

February 19, 2014

Associated Fisheries of Maine  
Northeast Seafood Coalition  
Fisheries Survival Fund

**Strawman Proposal  
Preferred Alternative  
Habitat Omnibus Amendment 2**

The Associated Fisheries of Maine, the Northeast Seafood Coalition, and the Fisheries Survival Fund collectively represent the majority of groundfish and scallop interests in the Northeast. We have been active participants in the development of the Omnibus Habitat Amendment 2.

This document represents our response to the call by the Northeast Regional Administrator John Bullard (December 18, 2013 plenary meeting of the New England Fishery Management Council) for “strawman” proposals for preferred alternatives that meet the objectives of the Omnibus Habitat Amendment.

The preferred alternatives described below are intended to modify and/or replace existing groundfish year round closed areas and existing habitat management areas.

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Omnibus EFH Amendment DEIS – Volume 1, pages 28-29

**GOALS:**

1. Redefine, refine or update the identification and description of all EFH for those species of finfish and mollusks managed by the Council, including the consideration of HAPCs;
2. Identify, review and update the major fishing activities (MSA and non-MSA) that may adversely affect the EFH of those species managed by the Council;
3. Identify, review and update the major non-fishing activities that may adversely affect the EFH of those species managed by the Council;
4. Identify and implement mechanisms to protect, conserve, and enhance the EFH of those species managed by the Council to the extent practicable;
5. Define metrics for achieving the requirements to minimize adverse impacts to the extent practicable;
6. Integrate and optimize measures to minimize the adverse impacts to EFH across all Council managed fishery management plans;
7. Update research and information needs;
8. Review and update prey species information;
9. Enhance groundfish fishery productivity;
10. Maximize societal net benefits from the groundfish stocks while addressing current management needs

**OBJECTIVES:**

- A. Identify new data sources and assimilate into the process to meet goals (state, federal and other data sources);
- B. Implement review of existing HAPCs and consider modified or additional HAPCs (Goal 1);
- C. Review EFH designations and refine or redefine where appropriate as improved data and analysis become available (Goal 1);
- D. Develop analytical tools for designation of EFH, minimization of adverse impacts, and monitoring the effectiveness of measures designed to protect habitat (Goal 1, Goal 3 and Goal 5);
- E. Modify fishing methods and create incentives to reduce the impacts on habitat associated with fishing (Goal 4);
- F. Support restoration and rehabilitation of fish habitat which have already been degraded (by fishing and non-fishing activities) (Goal 4);
- G. Support creation and development of fish habitat where appropriate and when increased fishery resources would benefit society (Goal 4);
- H. Develop a strategy for prioritizing habitat protection (Goal 4);
- I. Develop criteria for establishing and implementing dedicated habitat research areas (Goal 7);
- J. Design a system for monitoring and evaluating the benefits of EFH management actions including dedicated habitat research areas (Goal 7);
- K. Improved groundfish spawning protection; including protection of localized spawning contingents or sub-populations of stocks (Goals 9 and 10);
- L. Improved protection of critical groundfish habitats (Goals 9 and 10);
- M. Improved refuge for critical life history stages (Goals 9 and 10);
- N. Improved access to both the use and non-use benefits arising from closed area management across gear types, fisheries, and groups. These benefits may arise from areas designed to address the other three groundfish closed area objectives. (Goals 9 and 10).

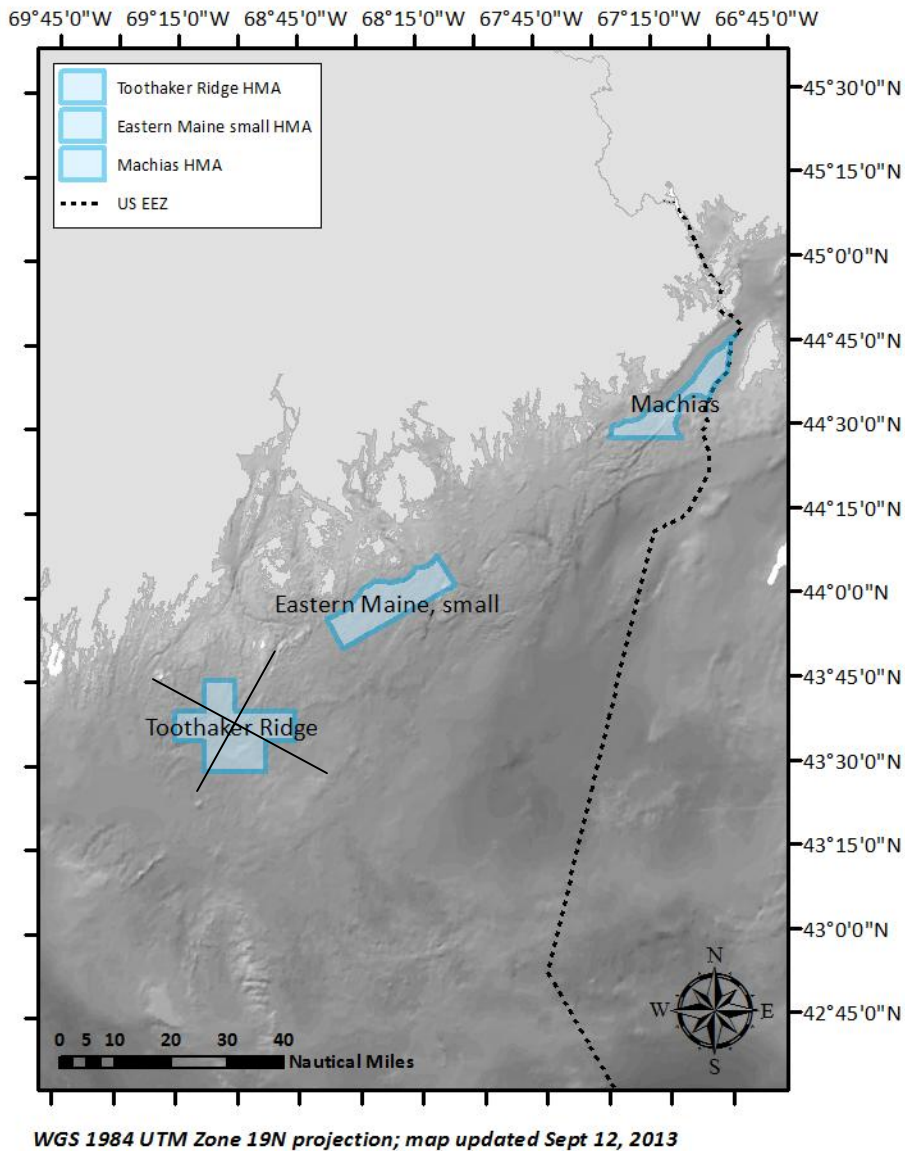
**HABITAT MANAGEMENT DECISIONS:**

**GULF OF MAINE**

- **Eastern Gulf of Maine**

**See page 45, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

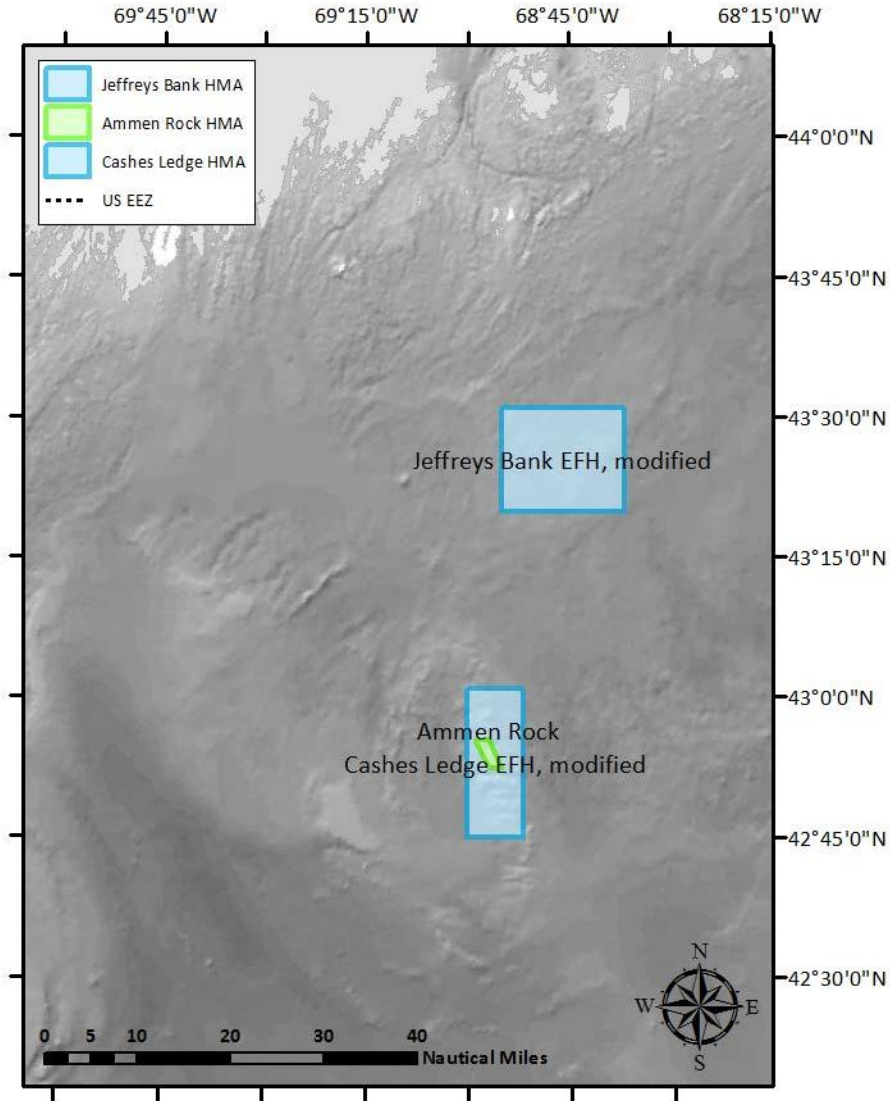
Preferred alternative is Eastern Gulf of Maine/Scotian Shelf Habitat Management Alternative 3, excluding Toothaker Ridge.



Addresses goals #4 (objective E) and #10. **See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

- **Central Gulf of Maine**

**See page 54, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**  
Preferred alternative is Alternative 4, Jeffreys Bank EFH modified and Ammen Rock/Cashes Ledge EFH modified.



WGS 1984 UTM Zone 19N projection; map updated Sept 12, 2013

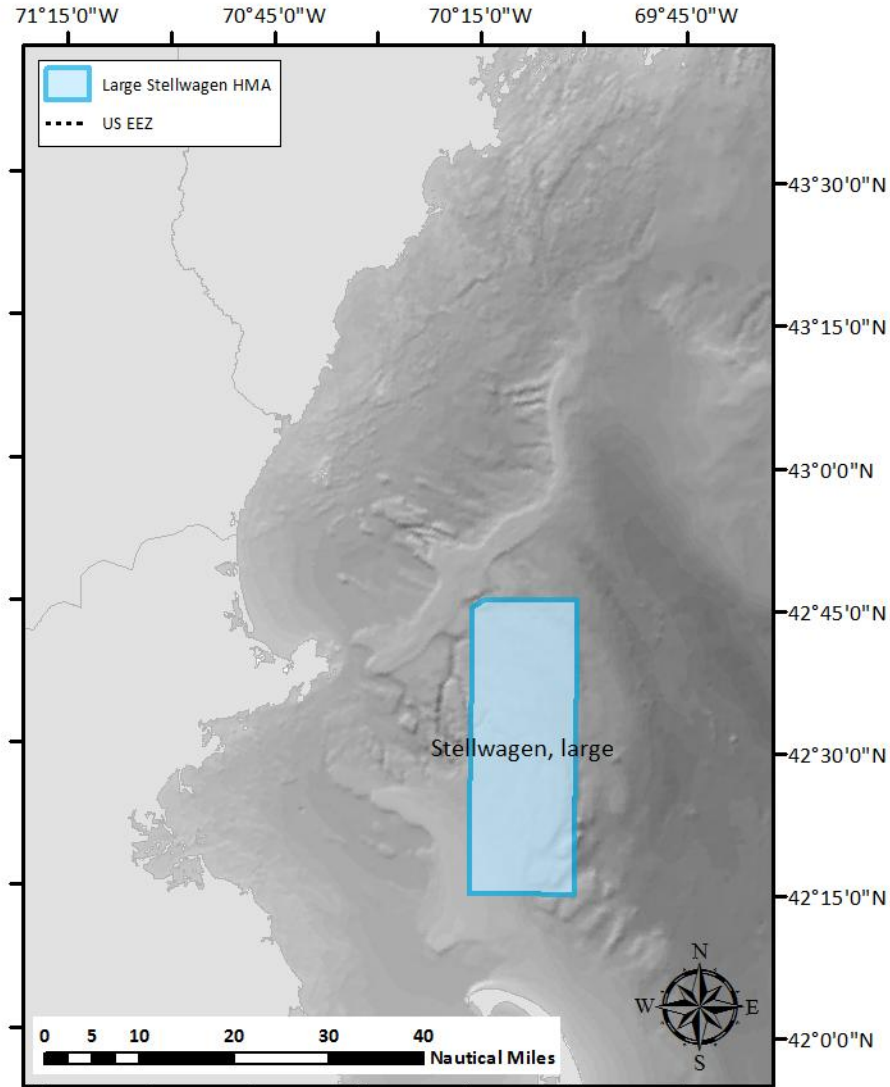
Addresses goals #4 (objective E) and #10.

**See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

- **Western Gulf of Maine**

**See page 64, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

Preferred alternative is Western Gulf of Maine Habitat Management Alternative 6.



*WGS 1984 UTM Zone 19N projection; map updated Sept 12, 2013*

Addresses goals #4 (objective E), #7 (objective I) and #10.

**See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

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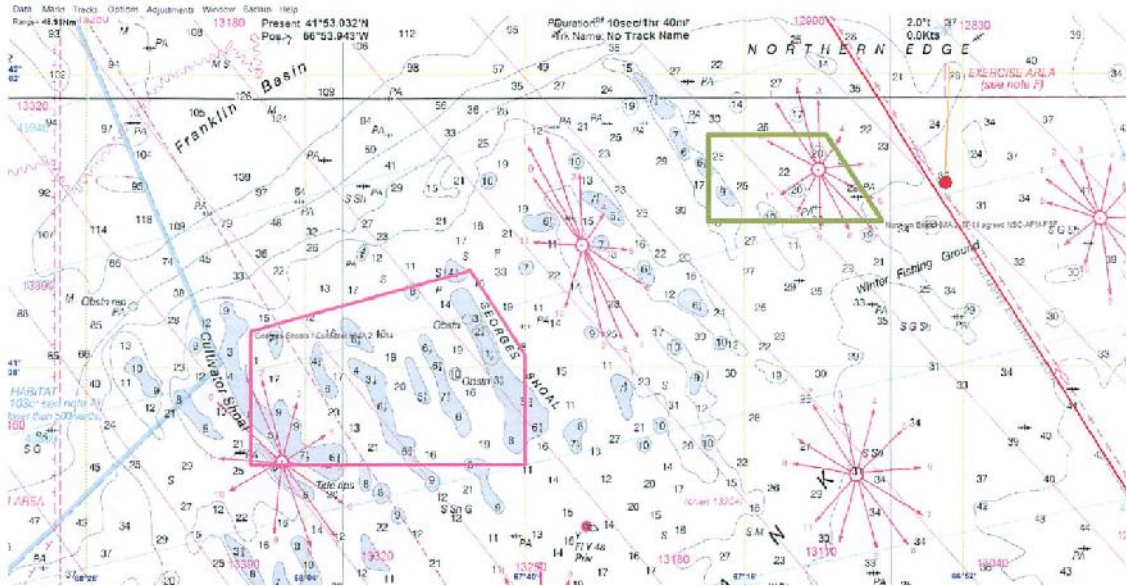
GEORGES SHOAL, GREAT SOUTH CHANNEL, AND SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

- **Georges Bank**

**See page 76, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

Preferred alternative is a modification of Georges Bank Habitat Management Alternative 5 maintaining the Georges Bank Shoals HMA, adding a Northern Edge HMA and removing the gear modification area (GMA). This alternative would replace the area currently known as Closed Area II. The area currently known as Closed Area II will be open for a maximum of 135 days/year to bottom trawl fishermen due to agreement between groundfish sector trawl vessels and lobstermen, and due to spawning protection closure February 1 – April 15.

Addresses goals #4 (objective E) and #10. **See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**



Coordinates:  
**Northern Edge**

- 4150 6701
- 4150 6720
- 4157 6720
- 4157 6707
- 4150 6701

**Georges Shoals**

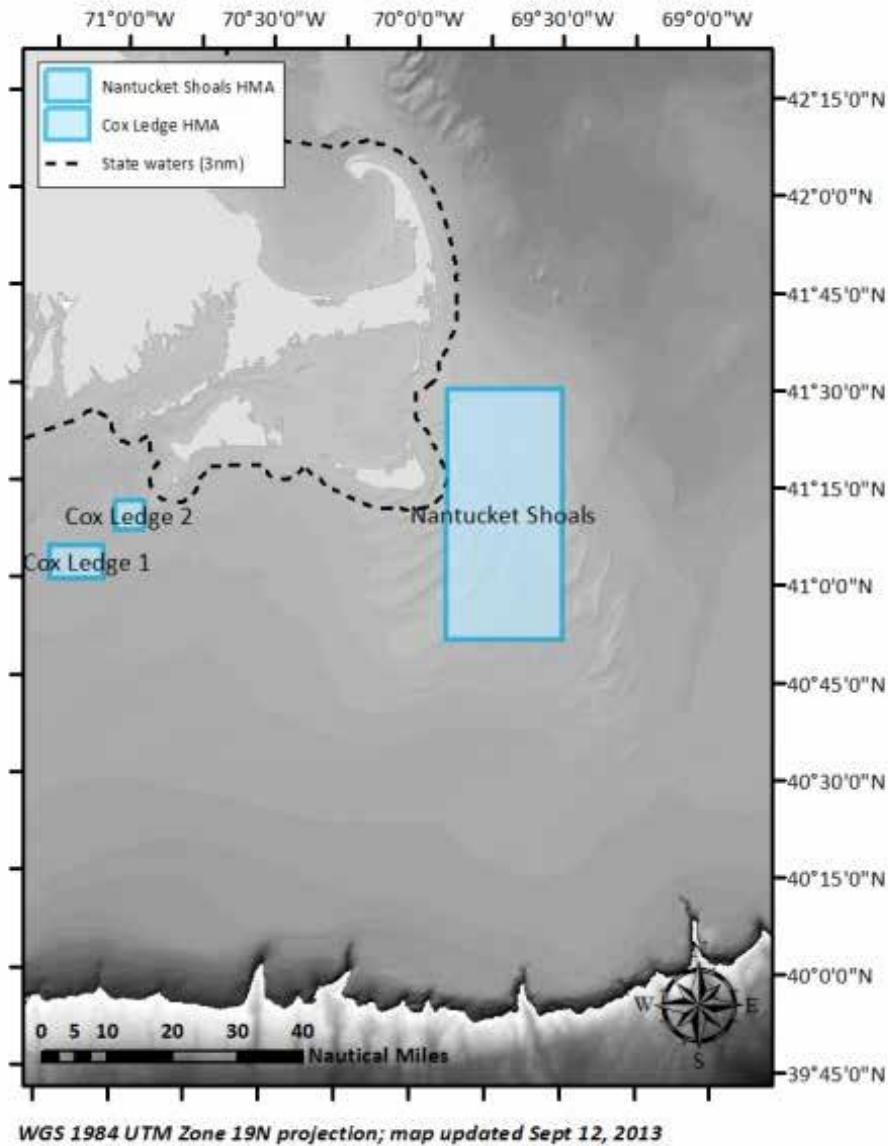
- 4141 6810
- 4146 6746
- 4139 6740
- 4130 6740
- 4130 6810
- 4141 6810

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- **Great South Channel and SNE**

**See page 88, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

Preferred alternative is Great South Channel/SNE Habitat Management Area, Alternative 5.



Addresses goals #4 (objective E) and #10.

**See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

## **GROUNDFISH SPAWNING DECISIONS**

- **Gulf of Maine**

**See page 91, Volume 3, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

The no action alternative improperly identifies the Western Gulf of Maine and Cashes Ledge closures, and the rolling closures (section 2.2.1.1) as spawning protection areas. We support the continuation of the sector rolling closures until such time that the Groundfish Committee can develop spawning protection areas in the Gulf of Maine that would address Goals # 9 and #10 (objective K). **See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

- **Georges Bank**

**See pages 103-104, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

Preferred alternative is Alternative 2 Spawning Protection Areas using Closed Area I and Closed Area II, spawning area restriction February 1 – April 15. Recommend that these areas be reviewed by the Multispecies Committee and PDT and modified if appropriate in a future multispecies action. Addresses goals #9 and #10 (objective K). **See pages 28-29, Volume 1, Omnibus EFH Amendment 2 Draft EIS**

## **DEDICATED HABITAT RESEARCH AREA (DHRA) DECISIONS**

**In all decision making with respect to DHRAs, the preferred alternative is Alternative 5 sunset provision.**

- **Eastern Gulf of Maine**

Preferred alternative is NO ACTION.

- **Stellwagen**

Preferred alternative is alternative 3, consistent with the SERA proposal and reference area 2.

Addresses goals #4 (objective E), #7 (objective I) and #10.

Support for this DHRA is contingent on adoption of Western Gulf of Maine Habitat Management Alternative 6.

- **Georges Bank**

Preferred alternative is NO ACTION.