NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program

Mission: Provide sound scientific information needed to conserve and manage deep-sea coral ecosystems

NOAA FISHERIES

About the Program

- Supports NOAA's role in actively managing fishing impacts and other threats to deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems
- Established in 2007 under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act
- Integrates expertise and resources available across NOAA, including the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, National Centers for Environmental Information, and National Ocean Service
- Supports conservation and management particularly in national marine sanctuaries
- Developed in consultation with U.S. regional fishery management councils, and in partnership with other federal agencies and educational institutions

The Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program is the nation's only federal research program dedicated to increasing scientific understanding of deep-sea coral ecosystems and providing resource managers with scientific studies to inform conservation actions.

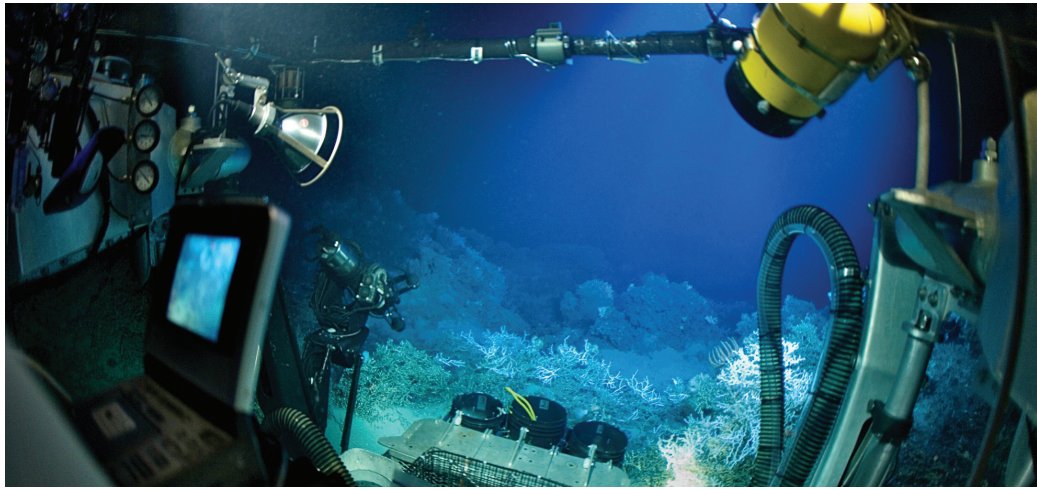
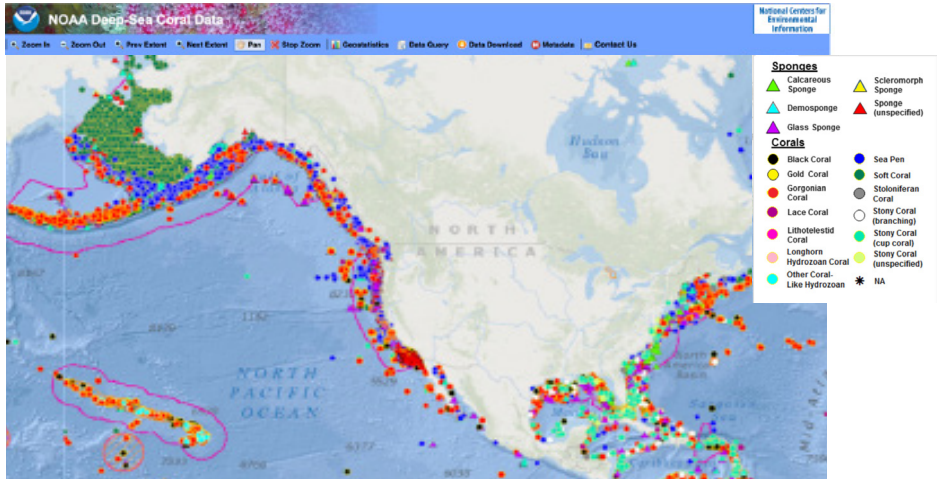


Photo: Art Howard

Deep-Sea Coral Ecosystems

Deep-sea corals can live hundreds or even thousands of years, creating remarkably complex communities in the depths of the ocean. Their habitats have been discovered in all regions of the U.S., although their full geographic extent is unknown.

Visit our National Database for an interactive map, reports, and more: https://deepseacoraldata.noaa.gov/



Architects of the Deep

Nationwide, these complex communities provide habitat for many fishes and invertebrates, including commercially important species like grouper, snapper, sea bass, rockfish, shrimp, and crab.

Fragile Habitat

Deep-sea corals are vulnerable to damage caused by human activities that disturb the seafloor, including bottom-tending fishing, energy exploration and development, and deployment of cables and pipelines. Recovery from damage may take decades or centuries, as most deep-sea corals grow extremely slowly.

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Our Research

Alaska: 2012-2014, 2020-2023

- Fieldwork and modeling reveal deep-sea corals and sponges as fish habitat
- Research informs management of vibrant groundfish fisheries

Northeast: 2012-2015

- Surveys, mapping, and modeling in the Gulf of Maine and 31 canyons
- Research informed historic protections in two council regions and the first Atlantic marine national monument

West Coast: 2010-2012, 2018-2021

- Fieldwork is enhancing understanding of impacts due to trawling and bycatch
- Research informs national marine sanctuary management plans and Essential Fish Habitat measures

U.S. Pacific Islands: 2015-2017

- Partnerships mapped and characterized previously unexplored habitats throughout the U.S. Pacific region
- Research supported priority science and management needs for marine national monuments and other protected areas

Southeast, Gulf of Mexico & U.S. Caribbean: 2016-2019

- Surveys documented extensive habitats and commercial species associations
- Partnerships with NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, three fishery management councils, a national marine sanctuary, and universities

Southeast: 2009-2011

- Discovered, mapped, and enhanced understanding of deep-sea coral habitat
- Research helped delineate fishing and protected areas

Nationwide Investment and Benefits

- The Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program is the United States' resource for information on deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems
- The Program supports multi-year fieldwork initiatives around the country, as well as deep-sea coral and sponge data analysis, management, access, and visualization
- Our research is informing ocean management decisions across the U.S.