



# New England Fishery Management Council

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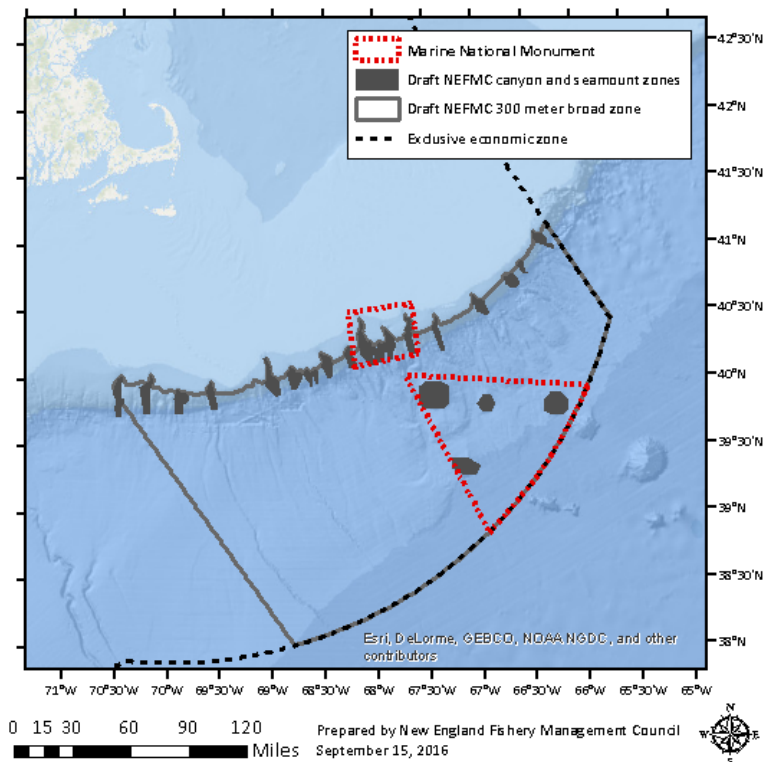
## Council to Weigh New Marine Monument Impacts, Implications

President Obama today announced that he had used his authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to establish a “Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument,” the first of its kind in the Atlantic Ocean. The New England Fishery Management Council, which has been working for several years to develop its own coral protection measures throughout a significantly broader sweep of this offshore area, will now turn its efforts toward analyzing the impacts and implications of the newly established marine monument and determining how the designation affects the work that already has been conducted under the Council’s draft Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment.

The 4,913-square-mile monument encompasses three deep-sea canyons – Oceanographer, Gilbert, and Lydonia – as well as four seamounts – Physalia, Bear, Retriever, and Mytilus – that also were proposed for additional protection under the Council’s Coral Amendment.

However, the Council will need to reassess its management strategy given these new developments. Next week, the full Council will meet in Danvers, Massachusetts and discuss “next steps” for how the Habitat Committee should proceed given that some of the actions in the Coral Amendment have been superseded by the monument’s establishment.

“The monument area does overlap some of the proposals in our own Coral Amendment,” said Council Vice Chairman Dr. John Quinn, who also chairs the Council’s Habitat Committee. “Since there’s no need for duplication of conservation measures, I expect those alternatives to be removed.”

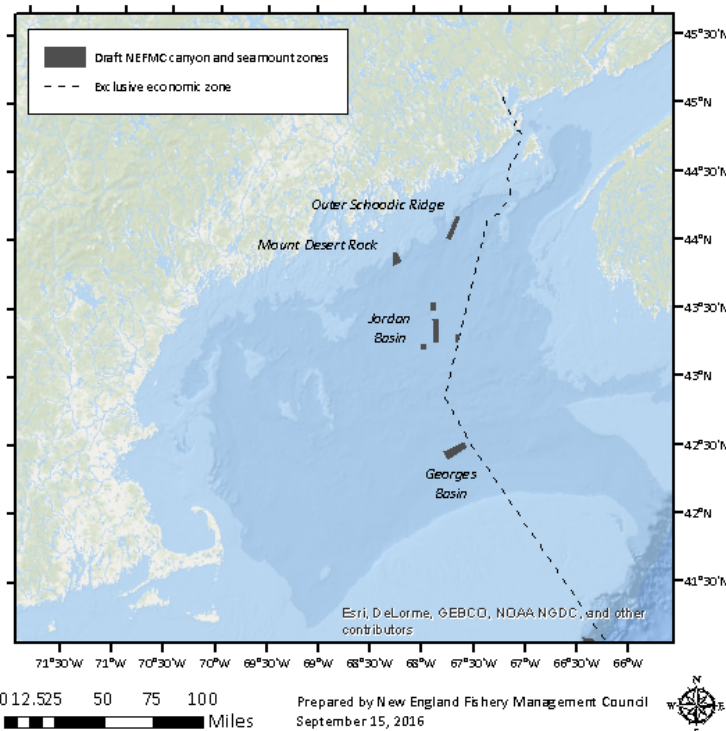


The New England Council’s Coral Amendment is considering alternatives to protect 15 additional deep-sea canyons outside of the new marine national monument boundaries. Ten are west of Oceanographer Canyon and five are east of Lydonia Canyon.



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The Council is expected to continue working on numerous other provisions within its Coral Amendment, which covers 15 additional deep-sea canyons on Georges Bank, as well as areas of the continental slope between those canyons.



*“Our amendment also is looking to protect coral habitats in the Gulf of Maine.”*

*– Executive Director Tom Nies*

The New England Fishery Management Council is considering Coral Amendment proposals for seven individual sites in the Gulf of Maine, including Jordan Basin, Georges Basin, and, closer to the coast, Outer Schoodic Ridge (east) and Mount Desert Rock (west).

Anyone interested in learning more about the New England Council’s work to date on the draft Omnibus Deep-Sea Coral Amendment can visit the habitat webpage at <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/habitat>.

Commercial fishing will be prohibited within the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, although the Administration is giving lobster and deep-sea red crab fishermen a seven-year exception to phase out fishing activities and exit the area. Other impacted fishermen, such as whiting and squid harvesters, will have 60 days to transition out. Recreational fishing will be allowed.

According to the White House, “The geographic boundaries of the monument have been narrowly tailored based on the best available science and stakeholder input.”

Acknowledging this statement, Council Chairman Terry Stockwell said, “The designation is smaller than proposals circulated earlier in the process, indicating an effort to at least partly address fishing industry concerns.”

The New England Council never took a formal position on any of the marine monument proposals that were put forward over the past year for this region. However, the Council was a signatory to the position developed last spring by the Council Coordination Committee (CCC), a body that pulls together the leadership teams of the nation’s eight Regional Fishery Management Councils.



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The CCC, in a late-June letter to the President, requested that, in the event of a marine monument designation, the Councils be allowed to continue managing fishing and habitat related activities under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), as has been the case since the Act was first passed by Congress in 1976 and implemented in 1977.

The MSA requires that fishery regulations be developed through a science-based, open, and very transparent public process where all stakeholders can participate in the discussion within multiple venues, including through advisory panel and committee meetings, workshops, scientific meetings, full Council meetings, and, these days, through webinars.

Chairman Stockwell said, “The position of all eight Councils is that we still prefer to be allowed to continue managing fishing activity and establishing essential fish habitat designations under the MSA.”

For more information about the New England Council’s deep-sea coral and habitat work, visit the Council’s habitat webpage at <http://www.nefmc.org/management-plans/habitat>.

The Council’s Sept. 20-22 meeting agenda and associated materials can be found at <http://www.nefmc.org/calendar/september-2016-council-meeting>. Habitat and coral issues will be discussed on Thursday morning, Sept. 22.

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