

# Habitat Committee Update

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NEFMC Meeting  
September 22, 2016

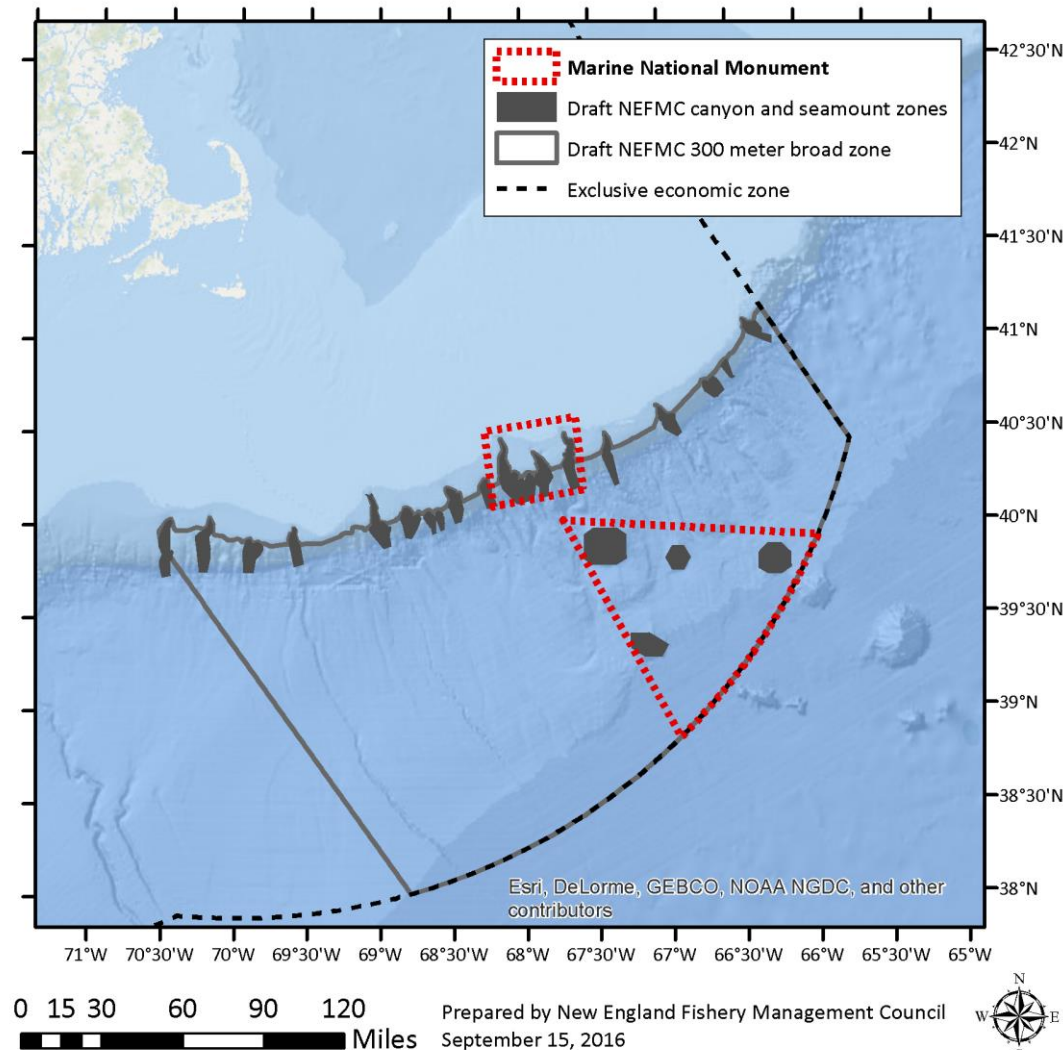


# Outline

- Deep-Sea Coral Amendment
  - Relationship to Marine National Monument
  - Committee-recommended updates
  - Timing and next steps
- Clam Dredge Framework
  - Timing, including OHA2 timing
  - Data availability and ongoing work
- Other recent Committee discussions

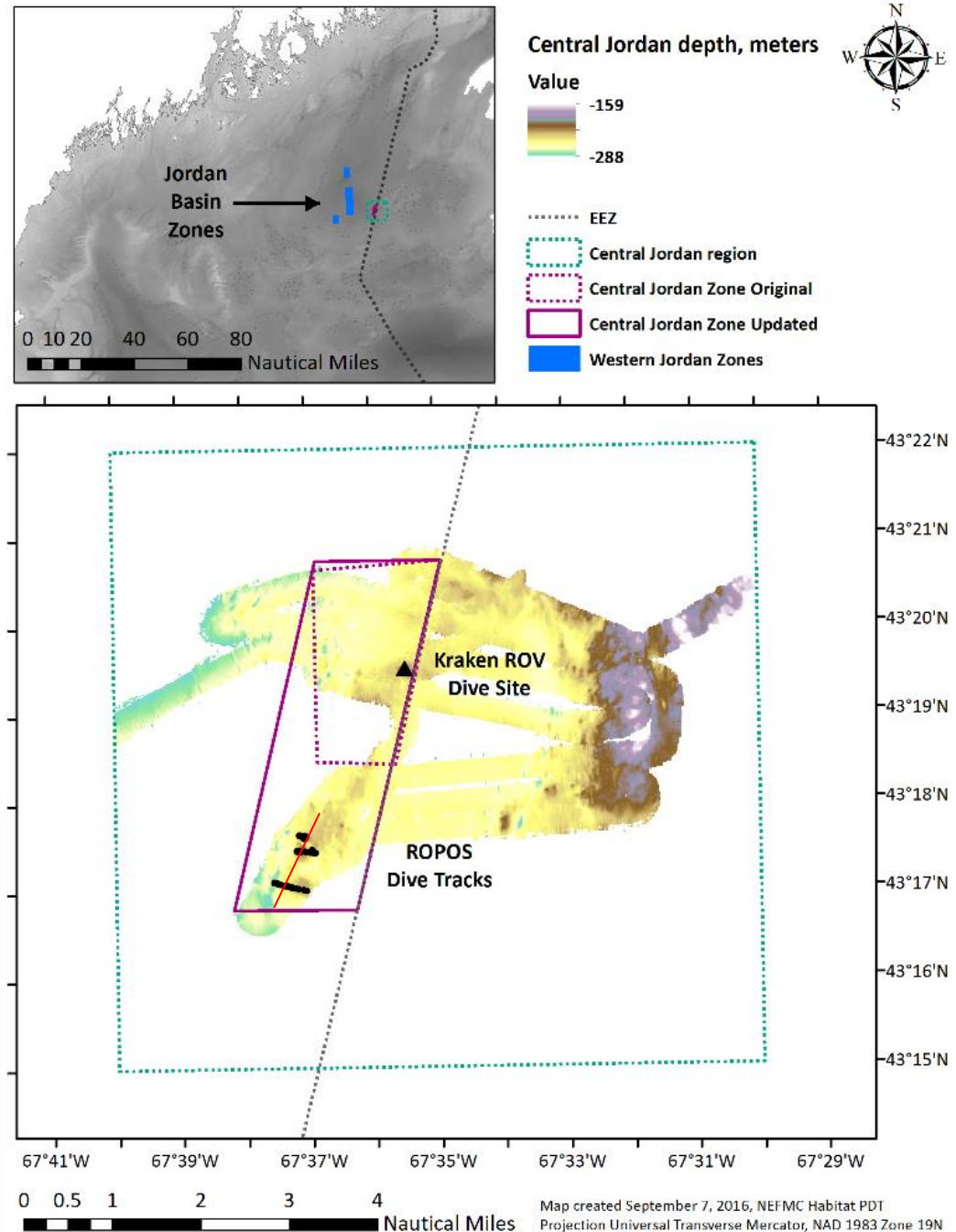
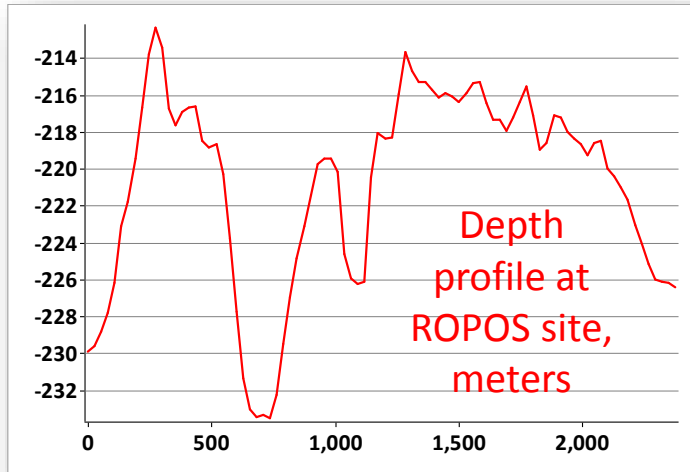
# New England Canyons and Seamounts Monument

- Announced by President Obama on September 15
- Canyon area encompasses five canyons (Oceanographer, Filebottom, Chebacco, Gilbert, Lydonia); size ~2000 km<sup>2</sup>; extends from ~100 meters to ~2,000 m depth
- Seamount area includes Bear, Mytilus, Physalia, and Retriever and goes to EEZ boundary; size ~10,000 km<sup>2</sup>; depth ranges from ~1,100 meters to ~4,500 meters
- Monument will restrict all fishing gear, with 7 years allowed for red crab and lobster fishery to exit
- 60 day transition for other gears
- Recreational fishing will be allowed



# Central Jordan Basin

- Council added for analysis in April
- Committee recommended updating to the larger zone boundary on August 18 (Motion 1)
- Original zone (9 km<sup>2</sup>) based on a single dive site (Kraken) with corals at low density
- Expanded zone (19 km<sup>2</sup>) includes a second dive site (ROPOS) with corals at high density

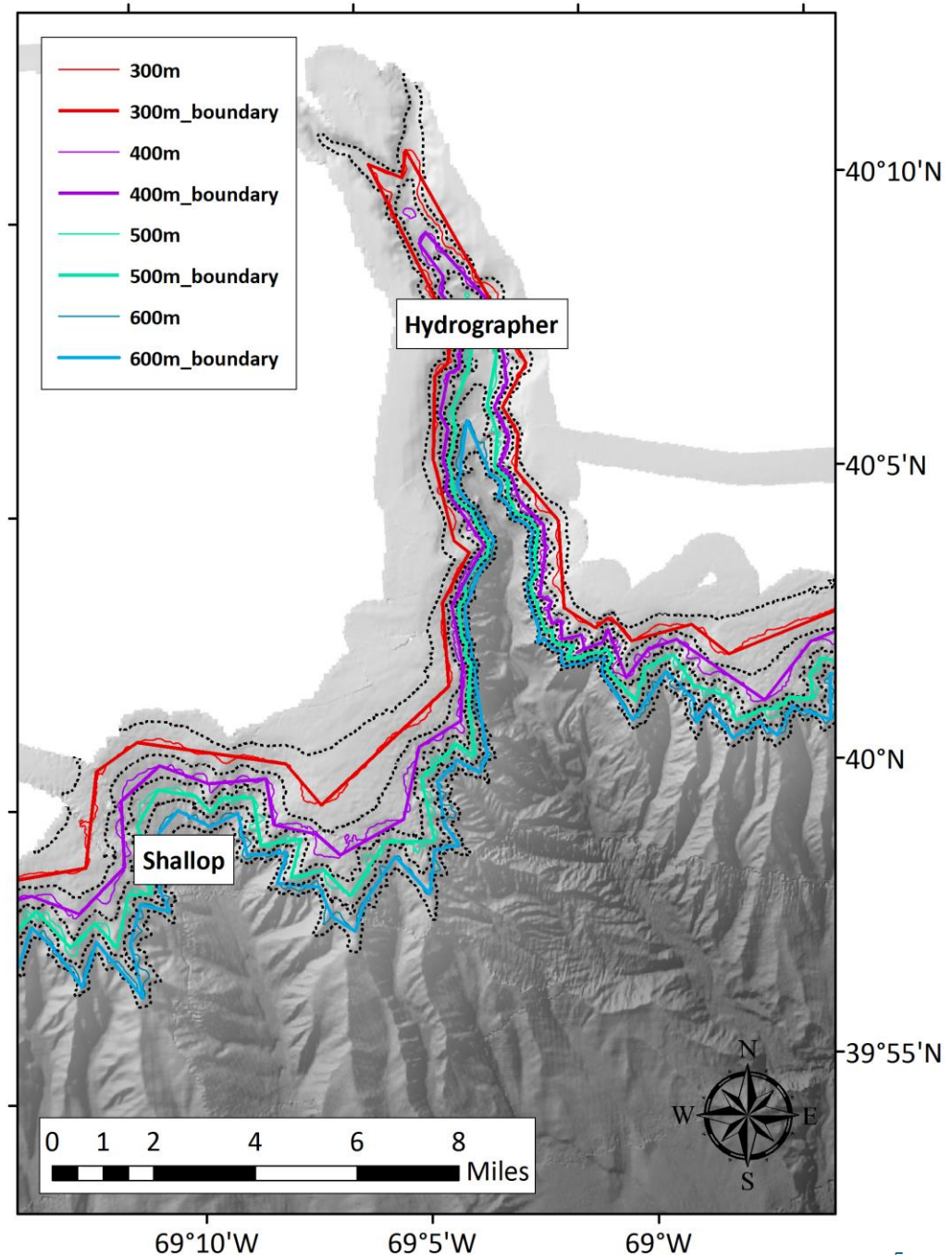


# Broad coral zone at 600 meters

- Council adopted simplified, depth-based, broad zone boundaries for analysis in April (300 m, 400 m, 500 m)
- Committee recommended an additional 600 m zone for analysis on August 18 (Motion 2a)

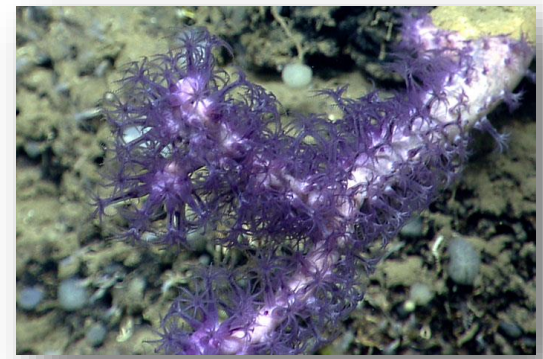
Zone	Size (km <sup>2</sup> )
300 meter	67,142
400 meter	66,410
500 meter	65,838
600 meter	65,359*

\* Based on rough boundary



# Ongoing PDT analysis

- PDT is assessing fishing effort and revenue overlaps with various coral zones, by gear type and species
  - Using VTR, VMS, and observer data
  - Augmented by lobster-related data from Maine and information from ASMFC Area 3 lobster permit holder survey
- PDT is also compiling data about corals in and around each zone and impacts to corals to support biological impacts analysis
  - Active field of research; e.g. last week's 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals (see details at [www.deepseacoral.org](http://www.deepseacoral.org))
- Will model impacts analysis in the draft EA after recently published MAFMC amendment, as appropriate. Their EA is online at [www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/2016/September/16msbamend16ea.pdf](http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/regs/2016/September/16msbamend16ea.pdf)



*Clavularia* sp., Nygren Canyon



*Anthomastus*, Oceanographer Canyon



*Shrimp and octocoral*, Hydrographer Canyon

Images courtesy of NOAA Okeanos Explorer Program, 2013 Northeast U.S. Canyons Expedition.

# Coral amendment next steps

- Monument announcement relieves a major source of uncertainty related to amendment
- Timing also depends on whether we analyze lobster trap restrictions
  - Primary gear type in Gulf of Maine zones, especially Outer Schoodic Ridge and Mt. Desert Rock
  - Major gear type in canyon and canyon/slope broad zones
  - If restrictions are considered, will require outreach with new stakeholders to get feedback on boundaries
- Once lobster gear issues are resolved, can schedule stakeholder workshops
  - Should consider separate canyon and Gulf of Maine meetings
- After workshop(s), PDT can update analysis with any revised boundaries, and then provide a draft document to the Council
- Council can then select preferred alternatives prior to public hearings on the amendment

# Clam framework timing

- One year exemption in new habitat management areas begins with Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 implementation
- After one year, exemption sunsets automatically
- Staff resubmitted OHA2 FEIS with edits on September 6
- Timing of OHA2 implementation is still uncertain, *could* look like:
  - FEIS publication in October (60 day comment)
  - Proposed rule published in November (30 day comment)
  - Amendment decision in February
  - Final rule published at the end of March/early April
  - Effective date at the end of April/early May
  - **This is a best-case timeline – could be affected by changes in administration**



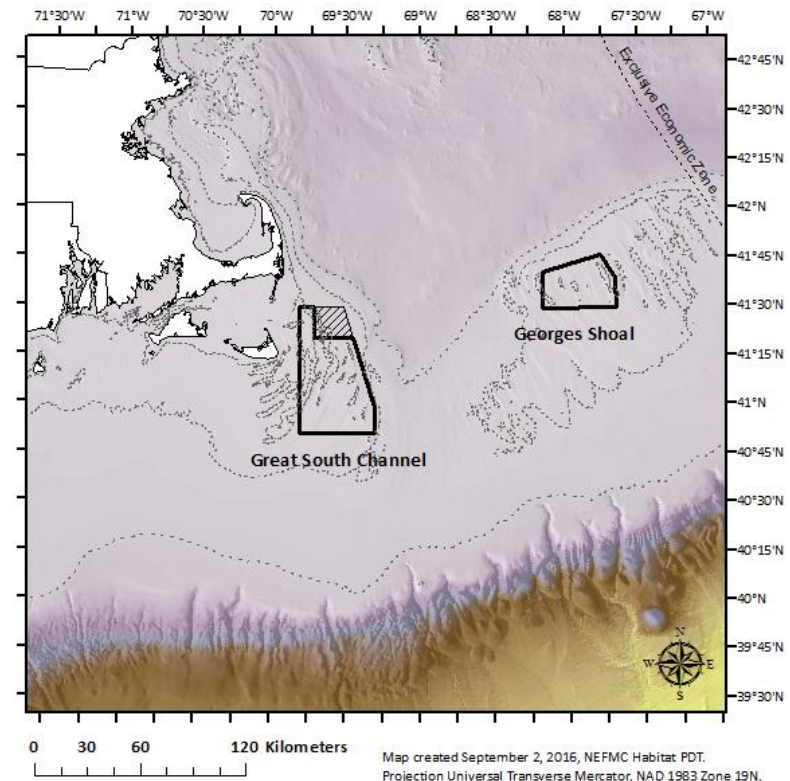
Hydraulic dredges. Image courtesy of GARFO

# Clam framework: next steps



*Image courtesy of GARFO*

- PDT is working on an image analysis to characterize habitats in the Great South Channel and Georges Shoal HMAs
- Another source of data is a project by the Science Center for Marine Fisheries – two parts:
  - Habitat-related information from NEFSC clam survey database – clams, shells, epifauna, sediment, gear codes
  - Fishing effort based on plotter data, filtered similar to VMS
  - Both compiled in a GIS database which will be made available to PDT
- Once both data sets are available, PDT will develop draft alternatives for the Committee to consider



# Other topics discussed by the Committee

- Offshore wind/fishery interactions
  - Habitat Committee discussed issue at length
    - Noted that fishery liaisons have been hired by various wind companies
  - Habitat and Executive Committees discussed possible coordination between NEFMC, MAFMC, and ASMFC on offshore wind-related issues and impacts
  - Ability to fully track these issues is a matter of staff time
    - Currently, we attend some BOEM meetings and webinars, comment on lease-related announcements and analyses, and try to stay abreast of BOEM's scientific work, providing science-related feedback to their staff on request
- EFH consultations
  - Per GARFO staff, Council comments welcomed on issues of concern
  - Again, increased coordination/tracking a matter of staff time

