

OECM Update¹

Executive Order 14008 highlighted the need for the regional fishery management councils to have a seat at the table for decisions about area-based management for conservation, fisheries management, and ecosystem protection. The Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report directs that “NOAA should work closely with the regional fishery management councils to identify areas or networks of areas where their fisheries management efforts would support long-term conservation goals.”

At its May 2021 meeting, Council Coordination Committee (CCC) established a new Subcommittee on Area-based Management to develop a common understanding among the Councils of area-based management measures, and assist the regional councils in coordinating with NOAA to achieve the goals set forth in the EO and report to the Climate Change Task Force. The Subcommittee will prepare a report on Area-based Measures in the U.S. EEZ. This report will include a comprehensive evaluation of all existing EEZ Federal fishery area closures and other area-based measures relative to a working definition of conservation area (developed by the Subcommittee) and established IUCN criteria for Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM). This will assist each council in ensuring that the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas includes all appropriate and accurate information in their database.

The Subcommittee membership includes a staff person from all 8 councils and is chaired by CCC member Eric Reid (NEFMC Vice-chair). Dave Witherell is the North Pacific Council staff person on the Subcommittee. The Subcommittee has been meeting monthly over the summer to prepare the draft spreadsheet of all area-based measures in the EEZ and develop a draft outline for the Subcommittee report. Key NMFS staff who will be working on the Atlas have also been invited to participate in the Subcommittee meetings to better coordinate with the agency efforts. The Subcommittee will report on its progress and preliminary data evaluation at the October 19-21 CCC meeting (which will be posted on www.fisherycouncils.org), with a draft report anticipated to be completed for the spring 2022 CCC meeting (May 17-19 in Annapolis, MD). A peer-review journal article capturing the findings of the Subcommittee is also planned.

In April 2021, the North Pacific Council also requested that staff prepare a comprehensive review of marine managed areas off Alaska, and summarize whether Council regulatory actions meet the OECM criteria. In June, based on a request of the Ecosystem Committee, the Council directed that the discussion paper be delayed until other projects to address OECMs are understood.

Preliminary data evaluation indicates that there are at least 540 marine conservation areas off Alaska, including 238 fishery area closures in the EEZ (including closures in the EEZ for scallop, black rockfish, and herring fisheries established by the State), ≥ 233 areas established in State waters by ADF&G/Board of Fisheries, 52 areas established in State waters by NMFS (SSL no entry zones around rookeries and groundfish fishery prohibitions within 3 nm of haulouts/rookeries) and 17 areas established in State waters by other Federal agencies (USFWS, NPS).

A draft summary table of the EEZ areas is attached. Of interest, 666,497 nm² are closed to bottom trawling year-round, representing about 65.1% of the EEZ (1,025,770 nm²). A total of 153,832 nm² are closed year-round to all bottom tending gears (15.0% of EEZ). In these calculations, the Arctic area is considered closed to all gears because the regulations state that OY=0 (i.e., fishing is prohibited).

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DRAFT summary table of fishery closure areas in the North Pacific EEZ. Includes ADF&G closures for scallop, rockfish, and herring in the EEZ. Does not include bycatch trigger closure areas. ATB Principles refer to the principles established for conservation in the [America the Beautiful Report](#).

PRELIMINARY DATA Updated September 27, 2021.

Type	Focus	Area Names (# subareas)	Size (nm ²)	CFR	Prohibitions/Restrictions	ATB Principles Applied
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Aleutian Islands Habitat Conservation Area	278,673	50 CFR 679.22(a)(14) and Table 24 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.167(3)	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Bering Sea Habitat Conservation Area	46,058	50 CFR 679.22(a)(16) and Table 42 and Figure 16 to 50 CFR Part 679	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Bowers Ridge Habitat Conservation Zones (2)	5,284	50 CFR 679.22(a)(15) and Table 25 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.167(3)	Bottom trawls, dredges	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Gulf of Alaska Coral Habitat Protection Areas (5)	14	50 CFR §§ 679.22(b)(9) and 679.7(a)(20), Table 26 to 50 CFR Part 679; 5 AAC 39.167(4)	Bottom trawls, dredges, dinglebar, pot, and longline gear.	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Gulf of Alaska Slope Habitat Conservation Areas (9)	2,109	50 CFR 679.22(b)(10) and Table 27 to 50 CFR Part 679	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Northern Bering Sea Research Area	61,602	50 CFR 679.22(a)(17) and Figure 17 and Table 43 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.164(b)(9)	Bottom trawls	1,2,4,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Nunivak Island, Etolin Strait, and Kuskokwim Bay Habitat Conservation Area	9,757	50 CFR 679.22(a)(18) and Table 44 and Figure 21 to 50 CFR Part 679; 5 AAC 39.164(b)(10)	Bottom trawls	1,2,3,4,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	St. Lawrence Island Habitat Conservation Area	8,457	50 CFR 679.22(a)(19) and Table 45 and Figure 17 to 50 CFR Part 679; 5 AAC 39.164	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8

Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	St. Matthew Island Habitat Conservation Area	4,478	50 CFR 679.22(a)(20) and Table 46 to Part 679	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat	Southeast Alaska Trawl Closure Area	52,680	50 CFR §§ 679.7(b)(1), 679.22(b)(4) and Figure 3 to 50 CFR Part 679	All trawls	1,2,3,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat and Vulnerable species	Kodiak Island, Trawls Other Than Pelagic Trawls - Type I Closures (2)	1,964	50 CFR 679.22(b)(1)(i) and Figure 5 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.164(b)(1)	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat and Vulnerable species	Nearshore Bristol Bay Trawl Closure Area	19,067	50 CFR §§ 679.2, 679.22(a)(9), and Figure 12 to Part 679	Bottom trawls. A section (948 nm ²) is open to trawling from March 31-June 15.	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat and Vulnerable species	Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Zone	5,713	50 CFR 679.22(a)(6) and Figure 10 to 50 CFR Part 679; 5 AAC 38.425(15)	All trawls, dredges	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat and Vulnerable species	Red King Crab Savings Area	3,998	50 CFR 679.22(a)(3), 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B), and Figure 11 to Part 679	Bottom trawls. In years when a RKC GHL is established, fishing with bottom trawls is allowed in southern part with <25% of RKC PSC limit.	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Ecosystems	Alaska Seamount Habitat Protection Areas (14)	5,312	50 CFR §§ 679.22(a)(12) and (b)(8), 679.7(a)(20), and Table 22 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.167(5)	Bottom trawls, dredges, dinglebar, pot, and longline gear.	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Ecosystems	Aleutian Islands Coral Habitat Protection Areas (6)	111	50 CFR §§ 679.22(a)(13) and 679.7(a)(20), Table 23 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.167(1)	Bottom trawls, dredges, dinglebar, pot, and longline gear.	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Ecosystems	Sitka Pinnacles Marine Reserve	2	50 CFR 224.103(d)	No fishing or anchoring	1,2,3,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas, Al Subarea (49)	18,806	50 CFR 679.22(a)(8)(v) and Table 4, 12, 5, and 6 to Part 679	No fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, or Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8

Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas - Seguam Foraging Area	2,132	50 CFR 679.22(a)(8)(i)	No fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, or Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas, BS Atka Mackerel Closure	292,151	50 CFR 679.22(a)(7)(vi) and Figure and Tables 4, 5, and 12 to Part 679	No fishing for Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas - Bogoslof Area	10,776	50 CFR 679.22(a)(7)(i) and Table 5	No fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, or Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas, Bering Sea Subarea (21)	6,979	50 CFR 679.22(a)(8)(v) and Table 4, 12, 5, and 6 to Part 679	No fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, or Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas - Bering Sea Pollock Restriction Area	1,572	50 CFR 679.22(a)(7)(ii) and 679.23(e)(2)(i)	No fishing for pollock from January 20 - June 10.	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas - GOA Atka Mackerel Closure	253,427	50 CFR 679.22(b)(2)(iv)	No fishing for Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Protection Areas - Gulf of Alaska (79)	24,475	50 CFR 679.22(a)(8)(v) and Table 4, 12, 5, and 6 to Part 679	No fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, or Atka mackerel	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species	Walrus Protection Areas – Cape Peirce, Round, and the Twins (3)	800	50 CFR 679.22(a)(4)	All federally permitted fishing vessels from April 1- Sept 30, except transit allowed in designated corridors from April 1- August 15	1,2,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable species and habitat	Cook Inlet Non-Pelagic Trawl Closure Area	5,717	50 CFR 679.22(b)(7)	Bottom trawls	1,2,5,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Habitat/ Vulnerable Species	Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection Area	112	50 CFR 679.22(b)(3) and Figure 5	All trawls	1,2,5,7,8

Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species/ Habitat	Arctic Area	148,393	50 CFR 679.20(a)(2)	All fishing	1,2,3,4,7,8
Ecosystem Protection	Vulnerable Species/ Habitat	Area 512 Closure Area	7,944	50 CFR 679.22(a)(1)	All trawls	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Vulnerable Species	Area 516 Closure Area	5,031	50 CFR 679.22(a)(2)	All trawls from March 15- June 15.	1,2,5,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Bycatch control	Halibut longline Closure Area	38,809	Figure 15 to 50 C.F.R. 679	Fishing for halibut	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Enforcement	Salmon Management Area West	984,294	50 CFR § 679.7(h)(2) and Figure 23 to Part 679	Fishing for salmon	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Habitat	Modified Gear Trawl Zone	3,167	50 CFR §§ 679.22(a)(21)	Bottom trawls without modified sweeps	1,2,5,6,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Vulnerable Species	Kodiak Island, Trawls Other Than Pelagic Trawls - Type II Closures (2)	1,089	50 CFR 679.22(b)(1)(ii) and Figure 5 to Part 679; 5 AAC 39.164(b)(1)	Bottom trawls from Feb 15 - June 15	1,2,5,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Vulnerable Species	Steller Sea Lion Conservation Area	23,866	50 CFR 679.22(a)(7)(vii)	Pollock fishing until April 1 for vessels >99'. When 28% of pollock TAC is taken the area closes for all until April 1.	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Bycatch control	Chum Salmon Savings Area	5,142	50 CFR 679.7(d)(5)(ii)(B), 679.22(a)(10) and Figure 9 to Part 679	Pollock fishing from August 1 - August 31 unless fishing under an IPA.	1,2,5,6,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Habitat	Scallop Closed Areas - Aleutian Islands (2)	24,110	5 AAC 38.076, 38.425(1) - (14) and (16)	Scallop dredges	1,2,7,8

Fishery Mgmt.	Habitat	Scallop Closed Areas - Bering Sea (3)	47,559	5 AAC 38.076, 38.425(1) - (14) and (16)	Scallop dredges	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Habitat	Scallop Closed Areas - Gulf of Alaska (8)	66,440	5 AAC 38.076, 38.425(1) - (14) and (16)	Scallop dredges	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Rebuilding	Bering/Kotzebue Herring Closed Area	170,407	5 AAC 27.950, 27.905, 27.900	Fishing for herring	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Rebuilding	Black Rockfish Closure Areas (4)	10,938	5 AAC 28.150(e); AS 16.05.251	Fishing for black rockfish	1,2,7,8
Fishery Mgmt.	Allocation	Catcher Vessel Operational Area	14,899	50 CFR 679.22(a)(5)	Pollock fishing by catcher/processors from June 10 - November 1, unless CDQ.	1,2,7,8