

# U.S. Fishery Management Councils and Marine Fisheries Commissions

Chris Moore and Stan Allen  
NFHP Board Members

National Fish Habitat Partnership  
Board Meeting  
January 29, 2025



## Healthy Habitats Support Fisheries, Jobs, and the Economy

- Saltwater recreational fisheries generated **\$138 billion** in sales impacts and supported more than **692,000 jobs** in 2022.
- Commercial fishing generated economic impacts of **\$183 billion** in sales and supports **1.6 million jobs** in 2022.



# Overview: U.S. Fisheries Management



## Inland Waters

- Department of the Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)



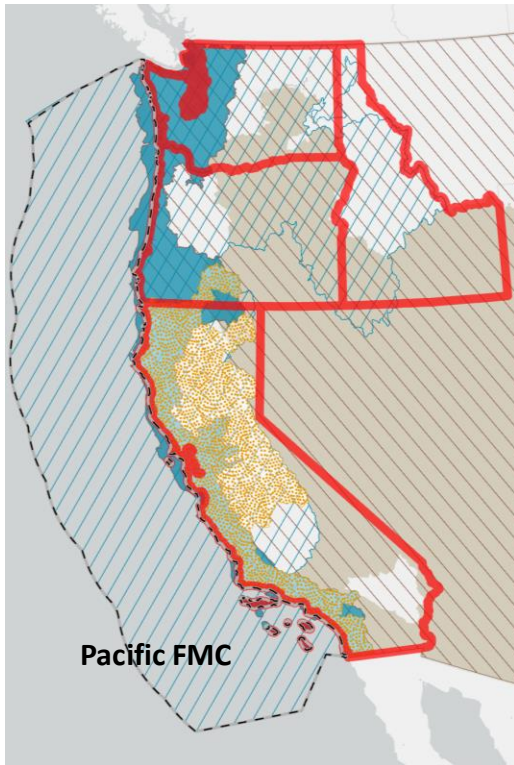
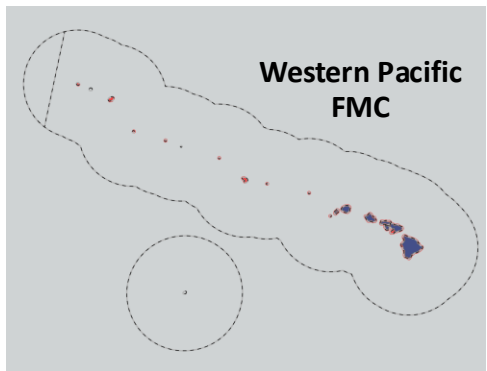
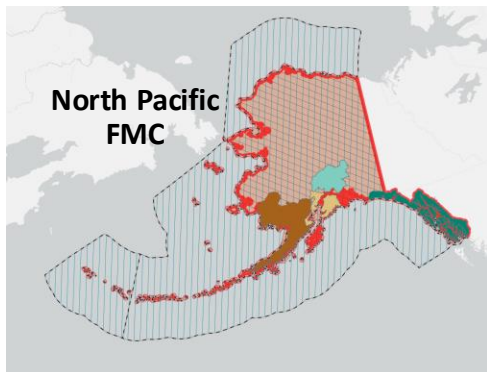
## State waters (up to 3 mi)

- Fishery Commissions
- State Natural Resource Agencies



## Federal waters (3mi-200 mi)

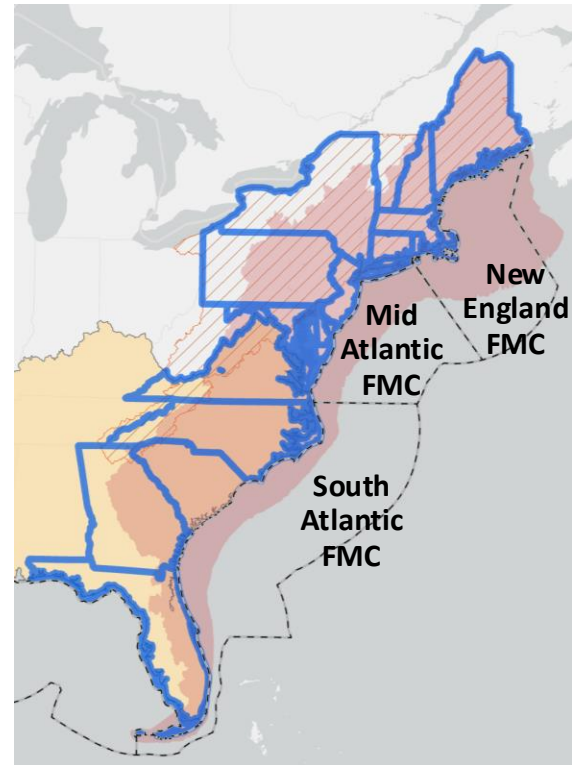
- Department of Commerce (NOAA Fisheries)
- Regional Fishery Management Councils



**Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission**

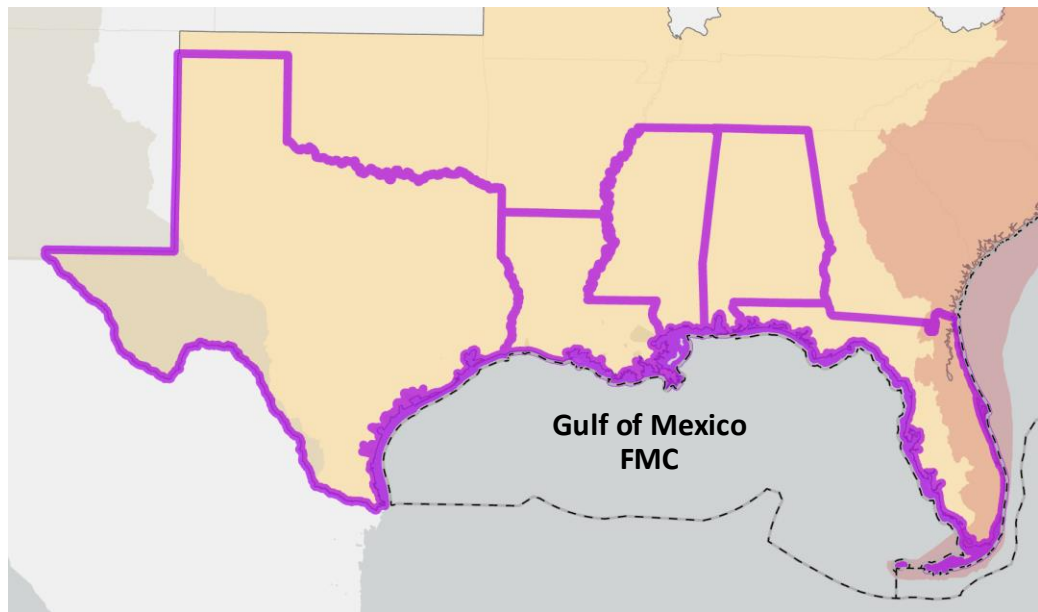
**Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**

**Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission**



**Legend**

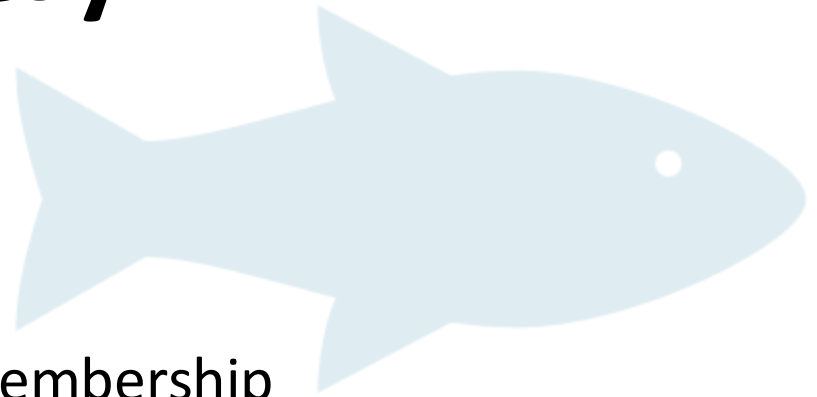
- Western Native Trout Initiative
- Kenai Peninsula Fish Habitat Partnership
- Matanuska Susitna Basin Salmon Habitat Partnership
- Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative
- Southeast Alaska Fish Habitat Partnership
- Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership
- Hawaii Fish Habitat Partnership
- California Fish Passage Forum
- Desert Fish Habitat Partnership
- Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership
- Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership
- Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture
- Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
- Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership \*



\* System based FHP



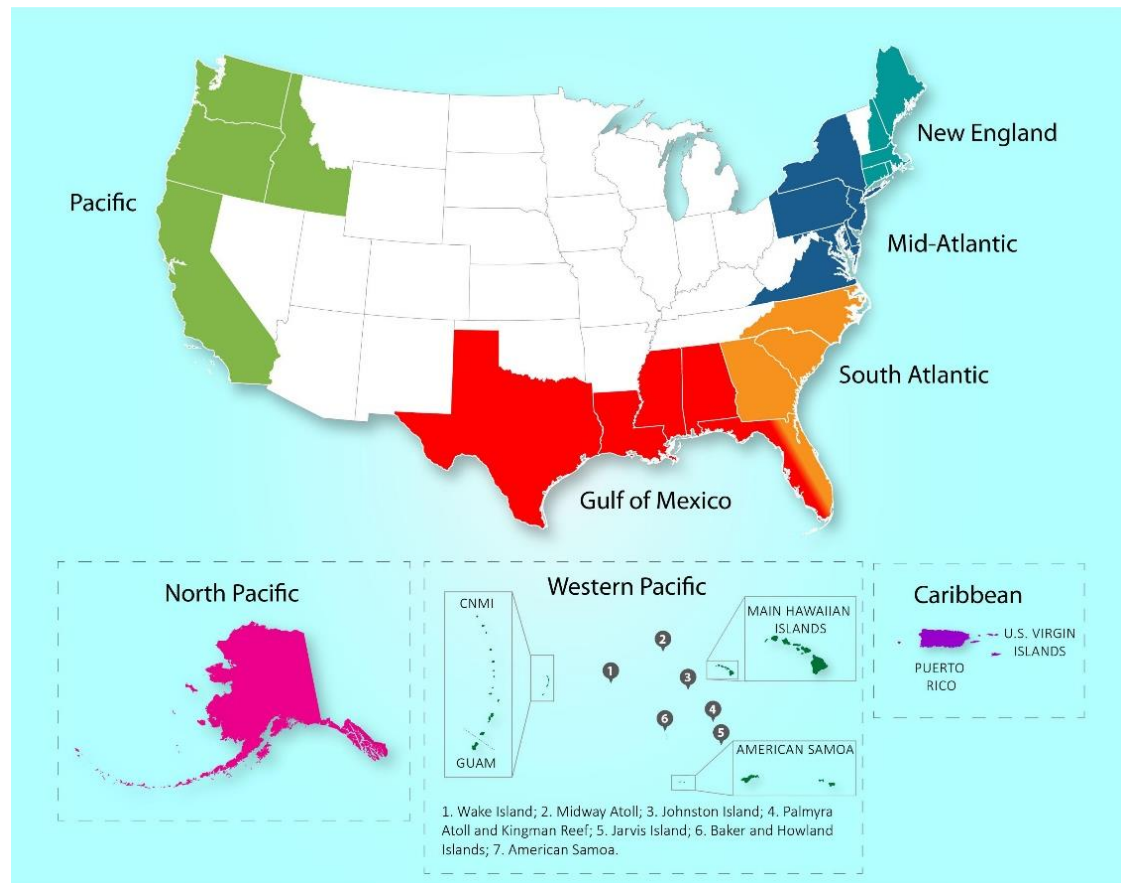
# Regional Fishery Management Councils



- Role, responsibilities, membership
- Council role in habitat conservation
- Council habitat highlights
- Cross-council habitat coordination

# Regional Fishery Management Councils

- Eight regional councils
- Created by Congress in 1976 through the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Each council is responsible for the management of fisheries within their region's federal waters (3-200 mi).





# Council Responsibilities

- **Developing and amending fishery management plans** for approval and implementation by NOAA Fisheries on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce
- **Setting annual catch limits and management measures** based on the best available science
- **Developing research priorities** with scientists and stakeholder/industry partners
- **Conducting public hearings and gathering public input** on proposed fishery management actions

# Council Membership



*Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council,  
December 2024*

## **Voting members**

- NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator
- State designees - marine fishery management official
- Individuals appointed by Secretary of Commerce

## **Non-voting members**

- USFWS Regional Director
- USCG Regional Commander
- Executive Director of Marine Fisheries Commissions
- US Department of State representative





Photo: NOAA Fisheries

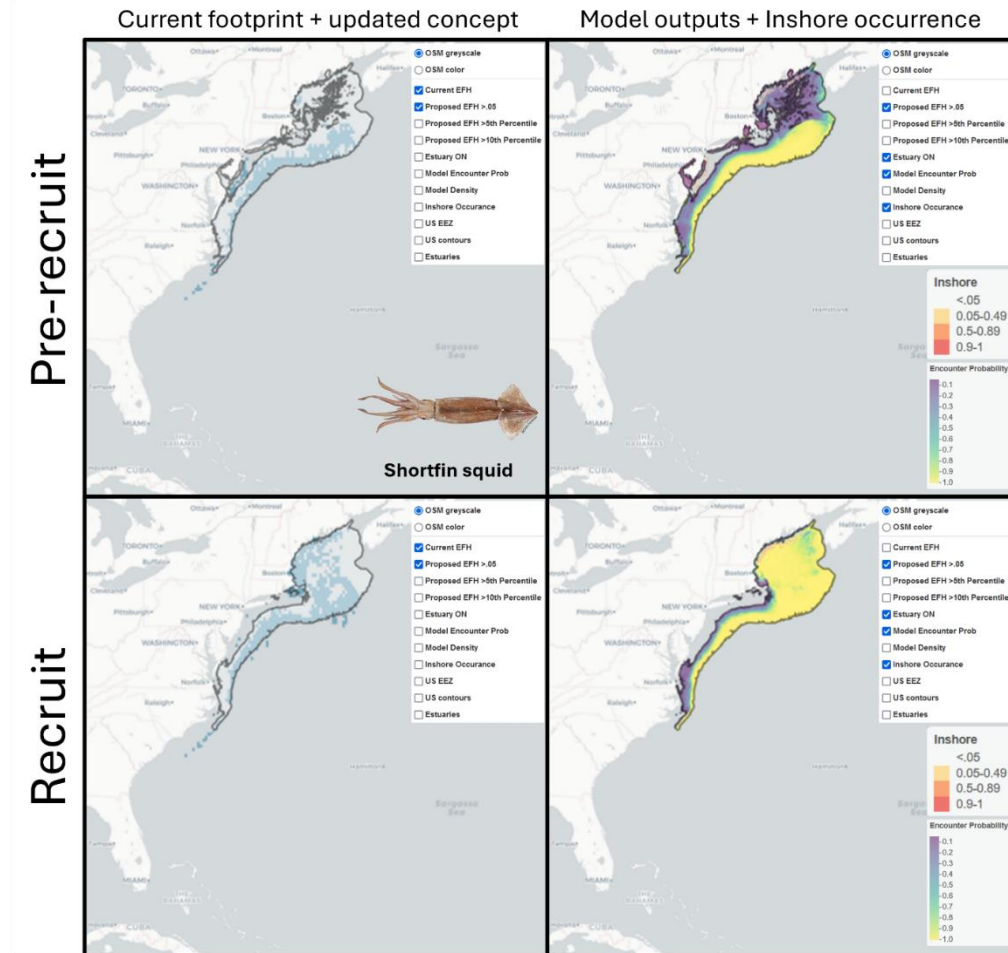
# Council Role in Habitat Conservation

Provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to are used to:

- Define & refine essential fish habitat (EFH) regulatory designations
- Exercise deep-sea coral habitat conservation authority
- Integrate habitat conservation into management decisions (i.e., EAFM or EBFM)

# Designation of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

- Councils are required to designate EFH for each species it manages
- Habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs), subset of EFH can be identified
- MAFMC and NEFMC are conducting EFH Reviews (working collaboratively on methods and products)
- New modeling/mapping approaches – 2nd Council region in country to incorporate model-based approaches



# Essential Fish Habitat Protection and Conservation

- Councils must take steps to minimize the impacts of fishing on EFH to the extent practicable.
- Once the councils have identified EFH, federal agencies must consult with NOAA Fisheries regarding whether their actions may adversely affect EFH.
- NOAA Fisheries consults on thousands of projects each year.



# Northeast Regional Habitat Assessment (NRHA)

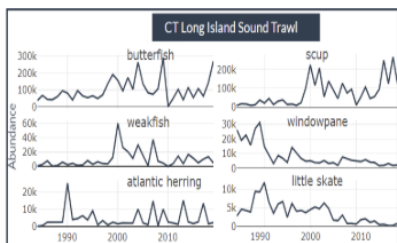
- **Purpose:** A collaborative, multi-disciplinary effort to describe and characterize estuarine, coastal, and offshore fish habitat distribution, abundance, and quality in the Northeast.
- **Participants:** MAFMC, NEFMC, NOAA Fisheries, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, Monmouth University and other partners.
- **Status:** NRHA work products were finalized and released throughout the summer and fall of 2022 and are being updated on an ongoing basis.

# NRHA Data Explorer

All NRHA products are housed in the NRHA Data Explorer Tool, an R-Shiny application used to explore data on trends in fish species distribution at state and regional scales, and to share other products and documentation.

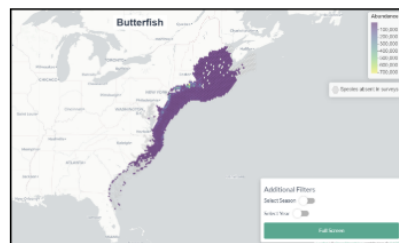
## Survey View

Northeast regional and inshore bay/estuary view of fishery independent survey data including top 20 species abundance and biomass, similarity clusters, and survey temperature and salinity data.



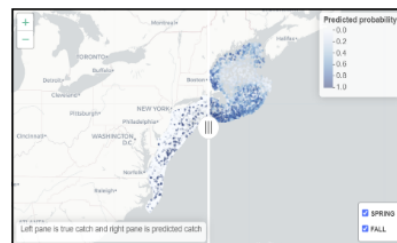
## Species View

Species view of fishery independent survey data, including distributions, relative abundance, and reports on habitat use and vulnerability to climate change.



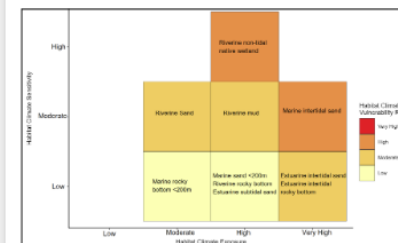
## Models

Outputs from spatiotemporal models that describe species distributions as a function of dynamic environmental factors, species interactions and predicted change in habitat use under various climate scenarios.



## Habitat Crosswalk

Habitat species vulnerability matrix and species narratives for 66 managed and forage species in the region.



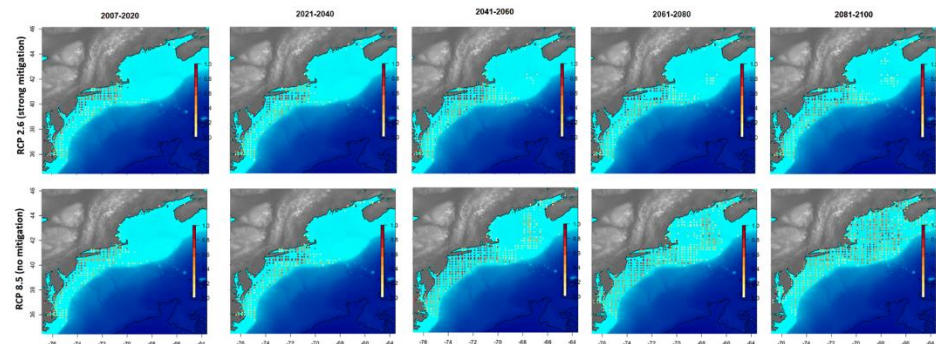
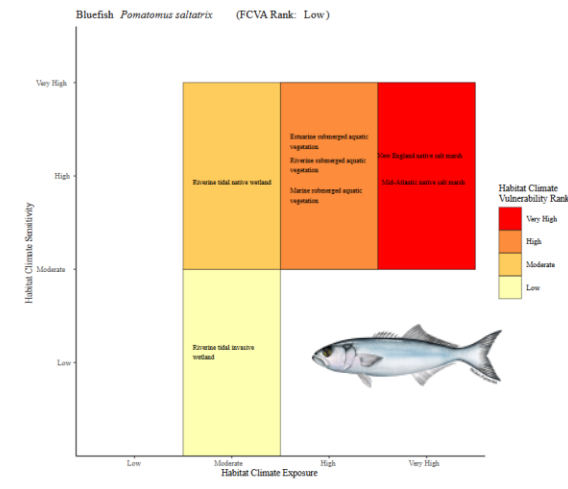
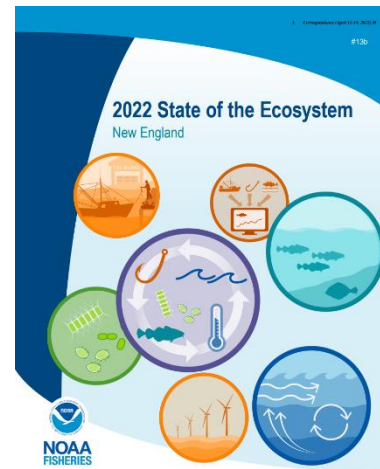
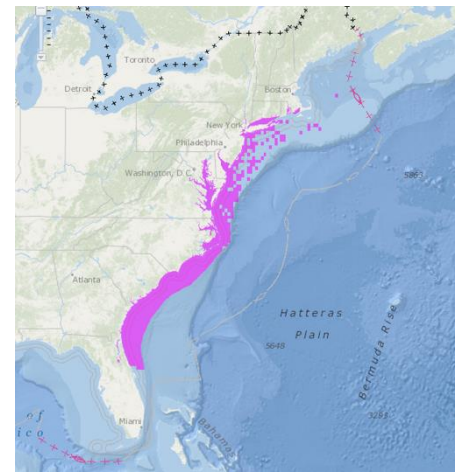
<https://nrha.shinyapps.io/dataexplorer/#/>

# Applications for NRHA Products

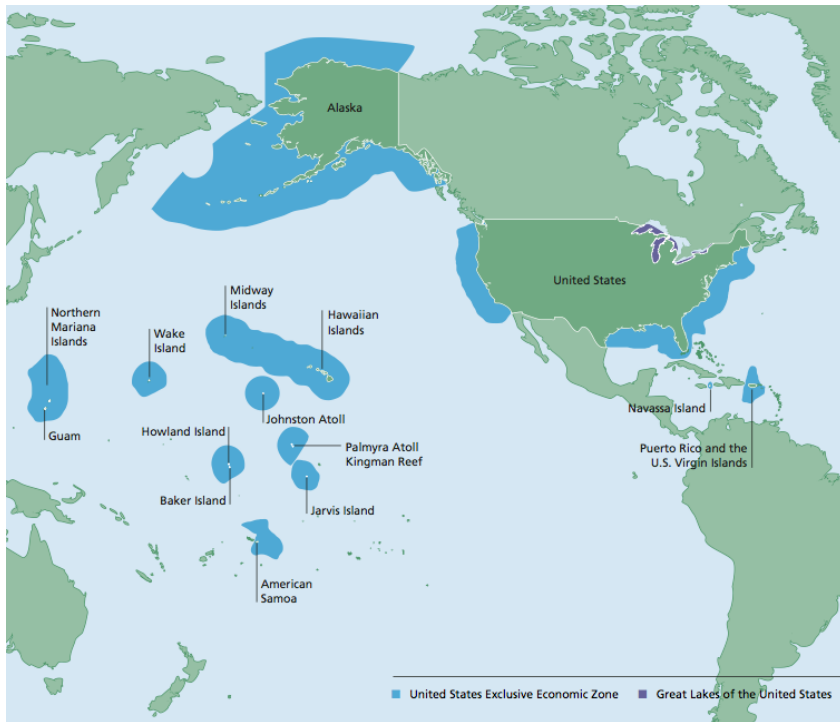
**Essential Fish Habitat:** NRHA provides more specificity on which environmental factors influence species distribution.

**State of the Ecosystem Reports:** NRHA provides habitat and climate change information on managed species.

**Single Species Assessments:** NRHA provides historic distributions and projected distributions due to climate change; examines climate species and habitat vulnerability, highlights links between environmental drivers and stock health and recruitment.



# Evaluation of Area-Based Management in the EEZ

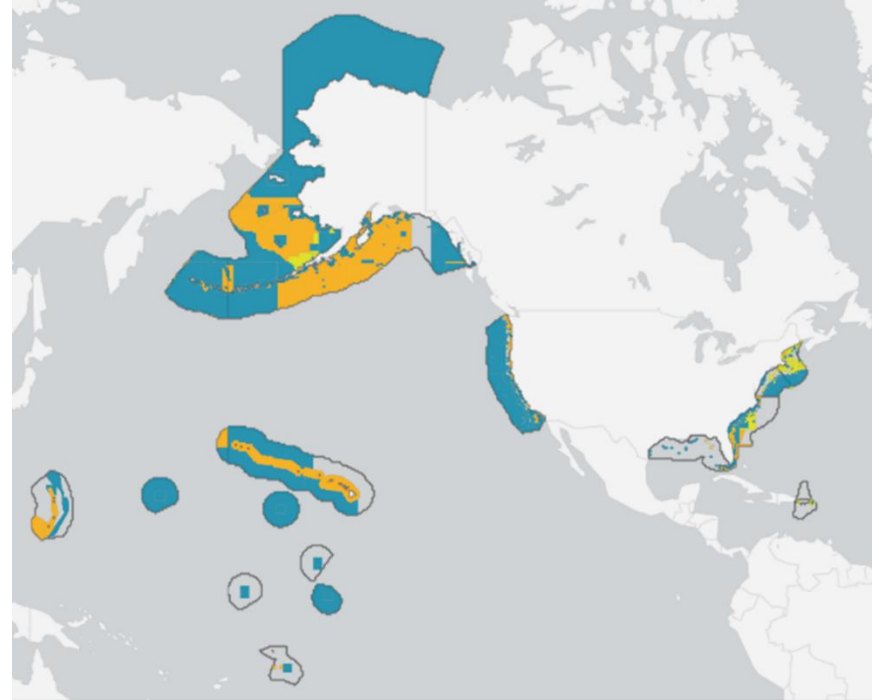


- **Background:** In 2021, the Council Coordination Committee formed an Area-Based Management Subcommittee to assist with tracking and reacting to the 30 by 30 initiative and associated America the Beautiful efforts.
- **Task:** Evaluate existing EEZ fishery area closures and identify conservation areas to recommend for inclusion in the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas.
- **Participants:** Council staff with support from NOAA Fisheries.

# Evaluation of Area-Based Management in the EEZ

- Final report identifies 648 conservation areas which cover greater than 72 percent of the total U.S. EEZ.
- Nearly a third of the U.S. EEZ includes prohibitions on all mobile bottom tending gears
- Bottom trawling is prohibited in about half of the EEZ.

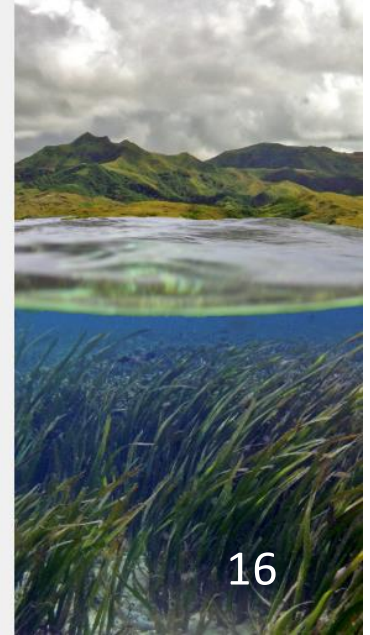
The Subcommittee also developed an [interactive web application](#) and [web map](#).



## Overview and Information Hub for the Regional Fishery Management Councils' Area-Based Management Review

This interactive web application summarizes information on fisheries management conservation areas identified and evaluated by the U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils in 2022-2023 for the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The Web Map page contains an interactive map and related summary charts which can be navigated by selecting one or more councils from the list on the left. Selecting individual conservation areas from the list on the right will zoom the map to the specific area. Clicking on the conservation areas in the map will generate a pop-up table with detailed information about the area(s) at that location.





# Fishing Gear Effects on Marine Habitats: A National Database

- **What:** A searchable collection of literature on the impacts of fishing gear on marine fish habitats throughout the U.S.
- **Why:** To provide an easily accessible and searchable tool for evaluating adverse effects of fishing gears on marine/estuarine habitats
- **Who:** The database was developed by a contractor working with Project Oversight Team (MAFMC, NEFMC, NPFMC, NOAA OHC), with input from all councils and NOAA staff.
- **When:** The online application was published in 2024 and will be updated on an ongoing basis.



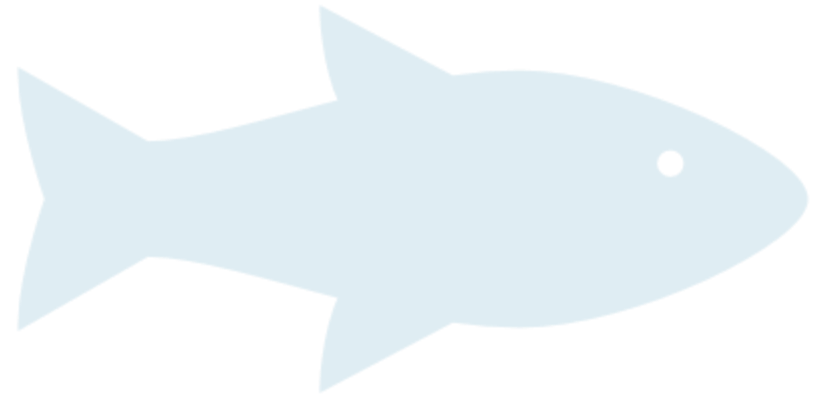


# Habitat Work Group

- **Purpose:** The Council Coordination Committee's Habitat Work Group provides a forum for council and NOAA Fisheries staff to discuss habitat science needs and implementation strategies and share regional updates, perspectives, and concerns.
- **Participants:** Habitat specialists from all eight councils as well as NOAA Fisheries regional offices and headquarters.
- **Recent Activities:** In 2024, the work group convened a two-day workshop that explored best practices for incorporating climate considerations into fish habitat work.



# **Marine Fisheries Commissions**

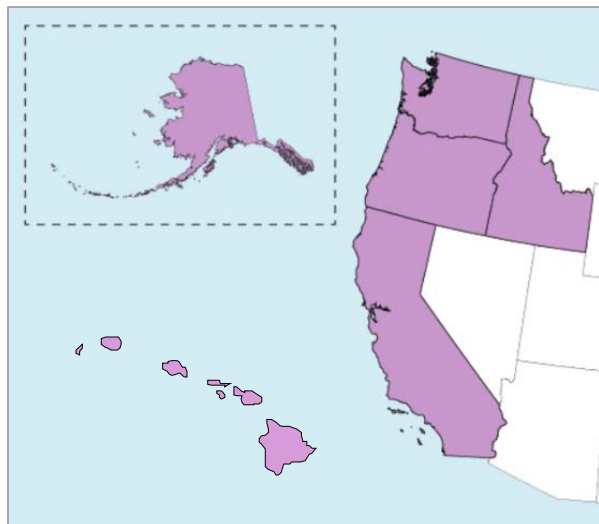


# Marine Fisheries Commissions

Three Marine Fisheries Commissions formed by Congress in 1942 (Atlantic), 1947 (Pacific), and 1949 (Gulf) under Interstate Compacts.

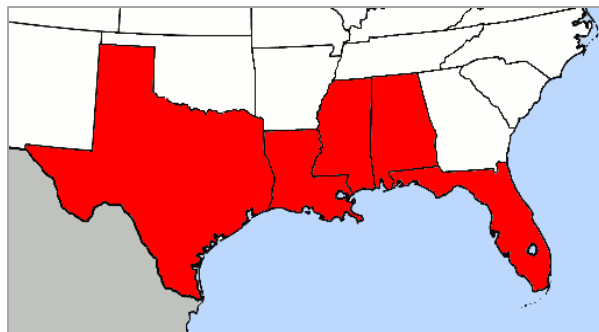
## Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

(6 states: AK, CA, HI, ID, OR, WA)



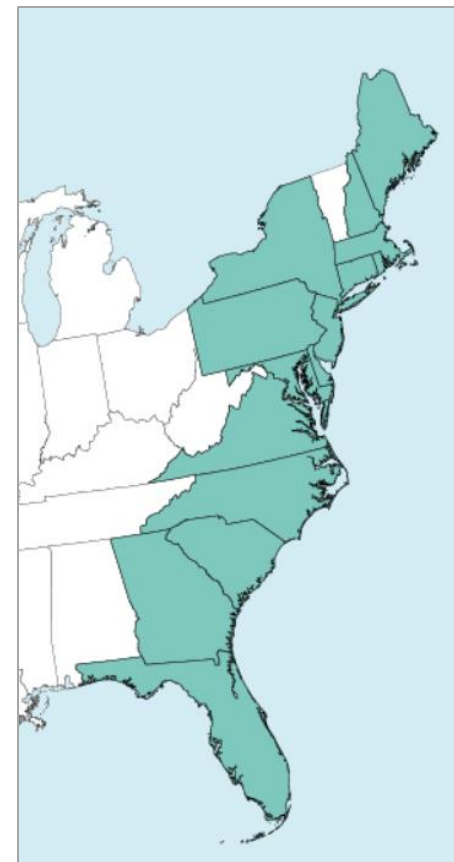
## Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

(5 states: TX, LA, MS, AL, FL)



## Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

(15 states: ME, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, VA, NC, SC, GA, FL)



# Marine Fisheries Commissions

## Mission:

*To promote and implement conservation, development, and management of fishery resources of mutual concern to member states.*

## Goals:

- Effective Fishery Policy Development
- Serve as a resource for state and federal partners in carrying out their fisheries mandates
- Funding Administration
- Collaboration
- Administrative Support



*Mt. Hood, Oregon*

# Commission Responsibilities

- No regulatory or management authority for Pacific and Gulf, Atlantic has management authority over 27 species
- Non-voting representation on Councils
- Functions include coordinating research activities, policy development, fisheries monitoring, data collection, and development of databases
- Each Commission is involved in fisheries habitat issues in various ways





ASMFC Commissioners,  
ASMFC Website

## Commission Membership

### Membership:

- Member of state delegation (*appointed by state legislature*)
- Private citizen (*appointed by governor*)
- State Fishery Director (*appointed by administrator*)

### Roles:

- Set policy
- Approve budgets
- Provide direction to staff and commission activities

# Commission Habitat Work

---

- Data hosting, development, and technical assistance
- Habitat conservation guidance
- People coordination
- Direct participation in FHPs at national, regional, state/local levels
- Administration





# Partnership coordination

- PSMFC is the fiscal sponsor for 3 Fish Habitat Partnership coordinators, supports Alaska partnerships
  - Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership
  - Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative
  - California Fish Passage Forum
- ASMFC is the coordinator for Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, provides administrative and operational support
- Serve on FHP committees



*PMEP Annual Meeting, Photo: Joan Drinkwin*



# Geo Platform



Easy access to our spatial data, maps and apps

## Featured Content

**APP CONSERVATION**



Web Mapping Application  
**PNW Protected Areas & Streams**  
 This map application focusing on the Pacific Northwest presents the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's

**APP RESTORATION**



Web Mapping Application  
**California Fish Passage Forum ...**  
 This map shows the locations of projects supported by the California Fish Passage Forum.

**APP FACILITIES**




Web Mapping Application  
**Columbia Basin Fish Facilities**  
 This application shows the locations of facilities used for fisheries management or passage within the

**APP RESTORATION**



Web Mapping Application  
**PMEP Funded Projects**  
 This map shows the locations of projects funded by the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat

**APP ESTUARIES**



Web Mapping Application  
**PMEP West Coast Estuary Viewer**  
 This web application highlights spatial data from the Pacific Marine and Estuarine Fish Habitat

**MAP MONITORING**



Web Mapping Application  
**StreamNet Mapper web app**  
 A simple mapping application highlighting available data from the StreamNet database, including

**APP MONITORING**



Web Mapping Application  
**PTAGIS Sites**  
 This application displays PTAGIS interrogation and mark/recapture/recovery sites.

**MAP ASSESSMENT**

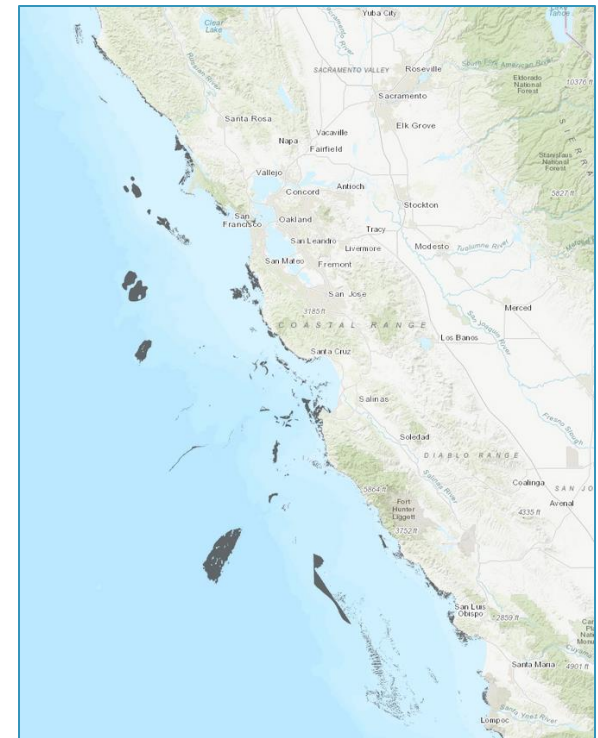


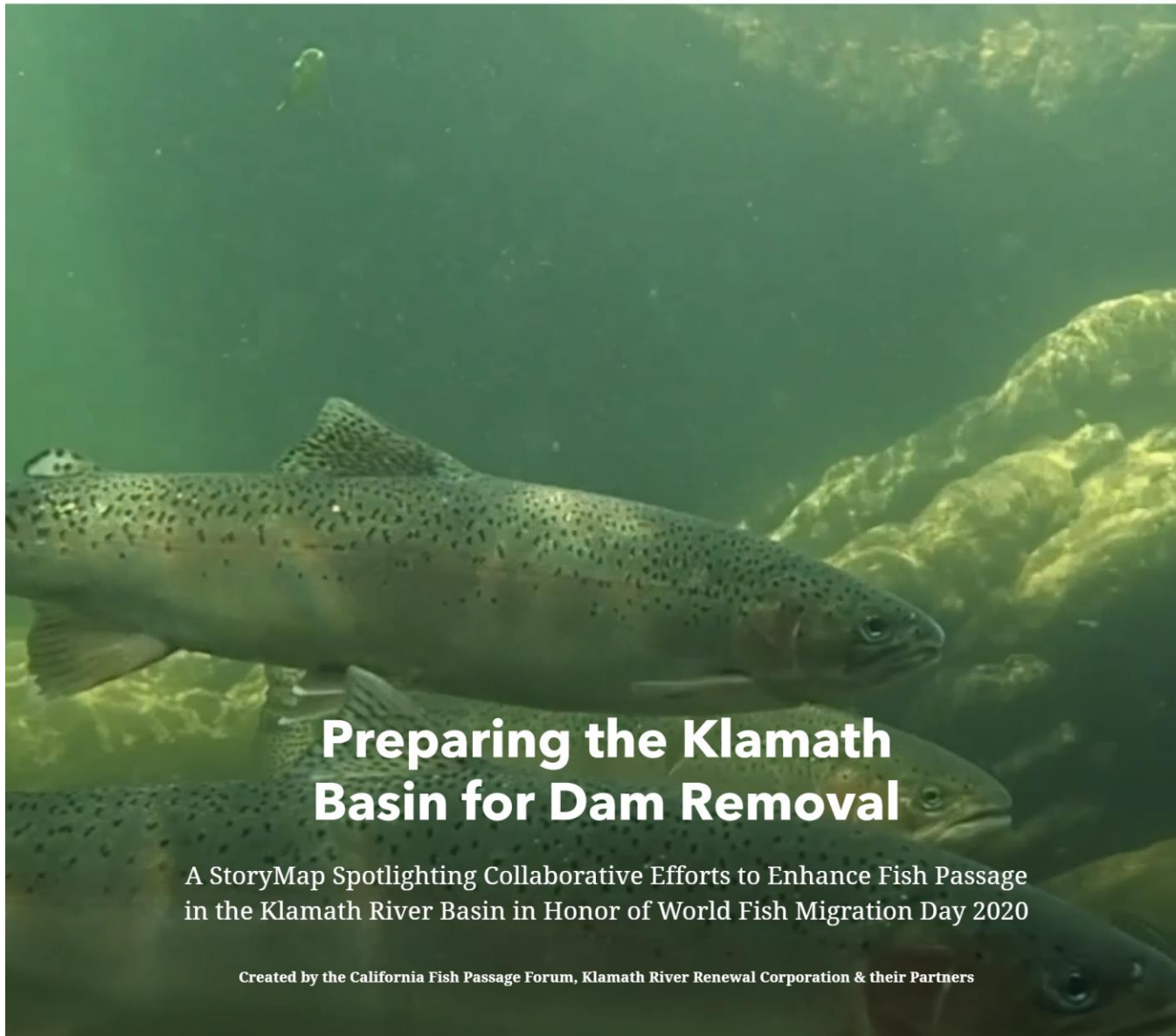
Web Mapping Application  
**Coastal Cutthroat Trout WebApp**  
 A map viewer created to support the Coastal Cutthroat Trout Assessment (<http://>

# Rocky Reef Spatial Data Update



- NOAA Fisheries and Pacific Fishery Management Council staff identified a need to update the spatial data for the Rocky Reef Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC)
- NOAA Fisheries is currently using the updated substrate data in planning of OSW development off the West Coast, but the spatial data will also inform an upcoming review by PFMC of groundfish essential fish habitat beginning in 2025
- PMEP's CMECS substrate dataset, developed by PSMFC staff, was identified as the best available source for West Coast nearshore substrate data
- PSMFC GIS staff are engaged in the working group for the current update to the Rocky Reef spatial data





# Preparing the Klamath Basin for Dam Removal

A StoryMap Spotlighting Collaborative Efforts to Enhance Fish Passage in the Klamath River Basin in Honor of World Fish Migration Day 2020

Created by the California Fish Passage Forum, Klamath River Renewal Corporation & their Partners



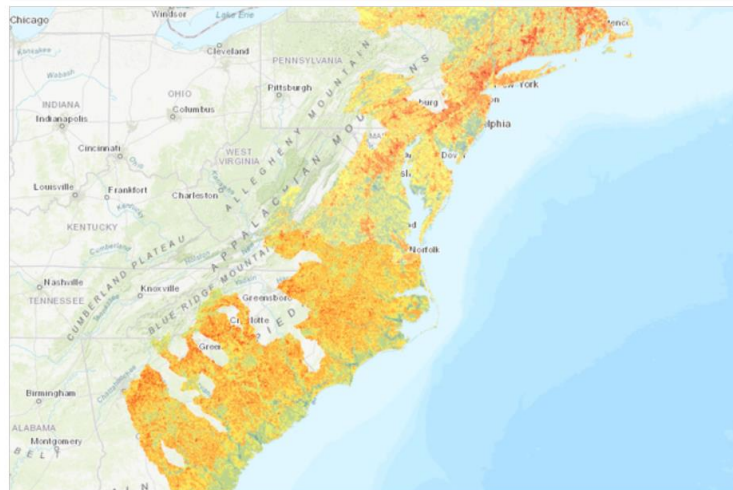
# Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Protection Prioritization Scenarios

Created by Kat Hoenke

Jul 18, 2018 (Last modified Jun 29, 2020)

Export

Open Map



## Description

A map to display the results of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Southeast Mapping Project, which includes Protection Prioritization Scenarios for anadromous, estuarine and coastal habitats.

## Location



## Datasets Used (10)

### Map Details



#### North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas (SHA)

North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas, NC DEQ, <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/habitat/SHAs>  
 North Carolina Strategic Habitat Areas, NC DEQ, <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/habitat/SHAs>

*Kat Hoenke (August 8, 2018)*

Dataset



#### South Atlantic Estuarine Analysis

*Kat Hoenke, Jessica Graham, Jen Walters, Lisa Havel*  
 ACFHP South Atlantic Estuarine Conservation Prioritization Scenario. Metrics include seagrass, oyster, wetland, 303D, causeways, and development

*Kat Hoenke (Last modified June 29, 2020)*

Dataset



#### South Atlantic Diadromous Analysis

*Kat Hoenke, Jennifer Walters, Jessica Graham, Lisa Havel*  
 Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) Southeast Map Series: Anadromous Protection Prioritization Scenario, 07/18/2018

*Kat Hoenke (Last modified June 29, 2020)*

Dataset



#### Mid-Atlantic Diadromous Analysis

*Erik Martin, TNC*  
 Mid-Atlantic Diadromous Analysis Results, ACFHP

*Kat Hoenke (Last modified September 4, 2020)*

Dataset

This map is visible to everyone

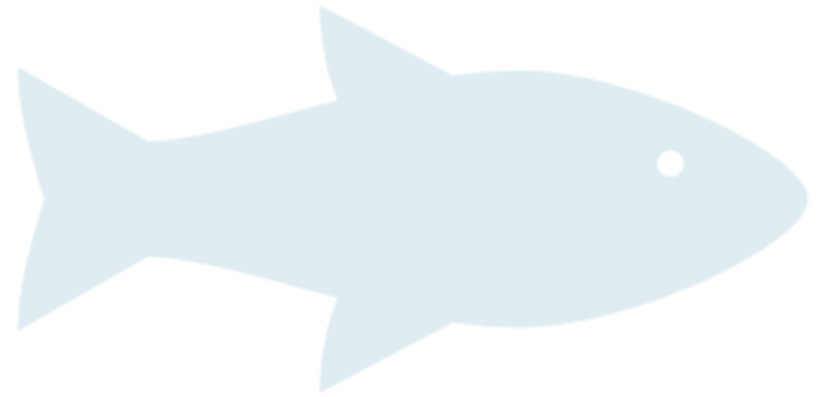
## Tags

coastal, prioritization, anadromous, habitat, estuarine

Bookmarked by 1 Group



# Concluding Thoughts



# Opportunities for Bridging Gaps

- Attend Council and Commission meetings
- Engage Commissions on legislation
- Utilize commissions' annual outreach to Congress/Capitol Hill to voice support for NFHP
- Board or Legislative Committee contact Commissions and Councils letting them know how to help
- Invitations to Steering Committee meetings
- Board engagement strategy
- Connect habitat work to fishery management actions and activities taken by Councils and Commissions

