

# Habitat Committee Report

## 2025 EFH Designation Framework

### Other Updates (In Brief)

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NEFMC Staff

**NEFMC**  
**September 24, 2025**  
**Gloucester, MA**



# 2025 EFH updates: How did we get here?

- NEFMC Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2 (2004-2018)
  - Revised EFH designations with data through ~2005, revisions effective 2018
    - Federal & state trawl survey data **by ten-minute squares**, plus depth and temperature
  - Multiple adjustments to spatial and temporal restrictions on methods of fishing
- Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (2017-2022; updates ongoing)
  - Compiled survey & environmental datasets through 2019, created data viewer, **developed species distribution models**, crosswalked habitat & species climate vulnerability assessments
  - Joint SSC subpanel review in 2022, presented to Council June 2022
- Essential Fish Habitat Five-Year Review (2024-2025)
  - Technical evaluation of nine EFH-related components of fishery management plans
  - Further development of **model-based EFH designation methods** – built off NRHA work
  - Presented to Council January 2025

# Resources:

## Council Habitat Documents

- Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2
  - [FEIS Volume 2: EFH and HAPC, Appendix A EFH Methods, Appendix B Supplementary Tables](#)
- EFH Five-Year Review Technical and Summary Reports

<https://www.nefmc.org/library/essential-fish-habitat-efh-information>

- *Review Components: (1) EFH designation, (2) impacts of fishing on EFH, (3) impacts of non-MSA fishing on EFH, (4) non-fishing impacts to EFH, (5) cumulative effects of activities on EFH, (6) minimizing the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, (7) prey species, (8) designation of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, and (9) EFH-related research needs*
- [Habitat policies](#): Offshore wind, oil and gas, aquaculture, submarine cables

FINAL  
Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2  
Volume 2:  
EFH and HAPC Designation Alternatives and Environmental Impacts  
Amendment 14 to the Northeast Multispecies FMP  
Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP  
Amendment 4 to the Monkfish FMP  
Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Herring FMP  
Amendment 2 to the Red Crab FMP  
Amendment 2 to the Skate FMP  
Amendment 3 to the Atlantic Salmon FMP  
Including a  
Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Prepared by the  
New England Fishery Management Council  
In cooperation with the  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950  
(978) 465-0492 tel.  
(978) 465-3116 fax  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930  
(978) 281-9315 tel.  
(978) 281-9135 fax

  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street, Mill 2 | Newburyport, MA 01950 | (978) 465-0492 | FAX (978) 465-3116  
John P. Quinn, J.D., Ph.D., Chairman | Thomas A. Nien, Executive Director  
OMNIBUS ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT AMENDMENT 2  
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
Appendix A: EFH designation methodologies

FINAL  
New England Fishery Management  
Council  
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)  
5-Year Review Summary Report  
Authors:  
NEFMC Habitat Plan Development Team (PDT), NEFMC EFH Fishery Management Action Team  
(OMAT)  
Date:  
March 18, 2025

Essential Fish Habitat Designation  
Methods for New England and Mid-  
Atlantic Council-Managed Species  
EFH Review Component 1  
Authors:  
Julian Garrison, Tori Kennet, Chris Haak, Michelle Buchanan, Jessica Cookley, Jennifer Costare  
Date:  
March 25, 2025

# Resources: Habitat Applications

1

## Draft EFH Designations

### Project Overview

This app allows users to view proposed EFH layers that were created using joint species distribution models and inshore trawl data.

Take Tour Layer Info

### Select Council:

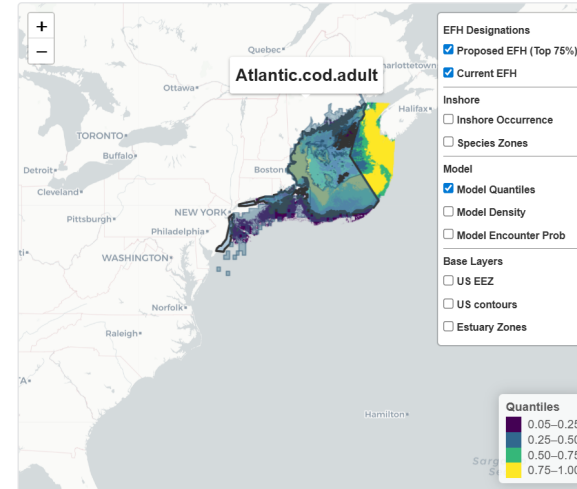
NEFMC

### Select Species:

Atlantic cod adult

### Inshore Surveys

- NEAMAP Bottom Trawl
- Maine-New Hampshire Inshore Trawl
- Massachusetts Bottom Trawl
- Rhode Island Narragansett Bay Trawl
- Connecticut Long Island Sound Trawl
- New Jersey Delaware Bay Juvenile Trawl
- New Jersey Ocean Stock Assessment



Used during EFH Framework development to share draft maps, model outputs, and inshore data

3

## The Fishing Gear Effects on Marine Habitats Database

Home About Fishing Gear Map Submit

72 results found

Search full database: ?

Recovery

Search Study ID

Filters: ?

### Publication Type

- ☒ Journal article (72)
- ☐ Book section (0)
- ☐ Conference presentation (0)
- ☐ Grant report (0)
- ☐ Technical report (0)
- ☐ Conference proceedings (0)

| Study ID # | Title                                                                                                                                           | Year | Author                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 88         | Impact of experimental trawling on the benthic assemblage along the Tuscany coast (north Tyrrhenian Sea, Italy)                                 | 2004 | DeBiasi, A.M.                                                                                                                                                 |
| 102        | Effects of crustacean traps on benthic fauna                                                                                                    | 2001 | Eno, N. C., D. S. MacDonald, J. A. M. Kinneir, S. C. Amos, C. J. Chapman, R. A. Clark, F. S. P. Bunker, and C. Munro                                          |
| 110        | Trawl-induced damage to sponges observed From a research submersible.                                                                           | 2001 | Freese, J. L.                                                                                                                                                 |
| 121        | Immediate and longer-term impacts of hydraulic clam dredging on an offshore sandy seabed: effects on physical habitat and processes of recovery | 2003 | Gilkinson, K. D., G. B. J. Fader, D. C. Gordon Jr, R. Charron, D. McKeown, D. Roddick, E. L. R. Kenchington, K. MacIsaac, C. Bourbonnais, P. Vass, and Q. Liu |
| 122        | Immediate impacts and recovery trajectories of macrofaunal communities following hydraulic clam dredging on B...                                | 2005 | Gilkinson, K. D., D. C. Gordon, K. G. MacIsaac, D. L. McKeown, E. L. R. Kenchington, C. Bourbonnais, and W. P. Vass                                           |

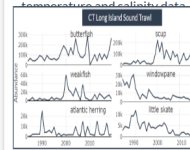
2

## NRHA Home Survey View Species View Models Habitat Crosswalk Reports About Us

### Welcome to the Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment Data Explorer

#### Survey View

Northeast regional and inshore bay/estuary view of fishery independent survey data including top 20 species abundance and biomass, similarity clusters, and survey



#### Species View

Species view of fishery independent survey data, including distributions, relative abundance, and reports on habitat use and vulnerability to climate



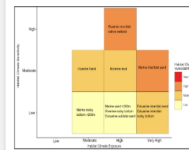
#### Models

Outputs from spatiotemporal models that describe species distributions as a function of dynamic environmental factors, species interactions and predicted change in



#### Habitat Crosswalk

Habitat species vulnerability matrix and species narratives for 66 managed and forage species in the region.



4

## Prey Analysis Data Analysis Info Tables

### Select predator:

Atlantic cod

### Select season:

FALL

### Select region:

Gulf of Maine

### Select size category:

M

### Graph settings:

- ☒ Aggregate across seasons and regions?

### Show individual graphs for:

season

### Interactive Prey Rankings

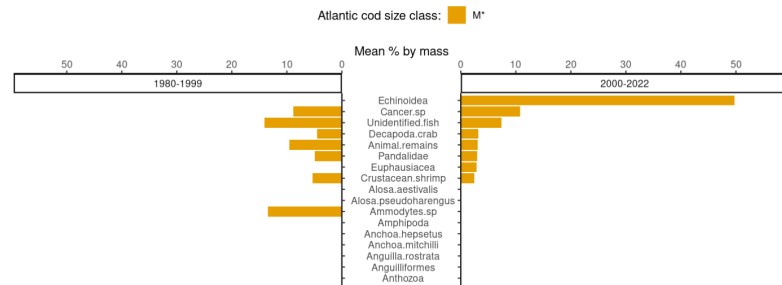
### Mean proportion of Prey

### Prey Frequency by Predator

### Predator-Prey Interaction

### Raw Data

The plot displays the mean percentage by mass of different prey species consumed by the selected predator over specified time periods and seasons. Each bar represents a prey species, with the height indicating its average contribution to the predator's diet. This visualization identifies which prey species are most significant in the diet of the predator being analyzed.

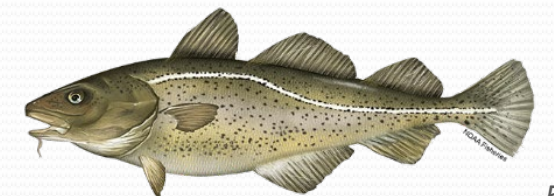
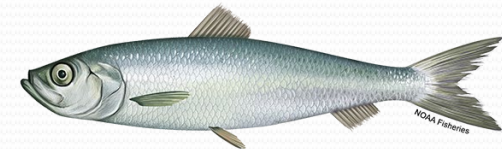
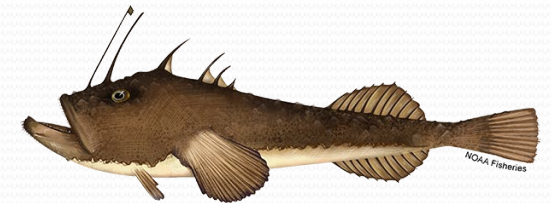
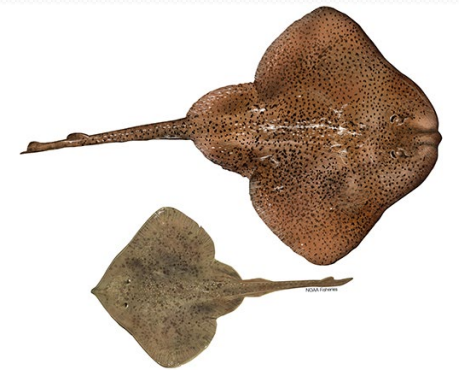


- (1) [https://nrha.shinyapps.io/EFH\\_demo/](https://nrha.shinyapps.io/EFH_demo/)
- (2) <https://nrha.shinyapps.io/dataexplorer/#!/>
- (3) <https://fishmaps.shinyapps.io/FishingEffectsDatabase#!/>
- (4) <https://fishmaps.shinyapps.io/prey/>

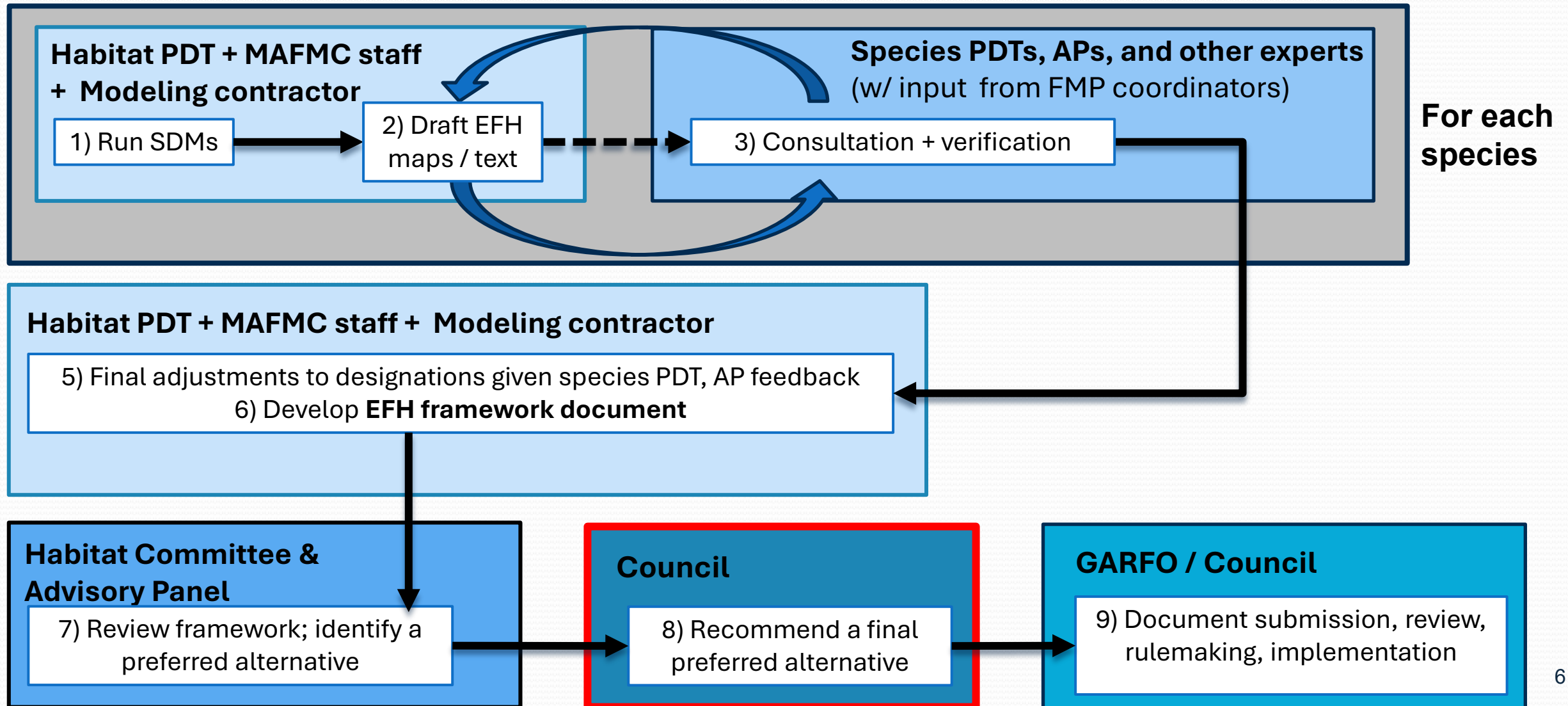
# EFH Framework (Initiated April 2025)

[April Council meeting materials at this link](#)

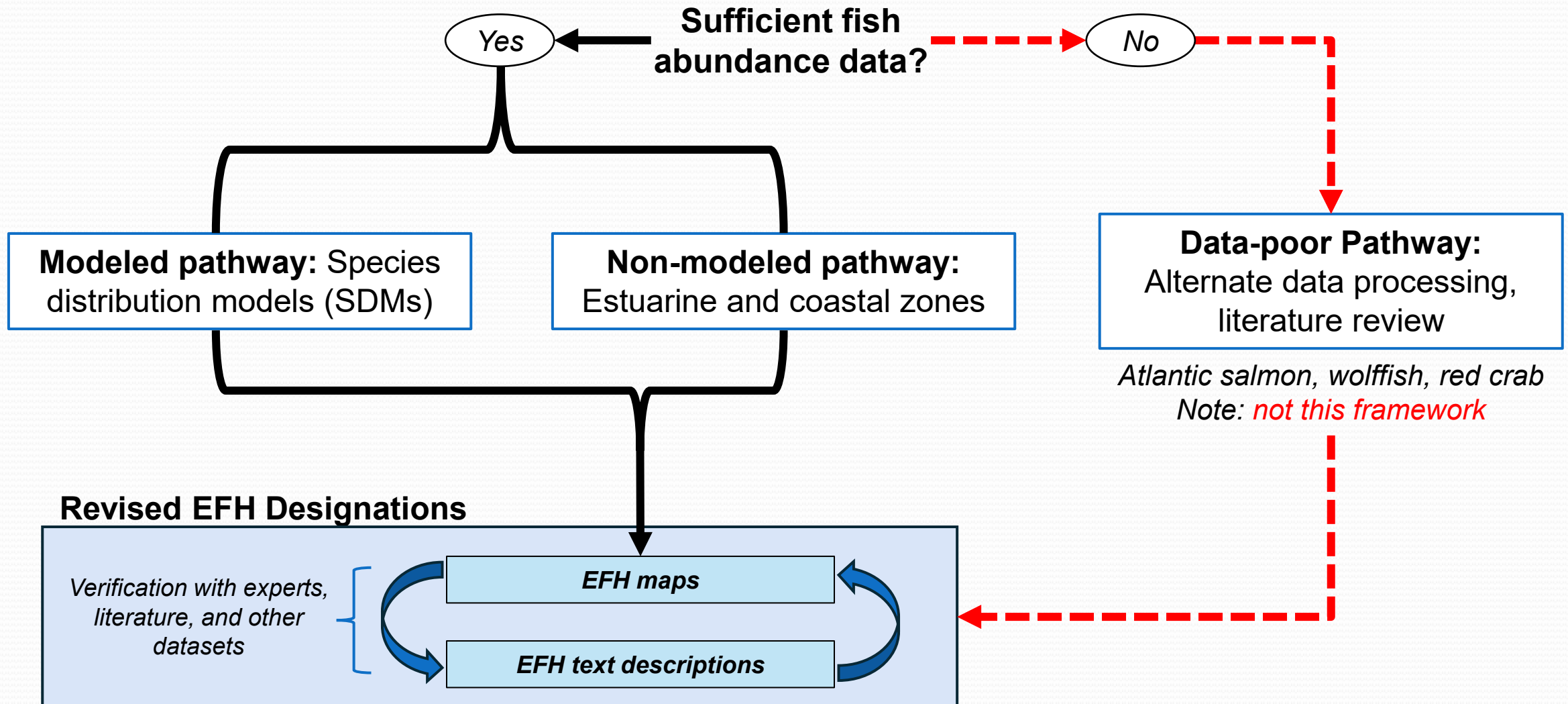
- **Problem statement:** During the EFH Five-Year Review completed in January 2025, the Council recognized the need to **update EFH designations for its managed species based on recent species distribution and abundance data and species distribution model outputs. The current designations are based on data through 2005 and may not reflect current habitat use by Council-managed species.**
  - *Builds on species distribution modeling approaches and inshore workflows developed during NRHA and the EFH Five-Year Review*
- **Objective:** Revise EFH text descriptions and maps for all life history stages of Atlantic herring, monkfish, Atlantic cod, smooth skate, thorny skate, barndoor skate, little skate, winter skate, clearnose skate, and rosette skate.
  - *Designations for other species will be updated in future Council actions*



# Workflow for EFH Framework



# Updated EFH designation methods flowchart

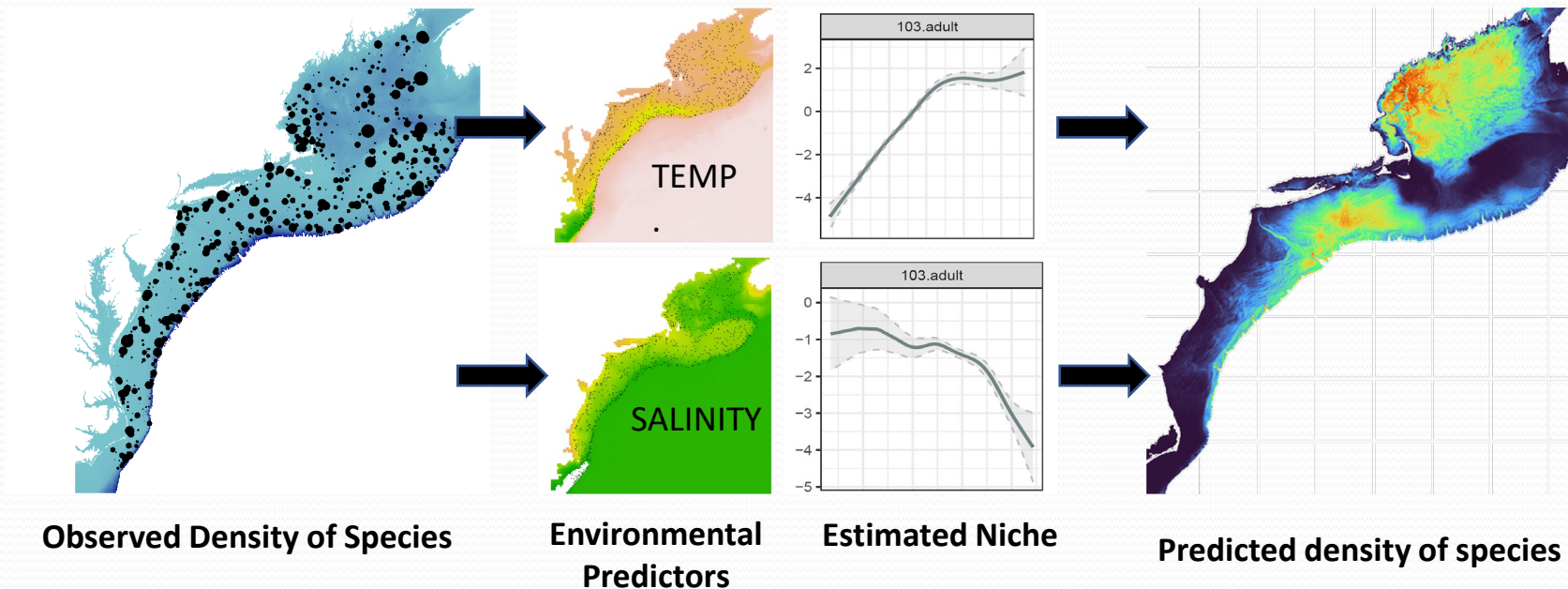


# Modeling pathway (inshore to offshore areas)

**Species Distribution Models (SDMs)** estimate the habitat “niche” of organisms by relating **observed densities** to **environmental variables**

- *Separate juvenile and adult models with sufficient data; otherwise, combined models (i.e., barndoor, rosette, smooth, thorny skate)*

“Environmental filters”



- SDMs were developed for most species managed by NEFMC and MAFMC including all 10 species in this action
- Rely on abundance data from NEFSC, NEAMAP, ME-NH, MA trawl surveys (2000-2019)
- Possible to predict species density beyond sampled area → being careful about these inferences, e.g., in low salinity habitats
- Joint SDMs allow us to understand relationships between species

# Modeling pathway (SDM Density Quantiles)

➤ *Quantiles group the mean density predictions into bins:*

- Top 95% = general distribution area



- **Top 75% = principal habitat area (EFH)**



- Top 50% = core habitat\*

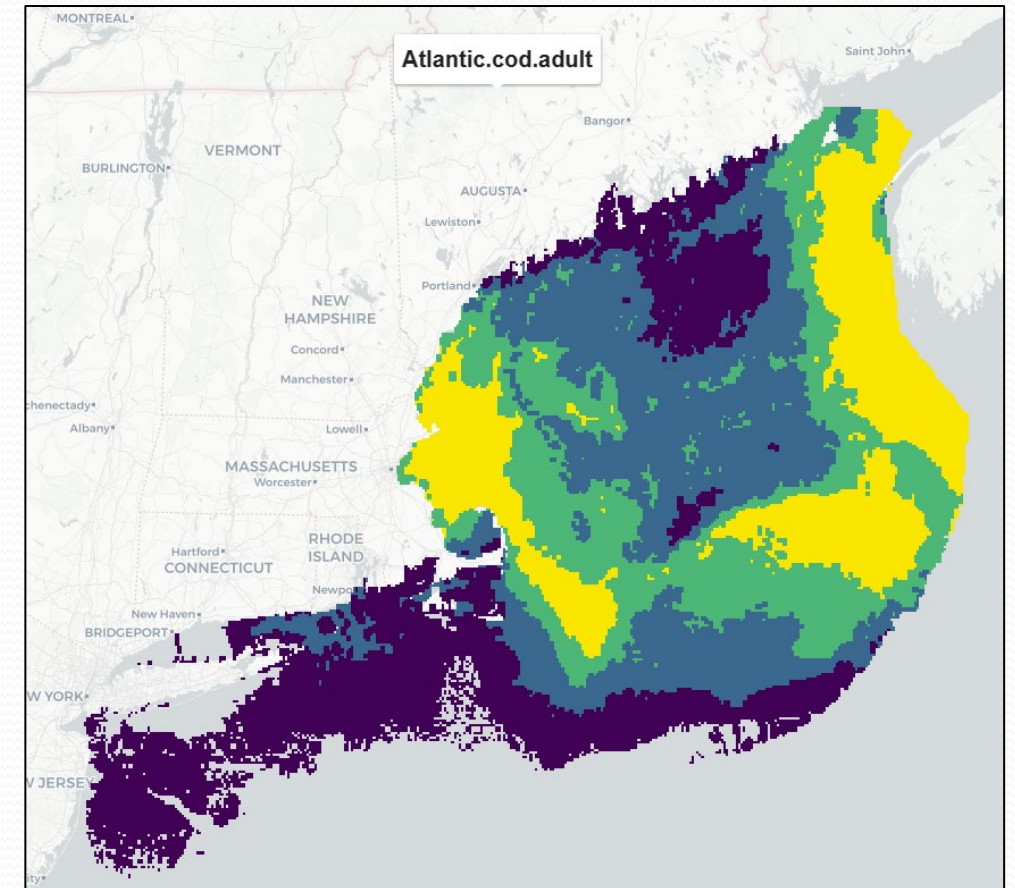


- Top 25% = hotspots\*



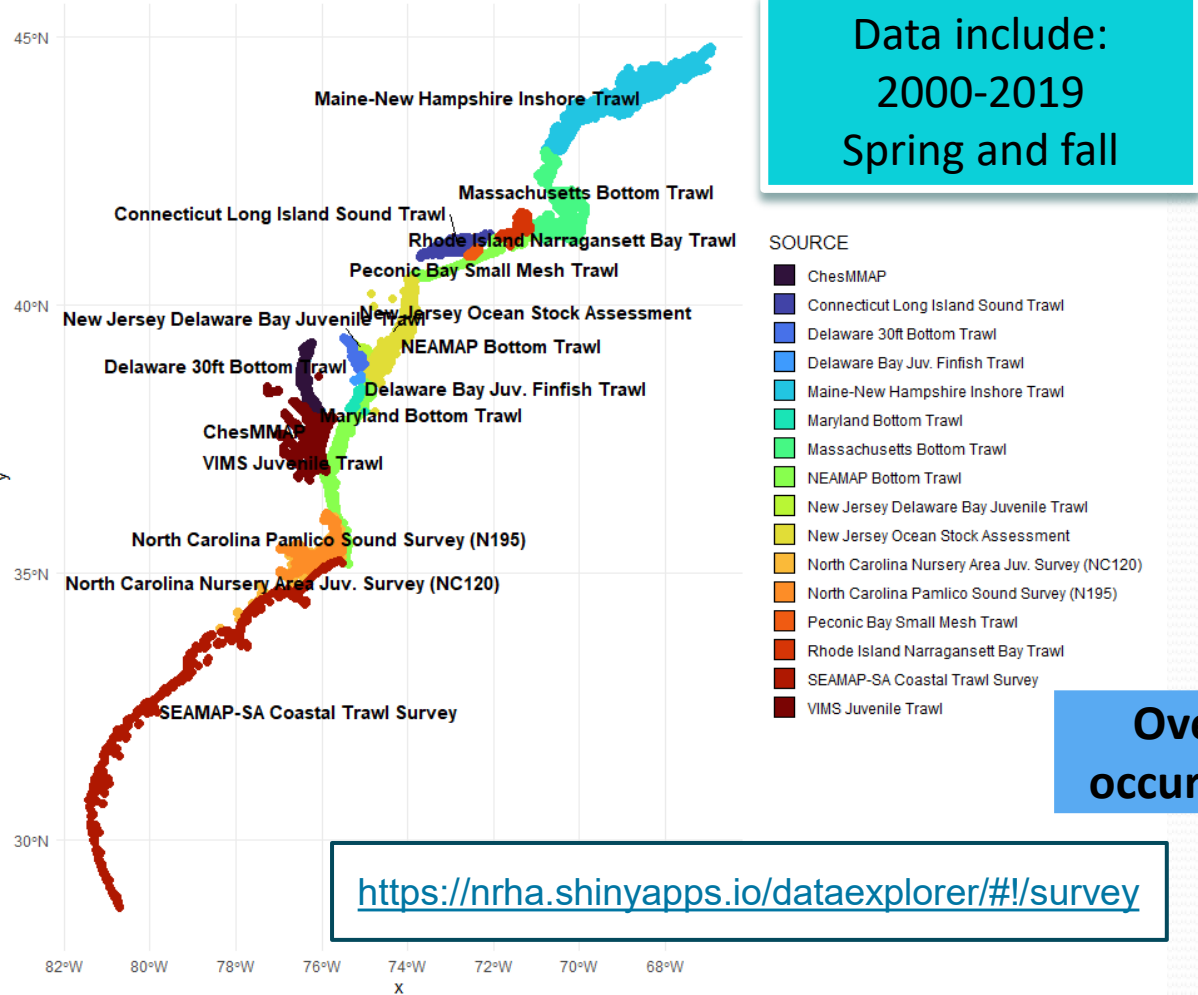
*\* Terminology is from North Pacific (model-based EFH since 2017); not wedded to this language if it isn't useful*

*Started our EFH work assuming 95% / general distribution area as EFH; after consultation recommend 75% / principal area as EFH*

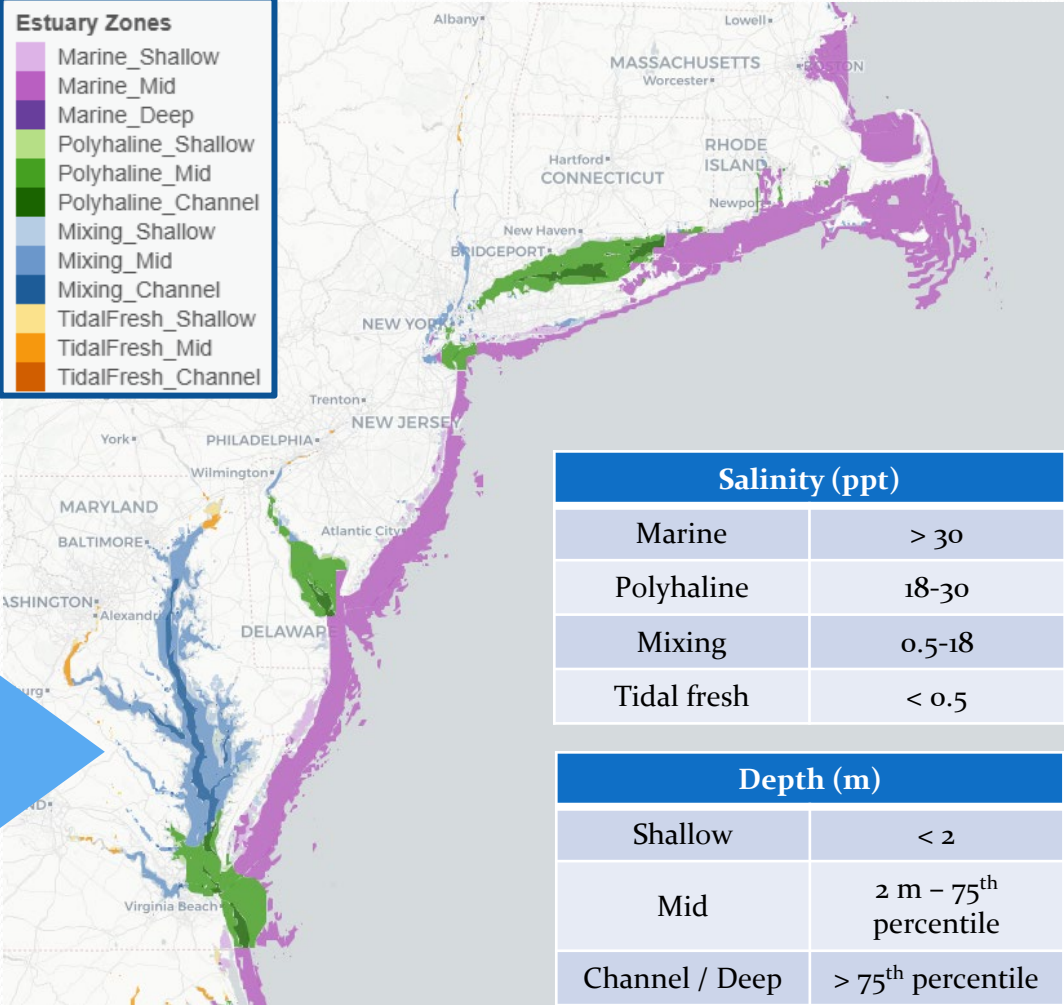


# Non-modeling pathway (estuaries and inshore areas)

## Inshore Fish Surveys – Occurrence Data

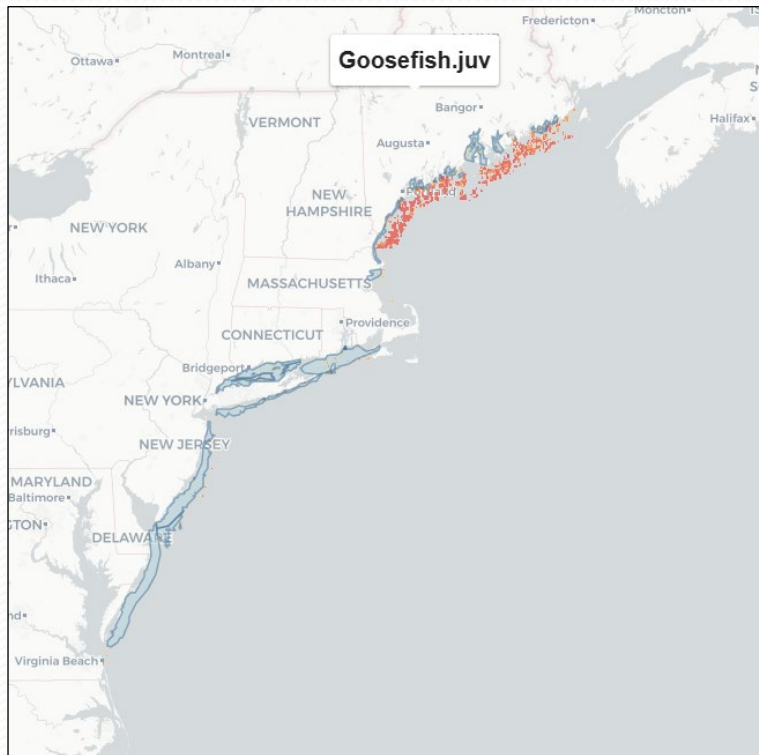


## Estuarine and Inshore Depth and Salinity Zones

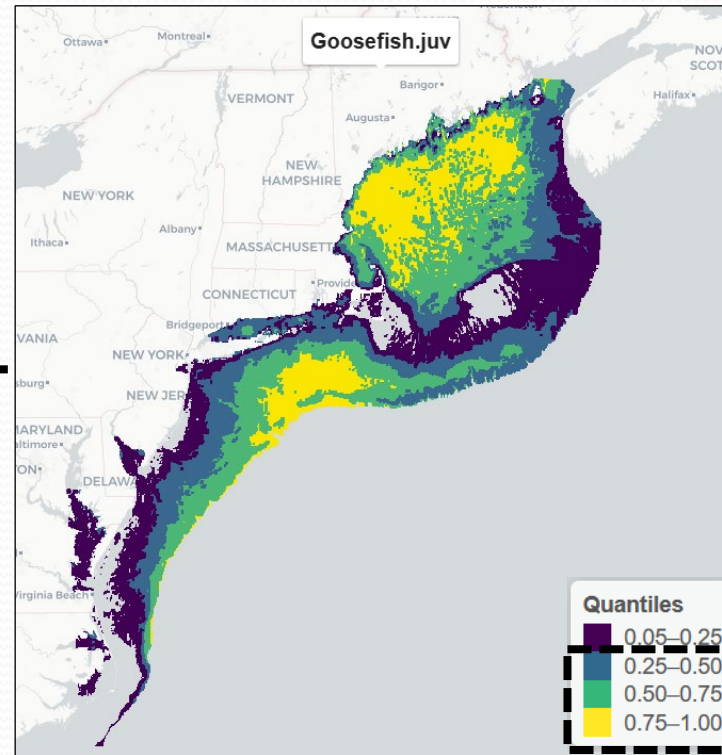


# Combine model-based and estuarine/inshore areas to create EFH map

Inshore zones with occurrence or appropriate habitat conditions



Model-based area (top 75% predicted density)



Combined to form principal habitat area = EFH



Derived from predicted density

# Summary of map updates by species

| Species                                      | Model-based maps for juveniles and adults | Egg and larval maps (based on juvenile and adult model outputs)          |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Atlantic herring                             | Separate juvenile & adult                 | Eggs, adult fall distribution<br>Larvae, union of adult and juvenile map |
| Atlantic cod                                 | Separate juvenile & adult                 | Eggs and larvae, union of adult and juvenile map                         |
| Monkfish                                     | Separate juvenile & adult                 | Eggs and larvae, union of adult and juvenile map                         |
| Clearnose, little, and winter skate          | Separate juvenile & adult                 | Eggs, use adult map<br>No larval maps for skates                         |
| Barndoor*, smooth*, rosette and thorny skate | Combined juvenile & adult                 | Eggs, use combined map<br>No larval maps for skates                      |

*\* In process of running combined juvenile/adult barndoor skate and smooth skate models; for now, maps are shown as the union of juvenile and adult model outputs*

# Text description updates

## Information sources:

- EFH maps and model outputs
- Inshore + offshore survey data
- Literature review
- Consultation w/ experts (species PDTs, APs, industry, etc.)

- Builds on OHA2 descriptions
- Provides additional information that complements EFH maps:
  - **Spatial distribution**, referencing EFH maps
  - **Habitat characteristics**: specific associations (e.g., substrates), environmental ranges (depth, temperature, salinity; *see example below*)
  - **Variations in habitat-use**: seasonal, geographic, oceanographic, life history, etc.
- Environmental ranges derived from quantiles of survey occurrence data:

| Species      | Life stage | Depth (m) |        | Temperature (°C) | Salinity (ppt) |
|--------------|------------|-----------|--------|------------------|----------------|
|              |            | Full      | 75%    | 95%              | 95%            |
| Atlantic cod | Juvenile   | 7-201     | 14-100 | 3-14             | 26-35          |

# Outreach process - designations

## Resources:

- [Guiding questions](#)
- [Detailed EFH primers\\*](#)
- [Simplified EFH primers\\*](#)

| Date                              | Group / Species           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| May 28                            | Groundfish PDT – cod      |
| May 29                            | Skates and Monkfish PDTs  |
| June 10                           | Groundfish AP / RAP – cod |
| June 18                           | Herring PDT               |
| July 7                            | Skate expert              |
| July 10                           | Cod expert                |
| July 10                           | Herring experts           |
| Other feedback via correspondence |                           |

*\*Note: primers do not have the most updated maps/text but are provided as snapshots in the outreach process*

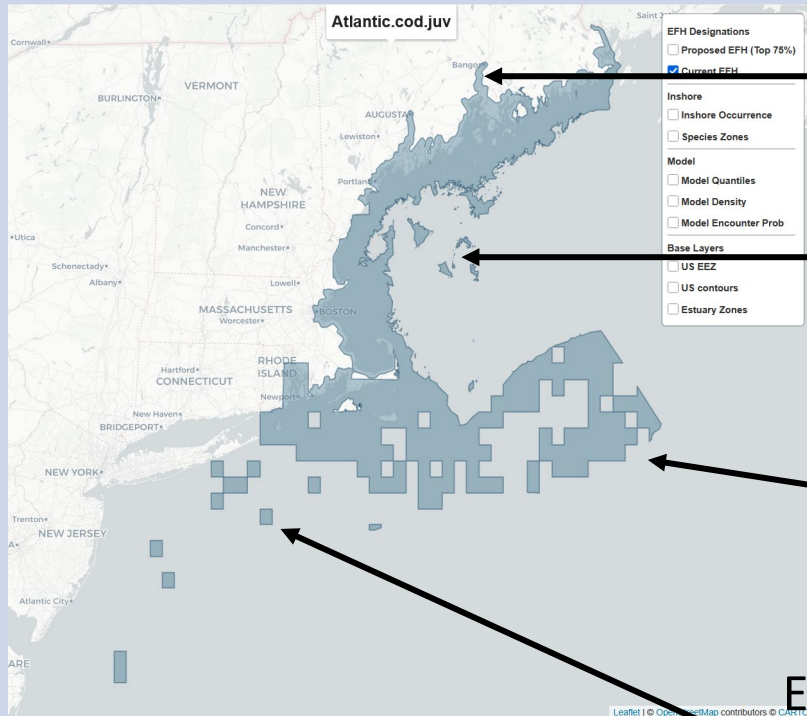
- *Consult and verify draft EFH maps and text with species experts*
- *Ongoing, evolving process – feedback on ways to improve upon it for next year*
- **Key themes:**
  - *Identify gaps in maps / text (seasonal, key habitat conditions, etc.)*
  - *Balance between **broad vs focused EFH***
  - *Interest in binning outputs into smaller time blocks, especially **most recent years***
  - *Consider additional datasets (verify, integrate?)*

# No Action vs. Updated Designation Methods

|                         | No Action (OHA2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Updated (2025-2027 actions)                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fish abundance data     | Federal, state, regional survey data (1968 or earliest available - 2005)                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Federal, state, regional survey data (2000-2019)                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Environmental variables | Depth, temperature; ranges estimated by examining histograms                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Depth, temperature, salinity, currents, sediments, rugosity; ranges estimated by summarizing all survey observations (depth / temp / salinity)                                                                                                  |
| Data processing         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cumulative abundance (75<sup>th</sup> or 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) by ten-minute squares (TMS), clipped by depth + inshore TMS with positive tows + whole estuaries.</li> <li>- Multi-step workflow, various layers joined together</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint species distribution models (SDMs) + inshore suitable habitat zones; 1-km grid.</li> <li>- Top 75% predicted density, all species</li> <li>- Programming-based, reproducible workflow</li> </ul> |
| Un-surveyed areas       | "Fill" areas added based on professional judgment, procedure for designating un-surveyed TMS if adjacent TMS EFH                                                                                                                                                                          | SDMs predict (interpolate) density based on environmental covariates, except in low salinity areas; inshore extrapolation uses depth/salinity zones                                                                                             |

# No Action vs. Updated Designation Maps

## No Action (OHA2)



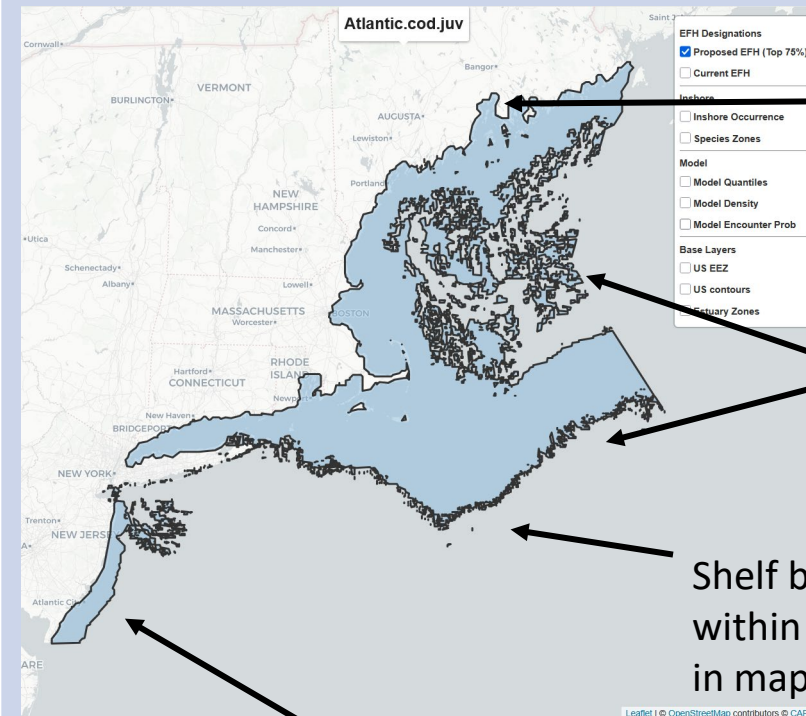
Designations by whole estuaries

TMS clipped by depth contours

Continental slope depths added for some species

Edges of designation show whole TMS

## Updated (2025-2027 actions)



Only marine or polyhaline areas of estuaries as appropriate to species

Edges of designation show 1-km grids

Shelf break / upper slope within model domain, included in maps for some species

Inshore areas designated within the geographic range of model outputs

# Framework document and appendices

1. Executive Summary
2. Contents
3. Introduction
4. Alternatives
  1. No Action EFH
  2. Updated EFH
5. Fishing Effects Evaluation
6. Impacts of Alternatives
7. Areas for Future Work
8. Consistency with Applicable Laws
9. List of Preparers
10. References

## Appendix A

- No Action EFH maps and text

## Appendix B

- Species distribution model outputs
  - Quantiles, smooth terms, trends, seasonal density estimates
- Table of environmental ranges

## Appendix C

- EFH Consultation Process



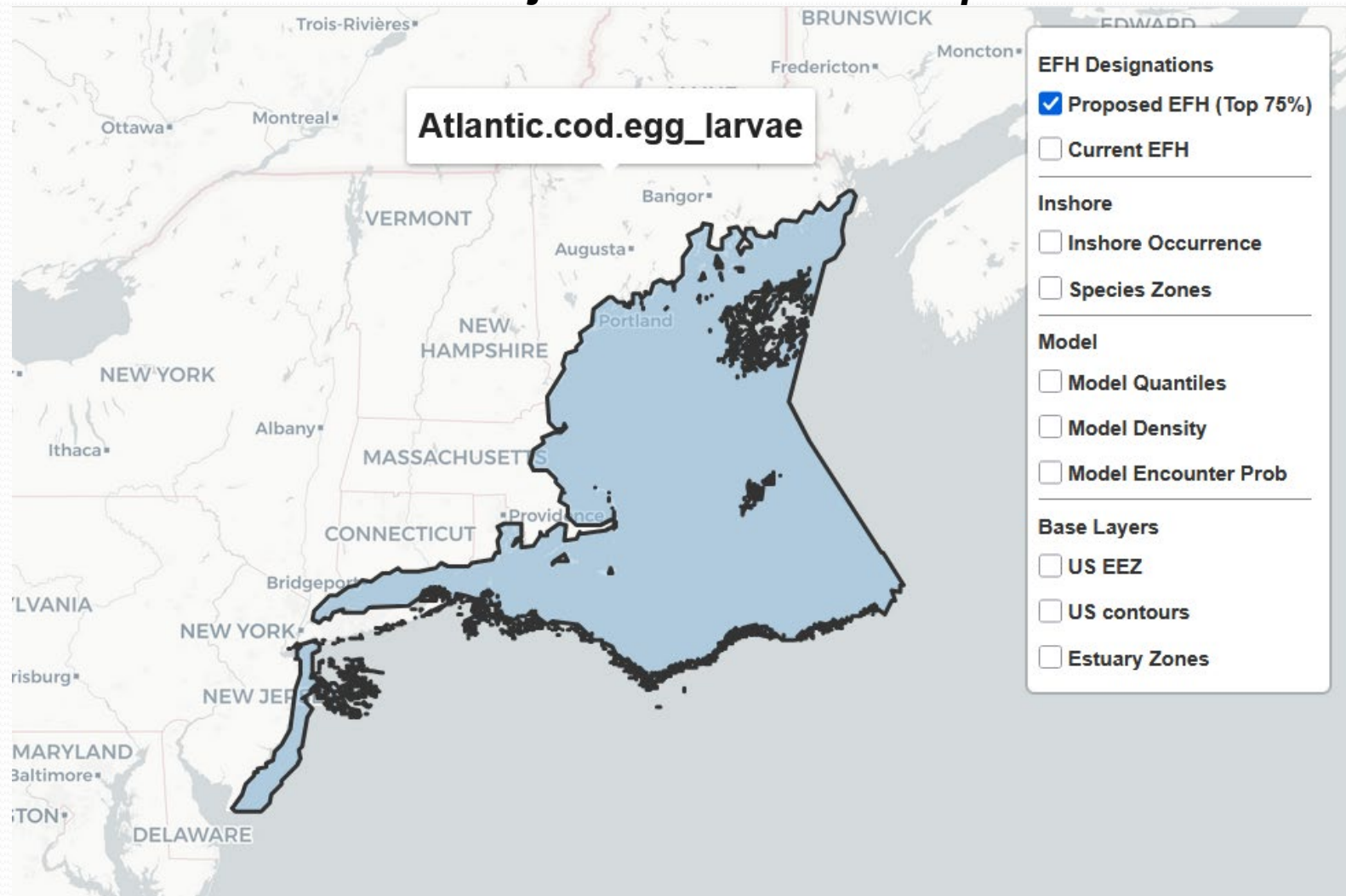
Questions about process or methods?

# EFH Designation Alternatives (Section 4.0)

- **Alternative 1 / No Action:** Current EFH designations as updated in Omnibus EFH Amendment 2
  - Rely on inshore and offshore survey data through ~ 2005
  - Data summarized by estuary / embayment and ten-minute square
  - Includes adjacent areas with suitable depths, temperatures
  - Includes continental slope depth ranges
- **Alternative 2:** Updated EFH designations
  - Relies on inshore and offshore survey data from 2000-2019
  - Combines model-based and non-modeled workflows
  - Updated text that relies on model outputs and survey data for environmental ranges

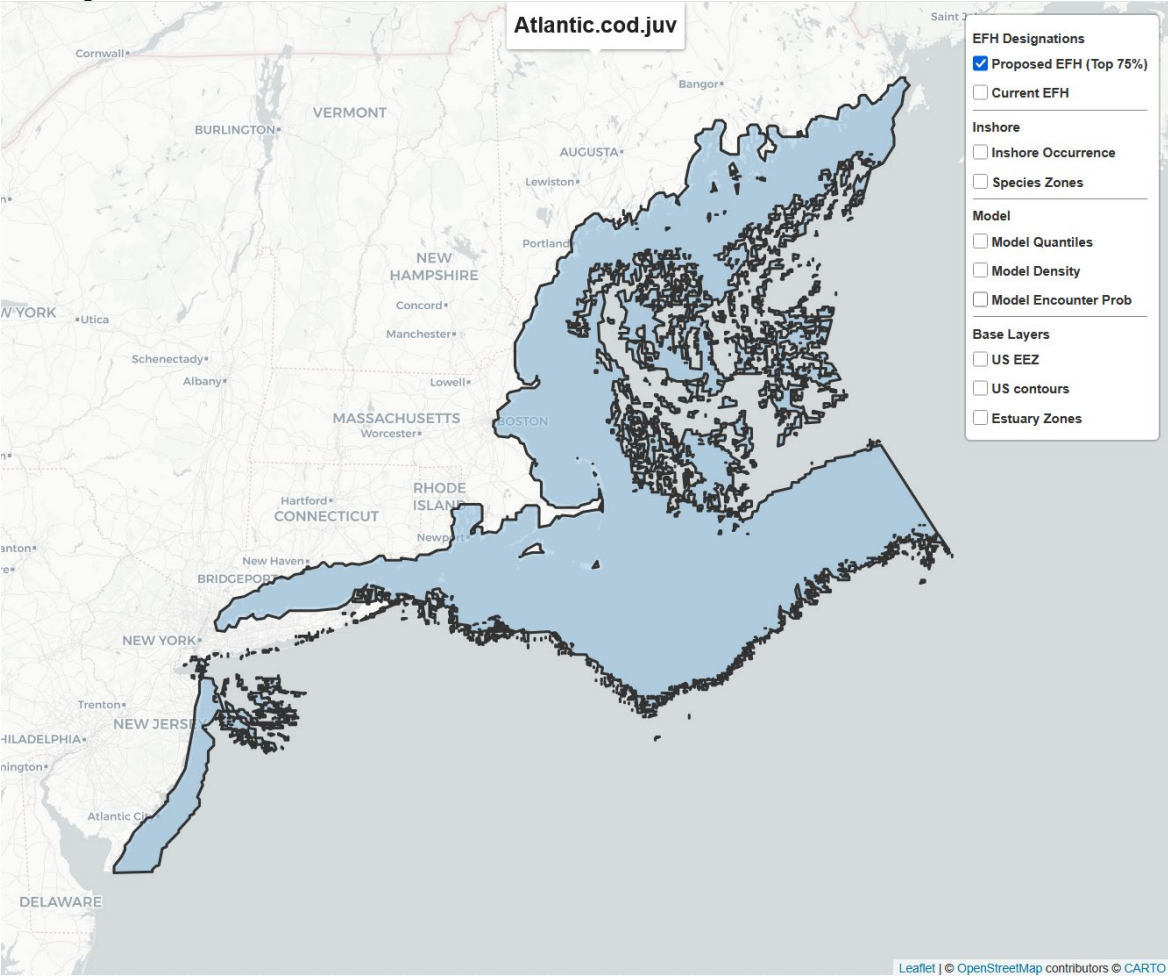
## Egg and larval EFH map

*Union of juvenile and adult maps*

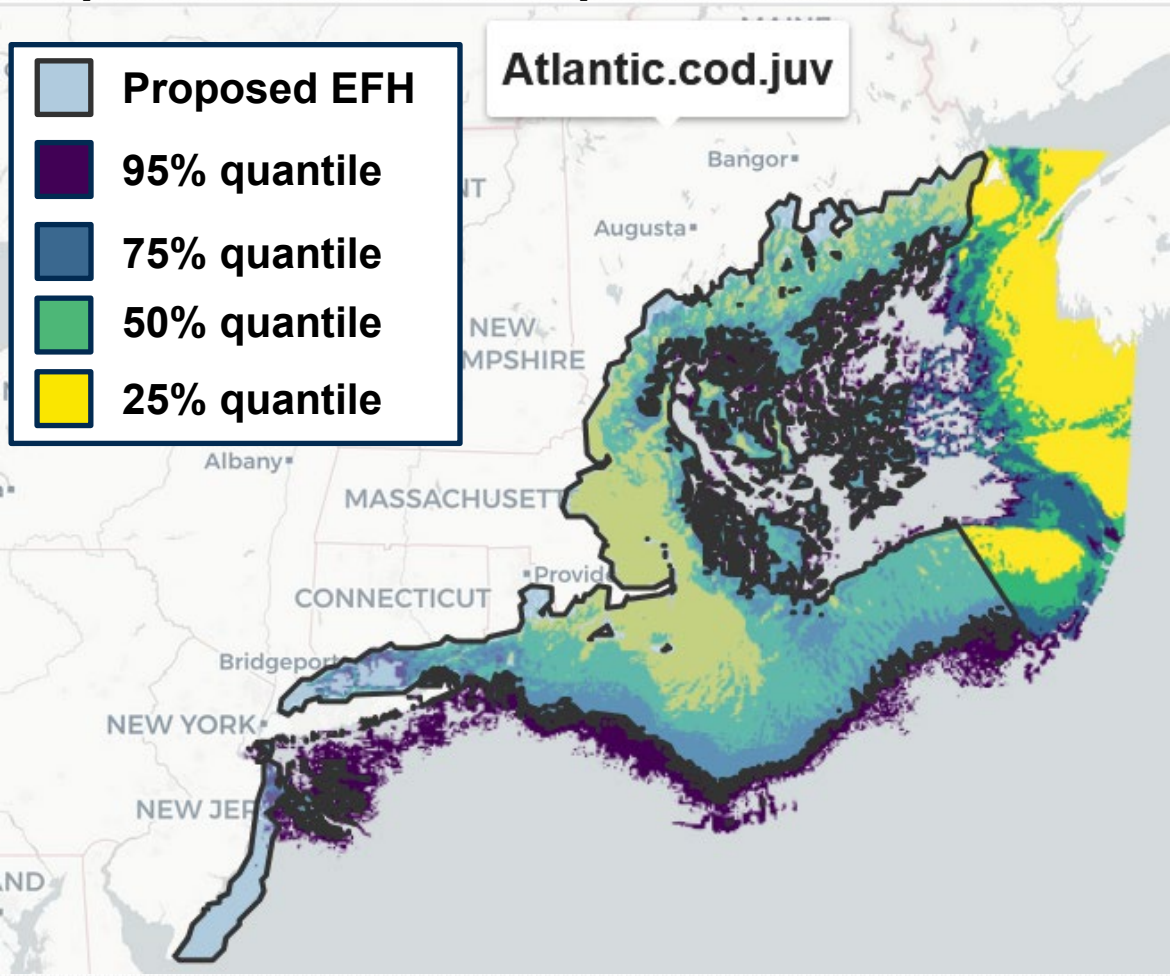


## Juvenile EFH map

*Proposed EFH*

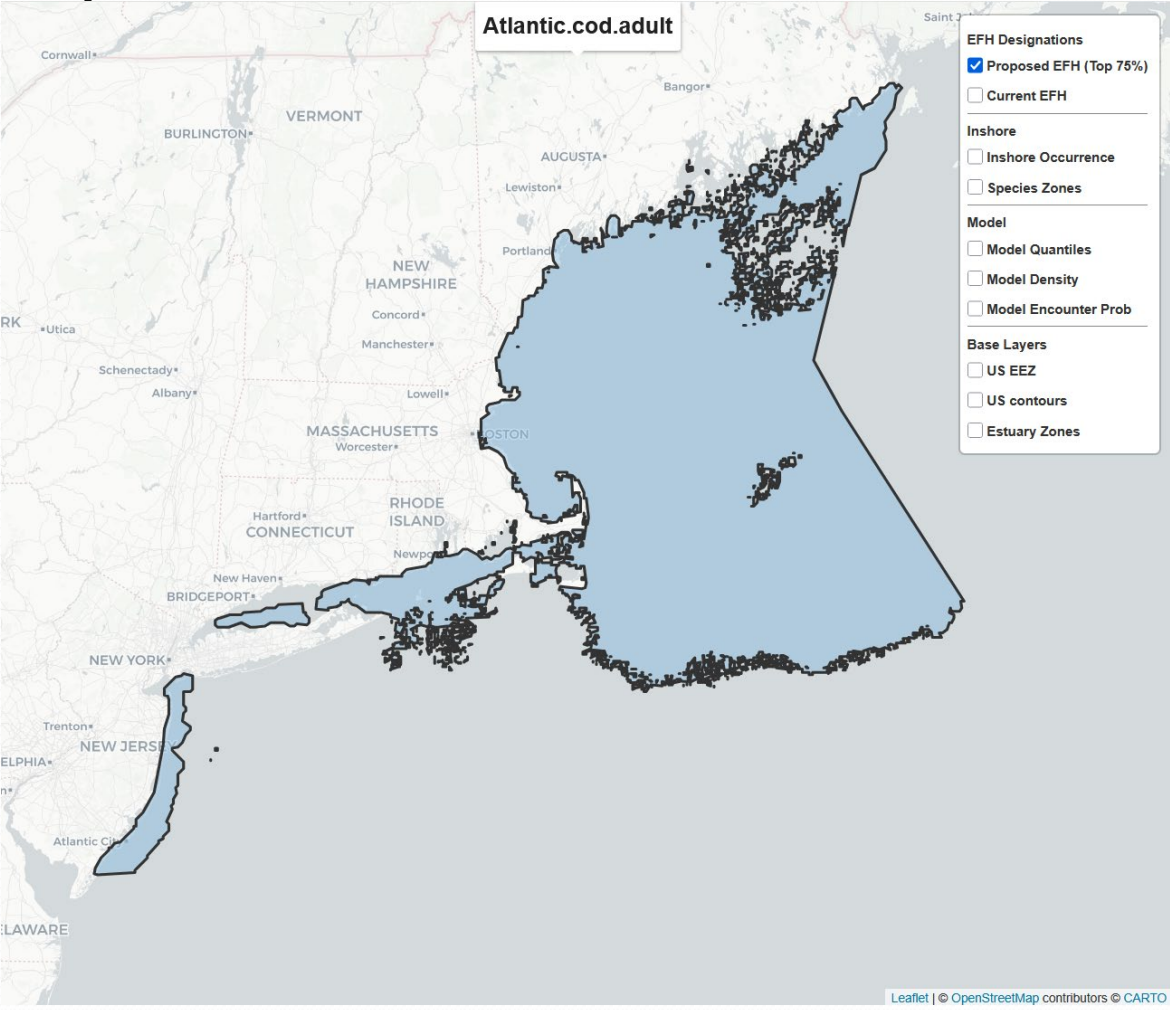


*Proposed EFH & Model quantiles*

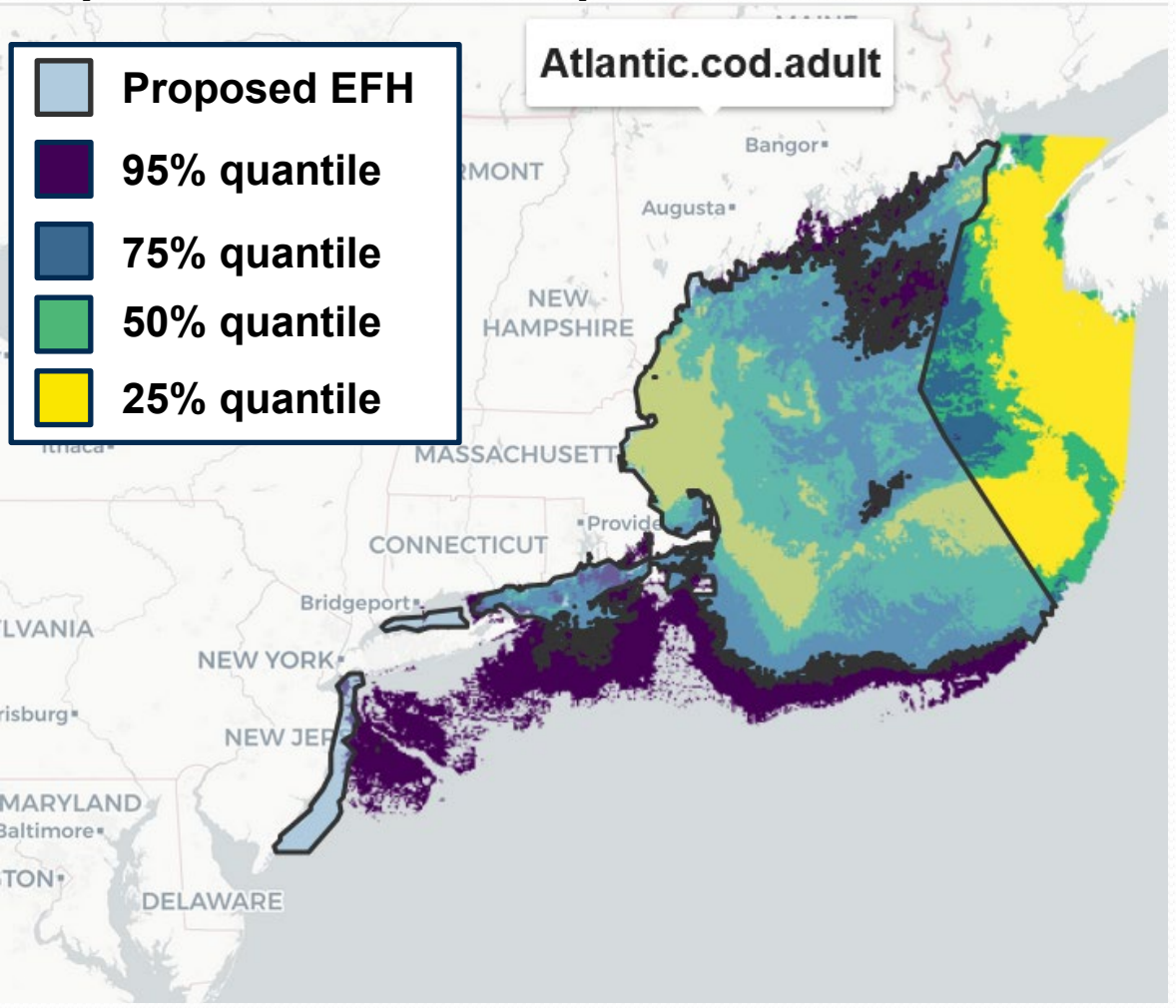


## Adult EFH map

*Proposed EFH*

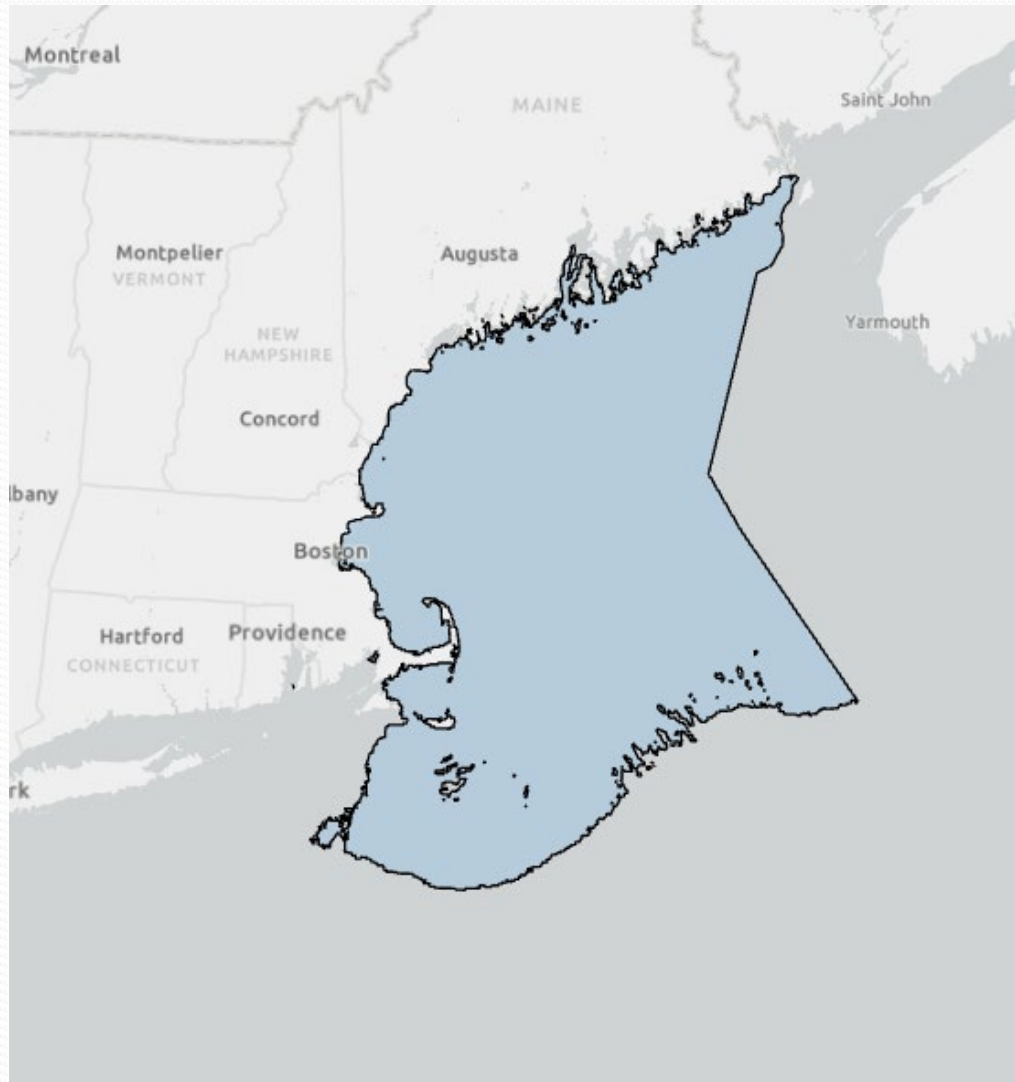


*Proposed EFH & Model quantiles*



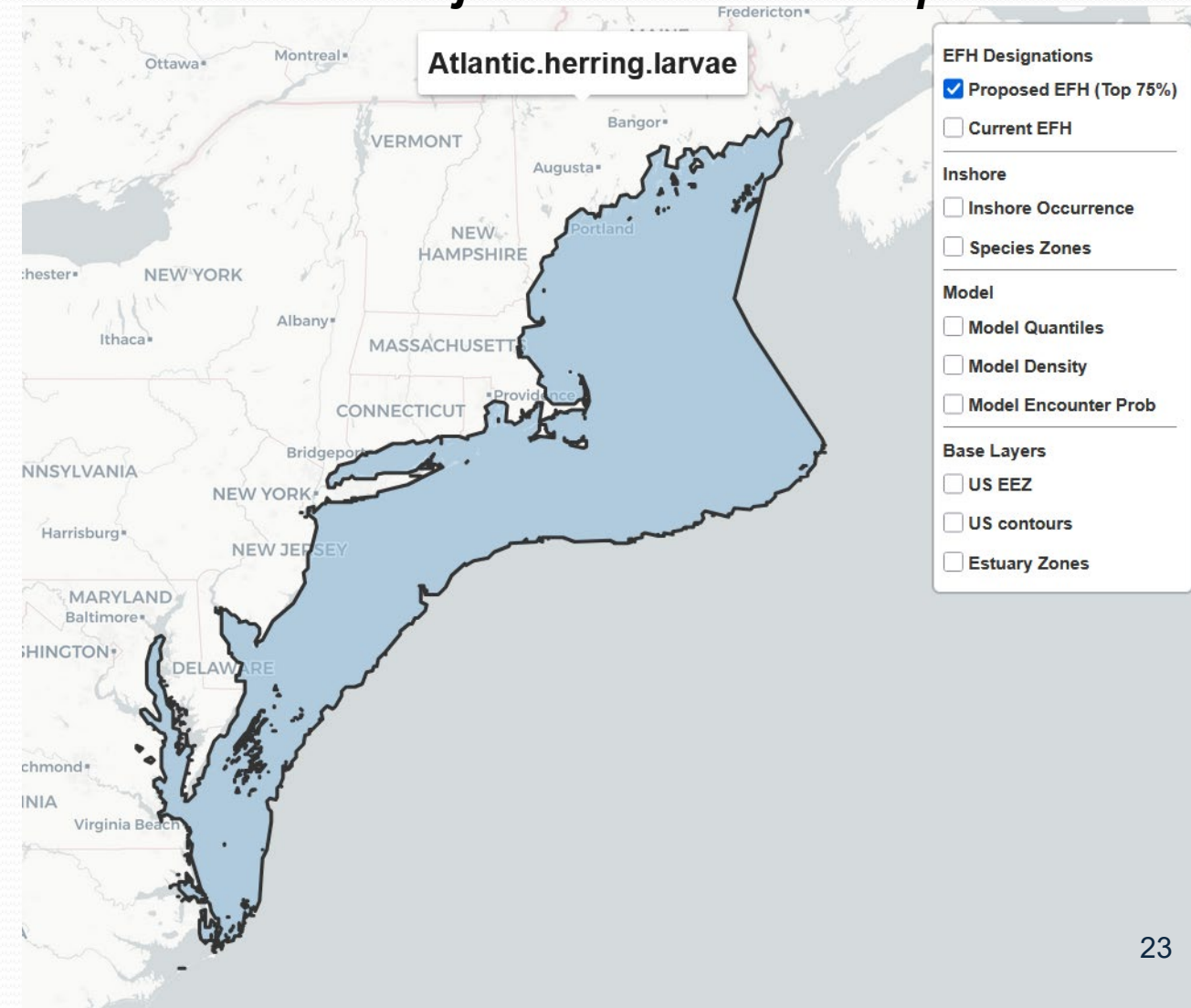
## Egg EFH map

*Adult 75<sup>th</sup> quantile in fall*



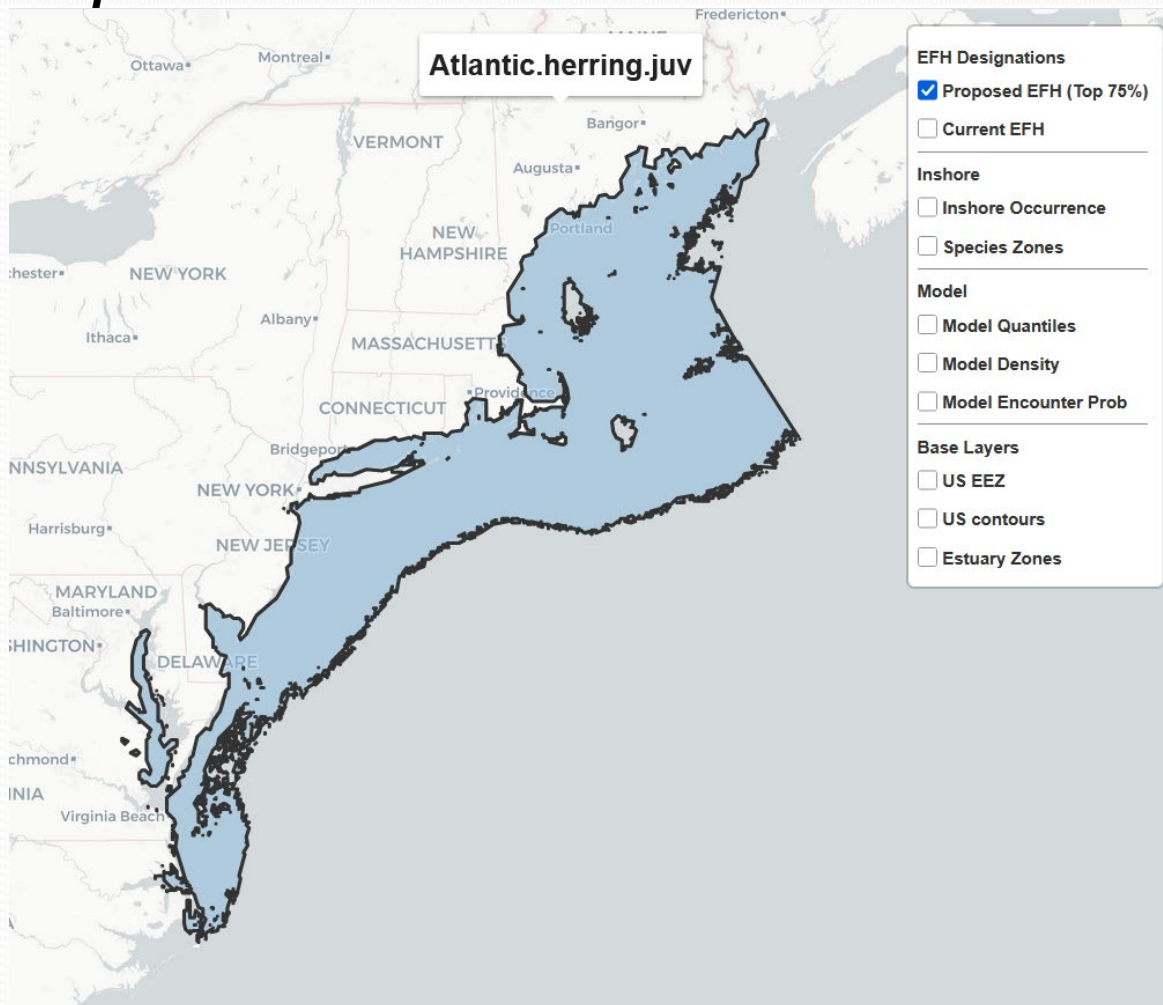
## Larval EFH map

*Union of juvenile and adult maps*

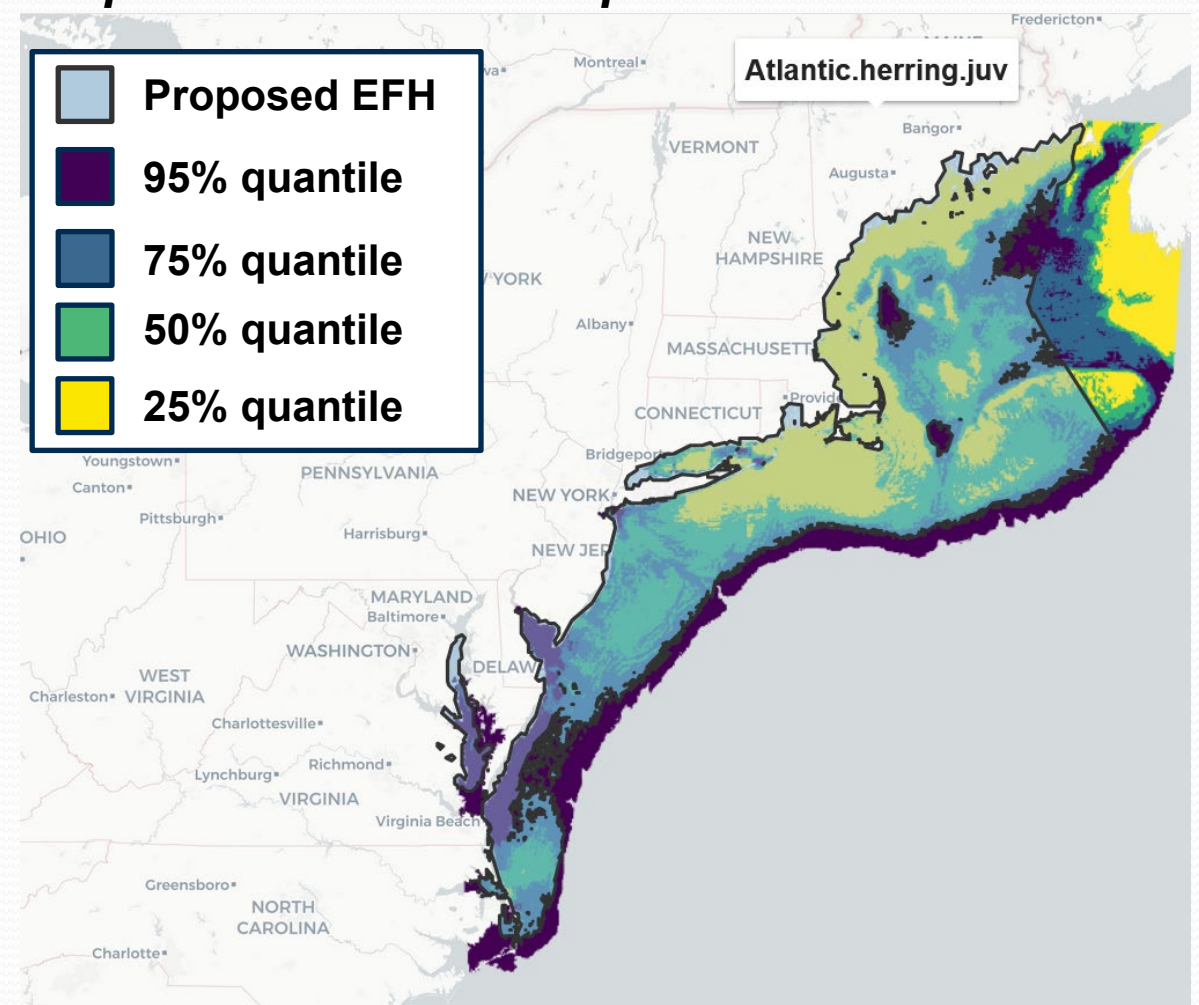


## Juvenile EFH map

### Proposed EFH

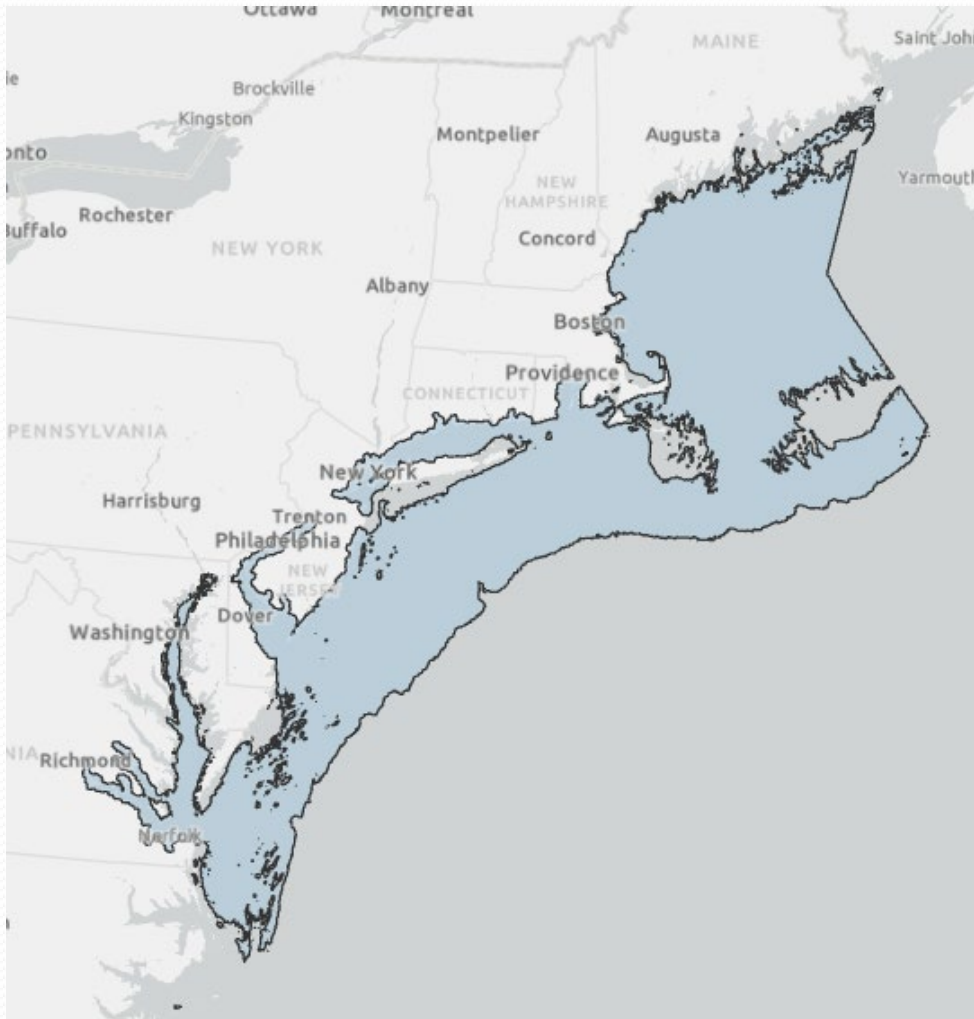


### Proposed EFH & Model quantiles

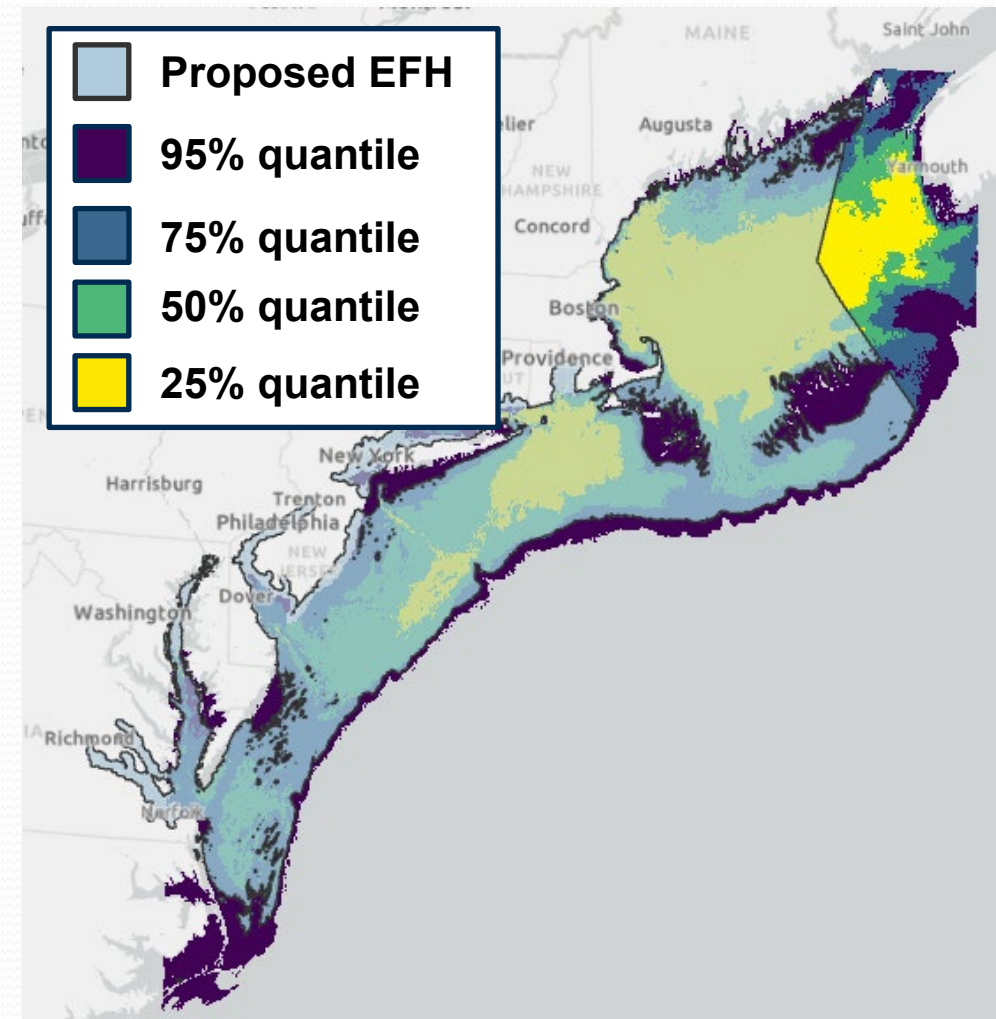


## Adult EFH map

*Proposed EFH*

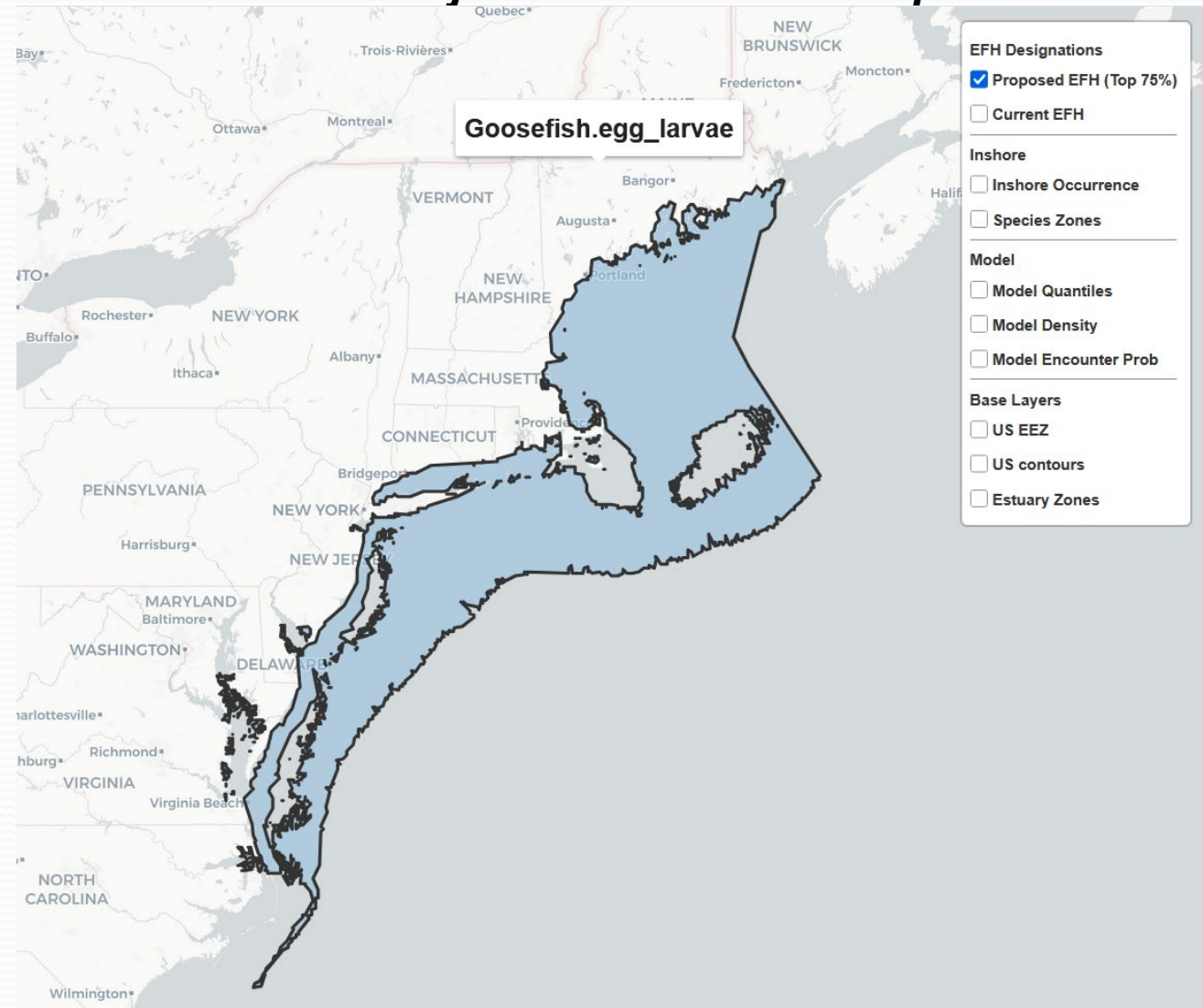


*Proposed EFH & Model quantiles*



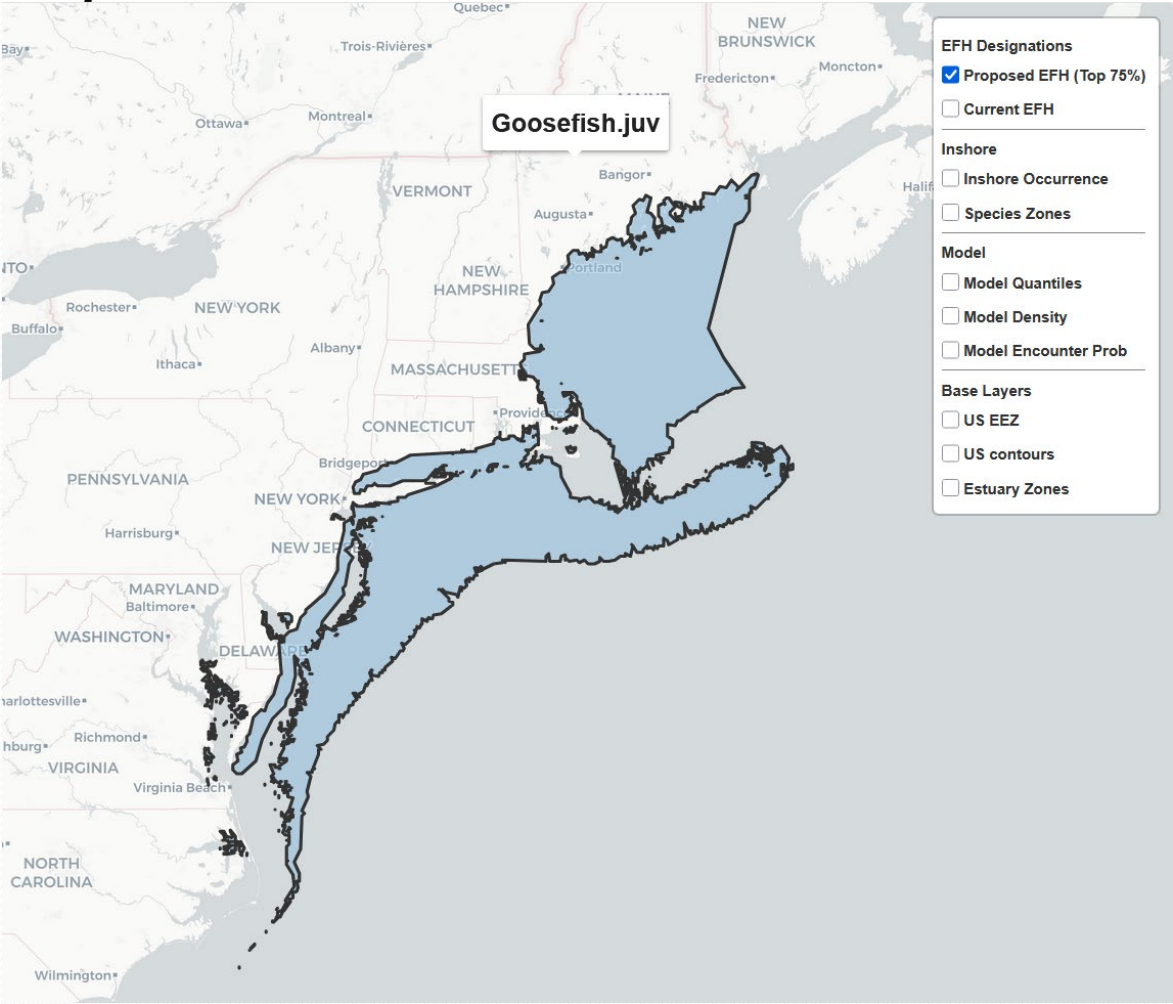
## Egg and larval EFH map

*Union of juvenile and adult maps*

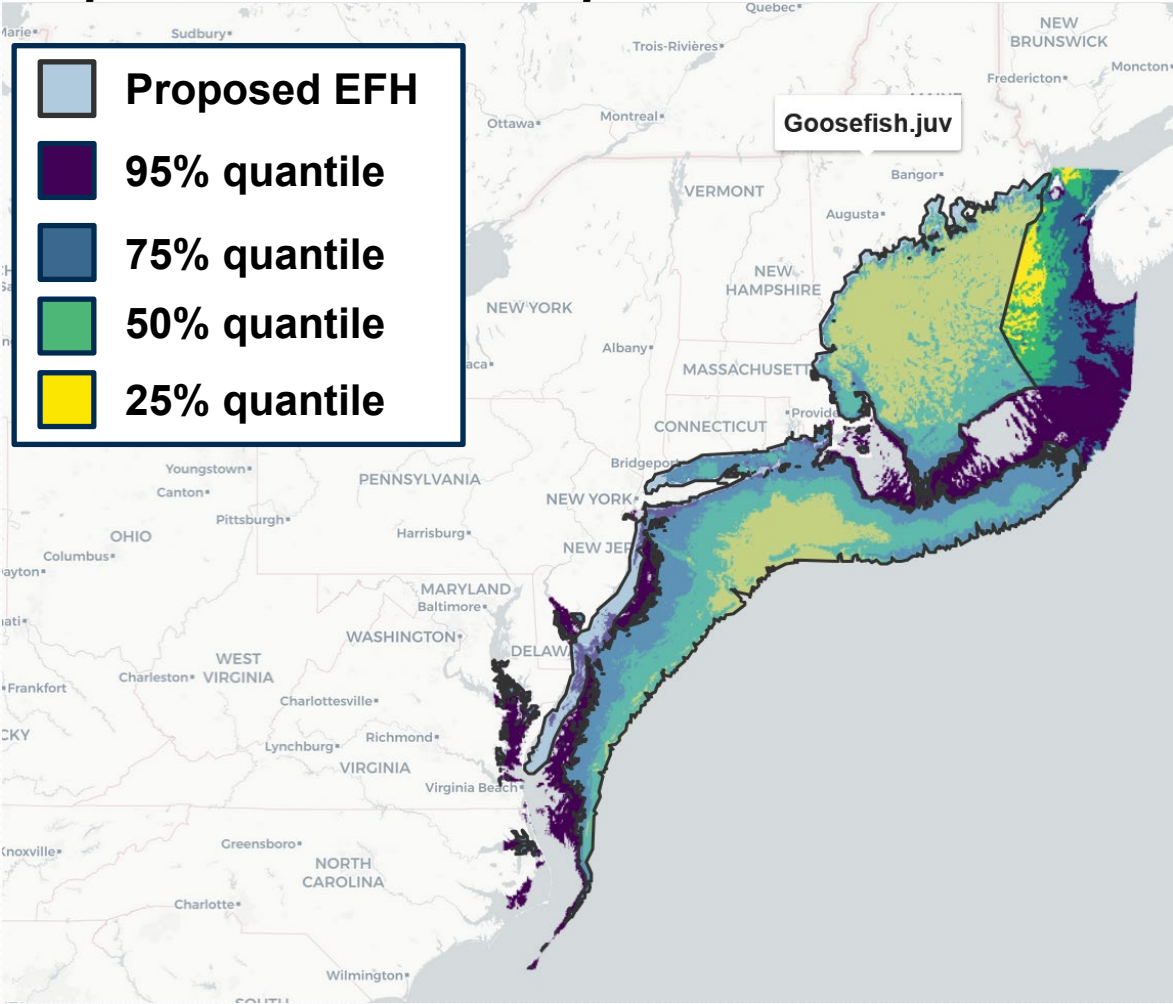


## Juvenile EFH map

**Proposed EFH**

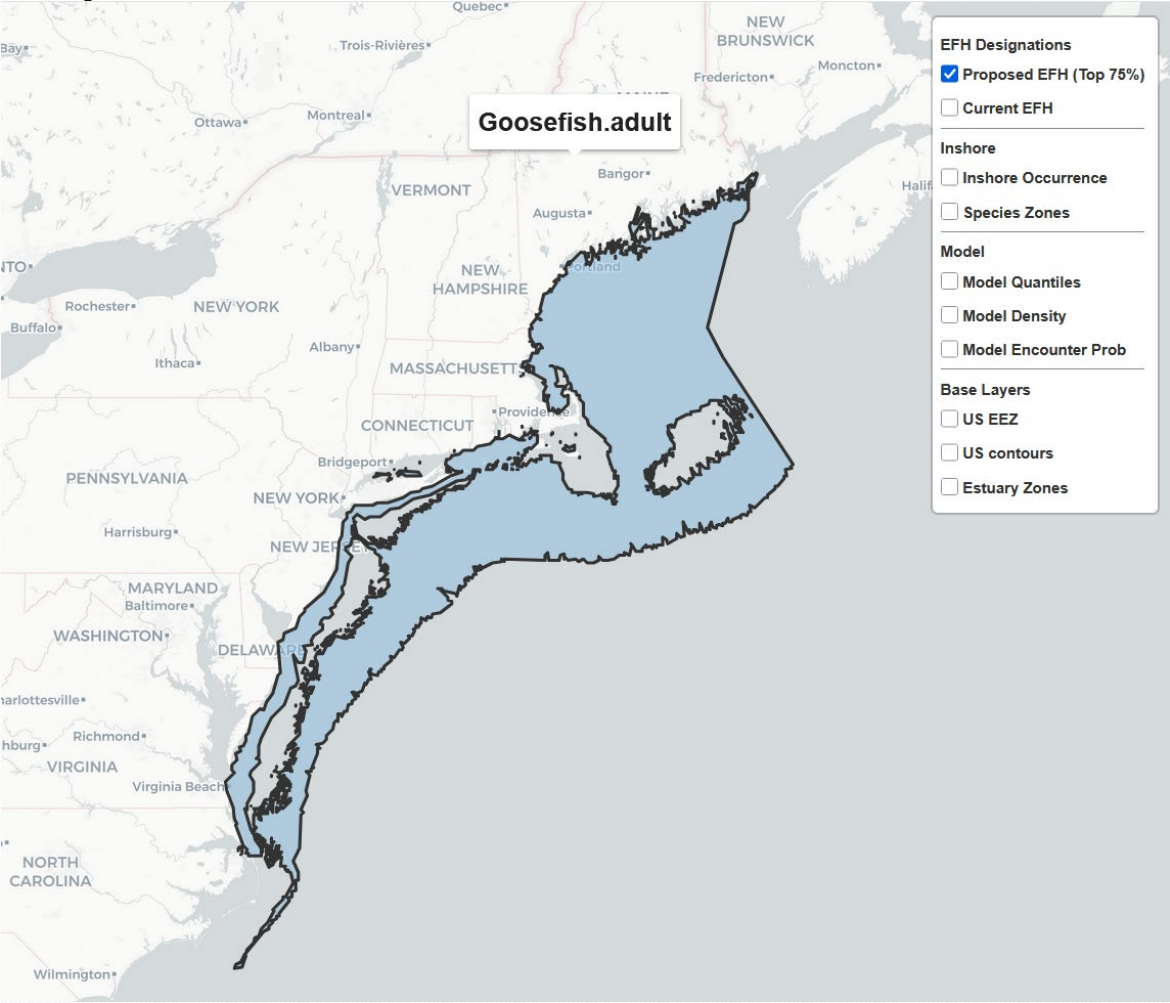


**Proposed EFH & Model quantiles**

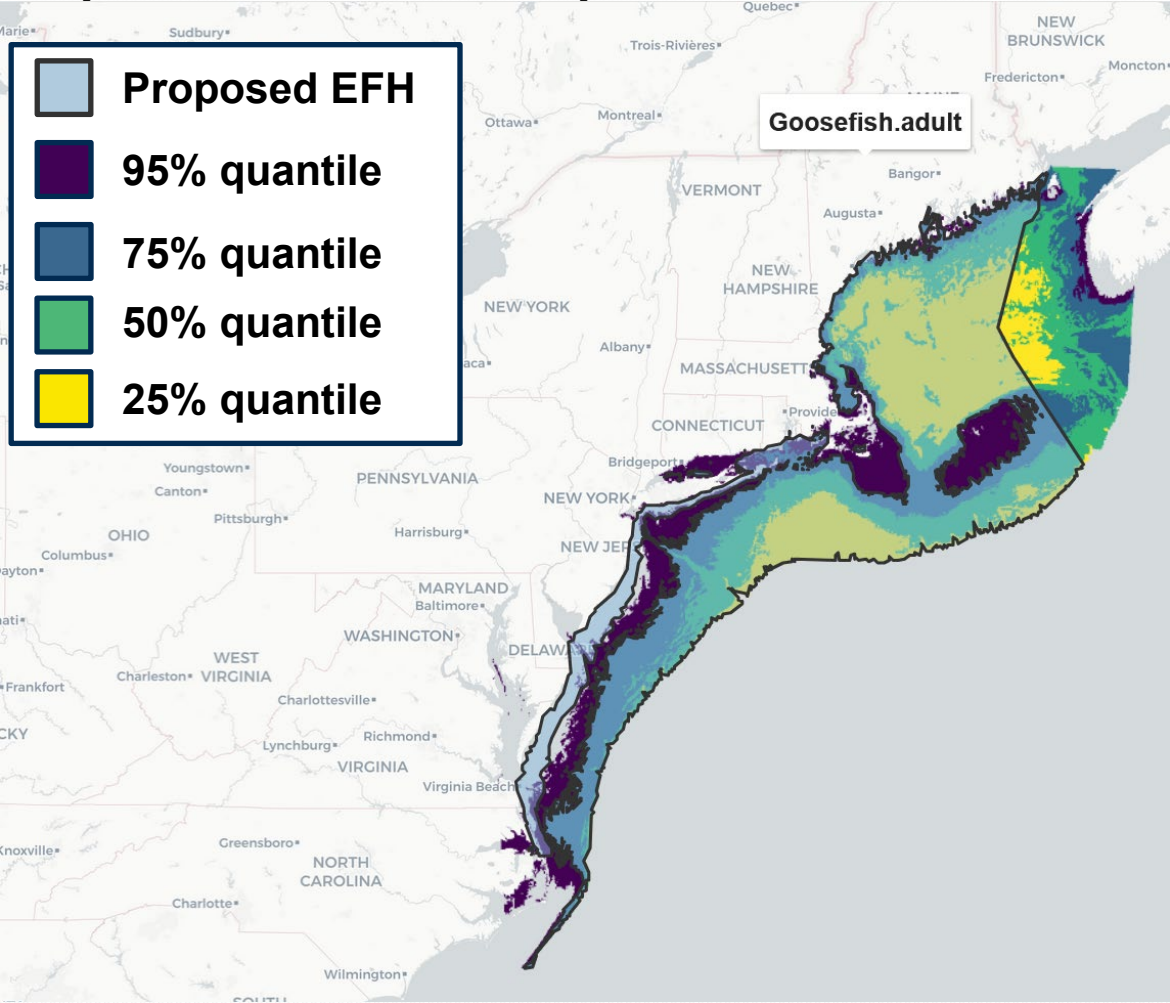


## Adult EFH map

**Proposed EFH**

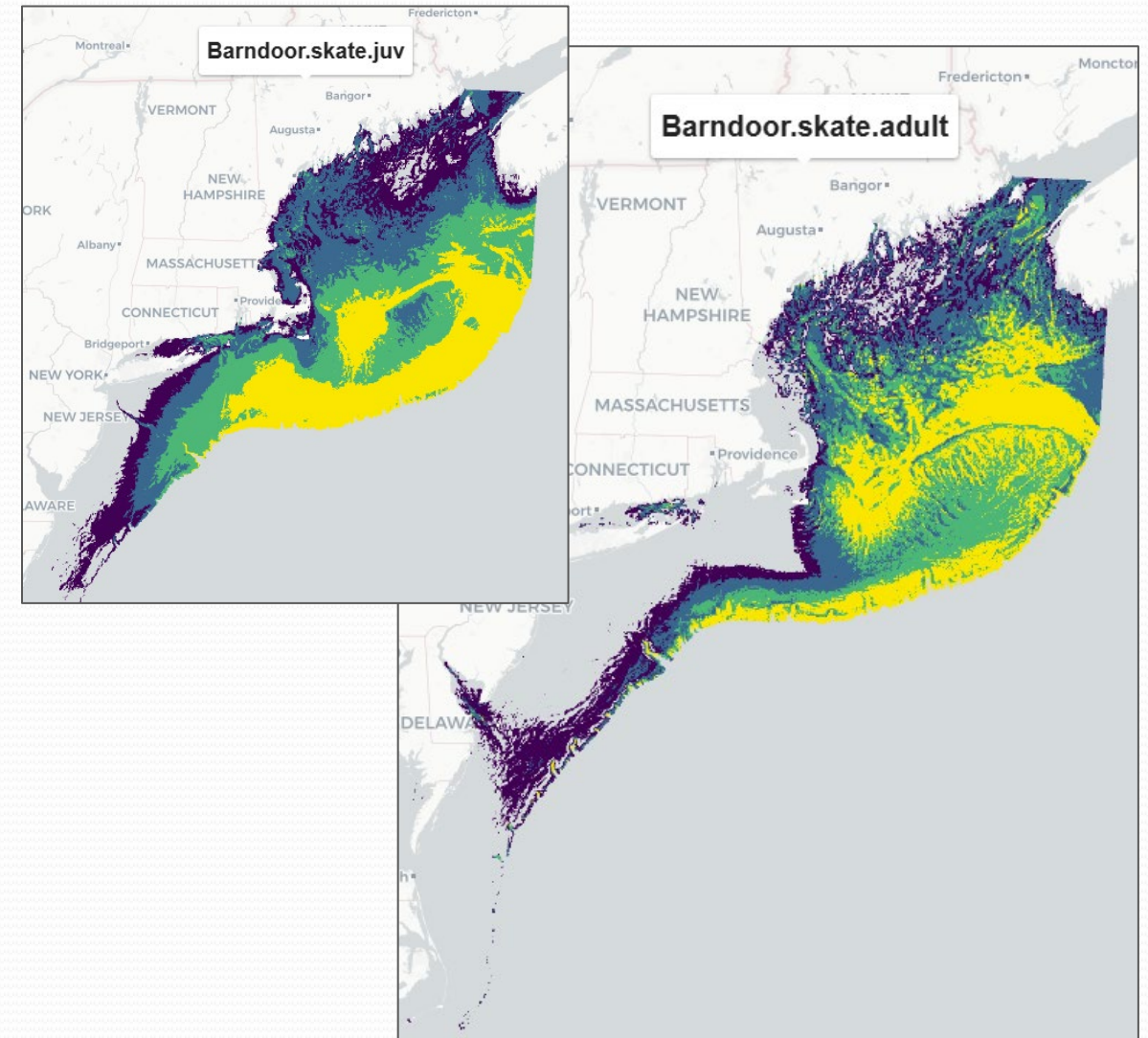
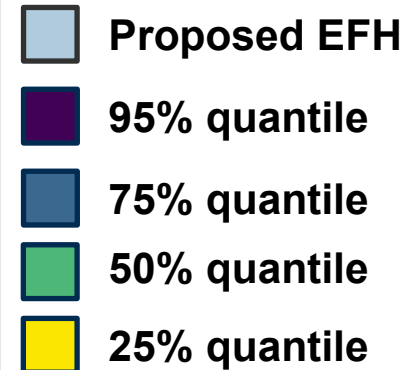
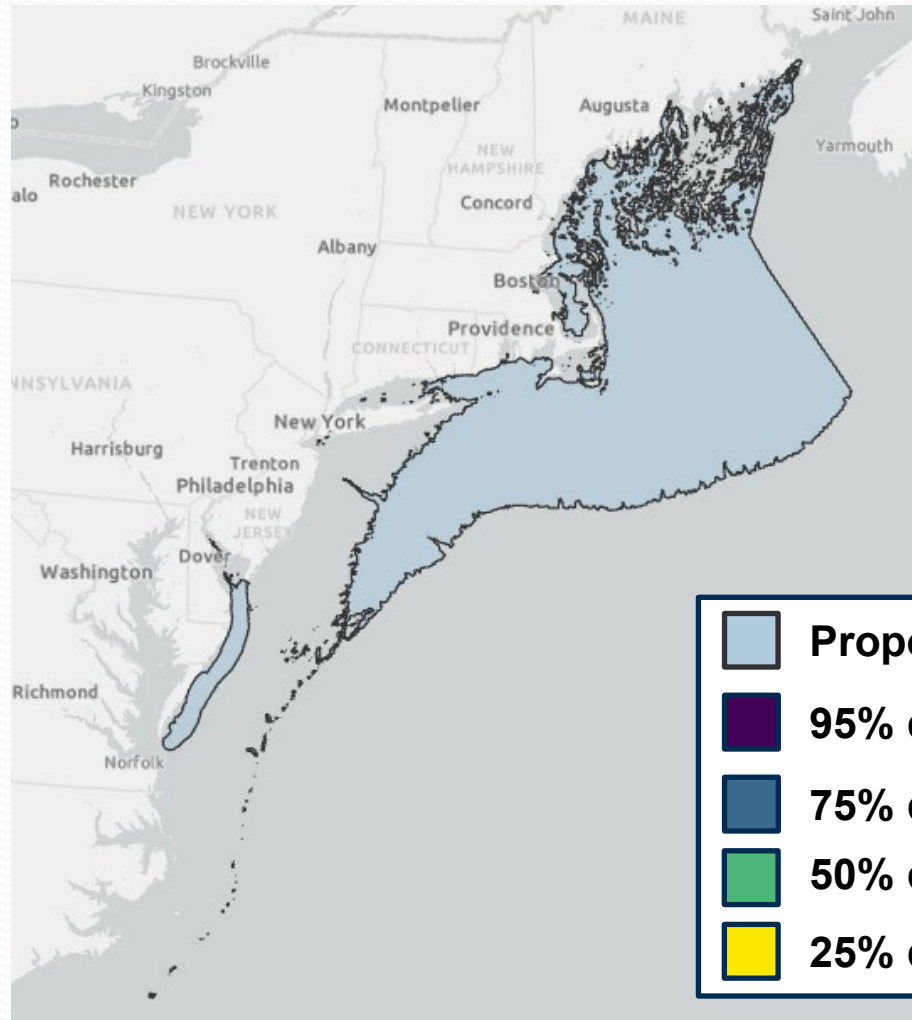


**Proposed EFH & Model quantiles**



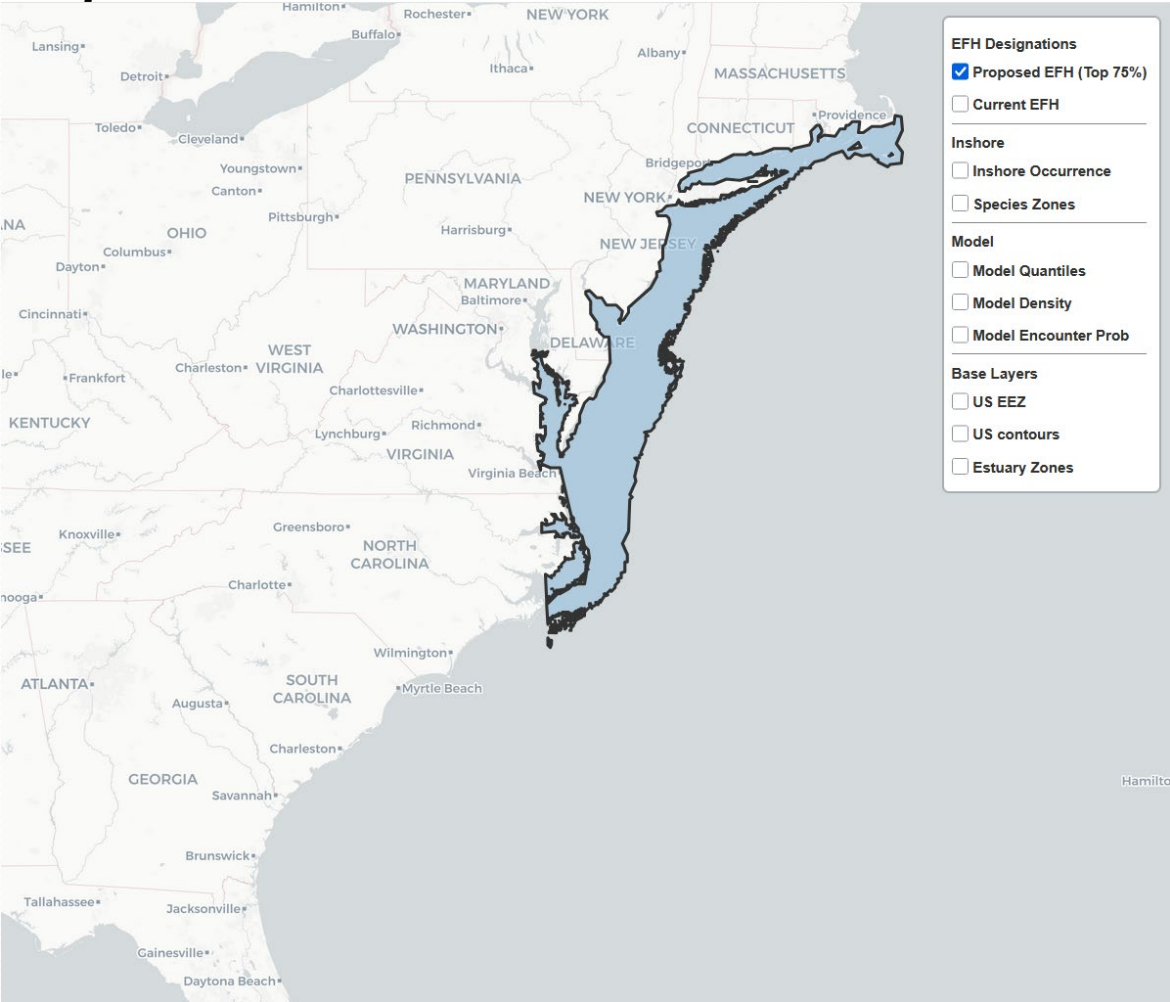
## Egg, Juvenile, Adult EFH map

### *Proposed EFH*

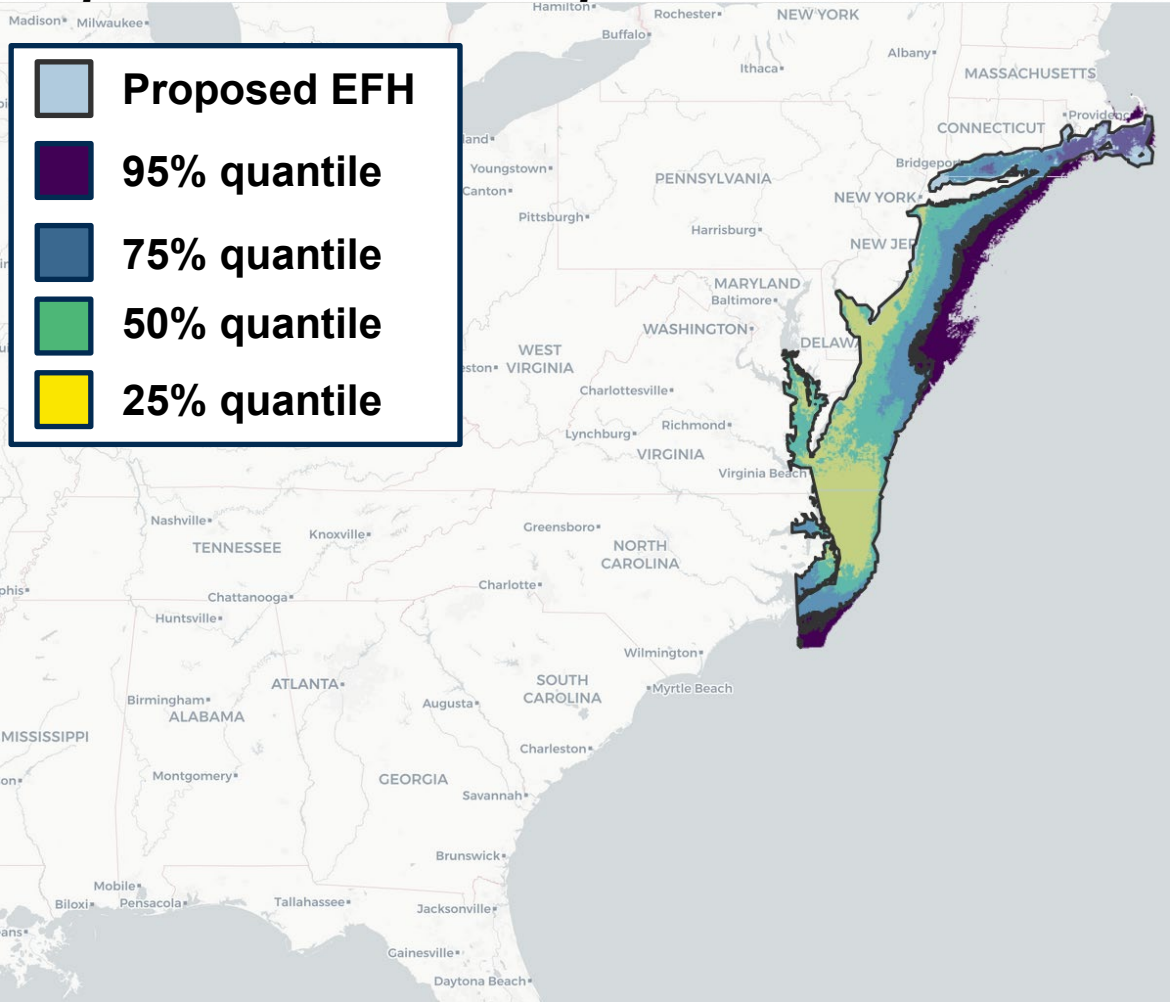


## Egg and Adult EFH map

Proposed EFH

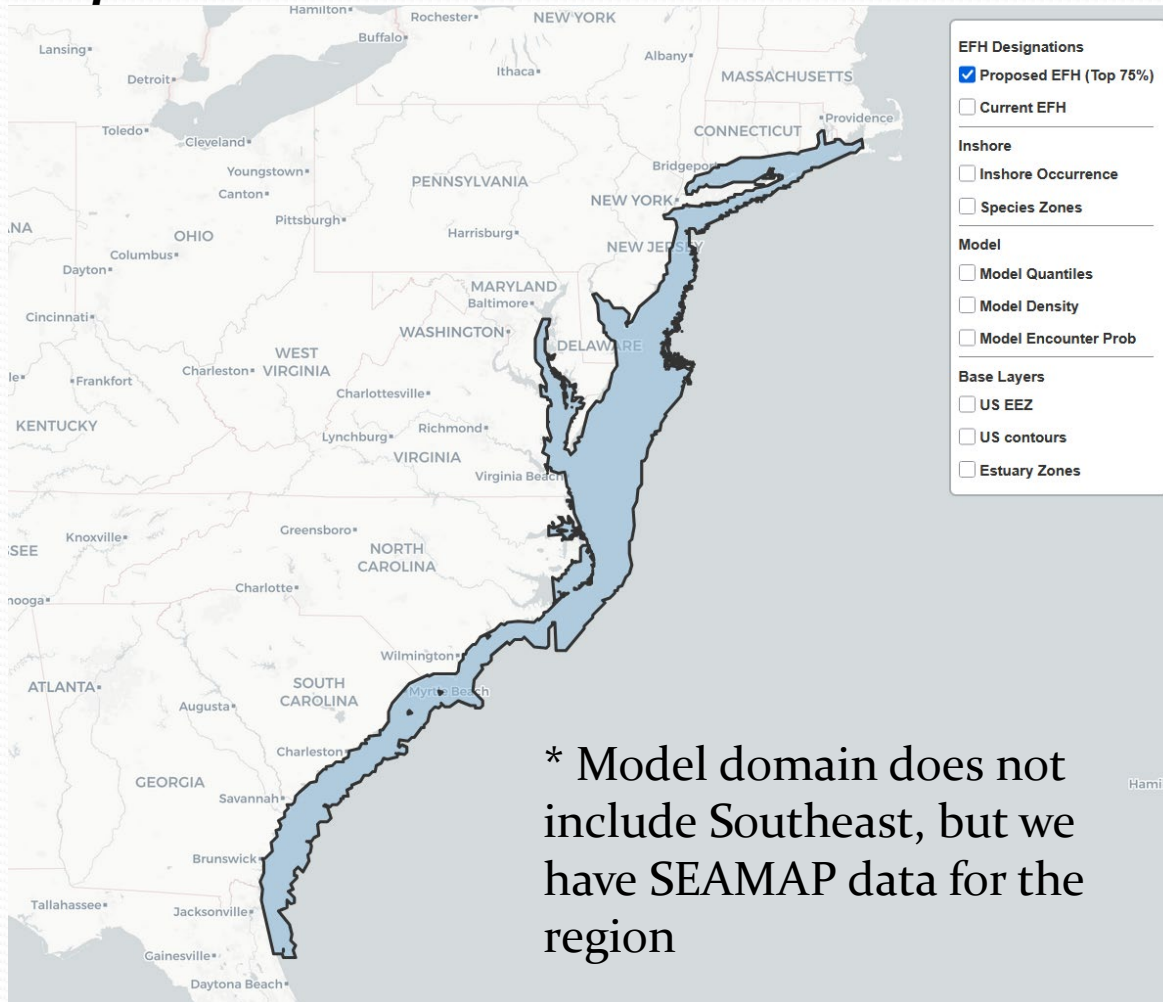


Proposed EFH & Model quantiles



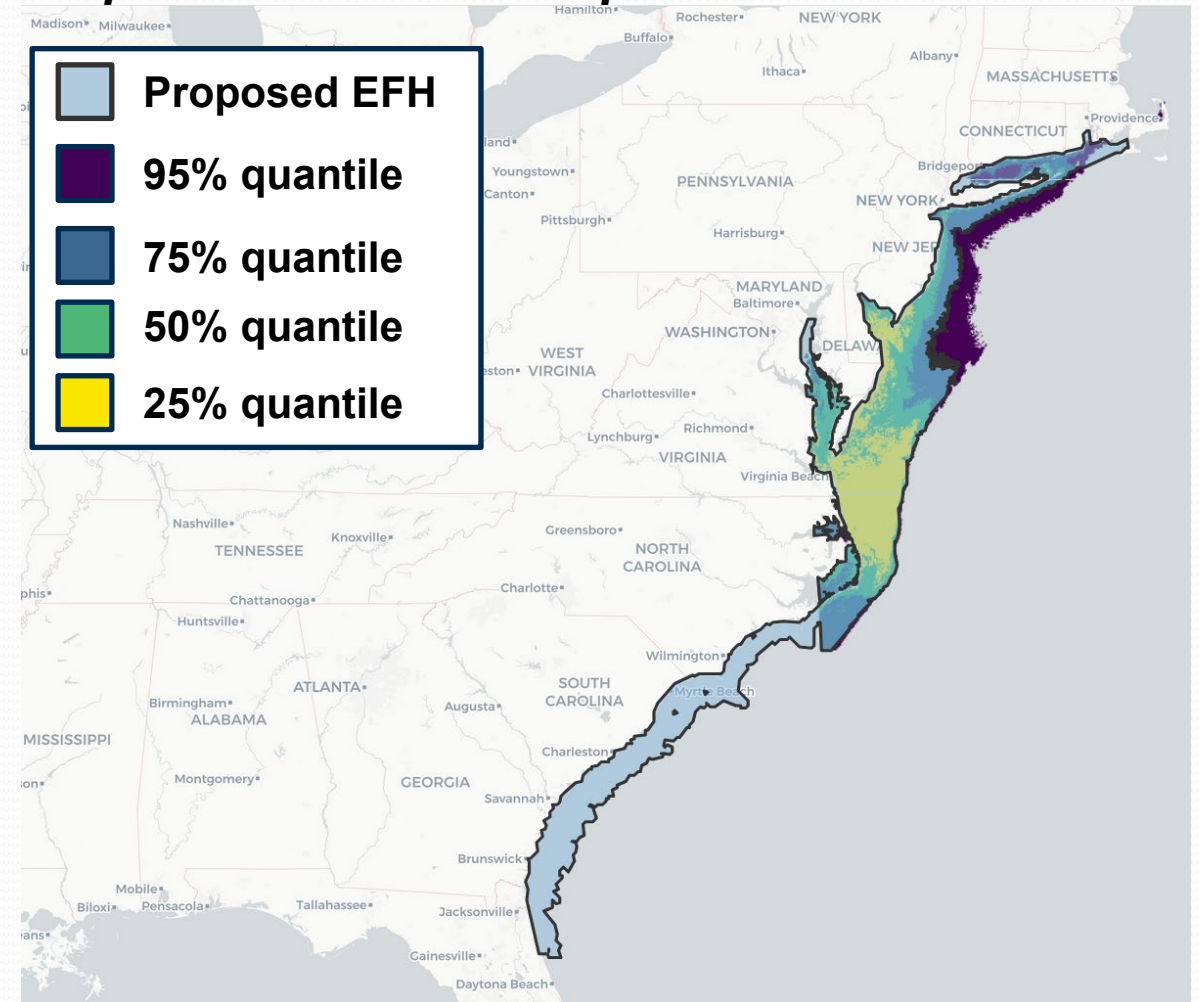
## Juvenile EFH map

### Proposed EFH



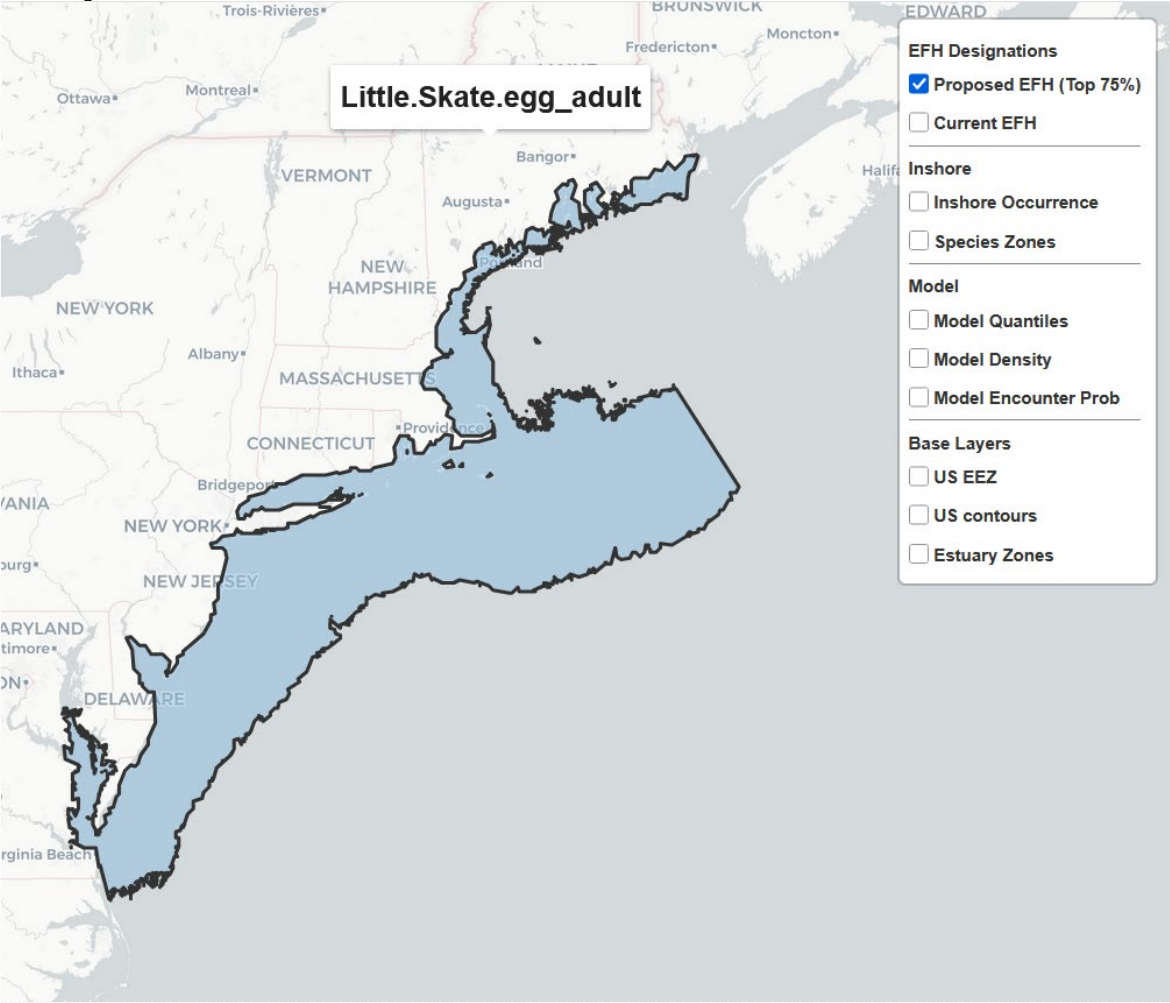
\* Model domain does not include Southeast, but we have SEAMAP data for the region

### Proposed EFH & Model quantiles

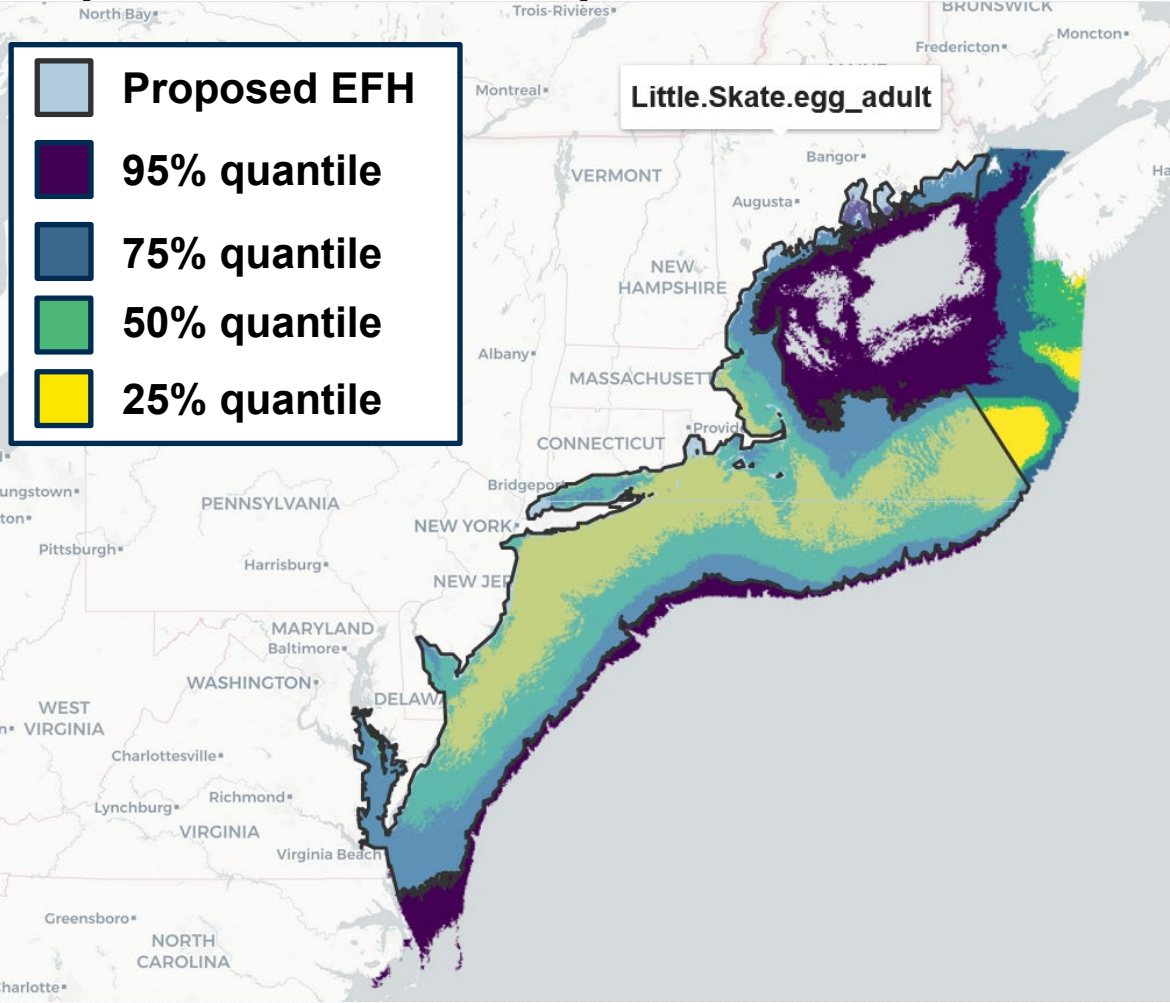


## Egg & Adult EFH map

*Proposed EFH*

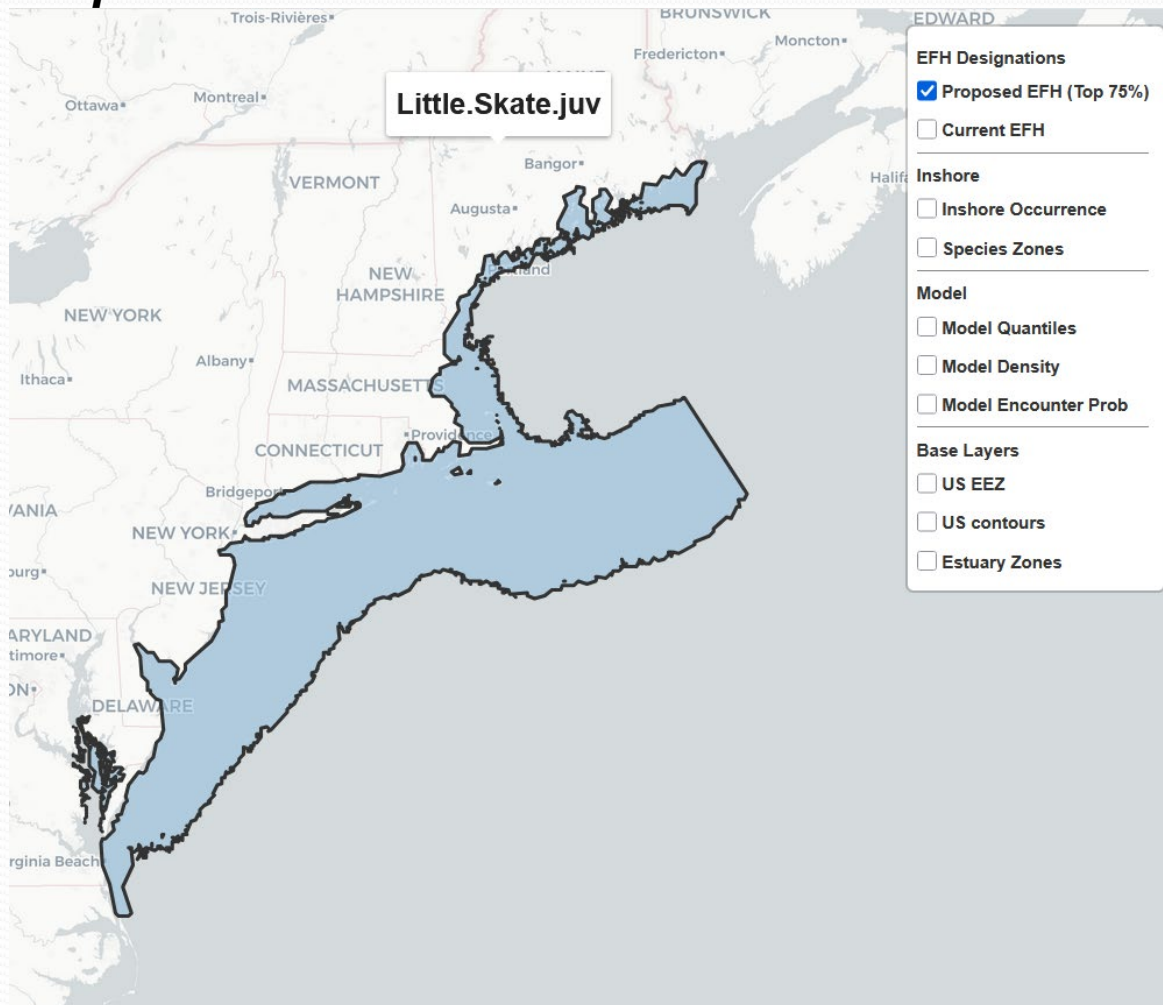


*Proposed EFH & Model quantiles*

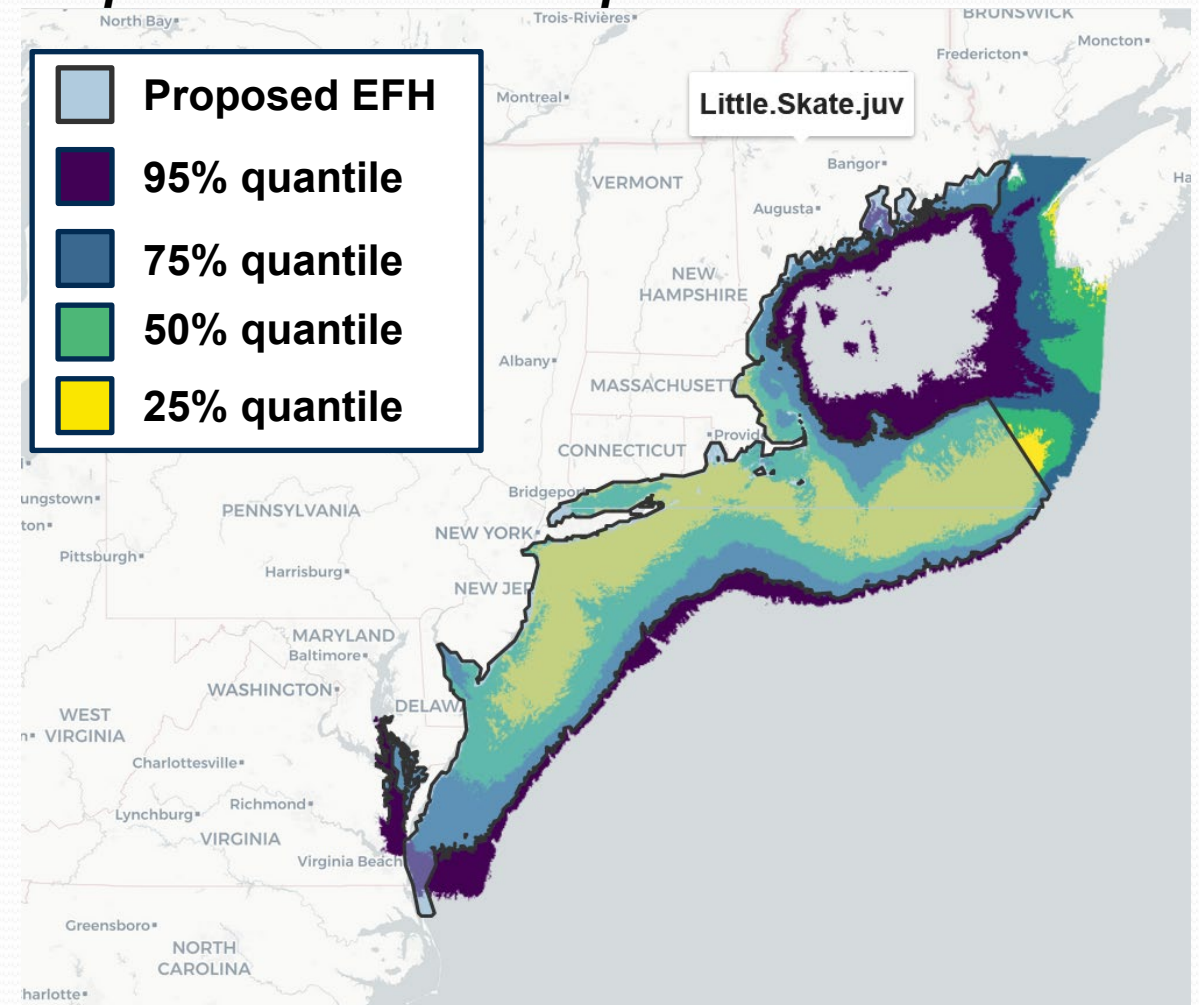


## Juvenile EFH map

### Proposed EFH

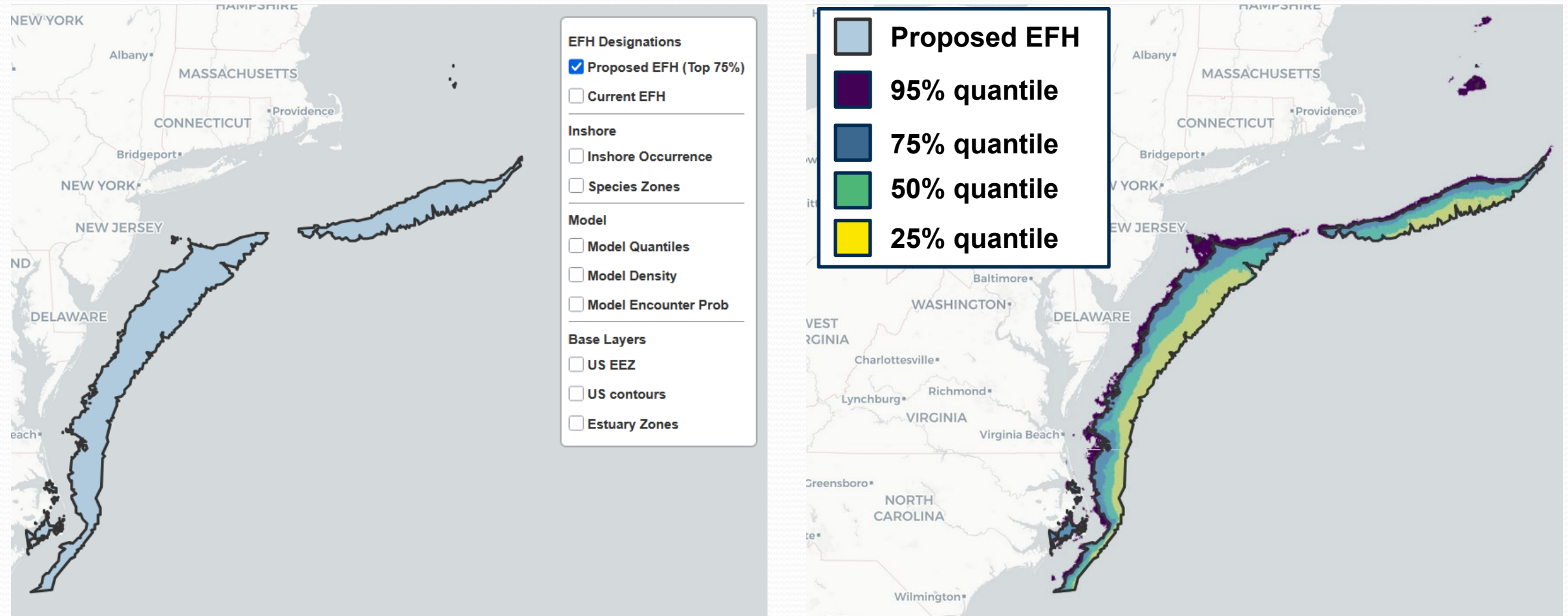


### Proposed EFH & Model quantiles



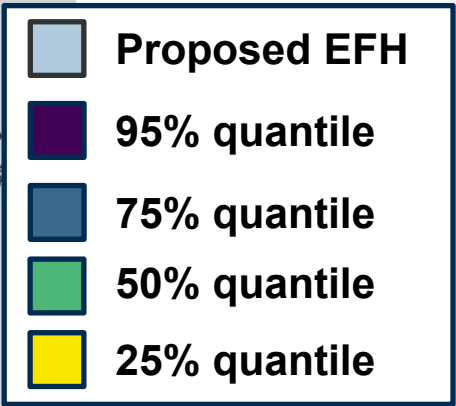
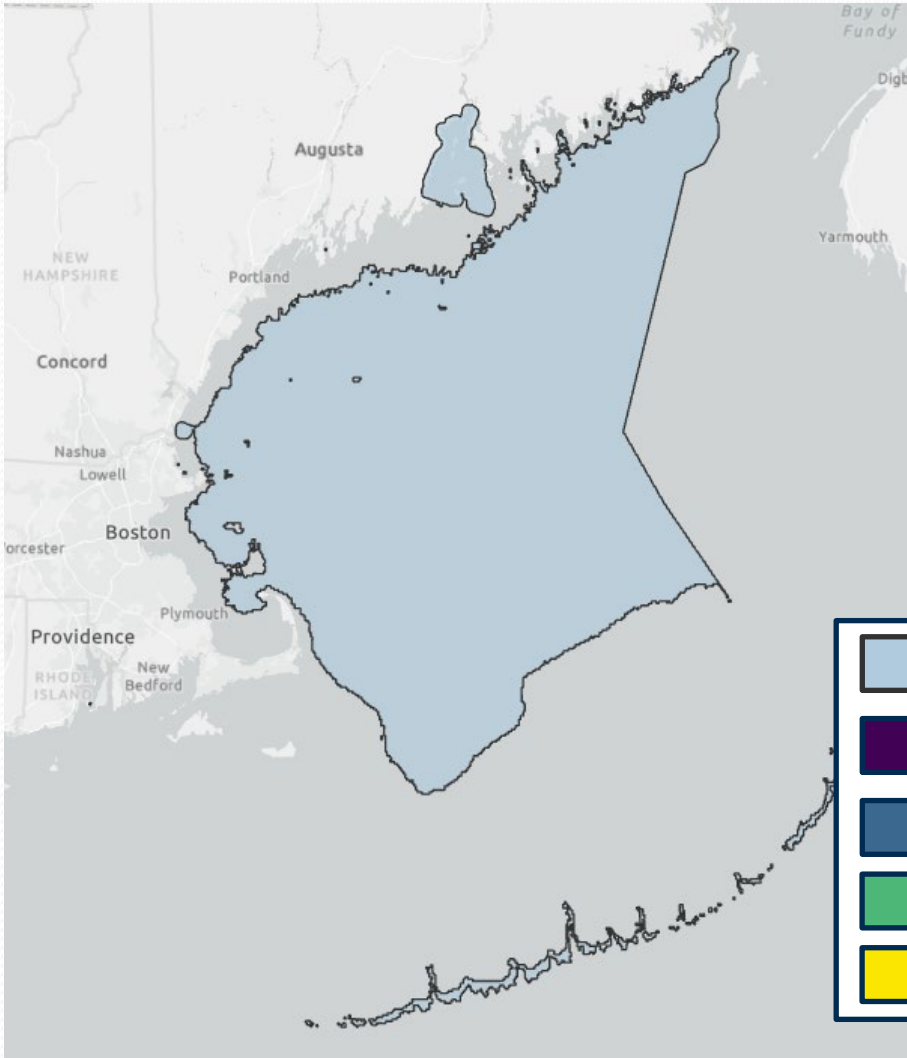
## Egg, juvenile, and adult EFH map

*Based on combined juvenile / adult model*



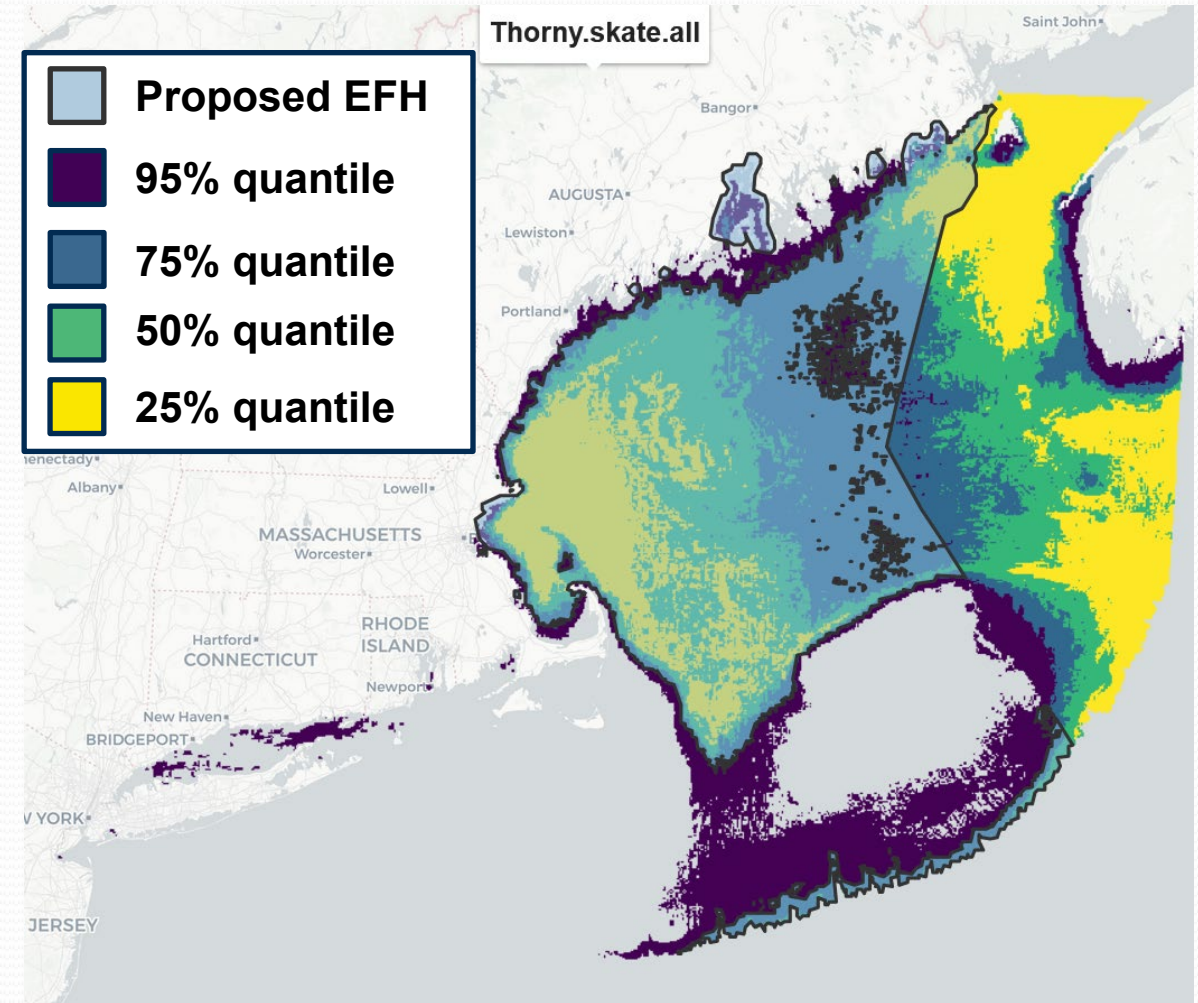
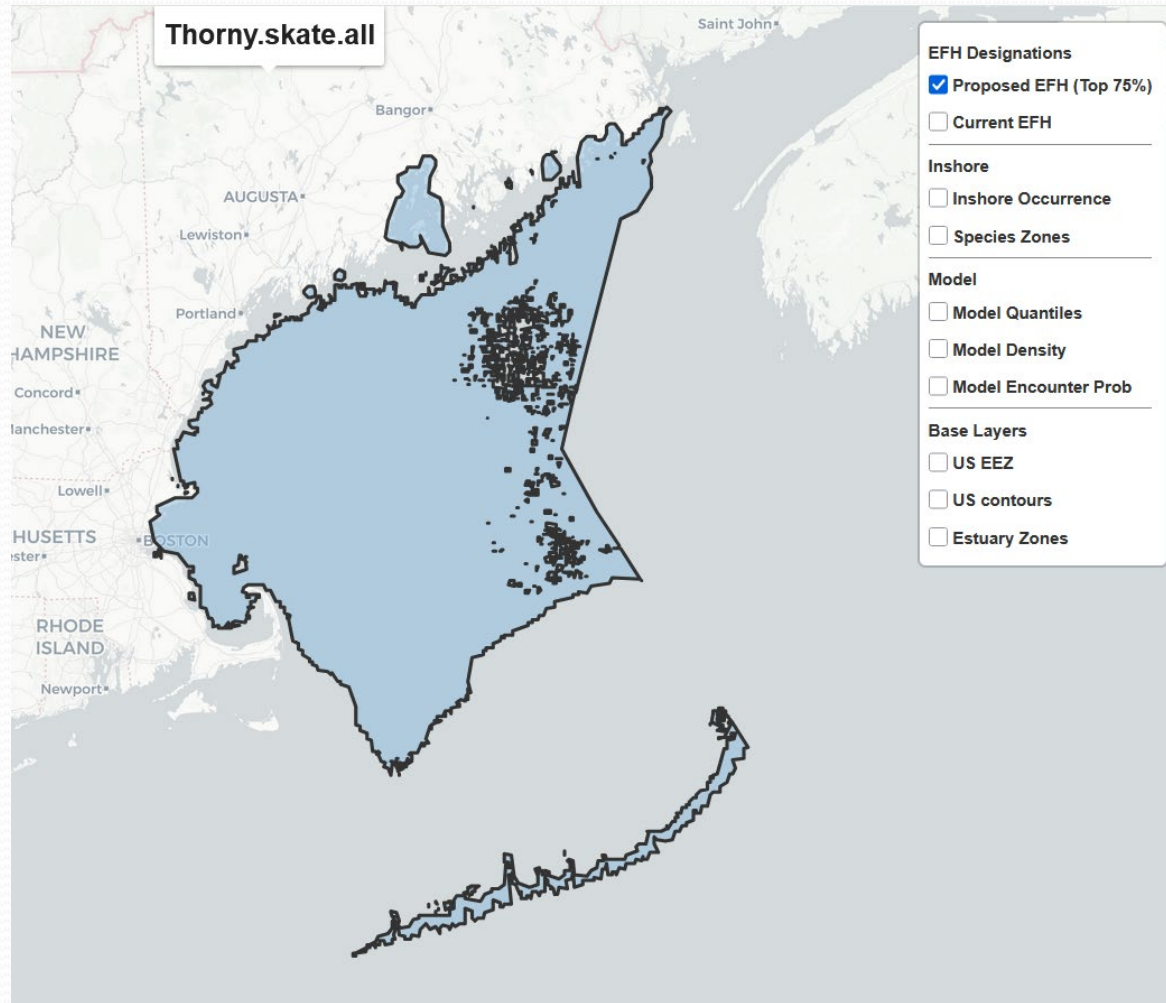
## Egg, Juvenile, Adult EFH map

### Proposed EFH



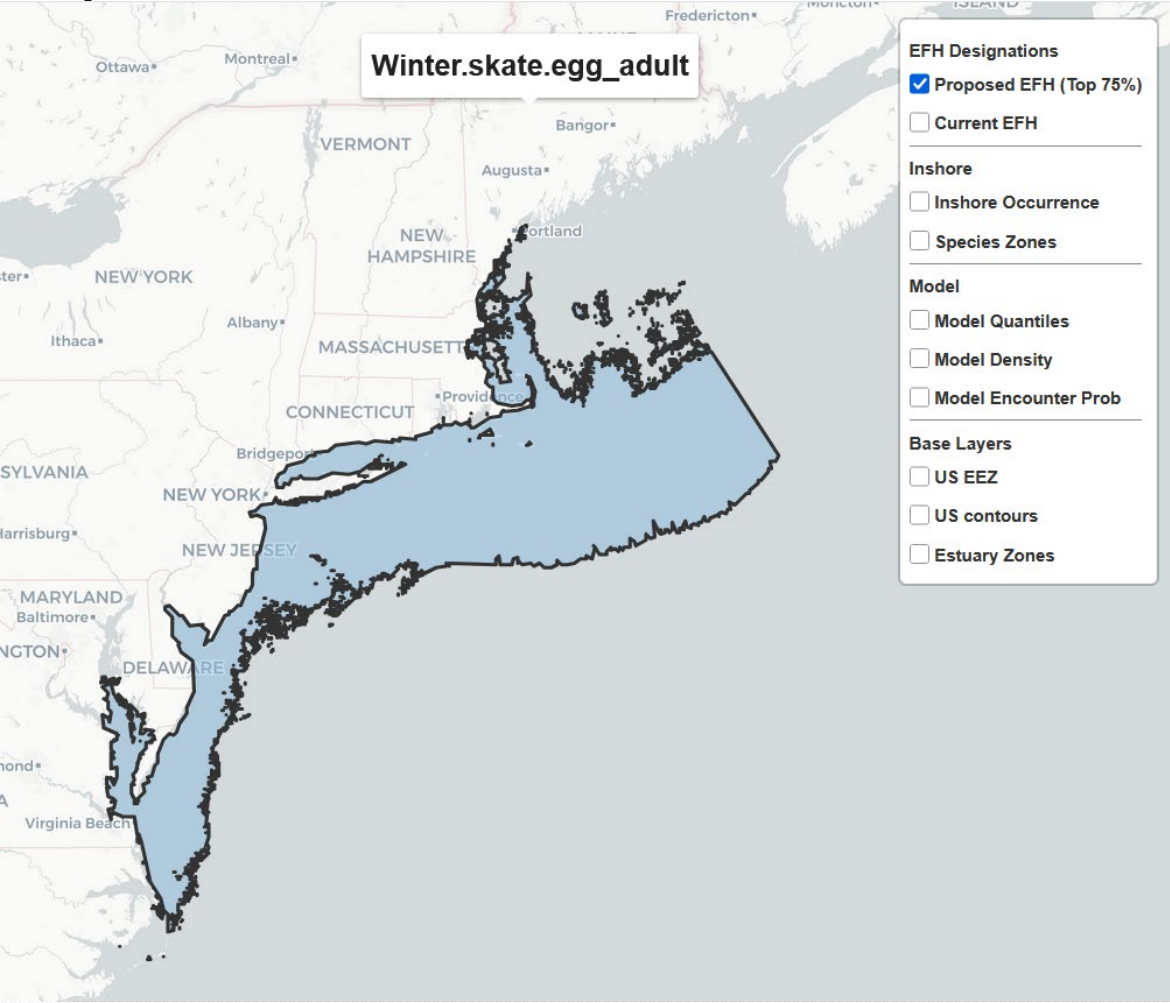
## Egg, juvenile, and adult EFH map

*Based on combined juvenile / adult model*

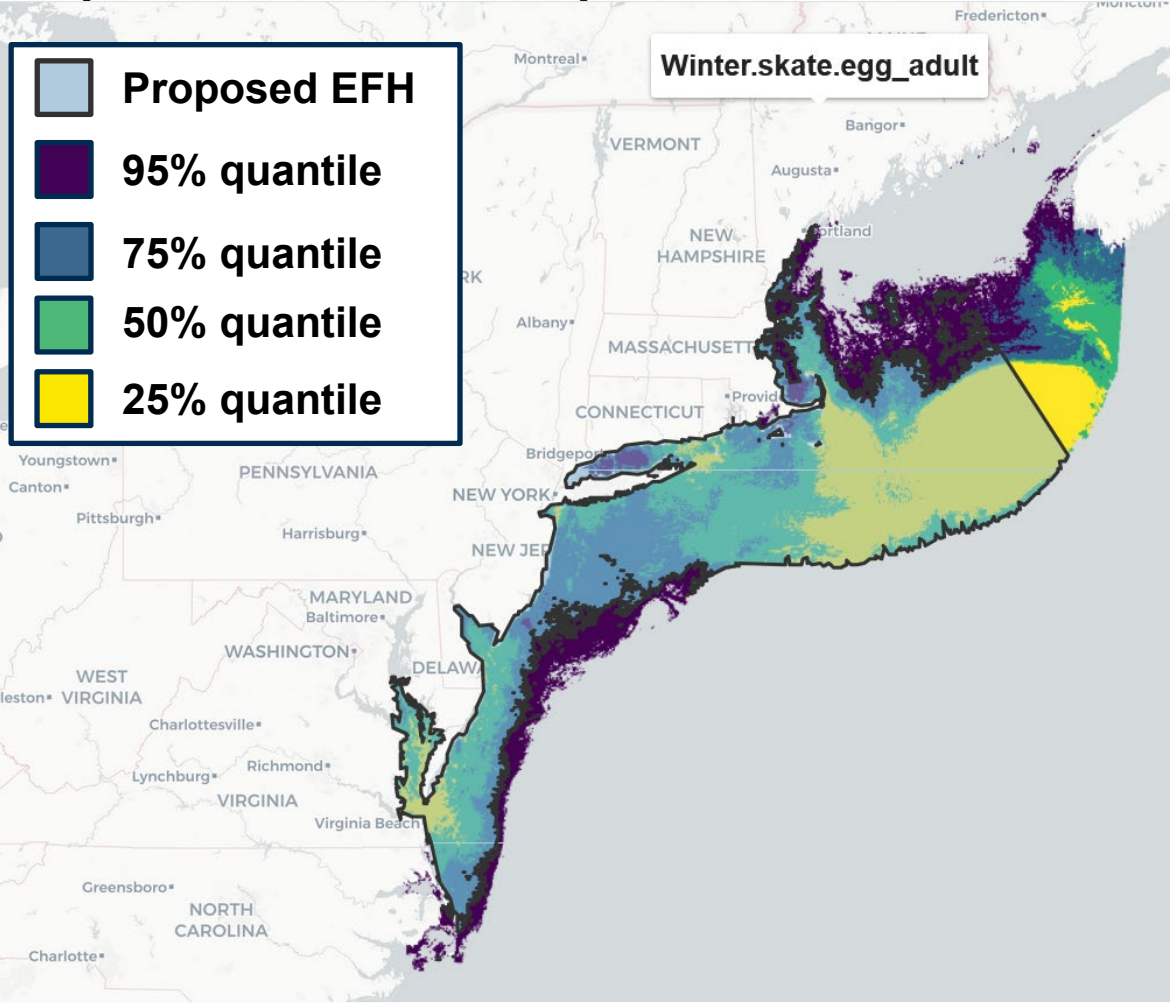


## Egg and Adult EFH map

*Proposed EFH*

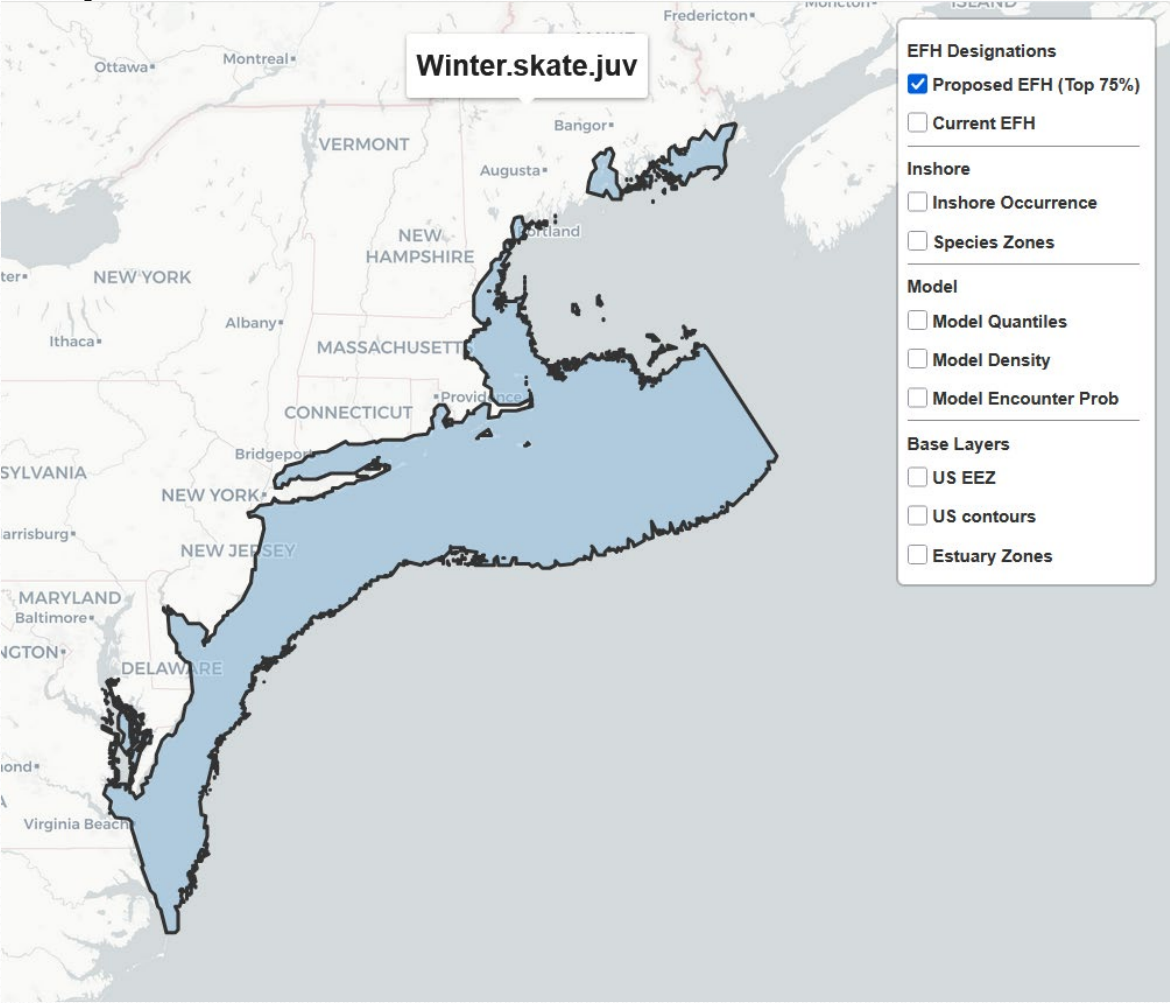


*Proposed EFH & Model quantiles*

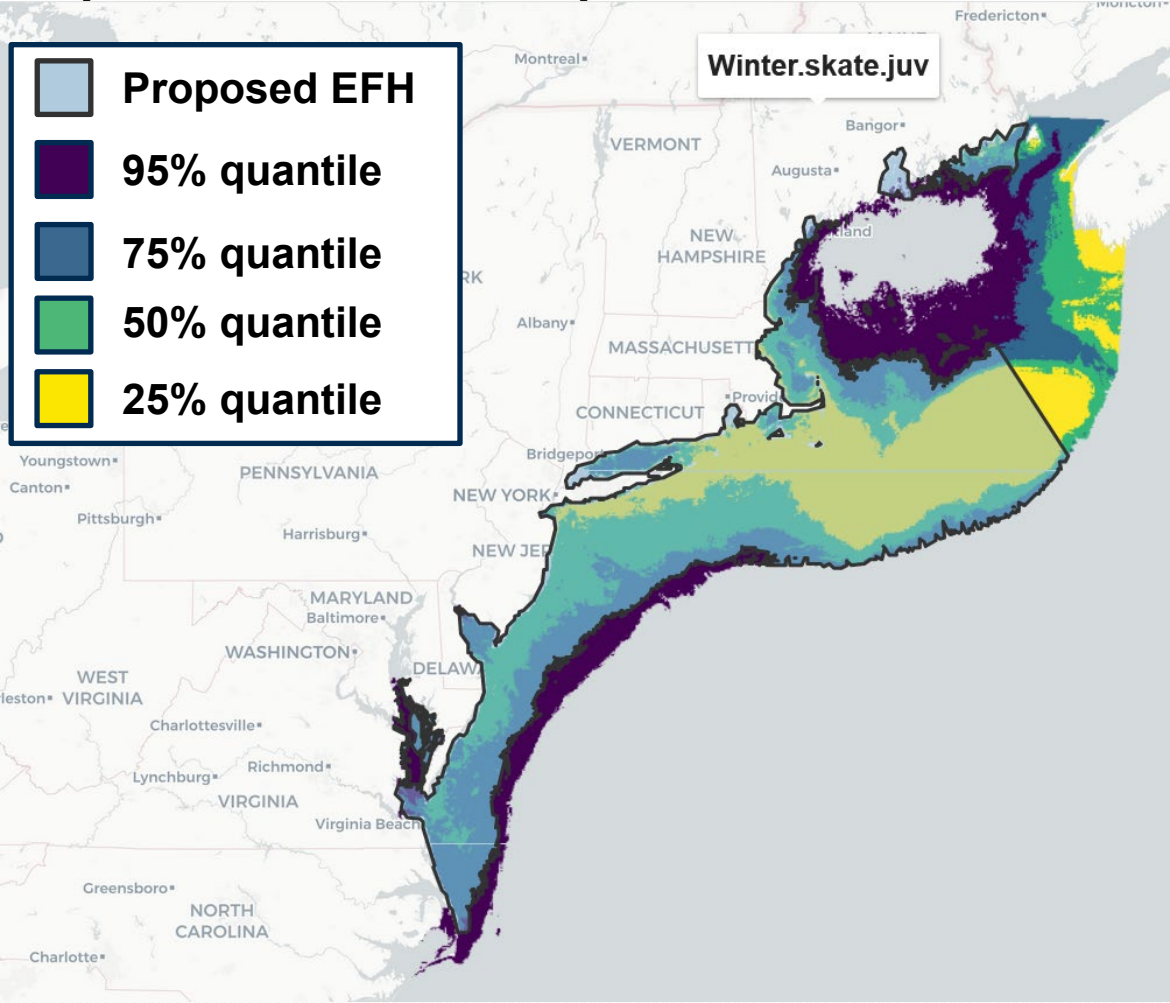


## Juvenile EFH map

Proposed EFH



Proposed EFH & Model quantiles



# Impacts summary

- Action is solely administrative – EFH designations do not directly affect distribution of fishing / use of fishing gears
- Updated designations ensure use of best, current scientific information
- Qualitatively considered effects on managed species, physical habitat, protected species, human communities
- Indirect positive effects on species, habitat conservation through consultation mechanism and Council actions resulting from updated designations
- HAPC are a subset of EFH; juvenile Atlantic cod EFH continues to align with three cod-specific Habitat Areas of Particular Concern

# Fishing Effects Evaluation

- Considered fishing gear effects on habitat at regional, sub-regional scales during EFH Five-Year Review
- Evaluation uses Fishing Effects Model, which estimates combined impacts across major types of bottom tending gears, and by individual gears (trawl, scallop dredge, clam dredge, longline, gillnet, trap)
- Model estimates monthly effects; summarized as annual averages
- Recent, regionwide estimate combining all gears = 11% habitat disturbance
- Mean estimated fishing effects (% disturbance) within individual EFH areas ranges from 4%-19% during 2022, depending on species
- Higher values may indicate species to examine further when considering measures to minimize adverse effects of fishing on EFH

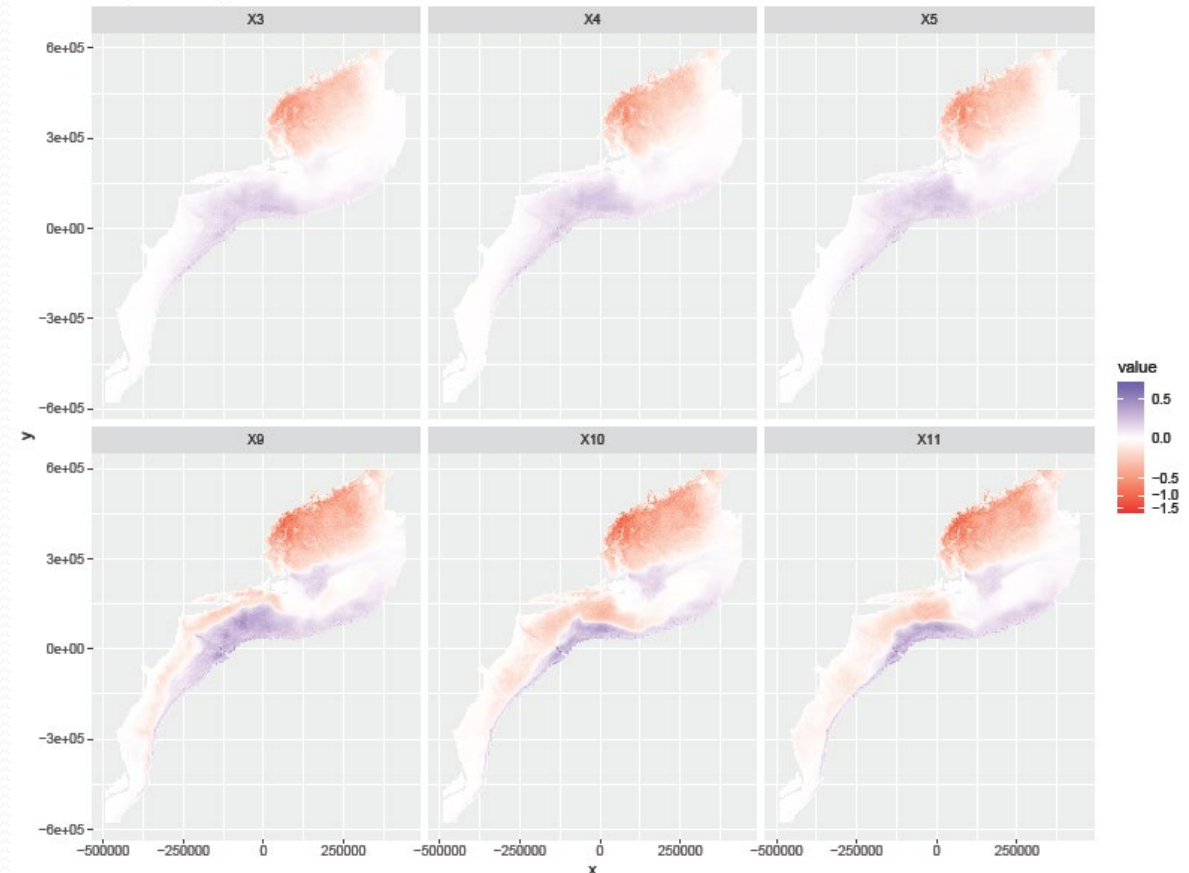
# Committee / Advisory Panel Recommendation

- Both the Committee and the Advisory Panel recommend that the Council select ***Alternative 2, Updated EFH Designations***, as preferred
- Committee rationale: The updated modeling approach is an advance on the methods used for previous designations and uses best available, up-to-date data. The Committee recognizes that there have been changes in the environment since the previous updates and that this is our best opportunity to address those changes in the EFH designations.

# EFH – What's next?

- Use SDMs to develop indicators of species distribution shifts through time  
→ *through IRA project*
- Develop updated EFH designations for remaining 18 species, using the same methods and years of data (modified for data poor, i.e., red crab, salmon, and wolffish) → *2026, 2027*
- Continue to share EFH-related information for use in EFH consultations and fishery management → *via NRHA Data Explorer or other channels*
- Consider other opportunities identified in EFH Five-Year Review Summary Report

Monkfish juvenile 20-year trend by month



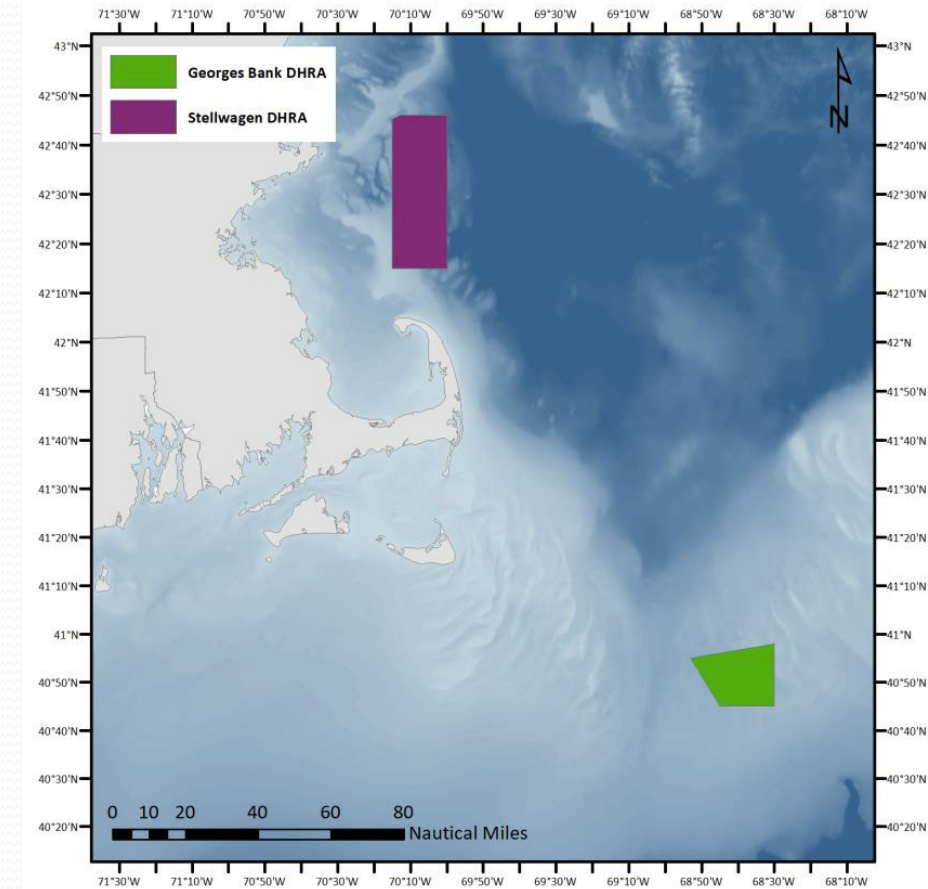


Questions?

Council discussion / motions

# Three-Year DHRA Evaluation

- The Stellwagen and Georges Bank Dedicated Habitat Research Areas (DHRA) established via OHA2 have a 3-year sunset provision that allows for administrative removal by GARFO Regional Administrator
- In 2022, Council recommended retaining both DHRAs
- Three years later, it is again time to review use of these areas and consider continued retention
- Can also take opportunity to discuss use of other habitat research areas that do not fall under this provision (Jordan Basin, Davis Bank, Rose and Crown)



# DHRA Review Process

*GARFO's notice will include a request for information about other research areas without the sunset provision, to keep GARFO/Council informed:*

- **Rose & Crown** and **Davis Bank**, Nantucket Shoals
- **Jordan Basin**, Gulf of Maine

| Activity                                                                                                                                          | Timing                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| GARFO requests information from the public on research occurring in the <b>Stellwagen</b> and <b>Georges Bank</b> DHRAs                           | TBD, in progress                              |
| GARFO prepares a report summarizing findings and provides report to the Council                                                                   | TBD, after comment period                     |
| Committee reviews report and makes recommendation to Council about whether to retain or sunset <b>Georges Bank</b> and/or <b>Stellwagen</b> DHRAs | TBD, if warranted based on report             |
| Council recommends whether to retain or sunset <b>Georges Bank</b> and/or <b>Stellwagen</b> DHRAs, transmits recommendation to GARFO              | TBD, following Committee discussion if needed |
| GARFO publishes notice with decision, based on Council recommendation                                                                             | TBD, after Council recommendation is provided |

# 2025 Priorities and Activities

| Item                                                           | Status                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Complete EFH Five-Year Review                                  | Completed Spring 2025 |
| Revise EFH designations                                        | Final Action today    |
| Habitat impacts of management actions                          | Ongoing               |
| Develop habitat and fishery comments on non-fishing activities | Ongoing               |
| Contribute to habitat science and management partnerships      | Ongoing               |
| Collaborate on offshore wind science issues                    | Ongoing               |

→ See [staff memo](#) for details

# 2026 Work Planning – Staff Recommendations

- Continue to revise EFH designations (*details next slide*)
- Continue to advance Fishing Effects Model analyses
- Integrate habitat information into Council initiatives
- Communication, information sharing of habitat products
- Collaborate with habitat, ocean planning partners on science and management issues
- Maintain expertise on habitat and ocean planning science and research

→ See [staff memo](#) for details; **Committee agreement** with the suggested work areas for 2026, including the 2026 EFH Framework

# 2026 EFH Framework Recommendation

| Fishery Management Plan     | Species                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Small Mesh FMP (3 species)  | Red hake, silver hake, and offshore hake*;                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Groundfish FMP (12 species) | <u>Acadian redfish</u> , <u>American plaice</u> , <u>Atlantic halibut</u> *, <u>Atlantic wolffish</u> **, haddock, <u>ocean pout</u> , <u>pollock</u> , <u>white hake</u> , windowpane flounder, winter flounder, <u>witch flounder</u> , yellowtail flounder; |
| Atlantic Sea Scallop FMP    | Atlantic sea scallop***                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

\*Offshore hake and Atlantic halibut are somewhat data limited, with sufficient observations to model juveniles and adults in combination but not to run life stage-specific models.

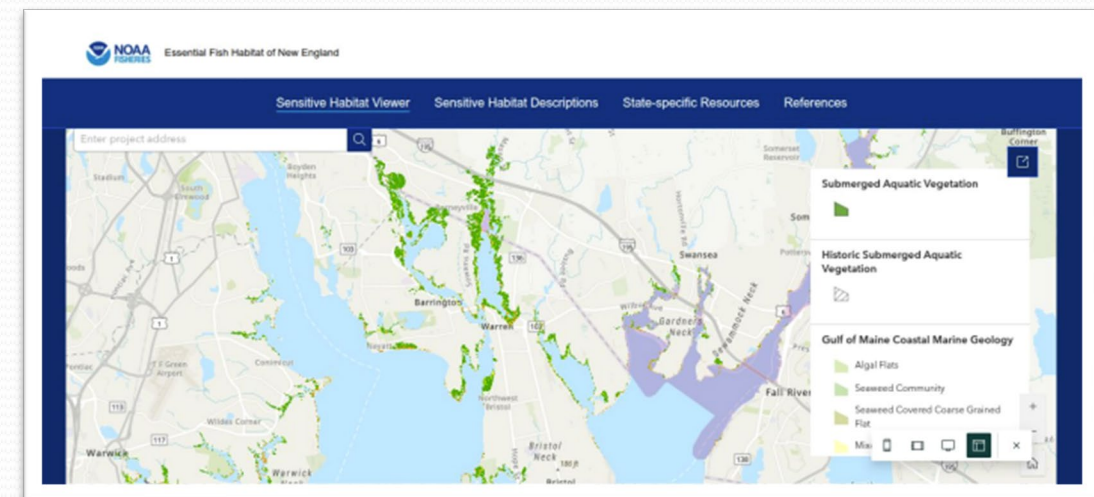
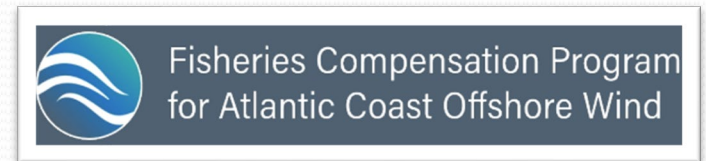
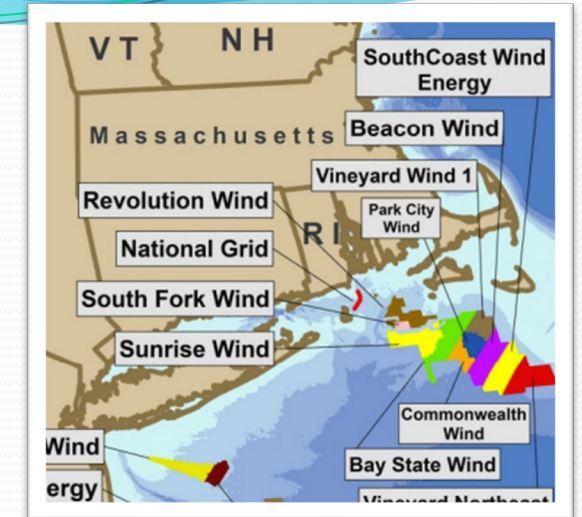
\*\*It is likely possible to fit a species distribution model for Atlantic wolffish, but this will almost certainly require a simplified modeling framework.

\*\*\*EFH will rely on a scallop-specific vs. joint species distribution model, which is already under development.

Underline = newly added to 2026 list, previous recommendation was to complete these species in 2027

# Other updates: EFH Viewer, Ocean Planning

- Sensitive Habitat Viewer [link to slides](#) and viewer <https://arcg.is/1DOfrX1>
- Offshore wind project and permitting status, updates on other non-fishing activities [see slides 47-60](#)
- Offshore Wind Regional Fund Administrator outreach [link to slides](#)
- Newport Mussels project outreach [link to slides](#)





Questions about DHRA review, future work, or ocean planning updates?