

Habitat Work Group Update

Past actions, current initiatives, and future directions



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¹ NEFMC, 2017 Habitat Work Group chair

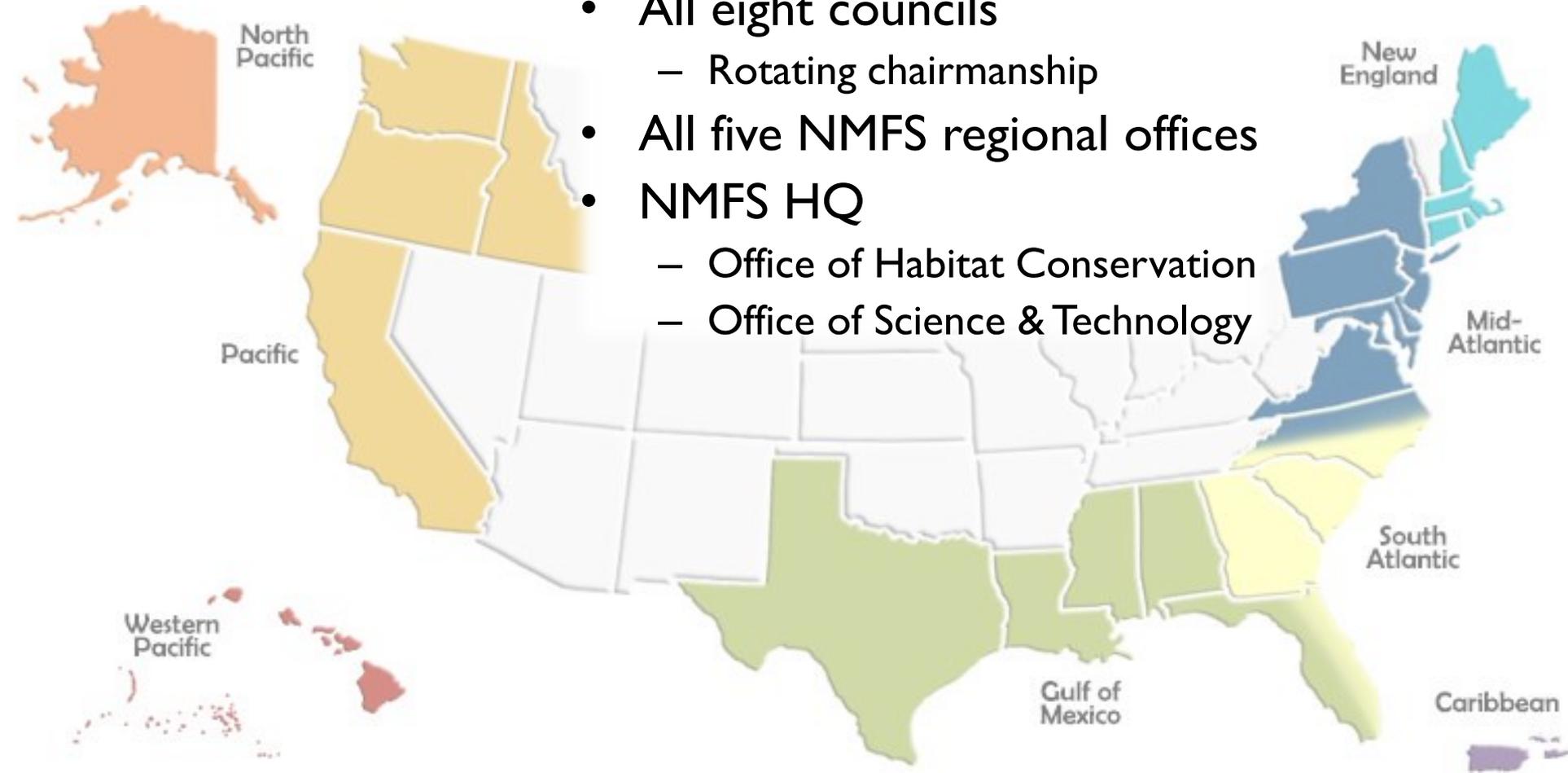
² MAFMC

CCC Meeting - May 17, 2017



Work group participation

- All eight councils
 - Rotating chairmanship
- All five NMFS regional offices
- NMFS HQ
 - Office of Habitat Conservation
 - Office of Science & Technology



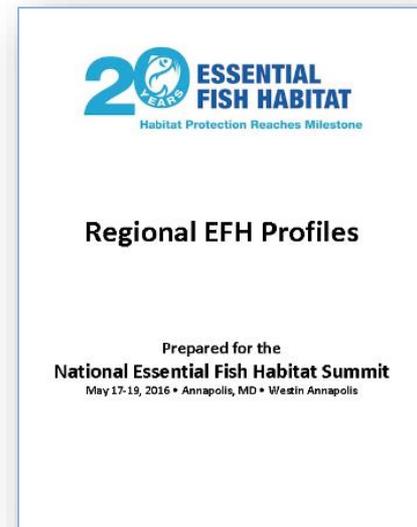
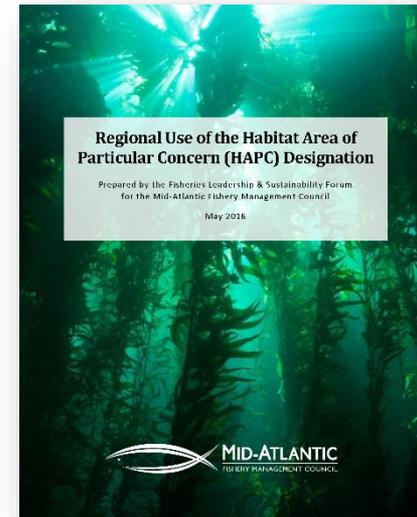
Building connections

- Provides a regular opportunity for sharing approaches to habitat management issues that are common to all regions
- Strengthens the relationships between habitat staff at Councils, regional offices, and NMFS HQ, so this network can be easily tapped when needs arise
- Creates a space for brainstorming and problem solving around shared challenges



Product development

- Cross-Council reviews of:
 - Habitat Area of Particular Concern designation approaches (2014, supported [MAFMC report](#))
 - Essential Fish Habitat designation approaches and strategies for five-year review (2015, [report](#) developed for EFH Summit)
 - Approaches to deep-sea coral management (2015)



EFH Summit

- Planned May 2016 [EFH summit](#) with the Fisheries Forum
 - Worked through a steering committee (similar membership to workgroup), with guidance from an advisory group
- Topics: EFH designation, minimizing adverse effects, communication, integrating habitat into EBFM, habitat science opportunities

Building on issues discussed at the Summit...



Habitat Science

- Convened Nov. 2016 habitat science roundtable
 - Presenters: OHC, S&T, NEFSC, SEFSC, SWFSC, NWFSC, AKFSC, PIFSC
- Next steps
 - Compare regional research plans and identify common themes
 - Ensure that the CCC and NMFS HQ are aware of these shared priorities
 - Continue to engage science centers so they are aware of our research priorities, and so that Councils can use updated science to support FMP development



Operational practices

- Explore further how different regions coordinate and collaborate
 - Nuts and bolts of how people interact across offices
 - Compare and contrast regional approaches
 - North Pacific example: AKRO and AKFSC coordination, informed by NPFMC; Habitat Ecological Processes and Research Team
 - What lessons can we apply to our own regions?
- Data assembly and integration is a significant challenge
 - Consider identifying some best practices?
- Will continue to carry this theme forward into future workgroup conversations



Possible future topics

Again, building on the EFH Summit...

- Habitat science as ecosystem science
 - How can habitat managers and scientists contribute to EBM efforts?
- Non-fishing impacts to habitat
 - Understanding complex and changing sources of impacts
 - Sharing practical strategies for getting Councils involved where needed





Essential Fish Habitat and Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management

Jessica Coakley and Christopher Moore

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

May 2017



Habitat and EAFM Intertwined

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GUEST COLUMN
POLICY

Incorporating Habitat into Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management Strategies

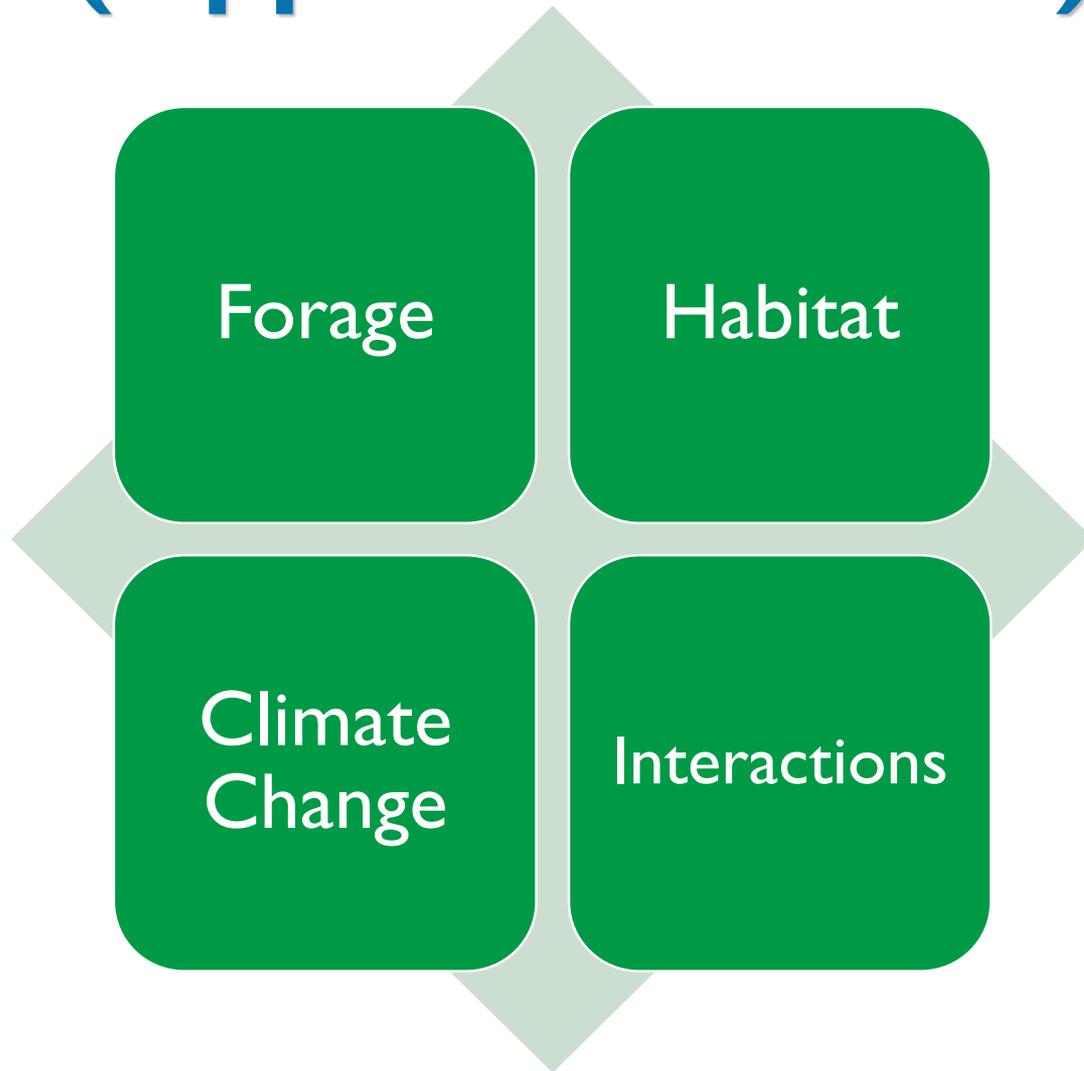
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Fish habitat earned legal status in 1996 (Sustainable Fisheries Act) when the U.S. Congress added it as “essential fish habitat (EFH)” to the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the law governing the management of U.S. federal marine fisheries. Given rapid climate change and increasing anthropogenic pressure on our coastal and ocean habitats, better defined EFH will be key for the development of successful ecosystem-based fisheries management strategies by the fishery management councils.

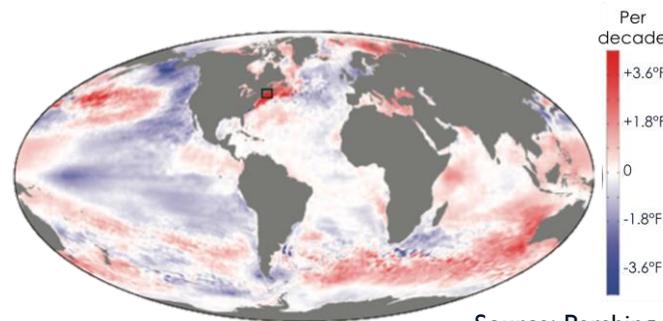


EAFM Guidance Document (Approved in 2016)



EAFM Habitat Objectives

- Strengthen Essential Fish Habitat designations
- Consider “essential” habitat from a multispecies/ecosystem perspective
- Emphasize the connectivity between species, life history stages, and inshore/offshore habitats
- Link habitat conservation to fishery outcomes (focus on resilience and productivity)
- Linkages to other focus areas: Climate Change, Species Interactions, Forage



Source: Pershing et al. 2015 Science

~~EFH Review Redo~~ (2017-2018)

- Part of broader Mid-Atlantic habitat project initiated with support from NOAA OHC
- Considered experience of CCC Habitat Workgroup members and their EFH reviews
- 2017-2018 develop habitat science products for the Council

EFH Redo (2017-2018)

- March 28-30, 2017 Data/Methods Meeting
- Developed roadmap for creating the next generation of EFH science products
- Strengthen EFH for consultation process
- Utilize HAPCs as a tool – track habitat change and develop potential metrics, indicators

One Area for Work Identified

- Nearshore/coastal habitats need work to support designations
- State/nearshore data needs to be compiled and integrated



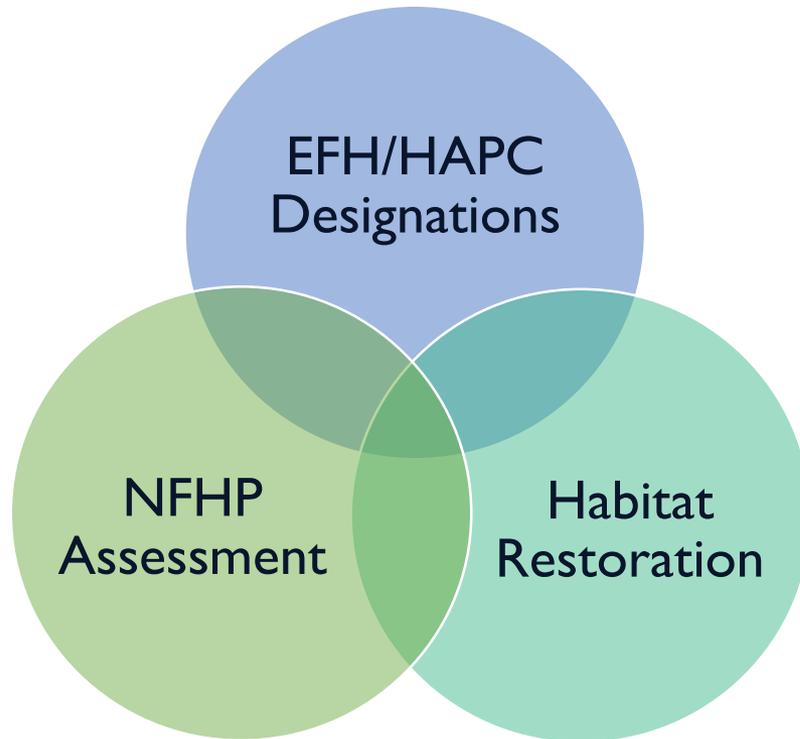


Regional Habitat Assessments to Support National Habitat Initiatives



The Future

- Assessment of fish habitat in the Mid-Atlantic that meets both regional and national needs



The Future

- Allow for regional areas to be compared across the nation
 - Some standard metrics across regions
 - Take advantage of regional data strengths
 - Minimize need for nation-wide only datasets



The Future

- Next steps:
 - Form a steering committee to develop an RFP
 - Have the SSC serve as a technical review group
 - Target work completion in 2018 - update every few years



Build off Current Work

- Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership (SARP)
 - Regional assessment focused on coastal habitat and indicators – with emphasis on habitat type
- Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP)
 - Model for partner engagement
 - Estuaries Inventory
 - State of Knowledge Report
- Gulf of Mexico Estuary Program (GMEP)
 - Considered fish presence/absence with habitat indicators

<http://www.mafmc.org/habitat/>



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UPCOMING EVENTS

List View	Calendar View
December 2015 Council Meeting	
Mon, Dec 7, 2015, 12:00pm – Thu, Dec 10, 2015, 1:30pm	
The Westin Annapolis (map)	
Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel (NTAP) Meeting	
Wednesday, December 16, 2015	
8:00am – 5:00pm	
Radisson Hotel Providence Airport (map)	

Fish Habitat



Fish habitat plays an essential role in the reproduction, growth, and sustainability of commercial and recreational fisheries and is essential to the biodiversity of marine and coastal ecosystems. Marine fish depend on habitat for survival, and many species require specific types of habitats for spawning, breeding, feeding, and growth. The Council works cooperatively with its management partners to protect essential fish habitat areas and minimize impacts of fishing activities on fish habitat.

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RELATED PAGES

- Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Committee
- Ecosystem and Ocean Planning Advisory Panel
- Protected Resources
- Ecosystem Approaches to Fisheries Management

MAFMC Habitat Initiatives

Council Policies on Activities that Impact Fish Habitat

Anthropogenic (human) activities have significantly altered coastal and marine habitat over time. In order to effectively address anthropogenic activities that threaten fish habitat, the Council is developing a series of policies to articulate its positions on the following issues: wind energy, offshore oil, marine transport, liquefied natural gas, and coastal development. By clearly communicating its positions on anthropogenic activities, the Council