

Data to Support a Review of Essential Fish Habitat for Pacific Coast Groundfish

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In this poster, we provide a summary of data used to support Phase I of a five-year review of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for 91 species of groundfish off the Pacific Coast of the U.S. We highlight some of the key products developed for this review that are now available to the public. Initial EFH designations were based on best available data developed from 2002 to 2005; NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) approved these designations in May 2006. Beginning in 2010, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC), Northwest and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers, and the NMFS Regions initiated the first mandatory five-year review for EFH provisions of the groundfish Fishery Management Plan. In Phase I of this process, we evaluated the extent of new information available for the review and for potential modifications of current EFH designations. Sources of information included published scientific literature and unpublished scientific reports; solicitation of data from interested parties; and the review of previously unavailable or inaccessible data sets. Coast-wide maps were updated for (1) bathymetry and interpreted groundfish habitat types; (2) the distribution and extent of groundfish fishing effort (as potential impact to EFH); (3) the distribution and relative abundance of biogenic habitat (i.e., sponges and corals); and (4) spatial management boundaries (as potential mitigation of impacts). This poster emphasizes geospatial datasets though additional new information has been identified, e.g., habitat associations for the 91 groundfish species, modeling efforts relevant to the determination and designation of EFH, non-fishing activities that may affect EFH, and new information on prey species. This complete body of information, in the form of a written report and supporting internet database, was presented to the PFMC, its advisory bodies, and the public, at the Council's September 2012 meeting, and adopted by the Council (PFMC's Essential Fish Habitat Review Committee Phase I Report: <http://www.pcouncil.org/groundfish/background/document-library/pacific-coast-groundfish-5-year-review-of-efh/>; online data catalog: <http://efh-catalog.coas.oregonstate.edu/overview/>). Phase II of the process is now underway and includes a six-month public review period. NMFS is currently conducting an analysis of the information in the Phase I Report, and will deliver a synthesis to the Council in April 2013. As part of Phase II, the Council will solicit proposals to modify EFH and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). If the Council decides to amend EFH, Phase III of the process will begin and may require an amendment to the groundfish Fisheries Management Plan. This five-year review represents a major update of the groundfish habitat assessment for the California Current and will have research and management applications well beyond satisfying the regulatory guidelines associated with EFH.

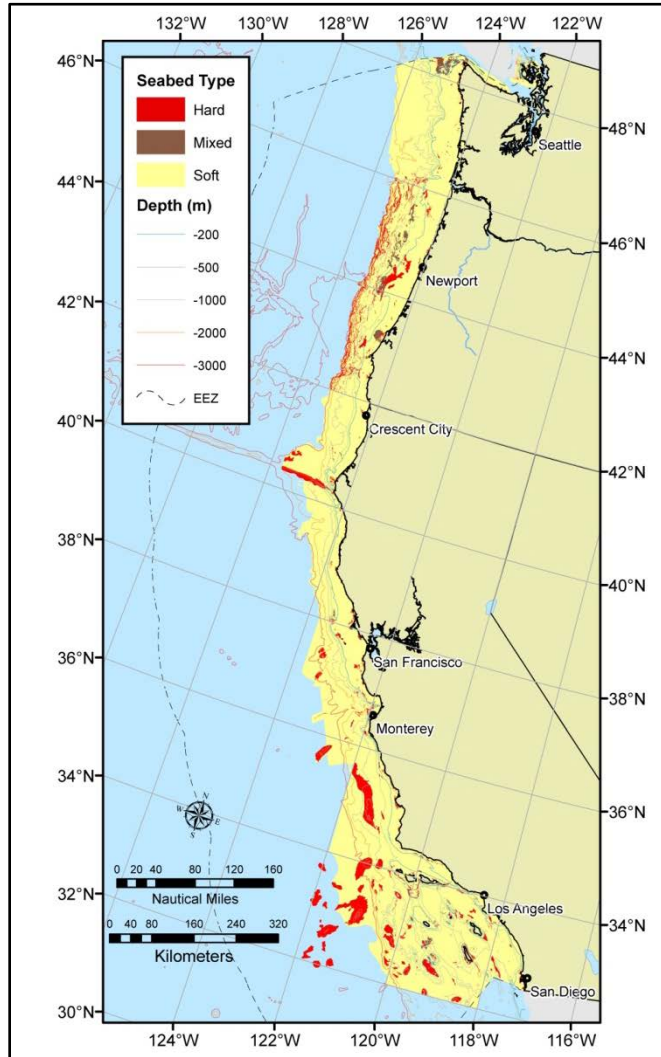
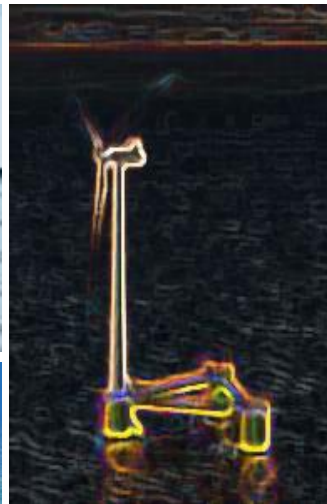


Figure A2: Map of seabed type (hard, mixed and soft) for the Pacific coast; developed for the Pacific coast groundfish 5-year review of Essential Fish Habitat.



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U.S. Department of the Interior
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FINAL REPORT

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This document is also available in a permanent archive along with background documents including the presentations made at the workshop. See: <http://hdl.handle.net/1957/36597>. It is also available at http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espismaster.asp?appid=1.

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