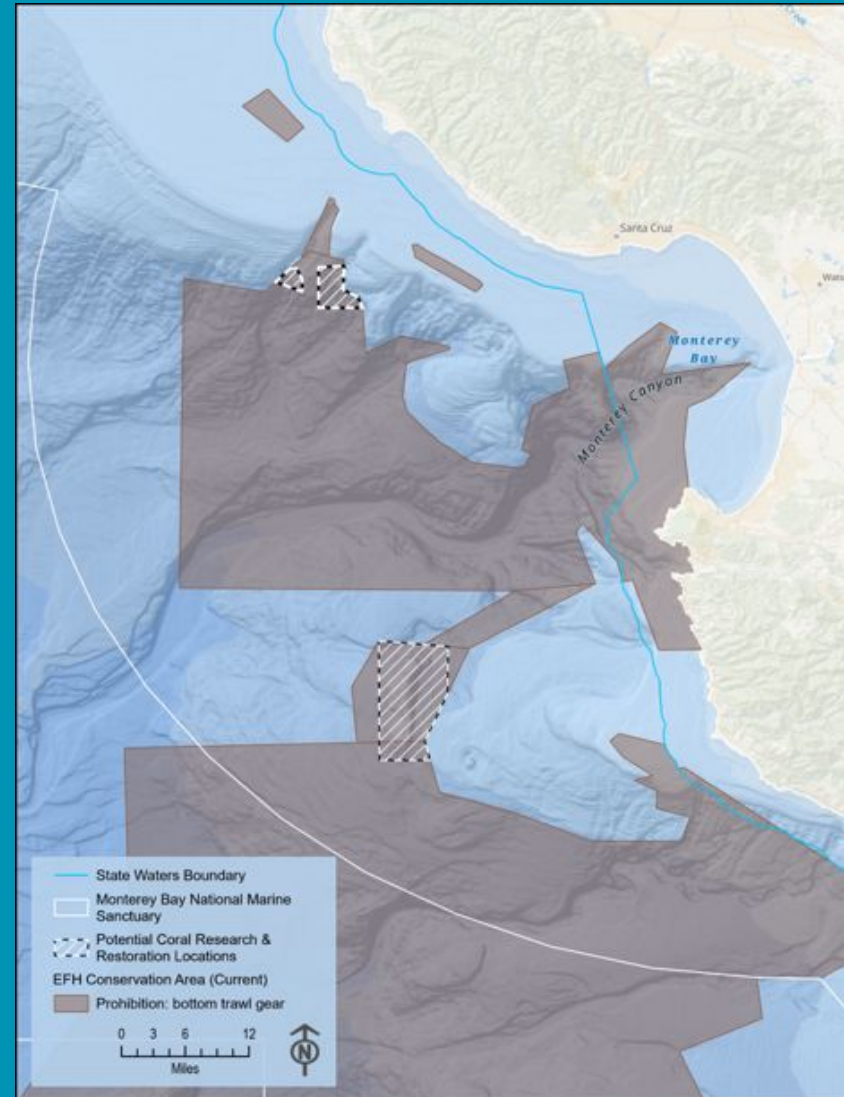
Mosaic of various DSC species  
*credit: NOAA*



# Locations and Areas



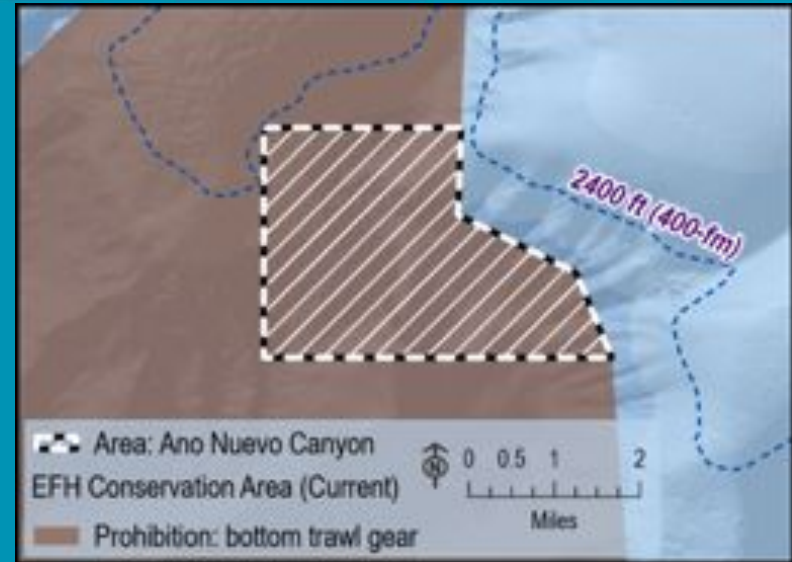
- Three locations
- Protected by National Marine Sanctuary regulations
- Overlap with Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Conservation Areas that prohibit groundfish bottom trawling.



# Proposed Locations



- Año Nuevo (ANC)  
(Alternative 1, Option a)  
Current Size: 4.92 nm<sup>2</sup>  
(revised from 6.5 nm<sup>2</sup>)  
Depth Range:  
2,493-4,659 ft (416-776 fm)
- Ascension (AC) Canyon  
(Alternative 1, Option b)  
Current Size: 1.83 nm<sup>2</sup>  
(revised from 2.97 nm<sup>2</sup>)  
Depth Range:  
2,395-4,790 (399-798 fm)





# Proposed Locations



## Sur Ridge (SR) (Alternative 2)

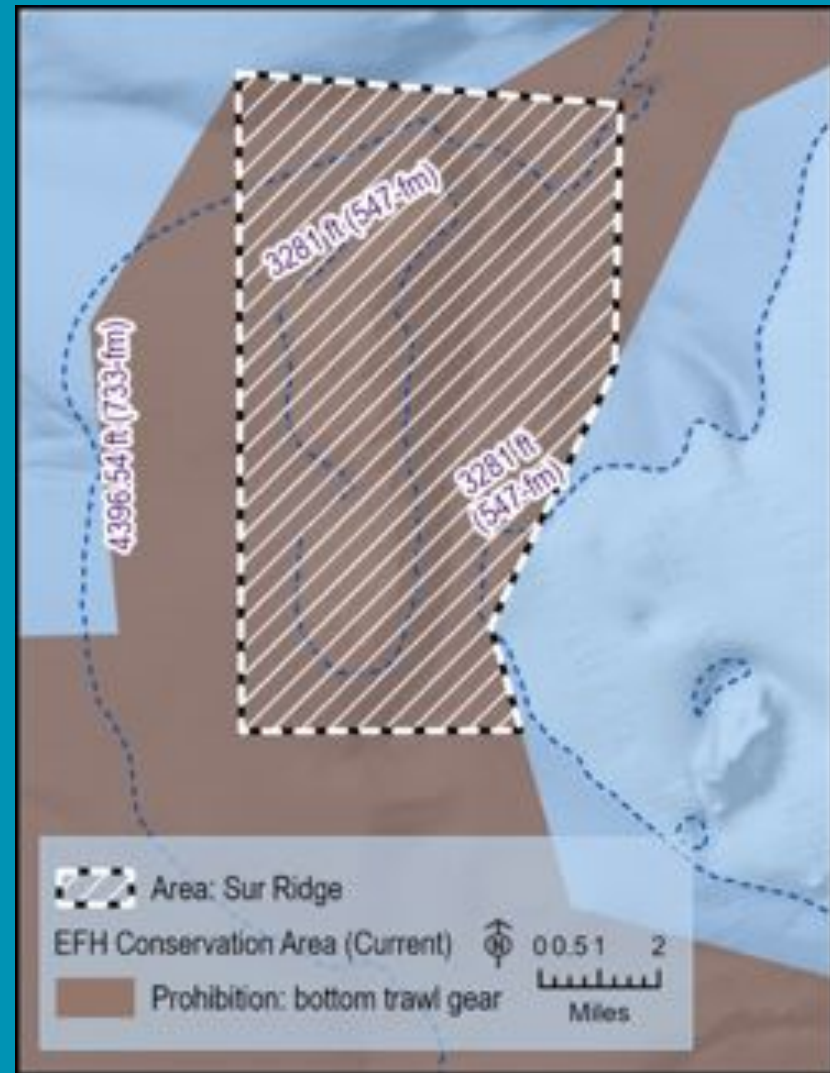
Size: 36.64 nm<sup>2</sup>

Depth Range:

448–853 fm (2,690–5,118 ft)

Target Coral Species:

- *Trissopathes* sp.
- *Lillipathes* sp.
- *Isidella tentaculum*
- *Keratoisis* sp.
- *Parastenella* sp.
- *Acanthogorgia* sp.
- *Swiftia kofoidi*
- *Paragorgia arborea*
- *Sibogorgia cauliflora*
- *Corallium* sp.



# Summary of Fishermen Outreach Efforts



- Submitted a letter to PFMC about proposed areas in **Feb 2023**, and attended the **March 2023** advisory bodies and Council meetings to present proposal.
- Provided a webinar for all PFMC advisory bodies in **Aug 2023**
- Participated in person at the **September 2023** PFMC meeting and joined GAP, Habitat Committee and EC mtgs; met with individual fishermen
- Provided a public webinar in **December 2023** for all stakeholders and invited fishermen specifically to attend
- Participated in person at the **March 2024** PFMC meeting and joined GAP and CA delegation meetings; met with individual fishermen
- Met with fishermen in Santa Cruz in **March 2024** and discussed options for Ano Nuevo/Ascension Canyon
- Continued to talk with individual fishermen, & met w/Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust in **April and May 2024**

# Additional Considerations



- The three proposed areas are needed to reach ONMS longterm goals for this 10-year project
- MBNMS plans to report on progress through the annual West Coast Region ONMS presentation to the Council; it will include progress made each year with some detail
- MBNMS proposes working collaboratively with fishermen on research studies
- Research studies in the areas will be in separate locations from the restoration and outplanting; this is why enough space and a variety of depths are needed



Questions?

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



NATIONAL MARINE  
**SANCTUARIES**