Essential Fish Habitat project status report

Reporting date: 10/13/2010

Project number: 2006-14

Title: Juvenile Rockfish Habitat Utilization

PIs: Pat Malecha

Funding year: 2006

Funding amount: $38,200

Status: ☒ Complete ☐ Incomplete, on schedule ☐ Incomplete, behind schedule

Reporting: Results were reported at the 15Th Western Groundfish Conference and in an oral presentation as part of the HEPR-themed AFSC seminar series. A manuscript is nearly complete and shall be submitted to an appropriate journal this fall/winter.

Results: Habitat preference trials indicate that quillback rockfish utilize coral more than any other habitat type particularly during daytime. Sponge and cobble are also preferred to gravel; however, the strength of association between rockfish and the various habitat types is considerably weaker at night. At night, quillback rockfish were more often in contact with bottom substrate and were less closely associated with emergent habitats. The pattern of quillback rockfish habitat utilization in the presence of a predator was remarkably similar except that rockfish utilized the coral, sponge and cobble habitats to a greater extent than when no predators were present. The lowest rate of predation was observed within coral habitat whereas, the highest rate of predation occurred in with gravel habitat. The average number of rockfish consumed per trial was about four times lower in the coral habitats than in the gravel habitats. Predation rate among the sponge and cobble habitats was intermediate to the rates among coral and gravel. The rate among sponge habitats was slightly lower than the rate among cobble habitats.