



Corner Seamounts Selected year: 2014

Geographical reference

Northwest Atlantic

Management Body/Authority

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)

Area Type

VME

Measure first applied in 2007

Habitat and Biology

General Biology

Information was available which suggested fishing on the Corner Seamounts had encountered hard corals, that fixed gear (e.g. Pots) had been used in some areas and was likely lost due to entanglement in corals, although exact locations were not available.

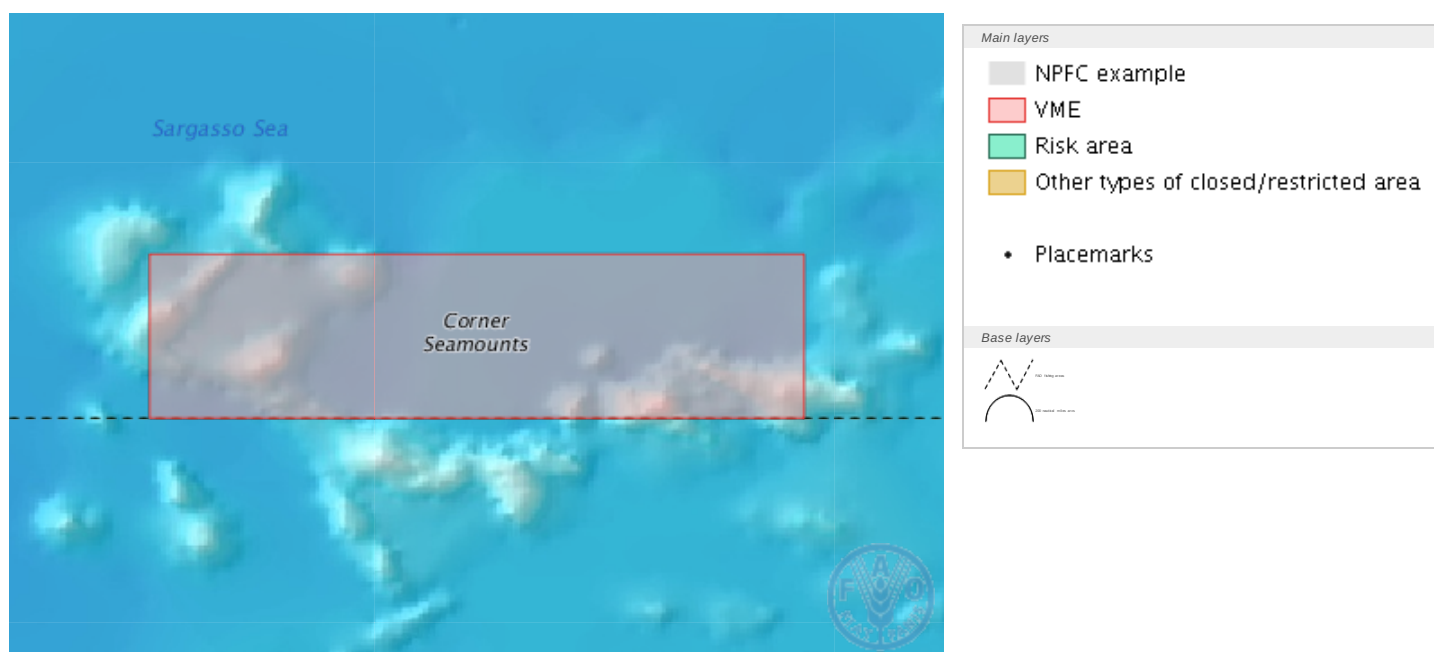
Physical description of the environment

SC 2007: Consists of 19 peaks with some summits being only 800-900 m deep.

Impacts

The shallow peaks have been heavily fished. Spanish fisheries information available in this area between 2005 and March 2007 (SCR Doc. 07/26) showed that one seamount in particular, and western Corner Rise in general, seem to have more species diversity.

Map



Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map(s) are for illustration only and do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries.

Management

Measures specific to this VME area

Area closed to bottom fishing until 31  2014, with exploratory fishing option. Vessels fishing this area shall have a scientific observer onboard. (Art 16.1-3)

Period in force: 2014 – 2014

Source of information

NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures 2014 (NAFO FC Doc. 14/1 Serial No. N6272)
<http://archive.nafo.int/open/fc/2014/fcdoc14-1web.pdf> Fisheries Commission 2014

General measures

Fishing areas

The comprehensive map of existing bottom fishing areas (as delineated by the coordinates shown in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 4) shall be revised regularly to incorporate any new relevant information. Contracting Parties may, in the future, consider the possibility of refining the comprehensive map on the basis of haul by haul information, if available. (Art.17)

Exploratory fishing protocol

Exploratory fishing covers all bottom fishing activities (a) outside of the existing bottom fishing area and (b) to fisheries within the existing bottom fishing area that show significant change. (Art 15.4). Exploratory fisheries must be conducted according to an exploratory fisheries protocol (Art 18; Annex 1E.I-IV) and are subject to review FC and SC. Exploratory fisheries will be allowed only if there are adequate mitigation measures to prevent SAI to VMEs (Art 19-21).

Encounter protocols

In existing bottom fishing areas, encounters with VME indicator species above a threshold value are reported to the Executive Secretary and trigger a 2 nmile move on rule. In new fishing areas, such encounters also result in temporary closures of 2 nmile radius and require a more detailed report by the on-board observer. (Art 22.1-2)

Threshold

For both existing bottom fishing areas and unfished bottom areas, an encounter with primary VME indicator species is defined as a catch per set (e.g. trawl tow, longline set, or gillnet set) of more than 7 kg of sea pens, 60 kg of other live coral and 300 kg of sponges. (Art 22.3)

Indicator species

The term "VME indicator species" refers to species of coral identified as gorgonians, *Lophelia*, and sea pen fields; crinoids; erect bryozoans; sea squirts; cerianthid anemone fields; and sponges that constitute sponge grounds or aggregations. The current list is attached as Part VI of Annex I.E (Art 15.7) and contains 67 species. The term "VME element" refers to topographical, hydrophysical or geological features which potentially support VMEs including slopes, summits and flanks of seamounts and knolls and canyons as described in the Annex of the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas. The current list is attached as Part VII of Annex I.E. (Art 15.8) and contains 5 elements.

Source of information

NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures 2014 (NAFO FC Doc. 14/1 Serial No. N6272)
<http://archive.nafo.int/open/fc/2014/fcdoc14-1web.pdf> Fisheries Commission 2014

Regional history of VMEs

NAFO started developing in protocols for protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems from possible significant adverse impacts resulting for the use of bottom contact fishing gears in the NRA in 2006. Initially, four seamount areas were closed as a precautionary measure and a request made for contracting parties to submit their benthic survey data. SC established WGEAFM and also worked jointly with ICES WGDEC to provide advice to FC. Extensive data sets from Canadian Government fisheries surveys were used to provide initial distributions of corals and sponges and these were later supplemented by dedicated Canadian and Spanish NERIDA project cruises in 2008-2010. Early fishing and benthic surveys undertaken in the 1970s by Russia provided much of the historical seamount information. NAFO has a total of 18 areas that delimit the most significant areas of corals and sponges in the NRA and are closed to fishing with bottom contact fishing gears. There are now a total of 18 closed areas within the NRA providing protection to vulnerable marine ecosystems on seamounts, slopes and canyons (CEM, 2011-2012).

Development of fishing footprint

NAFO asked CPs to submit maps of historical fishing identifying areas that have been fished at least twice during 1987-2007 (CEM 2008) and from this a map of the "existing bottom fishing areas" in the NRA was produced that covers most of the Grand Bank and Flemish Cap east of the EEZ boundary (CEM, 2011). It has not since been modified (CEM, 2011-2012). "New bottom fishing areas" are defined as areas in the NRA that are outside the limits of existing fishing area, including waters deeper than 2000 metres (CEM 2008-2011), though this qualifier was removed in 2012 (CEM 2012). Closures to protect VMEs can be in either existing or new bottom fishing areas. Spatial or seasonal closures to protect commercial fish stocks are within the existing bottom fishing area.

NAFO. 2013. Scientific Council Meeting - September 2013. NAFO SCS Doc. 13/21. 37 pp.

<http://archive.nafo.int/open/sc/2013/scs13-21.pdf> Scientific Council 2013 23 Sep 2013 - 27 Sep 2013

A request for Sargasso Sea management measures was discussed and it was recommended that the New England and Corner Rise seamounts boundaries be revised to include all the peaks and that the exploratory fishing protocol be expanded to include mid-water trawls. Precautionary regulations of the mid-water trawl fishery on splendid alfonsino should be put in place, with Table showing historical and recent catches from Corner Rise Seamounts area [V.1.b]. New information on Sea Pens in Candidate VME Areas 13 and 14 from EU Flemish Cap survey would be available later in 2013 [V.2.a].

NAFO. 2013. Scientific Council Meeting - 2013. NAFO SCS Doc. 13/17. 252 pp.

<http://archive.nafo.int/open/sc/2013/scs13-17.pdf> Scientific Council 2013 07 Jun 2013 - 20 Jun 2013

Encounter thresholds for VME indicator species were calculated and candidate values provided inside and outside of the fishing footprint using a GIS based model with research survey data [VII.1.c.v]. Work plan for Reassessment of fishing activity with respect to SAI developed that will include a review of VME closures

based mainly on NEREIDA data and an assessment of SAI on VMEs by bottom fisheries [VII.1.c.viii]. EAF road map development includes some VME elements [VII.1.c.xii]. A request for Sargasso Sea management measures was deferred to September [VII.1.c.xiv]. A preliminary assessment of risk of SAI on VME indicator aggregations and VME elements using VMS information was presented [VII.1.c.xv-xvi].

FAO. 2013. Report of the fifteenth session of the Scientific Advisory Committee Rome, 8–11 April 2013 FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Report No. 1042, 238 pp.

https://gfcmsitestorage.blob.core.windows.net/documents/Reports/GFCM-SAC-15_2013.pdf SAC 2013 08 Apr 2013 - 11 Apr 2013

40. An SCME priority is to (iv) deepening knowledge on vulnerable ecosystems and identification of protected areas; 41. new hydrocarbon drills in the eastern Mediterranean and assessment of impacts on vulnerable ecosystems. Strategic impact assessment (SAI) used in Cyprus. 45-46. Balearic seamounts protection discussed. 47-48. IUCN and other organisations preparing deep sea habitat maps. 50. Gulf of Lions now in new French EEZ.

Management Body/Authority

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)



The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization's (NAFO) overall objective is to contribute through consultation and cooperation to the optimum utilization, rational management and conservation of the fishery resources of its area of competence, and to ensure the long term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources and, in so doing, to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources are found.

Web site

<http://www.nafo.int/>

Regional Fishery Body fact sheet

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/NAFO/en>

