

HABITAT AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN (HAPC) PROPOSAL

Date: January 9, 2004
Name of Proposer: NOAA Fisheries
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Please check applicable box (es):

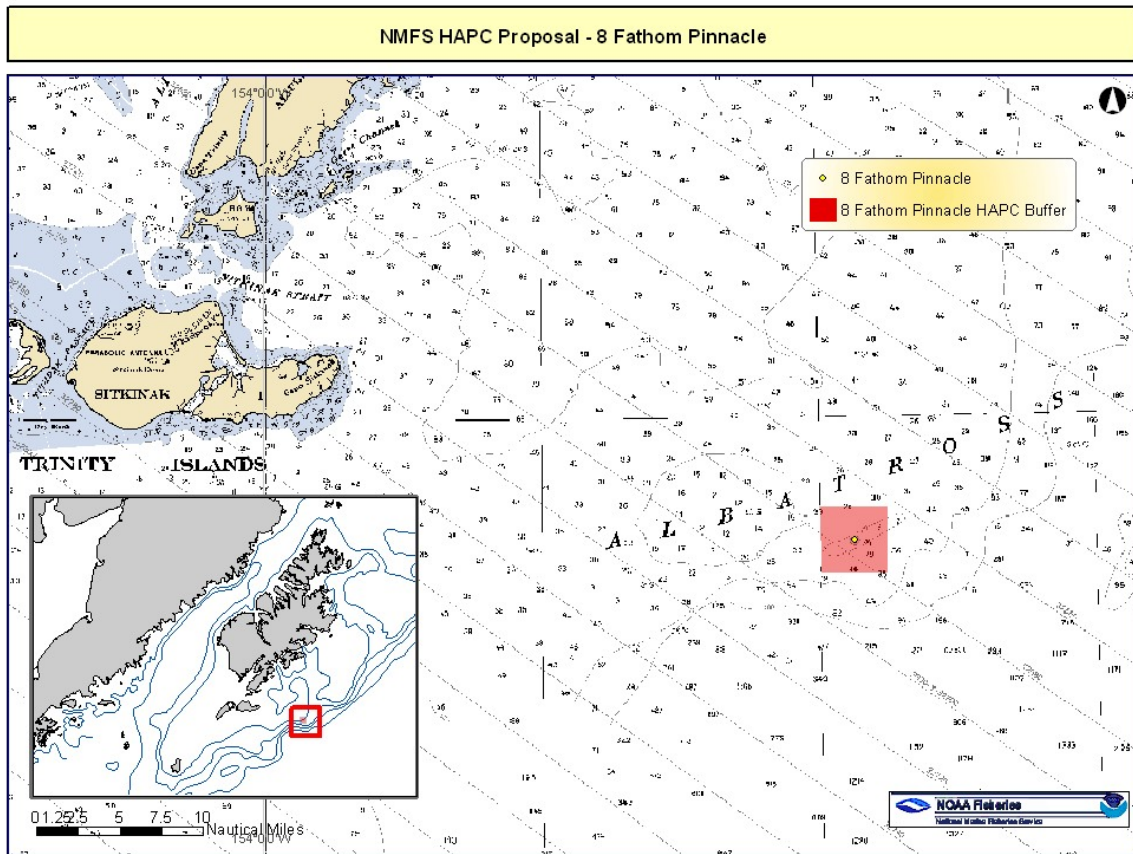
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	GOA Groundfish FMP
<input type="checkbox"/>	BSAI Groundfish FMP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Scallop FMP
<input type="checkbox"/>	BSAI Crab FMP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Salmon FMP

Title of Proposal.
Eight Fathom Pinnacle in the Gulf of Alaska

Summary Statement of the Proposal.
(Provide a brief paragraph concisely describing the HAPC.)

This proposal identifies a near surface pinnacle located offshore in the central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) as a HAPC because of its rare features. The pinnacle is located 30 miles offshore on Albatross Bank and within 5 miles of the continental slope. The pinnacle rises to 15m (8 fathoms) from surrounding areas of 46m (25 fathoms). The pinnacle is forested with kelp that provides cover and refugia for large schools of rockfish. The pinnacle was observed using the DSV *Delta* submersible. The pinnacle is within current fishing areas.

HAPC Site Location.
(Specific latitude/longitude or geographic reference. Include NOAA Chart number, if known.)
56.3698 N 152.9398 W
NOAA Chart 16580



Habitat Type and Species Information.

(Identify of any habitat type(s) and FMP species of the HAPC.)

The “8-fathom” pinnacle in the central Gulf of Alaska is the shallowest offshore pinnacle within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone in the Gulf of Alaska. The pinnacle rises to a depth of 15 m (8 fathoms) and surrounding areas are considerably deeper. The pinnacle has been observed *in situ* with the DSV *Delta* submersible. The summit of the pinnacle is within the euphotic zone and covered with *Laminaria* sp. and *Agarum* sp. Dense concentrations of the anemone *Metridium farcimen* are common throughout the area. The geological origin of the pinnacle is unknown. However, the boulders observed *in situ* do not appear to be of glacial origin, but possibly associated with a hydrocarbon seep.

The following species and life stages have been observed *in situ* on the 8-fathom pinnacle:

Common Name	Species
Black rockfish adults	<i>Sebastes melanops</i> .
Kelp greenling adults	<i>Hexagrammos decagrammus</i>
Ling cod adults	<i>Ophiodon elongatus</i>
Pacific Halibut adults	<i>Hippoglossus stenolepis</i>

Additionally, EFH has been described as General Distribution for the following FMP species within the Eight fathom pinnacle HAPC area: walleye pollock; Pacific cod; arrowtooth flounder; yellowfin, rock, rex, dover and flathead sole; shortraker, rougheye, northern, thornyhead, yelloweye and dusky rockfish; sculpins; skates; sharks; and squid.

Describe How the Proposal Addresses the each of the 4 HAPC Considerations (50CFR 600.815):

The IMPORTANCE of the ecological function provided by the habitat.

Detailed ecological studies have not been conducted. The area appears to be ecologically important providing shallow-structural habitat for large numbers of adult black rockfish, ling cod, halibut, and kelp greenling. Black rockfish are very abundant on the pinnacle and are typically associated with shallow nearshore habitat. The pinnacle may therefore support rare offshore populations of these species.

The extent to which the habitat is SENSITIVE to human-induced degradation.

The pinnacle is sensitive to fishing activities that may remove or damage vegetated and biotic structures associated with the pinnacle. The pinnacle is a rough feature that is usually avoided by fisherman since gear may be lost to hang-ups. Stray fishing gear could remove kelp and sedentary invertebrates that provide structural habitat.

Whether, and to what extent, the activity STRESSES the habitat type.

The pinnacle is located within existing fishing areas. Fishing may pose a threat to the kelp forest and biogenic structures. Should the area be stressed, juvenile rockfish may not be afforded protection from the cover habitat and would be more susceptible to predation.

The RARITY of the habitat type. (Mandatory requirement).

This pinnacle is rare and unique as it is kelp forested, some 30 miles offshore, and within 5 miles of the continental slope. There are numerous pinnacle formations throughout Alaska waters, however, this pinnacle supports the farthest offshore kelp forest in the Gulf of Alaska.

Statement of Purpose and Need.

(Provide a specific purpose as why the HAPC needs to be identified.)

The proposed 8-fathom pinnacle HAPC recognizes an unusual habitat feature that may be vulnerable to disturbance from fishing. More intensive management of this area would provide greater protection, and potentially enhanced recruitment, for rockfish.

Objectives of the Proposal.

(List objectives specific to the identification of the HAPC.)

The objective of this proposal is to identify the 8-fathom pinnacle as a rare feature and to project this feature from fishing disturbance.

Describe any Proposed Solutions to Achieve These Objectives.

(How might the problem be solved? Include concepts of methods of measuring progress towards those objectives.)

This HAPC is proposed by NOAA Fisheries to protect a documented rare pinnacle feature in the central Gulf of Alaska. Protection of the feature and kelp forest habitat from disturbance by bottom contact gear will provide sanctuary for the species that use the habitat. Archived submersible video documentation will allow scientists to monitor the density of the kelp forest and temporal changes in the abundance of those species utilizing the HAPC area.

Describe any Proposed Management Measures for the HAPC.

(Include specific objectives, if appropriate.)

All Council-managed fishing would be prohibited within the boundary of the HAPC buffer area (see table below). The buffer offers protection of the nearby surrounding area and acts as a precautionary zone to safeguard the pinnacle and sensitive vegetation from fishing activities.

HAPC Site	Latitude	Longitude	NOAA Chart Number	Area
8-Fathom Pinnacle	56.4100° N 56.4100° N 56.3400° N 56.3400° N	152.9900° W 152.8700° W 152.9900° W 152.8700° W	16580	4 nm by 4 nm (16 nm ²)

The proposal identifies the HAPC as a rectangular area to facilitate management and enforcement. A circle or other shape is possible for the buffer area around the identified habitat feature, but the NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement recommended using rectilinear areas to facilitate enforcement. Other potential management options might include requiring VMS on all vessels, or prohibiting vessels from carrying bottom contact gear in these areas.

Identify any Expected Benefits to Habitat or FMP species.

(Include specific information regarding a species life history stage, if known.)

This pinnacle feature is believed to be the furthest offshore, kelp-forested pinnacle in the EEZ of the GOA. The kelp forest is dense and supports large schools of rockfish. Protection of this feature will safeguard sensitive and rare fisheries habitat. The area would be protected from disturbance and rockfish may experience increased survival to maturity as a result of the closure.

Identify Fishery, Stakeholders, and/or Communities, which may Benefit from the Proposed HAPC.

(Who may or may not benefit from the proposal? Include any known or indirect socioeconomic costs.)

Fishing activity presently occurs within the boundaries of the proposed closure and near the pinnacle feature. The pinnacle is known to be rugged and gear is known to hang on rugged areas. Fishermen from Kodiak, Homer, Sand Point, Sitka, Juneau, and Seattle would be displaced from the small buffer area, but presumably they would benefit in future years by the protection of rockfish and other species.

Support Data or Information Sources

(List data sources, information resource, literature, and any traditional knowledge for the proposal.)

Observation and Professional Opinions: Robert Stone, Jon Heifetz, and J. Linc Freese, NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Auke Bay Laboratory, Juneau, Alaska. (907) 789-6005.

Sent Completed Proposals to or Request Further Information from:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council (<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/default.htm>)

ATTN: Cathy Coon

605 W 4th Ave Suite306

Anchorage AK 99501-2282

(907) 271-2809