



U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils:

**Decades of Knowledge and
Experience in
Coastal and Marine
Spatial Planning**



More than 30 Years of Managing Fisheries in the U.S.

www.fisherycouncils.org

7 For over 30 years, the eight **Regional Fishery Management Councils** have worked through a public process to manage U.S. fisheries. Fishing has always been, and continues to be, the most broadly distributed human activity in U.S. waters.

All eight Councils firmly believe that each Council must have a dedicated seat on the appropriate regional planning body in its jurisdiction. The 2010 Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force stated that the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning regional planning bodies would provide a formal mechanism for consultation with the Councils on fishery-related issues in their areas. We believe this consultation should include a designated seat on each regional planning body.

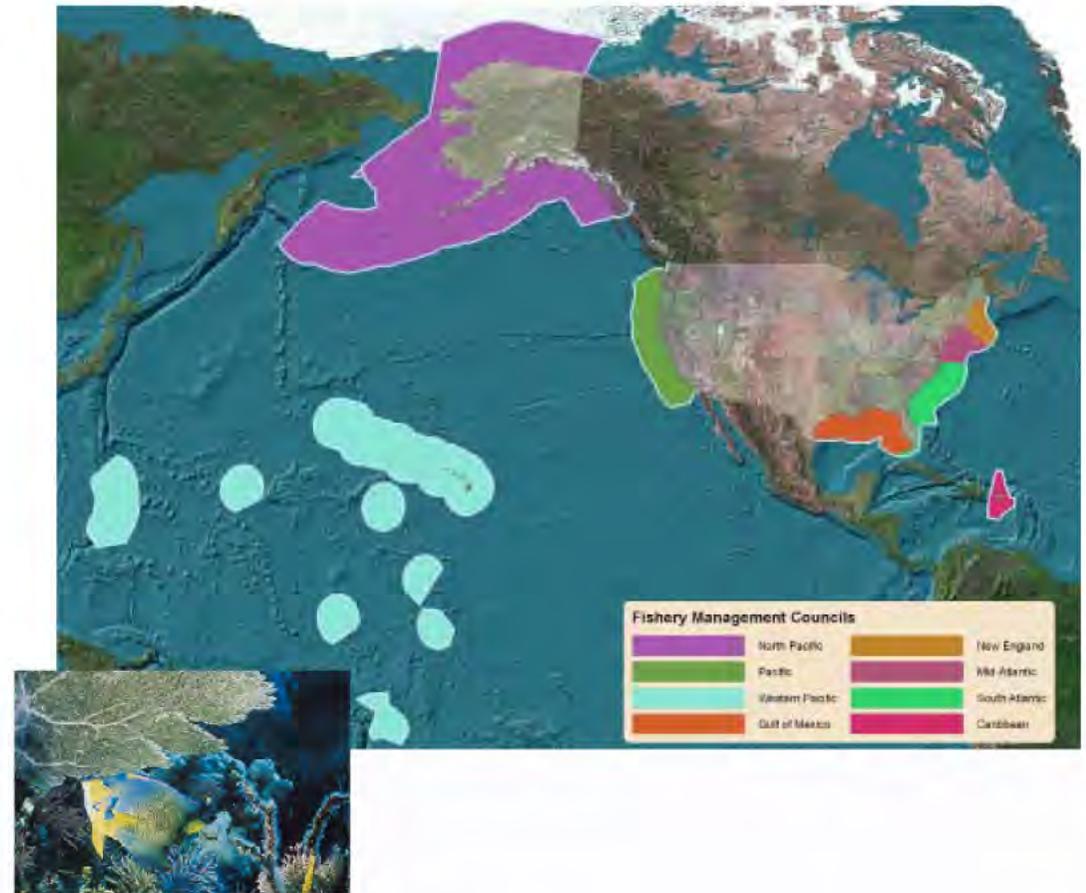
In putting their unparalleled experience to work over time, every Council has:

Established special use or otherwise restricted zones in all U.S. coastal waters that comprise our country's exclusive economic zone. These include areas that are both open and closed to fishing and that delineate essential fish habitat for all U.S. managed fish species, as well as habitat areas of particular concern for many of those species.

Engaged with individual agencies and with regional planning bodies. The Councils have worked with the states, tribal and local governments to develop regional governors' ocean partnerships/alliances and with a host of other entities addressing coastal and marine spatial planning.

Conducted hundreds of public meetings with a wide range of constituents in their respective regions – recreational and commercial fishing industry, processors, communities, tribal authorities and environmental and consumer groups. Through open, effective decision making, the Councils consider the input of thousands of resource users when planning for the future of fisheries.

The Regional Fishery Management Councils have years of experience with marine spatial planning. We look forward to bringing that experience to the table.



"The Conservancy... respectfully requests that the NOC provide a clear statement to agency staff and the nine CMSP regions affirming that each region has the flexibility to include Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMC) as full members on future Regional Planning Bodies, and furthermore, that this is highly desirable."

—Lynne Zeitlin Hale, Director
Global Marine Initiative
The Nature Conservancy

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

The North Pacific Council uses marine spatial planning as an essential tool to manage its large-scale commercial groundfish fisheries in Alaska's 1 million mile EEZ. Areas are used to apportion effort and catch among discrete areas, to spatially separate different fisheries, and to protect sensitive habitat and vulnerable species from potential effects of fishing. The Council has established 251 individual marine conservation areas off the coast of Alaska. In some areas, bottom trawling has been prohibited. In other areas, such as the seamounts, coral garden areas, and Steller sea lion rookery areas, all gear types have been prohibited, and the areas function as no-take marine reserves. The Council also developed a fishery ecosystem plan for the Aleutian Islands area that serves as a policy and planning document for this ecologically and historically unique ecosystem area. In 2009, the Council established a fishery management plan for the Arctic region, which prohibits all commercial fishing until sufficient scientific information is available for this area. The Council also has over 3 decades of experience working with International planning groups (RFMOs, etc.) on broader marine spatial planning issues.

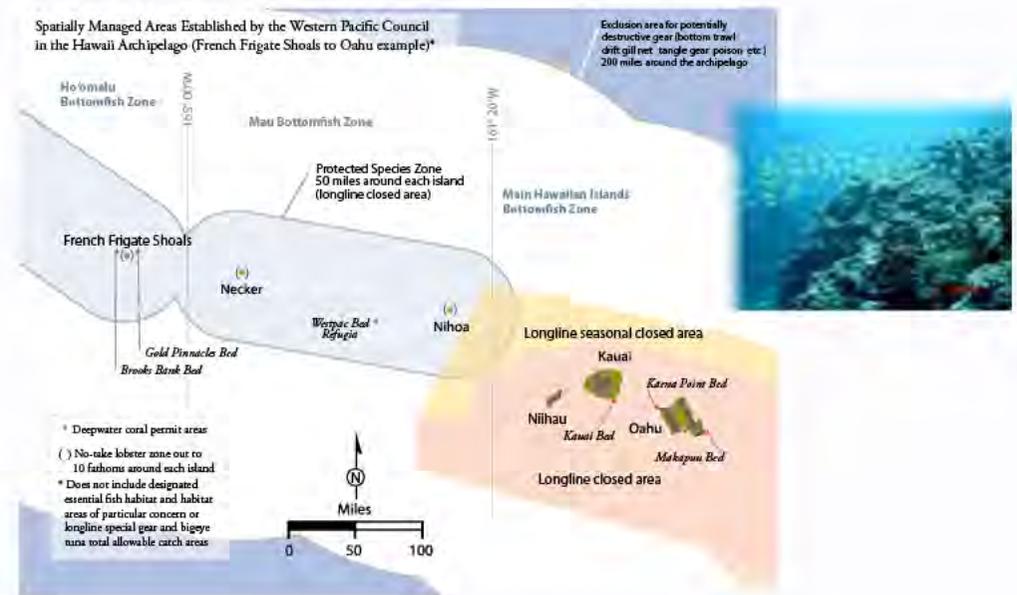
The Council has also established the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum to advance regional collaboration and enhance information exchange among 11 federal and 4 state agencies with jurisdiction over activities impacting marine waters. This group could be a starting point for development of a regional ocean planning body in Alaska.



Western Pacific Fishery Management Council

The Western Pacific Council has used spatial tools to manage fisheries throughout its extensive 1.6-million-square-mile jurisdiction. It has delineated approximately 700 areas to protect lobster banks, precious coral beds, bottomfish and seamount grounds, coral reef ecosystems, insular and pelagic fish stocks, essential fish habitat, habitat areas of particular concern, and threatened and endangered species, as well as to mitigate gear conflicts and support traditional local fisheries. The Council has banned bottom trawling, drift gill netting, tangle nets, poison and other potentially harmful gear throughout the EEZ in the Western Pacific Region and is in the proposed rule stage to ban purse seine fishing in the Marianas Archipelago and ban its use with FADs in EEZ waters surrounding American Samoa and the US Pacific Remote Island Areas.

The Council has developed place-based Fishery Ecosystem Plans for the Hawaii, American Samoa, and Mariana (Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) Archipelagos; the Pacific Remote Island Areas; and the Pacific Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific Region. It is a member on several international regional fishery management organizations, has organized and co-hosted four International Fishers Forums, and holds regular meetings with indigenous and fishing communities, village chiefs and mayors to enhance community involvement and consideration of traditional knowledge and other factors that have not typically been incorporated in contemporary fishery management.



Pacific Fishery Management Council

The Pacific Fishery Management Council develops regulations for the 317,690 square mile EEZ off of Washington, Oregon and California. The Council manages fisheries for about 119 species, including salmon, groundfish, coastal pelagic species and highly migratory species. The Council is also active in international fishery management organizations that manage fish stocks that migrate through the Council area.

The Pacific Council uses spatial management to minimize bycatch of overfished species, protect fish habitat, identify essential fish habitat for all managed fish species, and to take into account the needs of the many communities that rely on healthy West Coast fisheries. Spatial management will be increasingly integrated into Council management through ecosystem-based planning.

To protect overfished species such as cowcod and a few rockfish species, the Council has created gear-specific closed areas. The Rockfish Conservation Areas are large-scale closed areas designed to prevent vessels from incidentally taking overfished rockfish by eliminating fishing when and where those overfished species are likely to mix with healthier groundfish stocks.



The Council has designated broad areas as essential fish habitat for groundfish, coastal pelagic species, highly migratory species, and Pacific salmon. Over 50 discrete subareas have been identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern for groundfish. In addition, the Council tracks and comments on proposed offshore energy facilities, hydropower operations, and other non-fishing activities that have the potential to impact Council fisheries and communities.



A wave energy prototype is tested in the open ocean.
Photo - Oregon State University

New England Fishery Management Council

In the Northeast, the New England Fishery Management Council develops rules for both large and small-scale commercial and recreational fisheries that operate between 3 and 200 miles off the region's 6,100 mile coastline. Its management authority extends to fishing grounds in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank and southern New England and overlaps with the Mid-Atlantic Council for some species. Major ports include Portland, ME, Gloucester and New Bedford, MA, and Point Judith, RI.

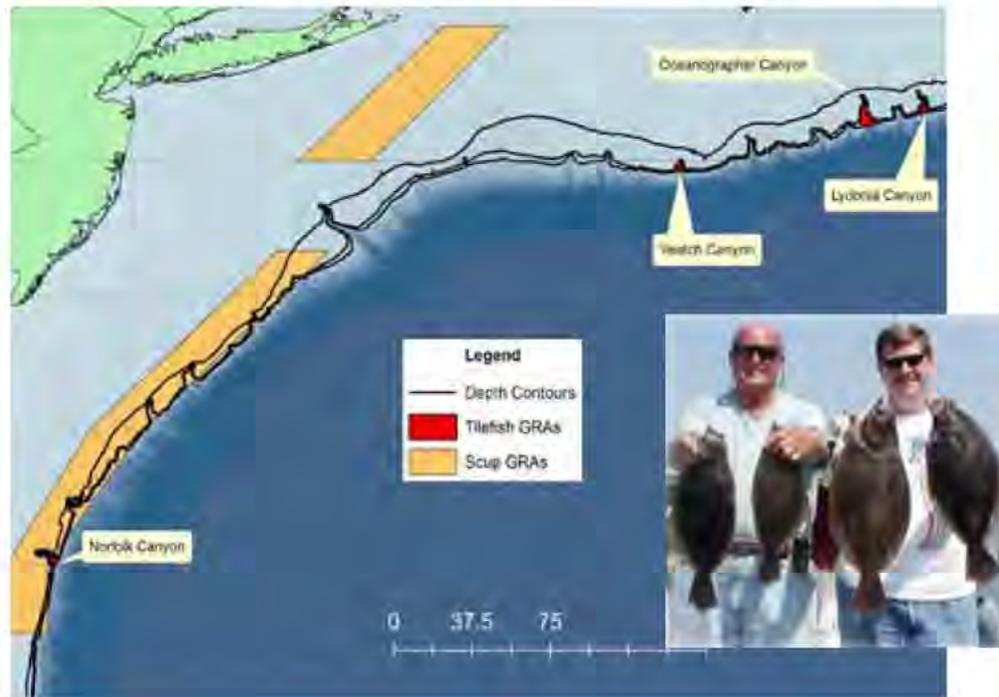
Since beginning in 1994, the Council has dramatically increased its use of and reliance on place-based management tools as a means of restricting fishing for conservation purposes, to enhance fish stock rebuilding and protect fish habitat from degradation associated with a number of marine-related activities. Currently, about 6,600 square miles of Georges Bank, an area about the size of Massachusetts, is closed to trawl and scallop dredge gear most of the year. Roughly 1,700 square miles in the Gulf of Maine are closed to mobile gear that fishes on or near the sea floor.

Rules in defined areas off the New England coast range from a complete prohibition on fishing activities, to closures for specific gear types or requirements to use modified gear in order to fish. Areas that protect harbor porpoise and the critically endangered right whale were delineated through a cooperative effort involving the Council, affected stakeholders and the National Marine Fisheries Service. They have been in effect for nearly two decades.



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

The Mid-Atlantic Council has identified over 7,000 square miles of specific areas to protect sensitive habitat, reduce overfishing, and rebuild biomass for almost all of the species under the Council's management authority. For example, to reduce the mortality of scup, the Council worked with stakeholders to identify a Northern and Southern Scup Gear Restricted Area associated with high discards and developed gear regulations to reduce this mortality. Also, habitat areas of particular concern HAPC were identified by the Council for summer flounder and tilefish. These areas are important because juvenile summer flounder use submerged aquatic vegetation for protection from predation and tilefish create habitat burrows from clay outcroppings. In fact, the Council established gear restricted areas to protect tilefish habitat by prohibiting mobile bottom tending fishing gear in Oceanographer, Lydonia, Veatch, and Norfolk Canyons. These areas were added to the national system of Marine Protected Areas in 2011. In addition, the surfclam and ocean quahog FMP developed by the Council allows for ocean areas to be closed to protect human health or small surfclams. During the past 35 years of clam management, areas as large as Georges Bank (11,000 + square miles) have been closed and reopened because of the possibility of paralytic shellfish poisoning or the presence of a large number of small clams.



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

From the Outer Banks of North Carolina to the shallow-water reefs off the Florida Keys, the South Atlantic Council has a long history of utilizing marine spatial planning when developing management measures for marine resources. The Council has defined regulated gear areas for fishing gear such as fish traps, bottom long-lines, and roller rig trawls, to help manage more than 73 species of snappers, groupers, jacks and other fishes and to protect associated habitats such as hard bottom and corals. Seasonal spawning area closures and deepwater marine protected areas have also been established to help protect snapper and grouper species as they aggregate to reproduce. In 1984, the first deepwater protected area in the U.S. was designated approximately 15 miles off the central east coast of Florida to help protect deepwater coral from fishing gear impacts. The area known as the Oculina Bank was expanded in 1994, and now includes an Experimental Closed Area where managers study long-term impacts of area closures. Continued research and mapping of deepwater coral areas recently led to the designation of more than 23,000 square miles (about the size of West Virginia) of deepwater coral habitat off the coasts of the Carolinas, Georgia and eastern Florida as Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

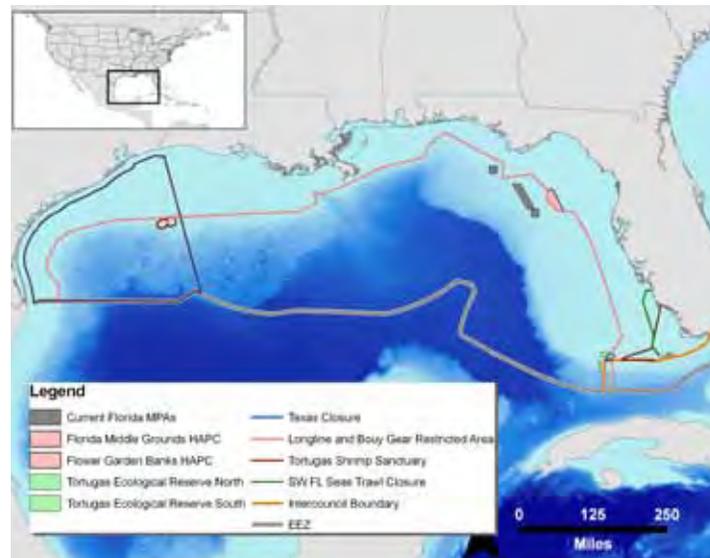
The Council works closely with other agencies and programs when developing management strategies that include the use of marine spatial planning. The Council also has developed alliances with the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative and the newly formed Governor's South Atlantic Alliance.



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

In the Gulf of Mexico EEZ marine protected areas are an important tool for the conservation and management of the region's resources, protecting more than 135,000 square miles of vulnerable habitat types and nursery areas from fishing activities. Certain gear types have been prohibited over large areas to reduce fishing mortality on juvenile fish and shrimp. Other areas containing sensitive benthic habitat have been identified as habitat areas of particular concern, where fishing is severely restricted. Some areas containing corals and coral reefs were considered so sensitive that the Council decided to protect them from all possible fishing impacts and prohibited all fishing in these marine reserves.

For example, the Council established bottom reef fish longline boundaries to prevent sea turtle interactions with fishing gear. Additionally, seasonal spawning area closures are in place for a number of reef fish species.



An annual shrimp closure, in cooperation with the State of Texas, helps to increase the yield of brown shrimp and eliminate waste of the resource caused by discarding under sized shrimp caught during a rapid growth period in their life cycle. The industry-supported closure results in larger shrimp, subsequently, a higher market value.

The Council has also identified essential fish habitat, threats to EFH from fishing and nonfishing activities and options to conserve and enhance EFH. It is also working toward ecosystem-based management.



Caribbean Fishery Management Council

The US Virgin Islands Marine Conservation District is a successful, 6.56 square mile, year-round no-fishing reserve area designed to protect a red hind spawning aggregation. Nassau groupers are also developing a new spawning aggregation in the reserve and fishermen have reported increasing catches of red hind in areas outside of the protected areas. Based on this success, other closures to protect spawning aggregations have been implemented.



The Caribbean Council, with the participation of fishers and scientists, has established other closed areas for the protection of spawning areas of groupers, snappers and other species in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, such as Bajo de Sico and Abril la Sierra in the west coast of Puerto Rico.

Additionally, the Council has endorsed the initiative of the local governments to work together to develop a mechanism to address marine spatial planning for the US Caribbean area. This mechanism will also work with neighboring countries interested in marine spatial planning. The leader of this effort is the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources of Puerto Rico.





7.9 Billion

total pounds of commercial landings by U.S. fishermen in 2009.

Source: Fisheries of the U.S.



3,446,904

square miles of federal waters managed by the Regional Fishery Management Councils.

Source: MPA Center



23,000

Square miles of deepwater coral protected by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (about the size of the State of West Virginia).

Source: SAFMC



\$11,051,345,543

saltwater angler expenditures/retail sales in 2008.

Source: American Sportfishing Association



Marlowe Sabater

Over 1000

individual spatial management areas established by the regional Councils.

Source: Regional Councils

As the need for seafood grows, so do competing uses of the ocean such as marine aquaculture and ocean energy, and the future of marine spatial planning will play a pivotal role in maintaining and improving stewardship of the oceans.

The Regional Fishery Management Councils use sound science and are implementing ecosystem-based management to reduce conflicts among uses, and preserve critical ecosystem services to meet economic and social objectives.



4.8 Billion

pounds of seafood consumed by Americans in 2009.

Source: Fisheries of the U.S.



74.7 Million

recreational fishing trips on the Pacific, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts in 2009.

Source: Fisheries of the U.S.



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Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
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Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
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The eight regional fishery management councils were established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act in 1976 to manage fisheries in federal waters of the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. The Councils develop management plans for the fisheries within their respective regions.

Councils are composed of federal and state fishery agency representatives and private citizens nominated by state governors and appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. The Councils make decisions through a collaborative, open, and transparent participatory process based on best available science and extensive stakeholder input.

The Councils' objectives are to promote sustainable fisheries and to reduce user conflicts and environmental impacts using spatial management and other regulatory measures.

www.fisherycouncils.org

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