Summary for Sanctuary Advisory Council, May 20, 2015
GFNMS EFH Options:
Proposed Areas and Pacific Fishery Management Council Actions Summary

Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary proposed options to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to modify Pacific Coast Groundfish Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) management measures, which included gear specific options and options for habitat designations. These options reflect a review of new information regarding the three ecologically important habitat areas *(See Figure 1 on Next Page for the Map of these Areas)*.

Council Actions

In April Council deliberated on scope (range) of Essential Fish Habitat options to be evaluated for an Amendment to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Here is a brief summary of their actions as they relate to the GFNMS proposal:

- The Council decided to limit the scope to address only the trawl fisheries, not fixed gear or other gear impacts (a.k.a. hook and line, vertical longline, pots, or traps). This means that Option 2B: Cochrane Bank "no bottom contact gear" would not be evaluated in the range of alternatives.
- The Council decided to broaden the scope to include a review of the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) adjustments. This means that the current trawl RCA could be adjusted within GFNMS boundaries. This also means that the fixed gear RCA would not be evaluated for changes within GFNMS.
- The Council decided to not evaluate any new Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). This means that specific options for HAPCs in the GFNMS proposal will not be evaluated. However, the hard-substrate areas within the GFNMS proposed HAPC options would be considered "rocky reefs" which is a current HAPC designation under Amendment 19 of the Groudfish Fishery Management Plan. These HAPC designations would result in additional NMFS scrutiny of proposed projects (i.e. development such as wind/wave energy) in these areas.

Overview of Proposed Areas

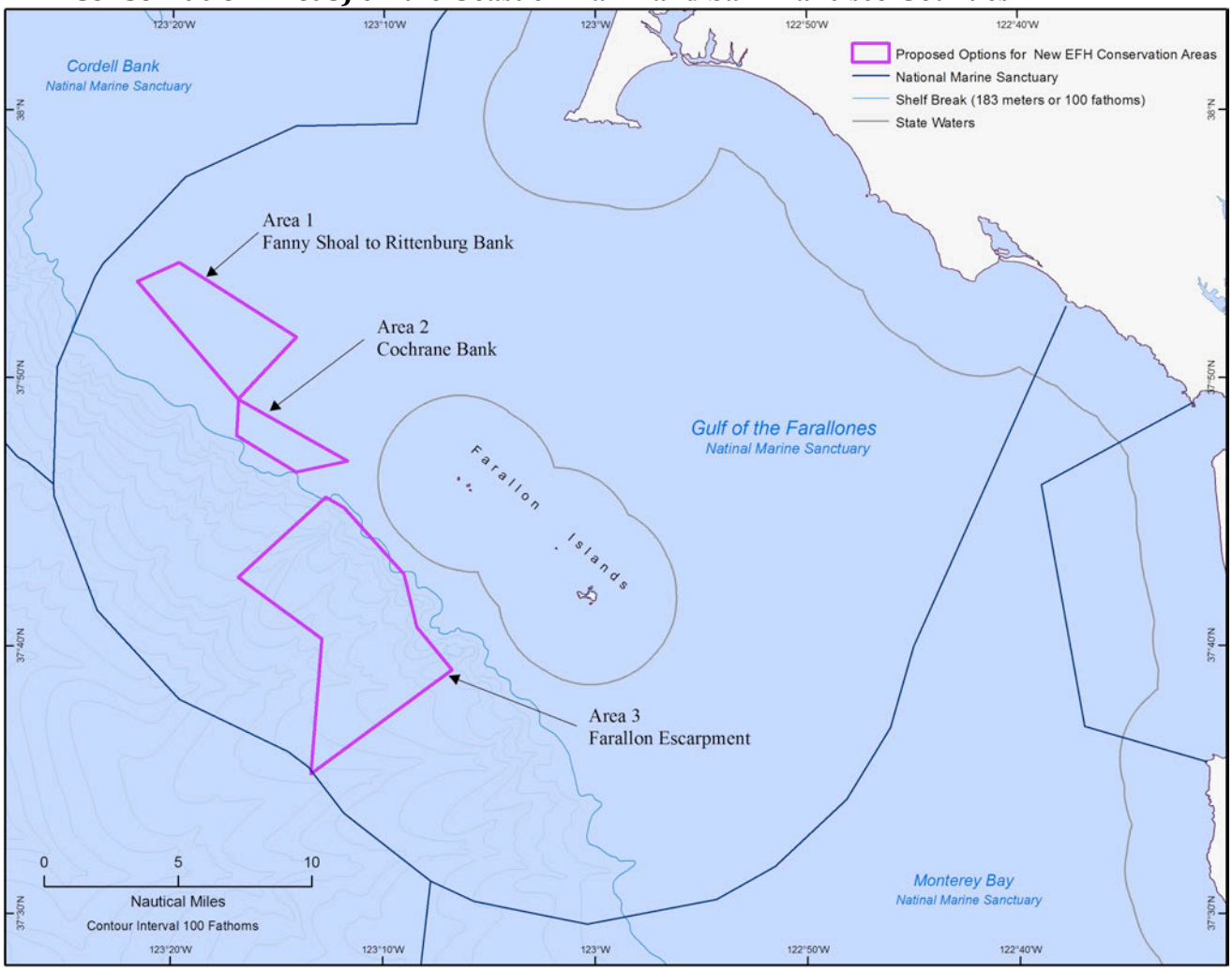
1) Area 1 - Rittenburg Bank to Fanny Shoal (17 square mile area);
   Design Rationale: Designed to protect rocky geological features, and biogenic (coral and sponge) habitat, in an area where groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) species are known to occur, while allowing bottom trawling in soft substrate north, east, and west of the Rittenburg Bank. Designed to link up with the current Farallon Islands/Fanny Shoal EFH Conservation Area. Designed to encompass soft substrate and biogenic (pennatulid) habitat on the shelf in the southern portion of this design in an untrawled or lightly trawled area.

2) Area 2 - "Cochrane" Bank (unofficial name) (6 square mile area);
   Design Rationale: Designed to protect rocky geological features and biogenic habitat in an area where Groundfish FMP species are known to occur, while allowing bottom trawling on the shelf edge from the south or north to the edge of the southern or northern boundary of the Bank. Also designed to allow bottom trawling between the Farallon

Escarpment proposed area (Option 3 below), and Cochrane Bank, if the trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) is lifted.

3) Area 3 - Farallon Escarpment (47.3 square mile area).
Design Rationale: Designed to protect canyons, known areas of exposed bedrock on fault scarps and biogenic habitat in an area where groundfish FMP species are known to occur. (See *Section 5.b.iii and Section 6-Discussion-Substrate* for more information.) Designed to minimize socioeconomic impacts to the fishery by allowing bottom trawling on the shelf while protecting the area of moderate/high coral and sponge observations and slope habitat in an area with low bottom trawl effort, according to the cumulative fishing effort presented in the EFH Synthesis (See *Section 5.e-Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Combined Areas*). Also designed to allow bottom trawling between the Farallon Escarpment and Cochrane Bank proposed areas if the trawl RCA is lifted.

FIGURE 1: Proposed Options for New Ecologically Important Habitat Closed Areas (aka EFH Conservation Areas) off the Coast of Marin and San Francisco Counties



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Summary of Options from GFNMS EFH Proposal

The following is a summary of all options proposed by GNMS. The options highlighted in yellow would not be considered based on the April Council decision.

EFH CONSERVATION AREA OPTIONS *(Figure 1)*

Area 1 – Rittenburg Bank to Fanny Shoal

OPTION 1 - Change the current boundary configuration of Farallon Islands/Fanny Shoal ecologically important habitat area (EFH Conservation Area), to include the following:

- Propose Rittenburg Bank to Fanny Shoal as a new EFH Conservation Area, that prohibits bottom trawl gear (as defined in 50 CFR § 660.302), other than demersal seine, to mitigate the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH to the extent practicable. It includes an offshore bank of rocky habitat (Rittenburg Bank) and adjacent soft sediment that extends to Fanny Shoal.

Area 2 – Cochrane Bank

OPTION 2 – Add new ecologically important habitat area (EFH Conservation Area) at Cochrane Bank.

- *OPTION 2A* - Propose Cochrane Bank as a new EFH Conservation Area, that prohibits bottom trawl gear (as defined in 50 CFR § 660.302), other than demersal seine, to mitigate to the extent practicable, the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH on the continental shelf to the extent practicable. This is the deepest known rocky bank within GFNMS.
- *OPTION 2B* - Propose Cochrane Bank as a new EFH Conservation Area, that prohibits all bottom contact gear (as defined in 50 CFR § 660.302), to mitigate to the extent practicable, the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH on the continental shelf. The same coordinates would be used as Option 2. This is to further protect Cochrane Bank from all gear impacts. This area had the highest observed on-transect percentage of derelict fishing gear, which included nets and line. Cochrane Bank also has long-lived coral *Antipathes dendrochristos*, known as Christmas Tree Coral, a species previously thought to be endemic to Southern California, but now discovered in GFNMS and believed to be at the northern extent of its range. The size and growth rate of this species makes it vulnerable to potential habitat damage by all gear types, and according to the NOAA publication, "The State of Deep Coral Ecosystems of the United Stated," chapter Pacific Coast: California to Washington (Whitmire and Clarke 2007), *A. dendrochristos* has a high rating of structural importance, meaning they are known to provide vertical structure above the sea floor that can be utilized by other invertebrates or fish.

Area 3 – Farallon Escarpment

OPTION 3 – Add new ecologically important habitat area (EFH Conservation Area) at the Farallon Escarpment.

- Propose Farallon Escarpment as a new EFH Conservation Area, that prohibits bottom trawl gear (as defined in 50 CFR § 660.302), other than demersal seine, to mitigate to the extent practicable, the adverse effects of fishing on groundfish EFH on the upper continental slope.

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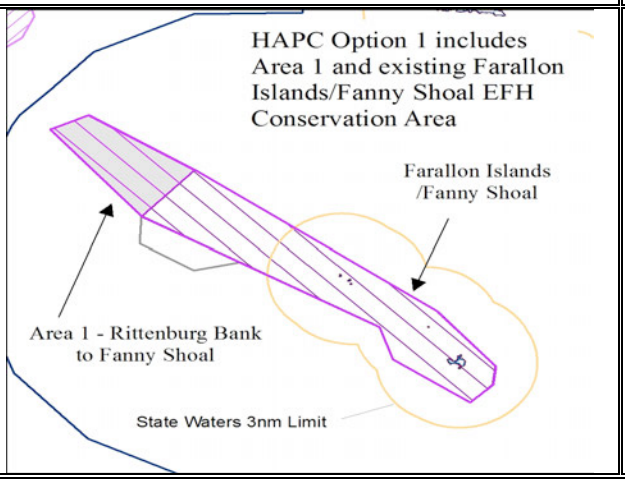
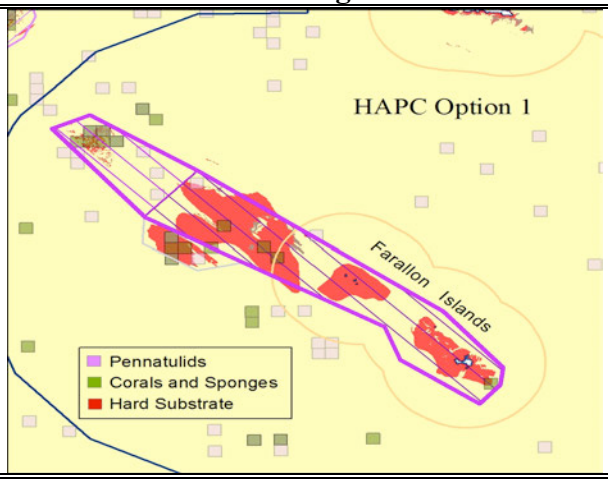
**Note:* Exposed bedrock on the Farallon Escarpment was described after the substrate maps were produced in the EFH Synthesis Report, and therefore shows as soft habitat in the Report.

HABITAT AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN DESIGNATION OPTIONS

HAPC OPTION 1 – Proposed Council consideration of new EFH HAPCs "Areas of Interest" at Rittenburg Bank.

HAPC OPTION 2 – Proposed Council consideration of new EFH HAPCs "Areas of Interest" at Cochrane Bank.

Note: GFNMS did not propose a HAPC "Area of Interest" for the proposed EFH Conservation Area at the Farallon Escarpment. The entire Escarpment heads north, south and west of GFNMS boundary, placing portions of it beyond GFNMS jurisdiction. The Escarpment is also larger than the current GFNMS proposed EFH Conservation area boundary.

HAPC OPTION 1: Shows Proposed & Existing EFH Conservation Areas Combined	**HAPC OPTION 1: Shows Area with Substrate and Biogenic Habitat**
	
HAPC OPTION 2: Shows Proposed New EFH Conservation Area	**HAPC OPTION 2: Shows Area with Substrate and Biogenic Habitat**