



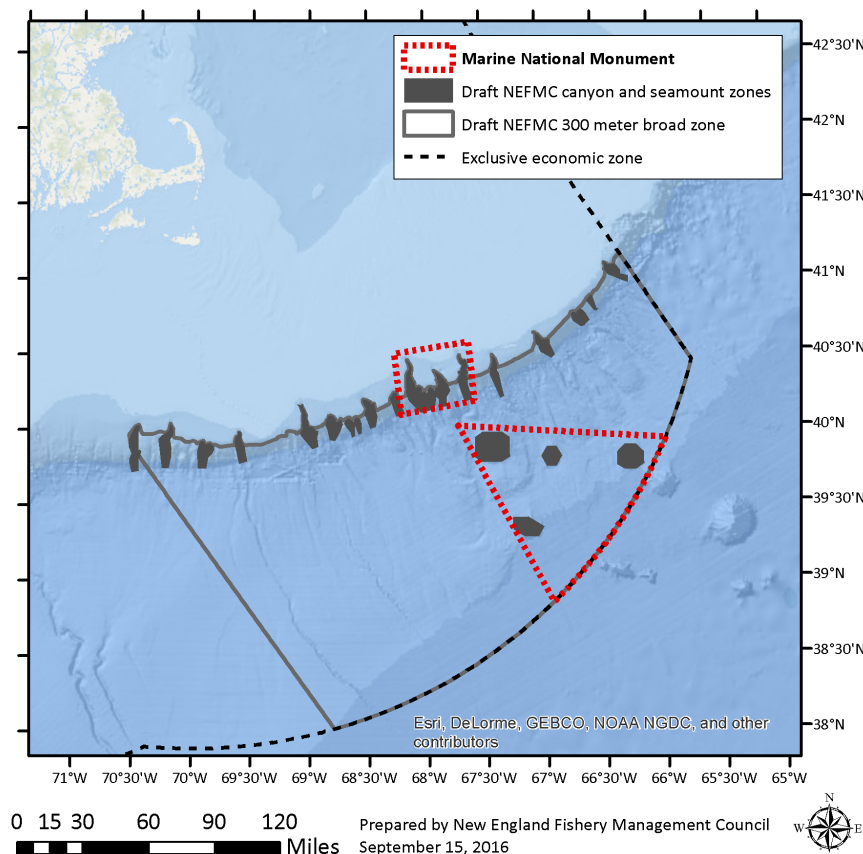
New England Fishery Management Council

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Work Continues on Coral Amendment, Clam Dredge Framework

The New England Fishery Management Council today clarified the range of fishing gear restrictions that will be analyzed under its Deep-Sea Coral Amendment. The Council is considering alternatives to restrict (1) trawl and dredge gear only; or (2) all fixed and mobile bottom-tending gears in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank coral zones. Previously, the Council had not taken a position on how to address the lobster and Jonah crab fisheries, which are not managed by the Council under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act but rather by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.



In a move that eliminated this ambiguity, the Council asked for additional analyses from its Habitat Plan Development Team (PDT) about the potential economic and biological impacts of restricting lobster and crab traps in coral zones. The Council then added an alternative to the amendment to potentially exempt these trap fisheries from bottom-tending gear restrictions.

Updated NOAA Fisheries policy guidance, which states that restrictions in coral zones "may apply to ... state-regulated fishing that is authorized in the Exclusive Economic Zone," enabled the Council to take this step.

On Sept. 15, President Obama designated the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, which overlaps portions of the Council's Coral Amendment. The Council

The 4,913-square-mile monument encompasses three deep-sea canyons – Oceanographer, Gilbert, and Lydonia – and four seamounts – Physalia, Bear, Retriever, and Mytilus (red boundaries on map above). The Council's amendment covers 10 canyons west of Oceanographer and five east of Lydonia, which are outside the monument boundaries.



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considered – but ultimately postponed to November – a motion to remove canyons and seamounts that fall within the monument’s boundaries from further consideration in the Coral Amendment.

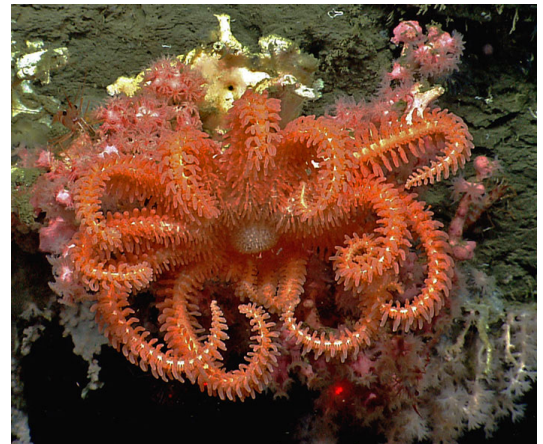
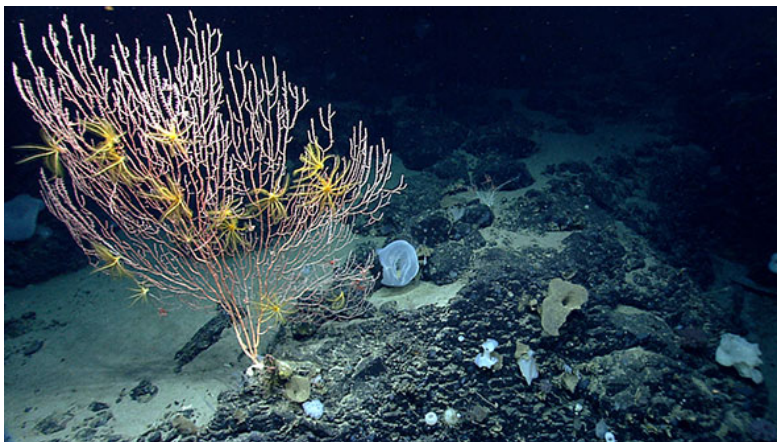
The Council first wanted additional information from NOAA Fisheries about how regulations related to the monument designation will be developed and implemented, as well as additional analyses from the PDT, before taking action.

The deep-sea canyon zones in the Council’s amendment that fall completely or partially within the monument boundaries are Oceanographer, Gilbert, Lydonia, Filebottom, Chebacco, and Heel Tapper. The overlapping seamount zones are Physalia, Bear, Retriever, and Mytilus. The monument also includes portions of the depth-based, broad zone proposals.

In addition, the Council approved:

- Boundary adjustments to the Central Jordan Basin coral zone in the Gulf of Maine based on updated information from the PDT; and
- Adding a 600-meter depth-based broad zone to be considered alongside the other broad coral protection contour zones of 300, 400, and 500 meters that currently are under analysis.

Several workshops, meetings, and public hearings will be held prior to the Council taking any final action on this issue or other Coral Amendment issues.



Jasonia, a bamboo coral, with numerous crinoid associates, left, photographed on Mytilus Seamount, and a brisingid seastar on a small bubblegum coral in Hydrographer Canyon, above. — Images courtesy of NOAA Okeanos Explorer Program



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Clam Dredge Framework Adjustment

After fine-tuning several details, the New England Council in early September resubmitted Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 (OHA2) to the the National Marine Fisheries Service's Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) for approval. The Council and GARFO expect the amendment will be implemented next spring.

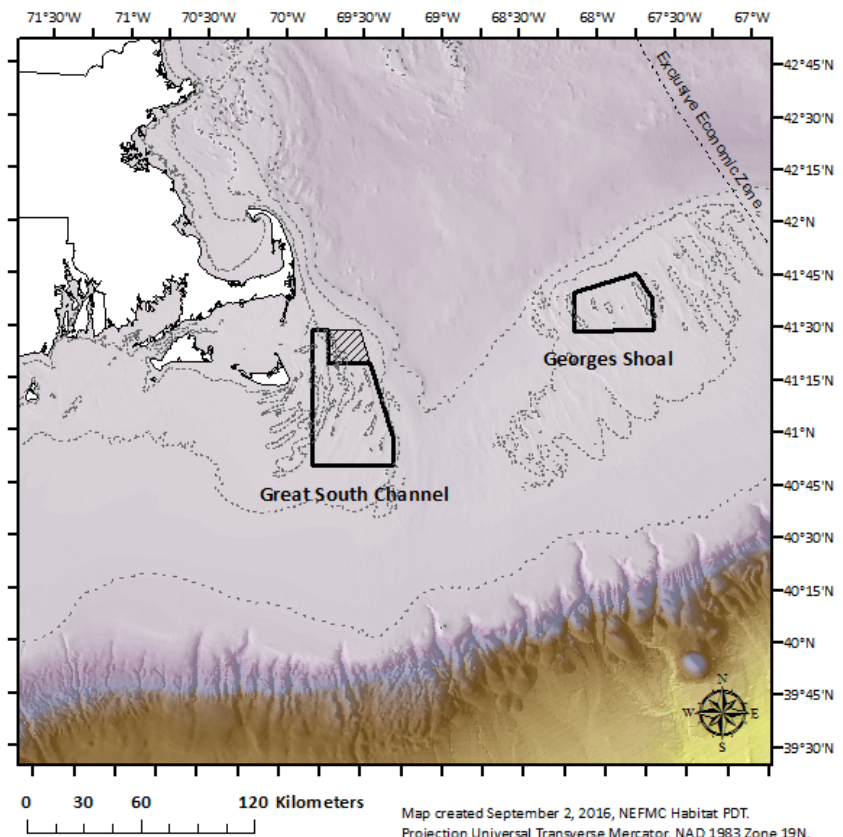
Implementation will trigger a one-year exemption for the surfclam/ocean quahog clam dredge fishery from a prohibition on fishing in the Great South Channel and Georges Shoal Habitat Management Areas (HMAs) identified in the map below.

At industry's request, the Council initiated a framework adjustment to OHA2 to consider development of a longer-term access program so clam fishermen could continue working in both areas beyond the one-year exemption. The Council now is in the process of identifying areas within both HMAs that provide suitable bottom for clam fishing but minimize adverse fishing impacts on habitat to the extent practical. The Council's ultimate goal is to balance conservation and industry needs.



Ocean Quahog (*Arctica islandica*)
Atlantic Surfclam (*Spisula solidissima*)

— NOAA Fisheries graphic



Great South Channel and Georges Shoal Habitat Management Areas, shown above, are under consideration for surfclam/ocean quahog fishery exemptions in the Clam Dredge Framework..

Visit the New England Council's habitat webpage at:

<http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/habitat>. The draft coral amendment is available directly at:

http://s3.amazonaws.com/nefmc.org/3a-160708_Coral_Amendment.pdf.

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