



Area-Based Management Subcommittee

Updates, Including Experience Builder Application

October 12, 2023

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Recent Subcommittee work

1. Following the May CCC meeting, the subcommittee worked with GFMC staff and CCC members to prepare a press release sharing the report. [U.S. Fishery Management Council Report Finds More than 72% of Federal Waters Classified as “Conservation Areas” – Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council \(gulfcouncil.org\)](#)
2. A core group of subcommittee members worked over the summer to finalize a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. All co-authors were invited to revise the text. Submission to Marine Fisheries Review is planned for early October pending final checks on the detailed conservation area tables in the paper.

ArcGIS Experience Builder Web Application

- NEFMC extended our contract with Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to develop the application, as recommended by the CCC.
- As of late September, a draft application has been prepared and shared with the subcommittee for review.
 - A homepage with project overview and basic methods,
 - A national results summary,
 - An interactive webmap,
 - Tabs that provide an area management overview for each region, and
 - A collection of links and resources for further information.
- The content for the application is adapted from the report and manuscript.
- The application will be disseminated widely when complete, ~ end of October.

This interactive web application is the U.S. Regional Fishery Management Council's first spatial information portal. It summarizes evaluations of fisheries management conservation areas within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that were conducted by the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Area-based Management (ABM) subcommittee in 2023.

Overview of the Regional Fishery Management Council's Area Based Management Review

On January 27, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Section 216(a) established the first-ever national conservation goal, calling for the conservation of "at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030." In accordance with the Executive Order, the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Agriculture and Commerce, and the White House Council on Environmental Quality released the Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report on May 6, 2021. The report calls for the development of an Atlas to measure the progress of conservation, stewardship, and restoration efforts across the United States. In May 2021, the Council Coordination Committee formed an Area-Based Management (ABM) Subcommittee to assist with tracking and reacting to the 30x30 initiative and associated America the Beautiful efforts.

On behalf of the Councils, the ABM Subcommittee developed a report that includes a comprehensive evaluation of all existing conservation areas in the U.S. EEZ, with the goal of recommending conservation areas for inclusion into the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas. Other ABM Subcommittee products included national and regional maps (static and web-based), a journal article, and this online application.

For the purposes of this effort, we defined conservation areas as:

"An established, geographically defined area, with planned management or regulation of environmental adverse fishing activities, that provides for the maintenance of biologically productivity and biodiversity, ecosystem function and services (including providing recreational opportunities and healthy, sustainable seafood to a diverse range of consumers)".

Next, we developed an inventory of all potential conservation areas in the U.S. EEZ that were established under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other laws.

Then, we considered how each area met the eight principles set forth in the Conserving and Restoring the America the Beautiful Report, and assigned areas that met our conservation area definition and at least three of the eight America the Beautiful principles into one of three categories. These categories are based on the objectives for developing the conservation area and whether the areas are implemented year-round or seasonally. The categories include:

- Ecosystem Conservation Areas.
- Year-Round Fishery Management Areas.
- Seasonal Fishery Management/Other Areas.

We also evaluated the types of fishing gear restricted in each area. Different restrictions on fishing gear provide another indicator of conservation value relative to the adverse effects that fishing can have on benthic habitat and biodiversity. Gear types and groups of gear types evaluated included:

- Bottom trawls.
- Dredges.
- All bottom-tending gear (bottom trawls, dredges, and fixed gears that sit on the seabed).
- Other gears such as pelagic/midwater trawls, pelagic longlines or gillnets, rod and reel, spears, etc.



National Results

Across all three categories, the inventory includes 648 fishery conservation areas that have been established in the U.S. EEZ. Nearly all were created by the Councils, and many of the conservation areas extend into adjacent state waters. Of the total, 531 were classified as Ecosystem Conservation, 67 as Year-Round Fishery Management, and 50 as Seasonal Fishery Management Areas/Other. The vast majority (77%) of these areas have been established in the North Pacific, South Atlantic, and Pacific regions.

The fishery conservation areas in our inventory cover over 72% of the U.S. EEZ, when overlap of areas is considered. Some regions have used area-based conservation measures more than others. Overall, more than 50% of the EEZ has been designated as conservation areas in each region, except for the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean regions that rely primarily on other types of measures to conserve biodiversity. Over half of the EEZ is classified as Ecosystem Conservation Areas in the regions of Mid-Atlantic, Pacific, North Pacific, and Western Pacific. In sum, 1,911,427 n.mi.2 (56%) of the U.S. EEZ meet our criteria as Ecosystem Conservation areas.

The total area where different types of fishing gear are prohibited provides another indicator of conservation value. A total of 56% of the U.S. EEZ is closed to bottom trawling year-round, with 37% of the EEZ closed to all bottom tending gears year-round. Seasonal area closures are typically applied to protect a species or habitat at vulnerable times such as during spawning or molting seasons. These seasonal closures are less extensive, totaling less than 4% for any of the gear categories.



An Evaluation of Conservation Areas in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone

Prepared by the Council Coordination Committee (CCC)
Area-Based Management (ABM) Subcommittee



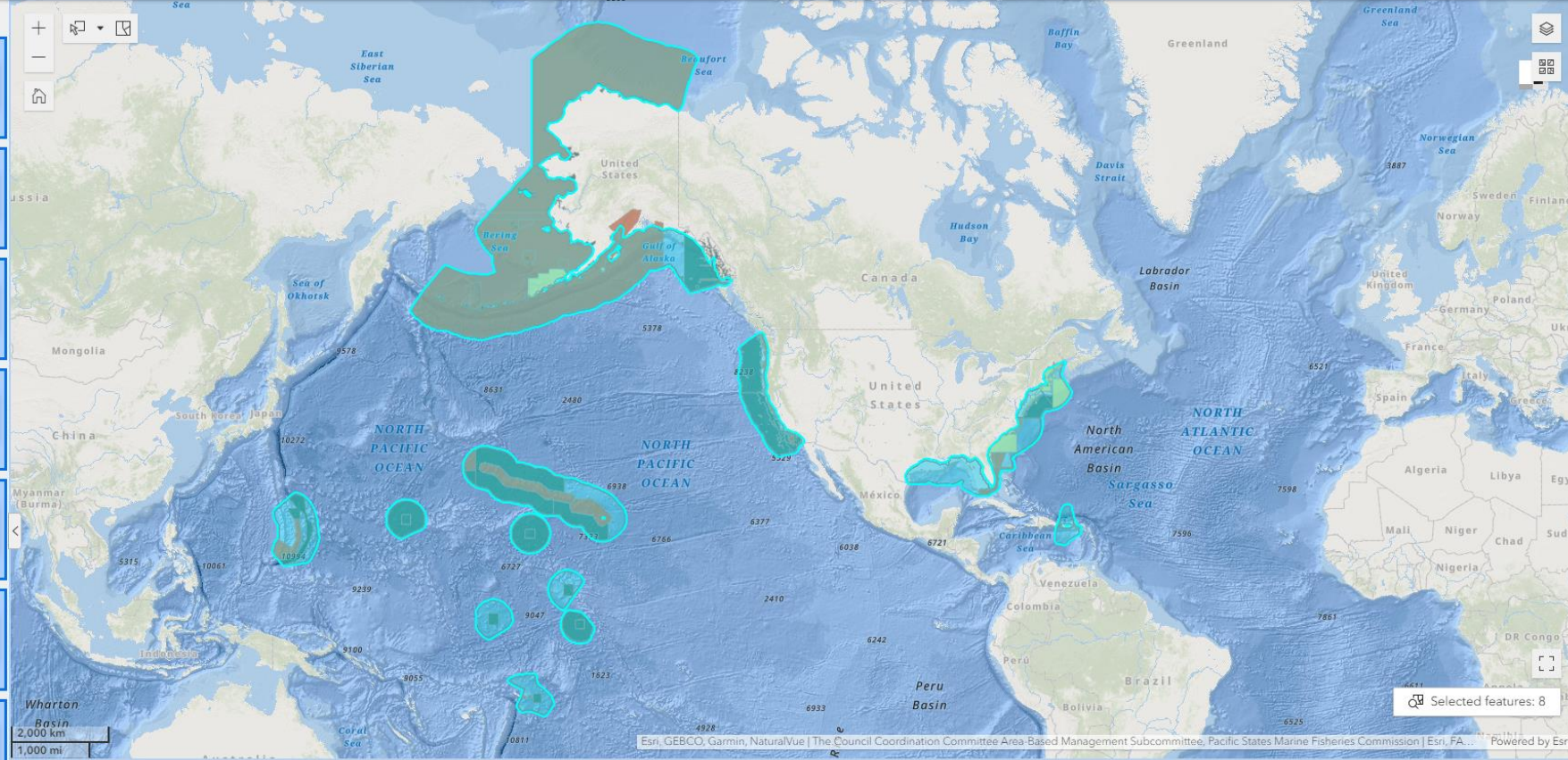
Draft Report Submitted: May 4, 2022
Final Report Submitted: May 5, 2023
Cover Photos: NOAA Fisheries

Please cite as: Council Coordinating Committee Area-Based Management Subcommittee, 2023. Michelle Bachman, Deirdre Boelke, Jessica Coakley, Mark Fitchett, John Froeschke, Kerry Griffin, Roger Pugliese, Eric Reid, Liajaya Rivera-Garcia, Miguel Rolon, and David Witherell. An Evaluation of Conservation Areas in the U.S. EEZ. Final Report. Available at: <https://www.fisherycouncils.org/area-based-management>

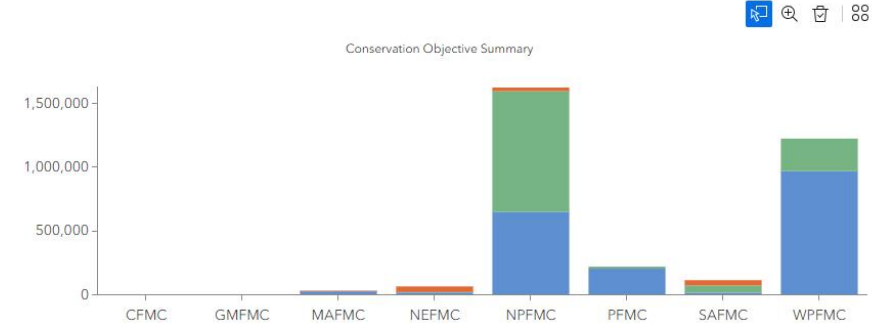
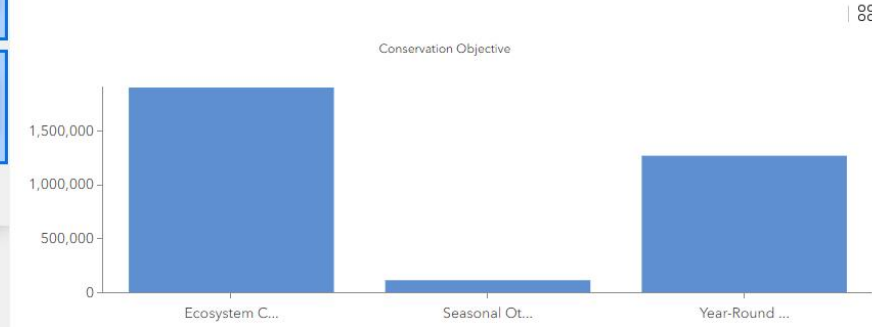
Fishery Management Conservation Areas in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone



- Click Council Tabs to Filter Data
- New England Fishery Management Council
 - Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
 - South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
 - Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
 - Caribbean Fishery Management Council
 - Pacific Fishery Management Council
 - North Pacific Fishery Management Council
 - Western Pacific Fishery Management Council



- Click Conservation Areas to Filter Data
- NE1 - Eastern Maine Habitat Management Area
 - NE2 - Jeffreys Bank Habitat Management Area
 - NE3 - Cashes Ledge Habitat Management Area
 - NE4 - Fippennies Ledge Habitat Management Area
 - NE5 - Ammen Rock Habitat Management Area
 - NE6 - Western Gulf of Maine Habitat Management Area
 - NE7 - Closed Area II Habitat Closure Area
 - NE8 - Great South Channel Habitat Management Area
 - NE9 - Stellwagen Dedicated Habitat Research Area
 - NE10 - Georges Bank Dedicated Habitat Research Area
 - NE11 - Jordan Basin Dedicated Habitat Research Area
 - NE12 - Georges Bank Coral Protection Area
 - NE13 - Mount Desert Rock Protection Area
 - NE14 - Outer Schoodic Ridge Coral Protection Area
 - NE15 - Oceanographer Canyon Closed Area
 - NE16 - Lydonia Canyon Closed Area
 - NE17 - Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument
 - NE18 - Cashes Ledge Closure Area
 - NE19 - Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area
 - NE20 - Closed Area II Closure Area
 - NE21 - Closed Area II-East Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE22 - Closed Area II Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE23 - Nantucket Lightship-South-Deep Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE24 - Nantucket Lightship-North Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE25 - Nantucket Lightship-Triangle Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE26 - Nantucket Lightship West Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE27 - Closed Area I Scallop Rotational Area
 - NE28 - New York Bight Scallop Closed Area
 - NE29 - GOM Cod Spawning Protection Area
 - NE30 - Winter Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area
 - NE31 - Spring Massachusetts Bay Spawning Protection Area
 - NE32 - Closed Area I North



New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC)

The New England Fishery Management Council develops fishery management plans for Northwest Atlantic waters off Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, including the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England. Some activity in New England-managed fisheries extends into the Mid-Atlantic Bight. Regulated species include groundfish such as Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*), haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), pollock (*Pollachius virens*), redfish (*Sebastes fasciatus*), yellowtail flounder (*Limanda ferruginea*), winter flounder (*Pseudopleuronectes americanus*), hakes, (*Urophycis* spp.), and others. Other fisheries prosecute monkfish (*Lophius americanus*), skates (*Leucoraja* spp.), Atlantic herring (*Clupea harengus*), deep-sea red crab (*Chaceon quinque-dens*), and Atlantic sea scallop (*Placopecten magellanicus*). There is also a no-take fishery management plan for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*). American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) is an important species in New England but is managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and not by the Council.

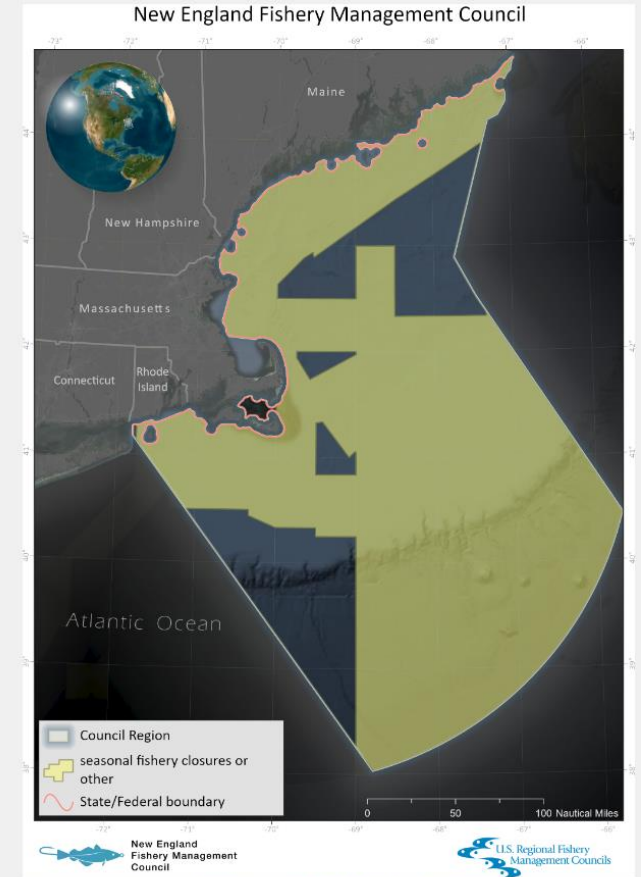
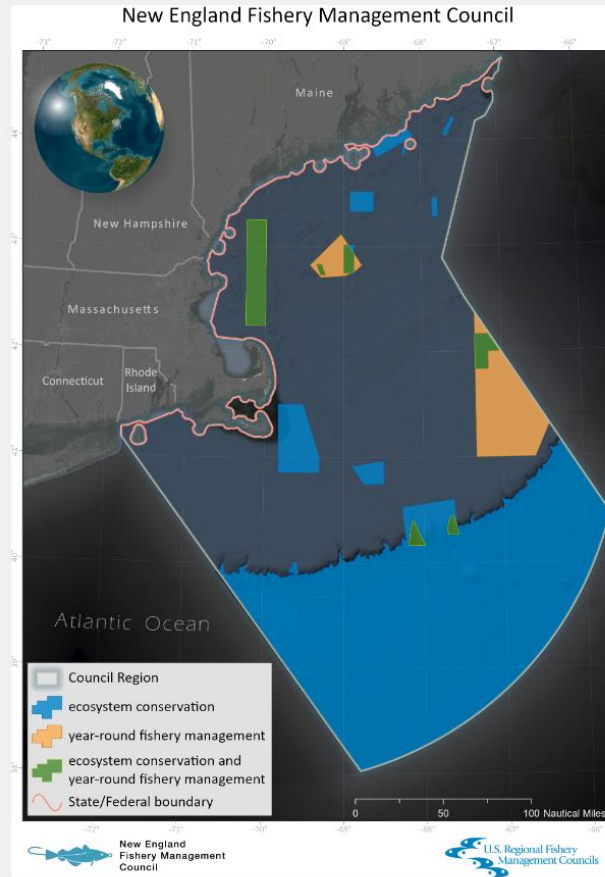
New Bedford, MA, was the top valued port in the nation during 2020, with \$377 million in ex-vessel landings, mostly from Atlantic Sea scallops. It was the 11th ranked port in volume. Gloucester, MA and Point Judith, RI are other major ports in New England. Recreational fishing occurs in all New England states, with MA and CT leading the region in terms of total catch.

The New England conservation areas address multiple objectives, including minimizing impacts of fishing on deep-sea corals and other vulnerable habitat types, limiting mortality of groundfish, protecting groundfish spawning grounds, promoting efficient harvest of the sea scallop resource in space and time, and avoiding takes of protected species.

A total of 47 conservation areas have been established in the New England EEZ, with 17 Ecosystem Conservation Areas, three Year-Round Fishery Management Areas, and 27 Seasonal Areas covering 87% of the New England EEZ in total. Ecosystem Conservation Areas cover 55,947 n.mi.2 which equates to 39% of the EEZ in New England. Bottom trawling is prohibited year-round in 24,041 n mi 2 representing about 13% of the EEZ in New England. A total of 3,703 n mi 2 (17% of the New England EEZ) is closed year-round

Region	Total area (nm ²) of U.S. EEZ	Year-round, Total area (nm ²)				
		All bottom tending gears	Mobile bottom tending gears	Bottom trawl	Dredge	Other gears
New England	55,947	3,703	21,915	24,041	34,009	22,778

% of Region (no overlap)				
All bottom tending gears	Mobile bottom tending gears	Bottom trawl	Dredge	Other gears
6.6%	39.2%	43.0%	60.8%	40.7%



Regional Fishery Management Conservation Area Evaluation Information Hub

Area name
Implementation Action (Year)
Regulations (with link of geographic area defined, if available)
Number of areas (if applicable)
Step 1 – Conservation Area Definition
1a. Established, geographically defined area?
1b. Planned management or regulation?
1c. Provides for the maintenance of biological productivity and biodiversity, ecosystem function and services?
Step 2 – Defining Governance
2a. What is the governance type (federal government, shared or collaborative governance, private governance, or indigenous and local communities)?
2b. Are the boundaries clear and well understood?
2c. Who is the lead Agency?
2d. Are there multiple entities involved in management of the area? If so, which ones?
2e. Is enforcement of the area adequate?
Step 3 – Category/Objective
3a. For fishery conservation areas, three categories are recommended; which one best describes the candidate area best? 1) ecosystem conservation; 2) year-round fishery management; or 3) seasonal fishery management / other.
3b. Which sub-category best describes the candidate area? For ecosystem conservation there are 4 sub-categories (habitat, vulnerable species, vulnerable ecosystem, biodiversity). For year-round/ seasonal fishery management or other areas there are 4 sub-categories (bycatch, spawning, allocation, other).
Step 4 – America the Beautiful Principles
4a. Does the area meet at least 3 of the America the Beautiful principles? Which ones?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue a Collaborative and Inclusive Approach to Conservation 2. Conserve America's Lands and Waters for the Benefit of All People 3. Support Locally Led and Locally Designed Conservation Efforts 4. Honor Tribal Sovereignty and Support the Priorities of Tribal Nations 5. Pursue Conservation and Restoration Approaches that Create Jobs and Support Healthy Communities 6. Honor Private Property Rights and Support the Voluntary Stewardship Efforts of Private Landowners and Fishers 7. Use Science as a Guide 8. Build on Existing Tools and Strategies with an Emphasis on Flexibility and Adaptive

Examples of Evaluation Criteria Relative to America the Beautiful

<p>For an overview of the Council Coordination Committee's Area-Based Management Initiative, please visit:</p> <p>https://www.fisherycouncils.org/area-based-management.</p> <p>Information about fishery management actions and other Council work is available on individual organization websites:</p> <p>New England: https://www.nefmc.org/</p> <p>Mid-Atlantic: https://www.mafmc.org/</p> <p>South Atlantic: https://safmc.net/</p> <p>Caribbean: https://caribbeanfmc.com/</p> <p>Gulf of Mexico: https://gulfcouncil.org/</p> <p>Pacific: https://www.pcouncil.org/</p> <p>North Pacific: https://www.npfmc.org/</p> <p>Western Pacific: https://www.wpcouncil.org/</p> <p>Regulations implementing these managed areas are available at:</p> <p>https://www.ecfr.gov/; most at https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-VI.</p>
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References and Resources

The image is a vertical composition. The top half shows a landscape of rolling green mountains under a cloudy sky. The middle section is a horizontal band of water with ripples. The bottom half is an underwater scene with clear blue water, seagrass, and a small striped fish.

Questions?