

# Increased Protections for Deep-Sea Habitat from Destructive Bottom Trawling

## Region

North Pacific

## Timeframe

2004 to present

## Fisheries Affected

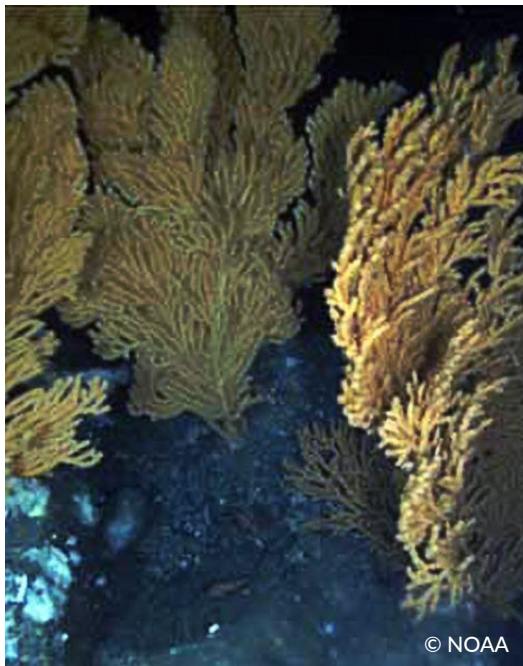
Federal trawl fisheries

## Target Species

Rockfish, Atka mackerel, pollock, Pacific cod

## Gear Type

Bottom Trawl



Oceana campaigned to restrict the expansion of bottom trawling to protect key habitats in the Aleutian Islands and succeeded in limiting the damage trawling would cause in these areas. The seafloor habitat of the Aleutian Islands is incredibly unique and home to some of the most diverse and dense aggregations of cold water corals known, including many endemic species. Deep-sea corals grow very slowly, and damage can take hundreds of years to recover. The habitat created by deep-sea corals and sponges provides spawning grounds for species such as rockfish and crabs. In July 2006, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a final rule implementing Amendments 65 and 78 to revise the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI). These amendments revise the FMPs by identifying and describing essential fish habitats, designating habitat areas of particular concern, and including measures to minimize to the extent practicable adverse effects on essential fish habitats.

In 2009, U.S. authorities closed nearly one million square kilometers of the north Pacific Ocean surrounding the Aleutian Islands to destructive commercial fishing. The unanimous vote by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council helps protect the seafloor from bottom trawling. Over 95% of the Aleutian Islands management area was closed to bottom trawling (950,463 km<sup>2</sup> or 277,100 nm<sup>2</sup>), and about 4% (42,611 km<sup>2</sup> or 12,423 nm<sup>2</sup>) remain open. In addition to protecting vulnerable deep-sea corals, sponges, and other animals living on the seabed from potential impacts of fishing, the prohibition of nonpelagic trawl gear also prevents impacts to the undisturbed sediments and ecosystems of the deeper basin and trench areas.