



Habitat Conservation

The Habitat Conservation Division, Northeast Region is working to protect, conserve and restore habitats of our living marine resources.

Primary Activities

The Habitat Conservation Division collaborates with regional fishery management councils to:

- Identify and describe Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for each managed species using the best available science;
- Incorporate EFH in species management plans;
- Determine fishing impacts on habitat and whether they are minimal or temporary; and
- Recommend steps to minimize impacts (e.g. restricting certain fishing gears in specific areas).

The Habitat Conservation Division also conducts technical reviews for development projects proposed or licensed by federal agencies, such as requests for permits to fill wetlands and waterways, depositing dredged material in nearshore waters, building coastal structures, and building and removing dams. Technical reviews assess the biological effects of these human activities and the value of coastal habitats, and include recommendations for reducing habitat loss and degradation.

Partnering and Interagency Coordination

The Habitat Conservation Division cooperates with state and federal agencies and private organizations on a variety of projects. In particular, the division provides conservation recommendations to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minerals Management Service, Department of Transportation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on issues relating to coastal and marine habitat for fish and shellfish species. The division also works with local partners to promote environmental stewardship and protect fish habitat.

NOAA Fisheries Service Habitat Conservation

*Protecting waters and substrate
where fish and other coastal
and marine species live*

Applicable Laws

NOAA Fisheries Service plays an advisory role to review proposed projects and other actions which may affect living marine resource habitat and makes recommendations for conserving that habitat. Our Habitat Conservation Division must comply with a number of federal laws and statutes including:

- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
- Federal Power Act -- Energy Policy Act
- National Environmental Policy Act
- Clean Water Act
- Oil Pollution Act
- Coastal Zone Management Act

Emerging Issues and Priorities

Interest in large-scale energy projects such as wind farms, expansion of natural gas lines, oil transport tankers and pipelines, offshore terminal facilities and tidal power generation present new challenges for the Habitat Conservation Division. We are increasingly involved in permitting and consultation reviews for these types of projects.

In addition, the Northeast Region has an abundance of hydropower dams. As these dams come up for license renewal, the Habitat Conservation Division provides recommendations for creating safe fish passage and fish-friendly dams.

The division also is actively involved in assessing the impacts of new and proposed aquaculture projects, particularly on sensitive eelgrass habitats along our coast.

For more information on NOAA Habitat Conservation, please visit our website: <http://www.nero.noaa.gov/hcd/>

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