

MID-ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2012

TO: Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee (deFur, McMurray, Berg, Elliott, Linhard, Luisi, Miko, Munden, Schafer, Travelstead, and Zeman)

FROM: Tom Hoff *TBH*

SUBJECT: February Council meeting

The Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee will meet on Tuesday February 14 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at the Virginia Beach, VA Council meeting. There will be two agenda items.

First, Dr. Steve Ross of the Center for Marine Science at the University of North Carolina - Wilmington will present some of his recent BOEM-funded work on deep-sea corals (DSC). He is exploring some of the mid-Atlantic's southern canyons below Hudson Canyon. Please find his PowerPoint presentation, attached.

Second, please find a memo from the Committee Chairman to the Council Chairman and Executive Director. Dr. deFur would like the Committee to prioritize the work that we identified at the November Committee meeting. It is also anticipated that a mission statement for the Committee will be distributed prior to the meeting by the Chairman.

I look forward to seeing everyone on Valentine's Day.

Request for Proposal (RFP) Number: M10PS00206

ORIGINAL

Volume I: Technical Proposal Atlantic Deepwater Canyons

30 June 2010

Prepared for:

MMS

Minerals Management Service
Procurement Operations Branch
381 Elden Street (MS 2101)
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8502 SW Kansas Avenue
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Mid-Atlantic Deepwater Canyons

Steve W. Ross (UNCW)

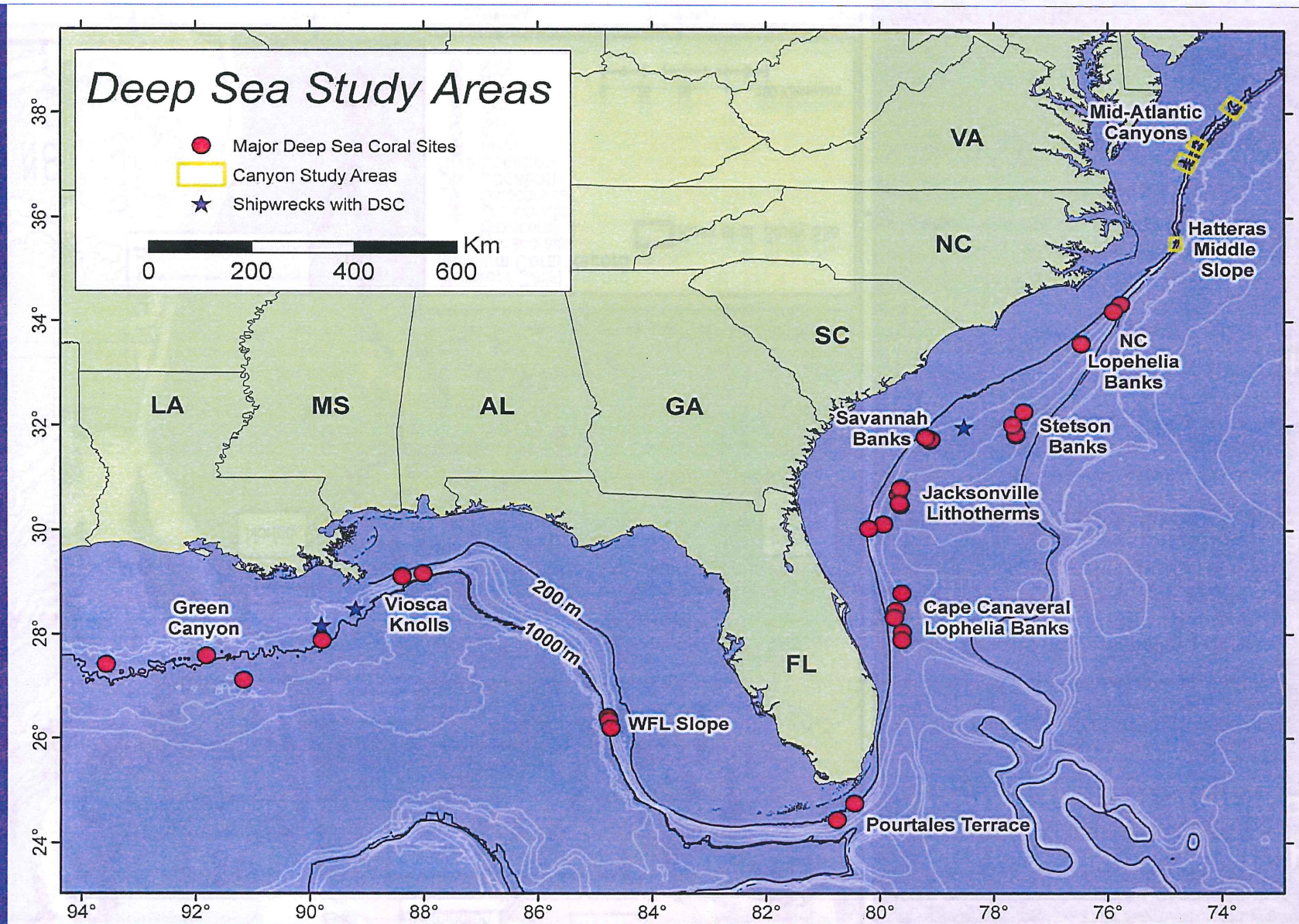
Sandra Brooke (OIMB)

- Four year project funded by BOEM to explore Mid-Atlantic Canyons
- Project awarded to Continental Shelf Assoc. with S.W. Ross and S.D. Brooke as lead PIs
- Partners include NOAA, USGS, NCMNS, European agencies, & several US universities
- Project emphasis on canyon hard grounds, deep-sea corals, and archaeological sites



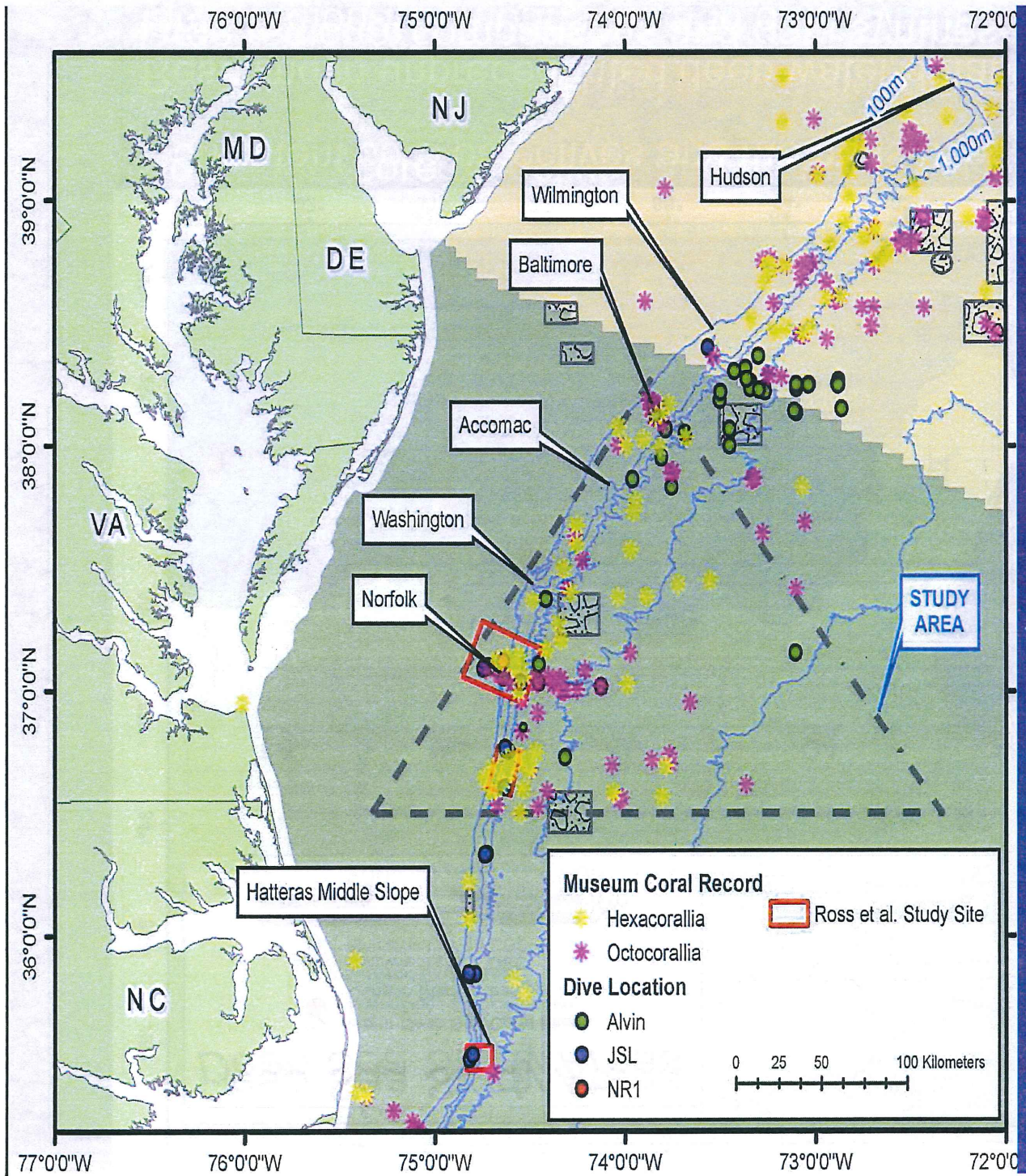
General MAB Canyons Project Objectives

- Characterize communities & habitat associations
- Document distribution & diversity of DSC
- Develop predictive models of DSC distributions
- Evaluate sensitivity of communities to impacts
- Understand connectivity between canyons
- Understand environmental setting
- Locate valuable prehistoric habitation sites
- Locate & document new shipwrecks
- Determine shipwreck eligibility to NR
- Assess shipwreck stability
- Describe biological communities on shipwrecks



Consistent core objectives and methods used throughout region.

Resulting in unprecedented deep water database that can be used for large regional comparisons and data syntheses.

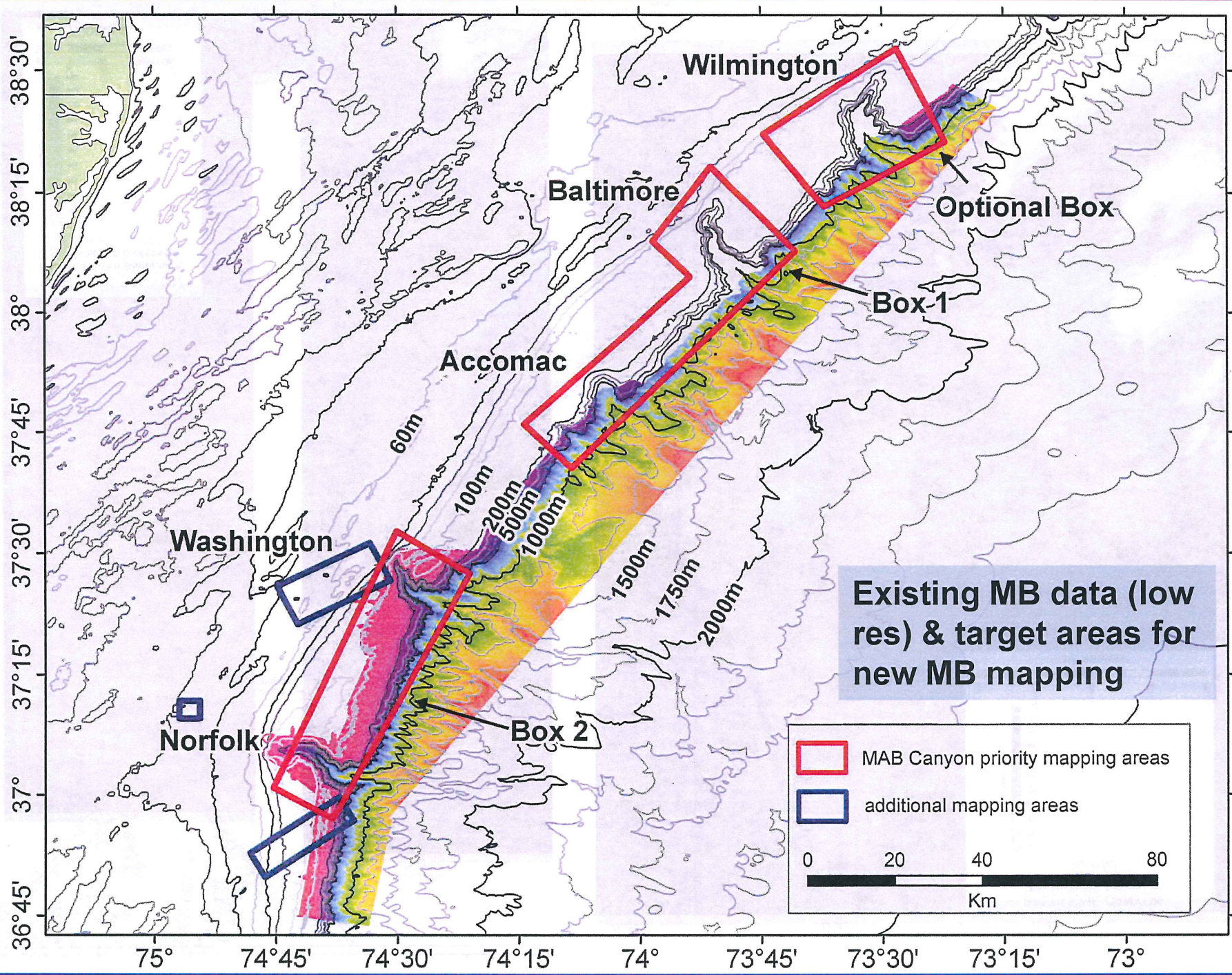


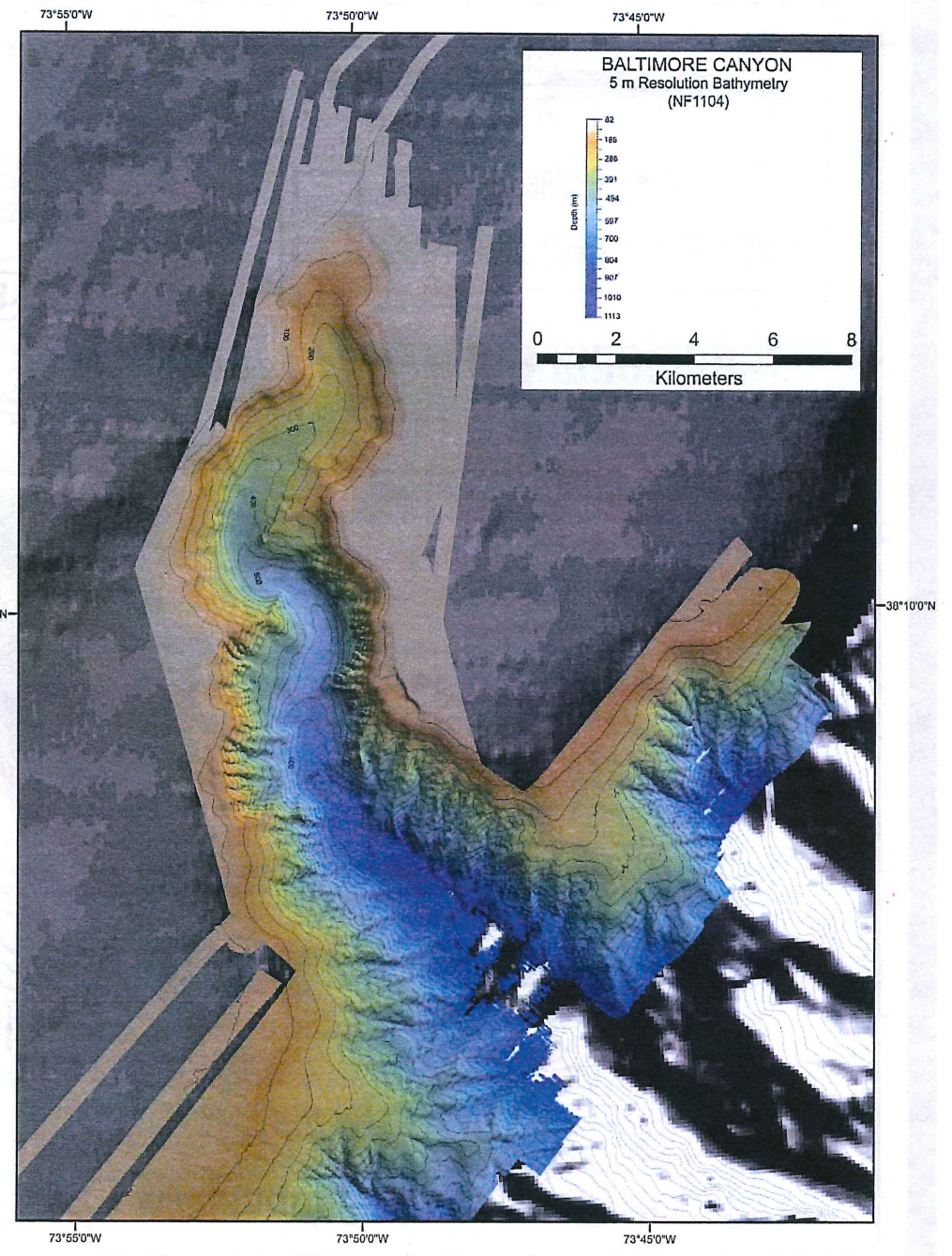
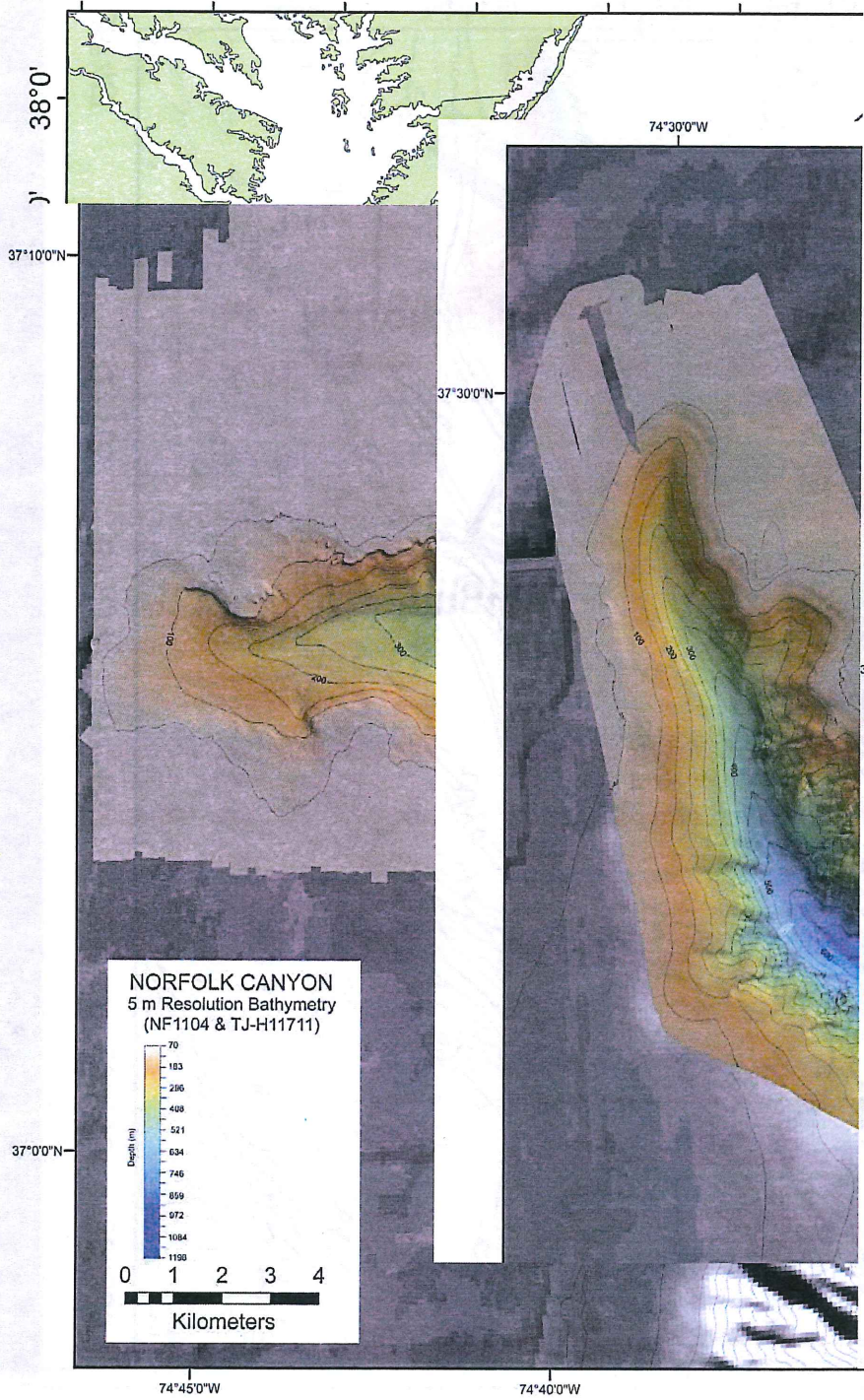
Major Mid-Atlantic Bight Canyons

Study focus on **Norfolk, Washington, & Baltimore** canyons

First cruise (June 2011) was multibeam mapping of canyons & archaeological targets in the study area.

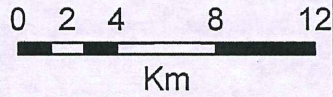
MB maps used to guide future selection of sampling stations.



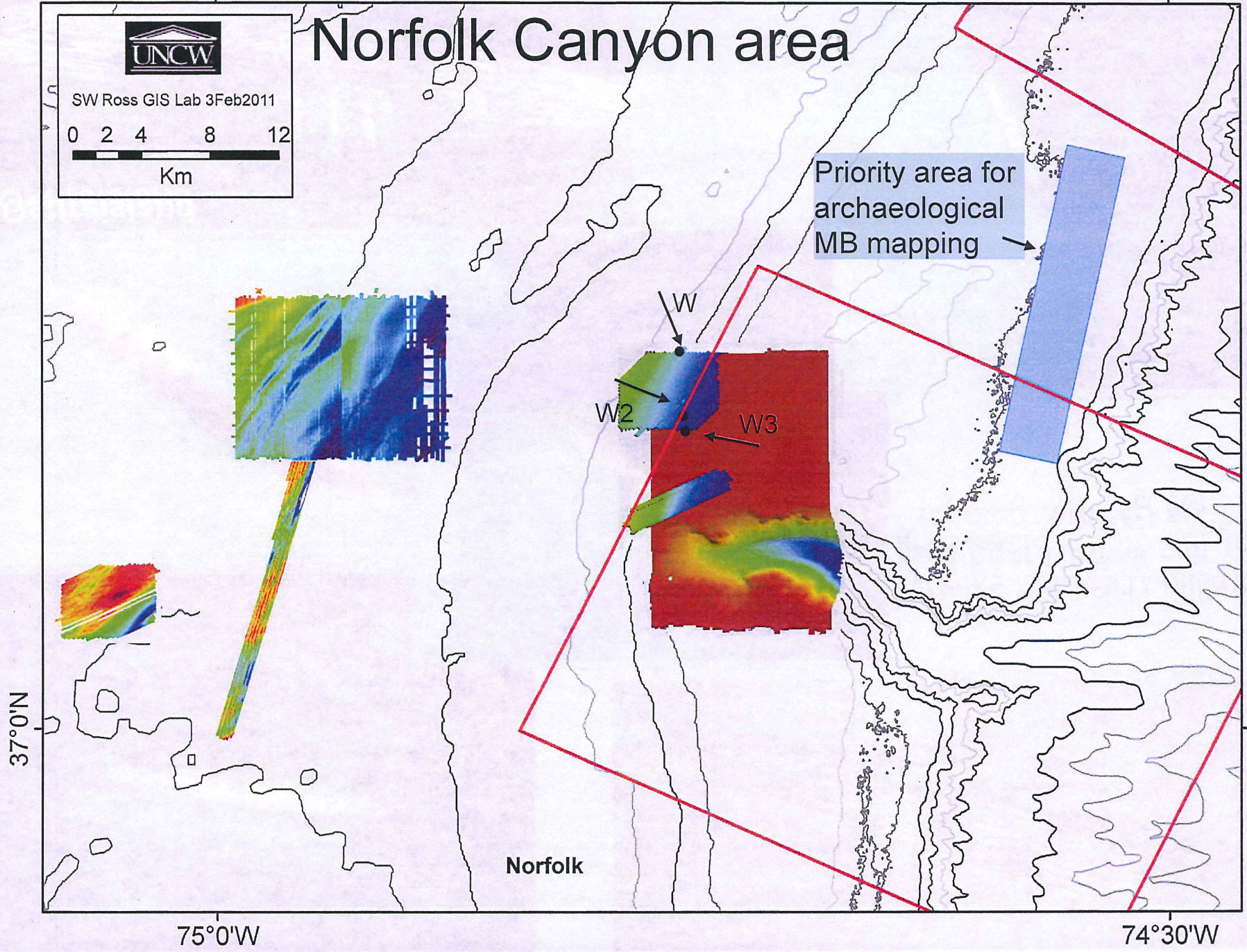


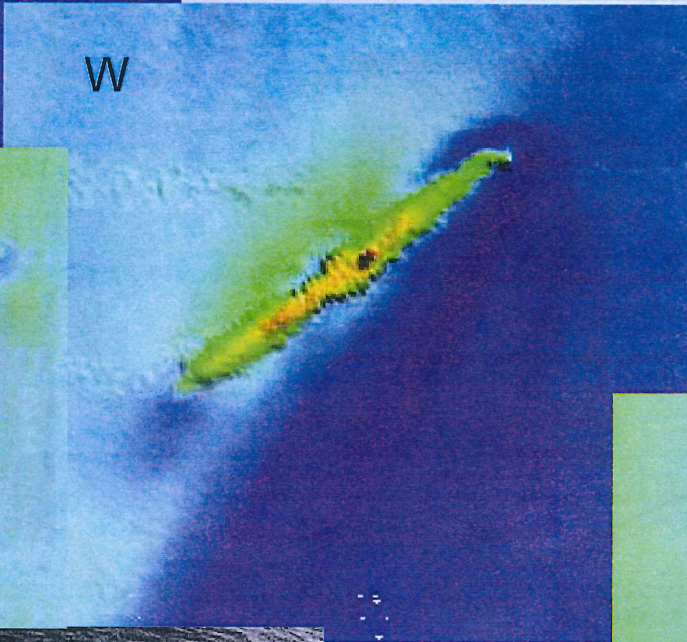
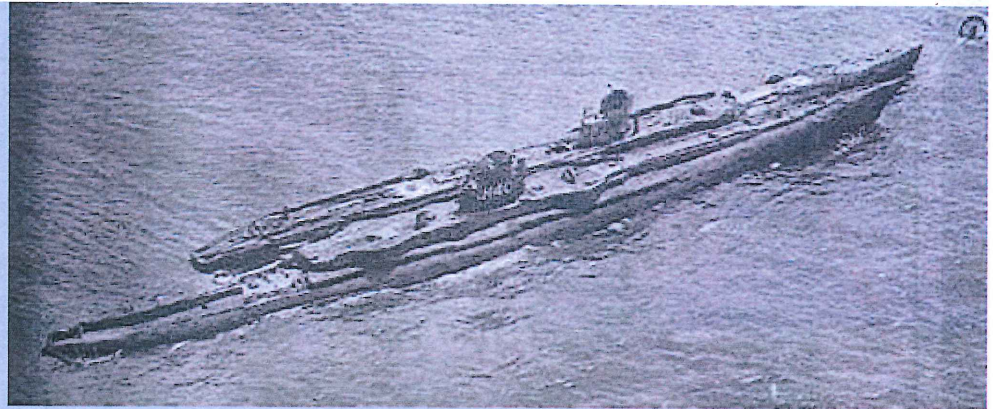


SW Ross GIS Lab 3Feb2011

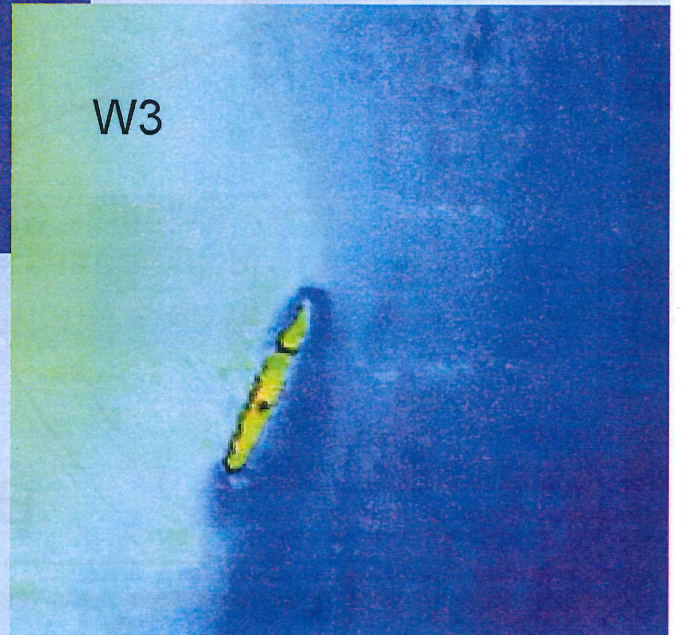
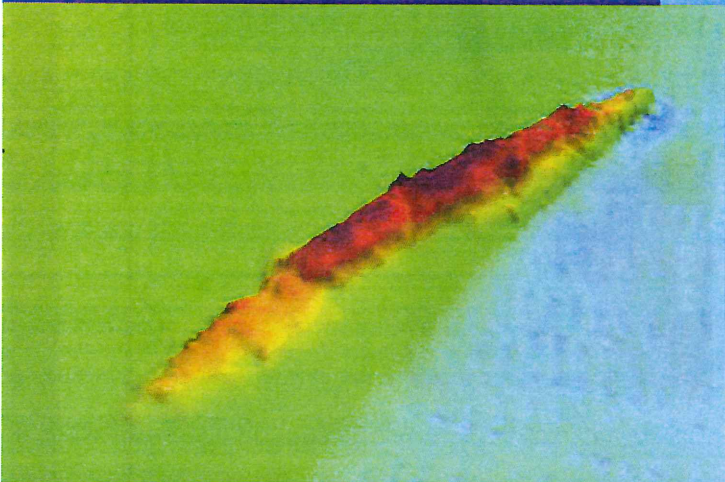


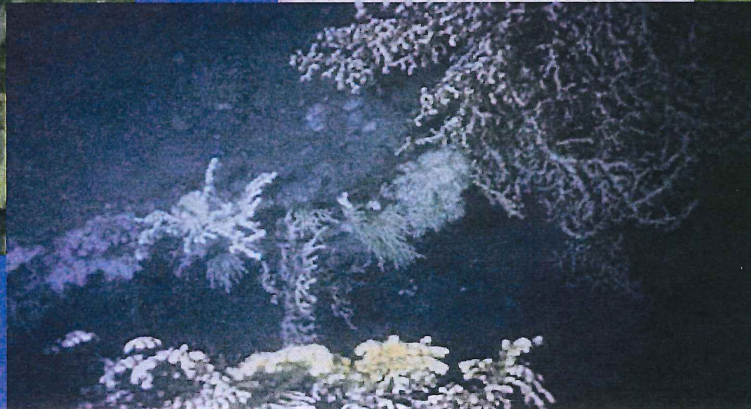
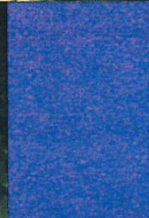
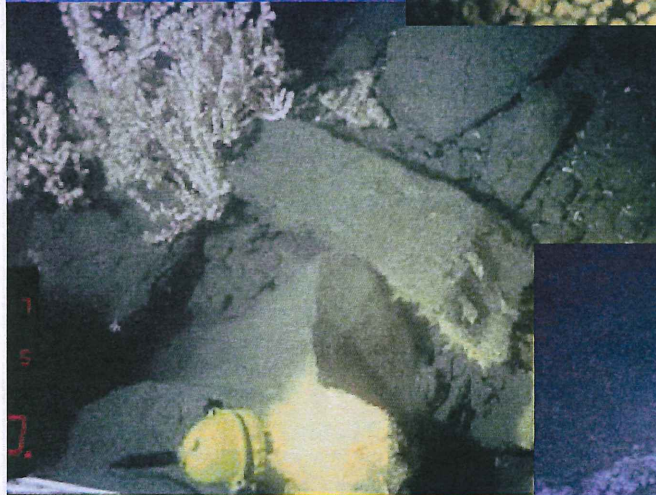
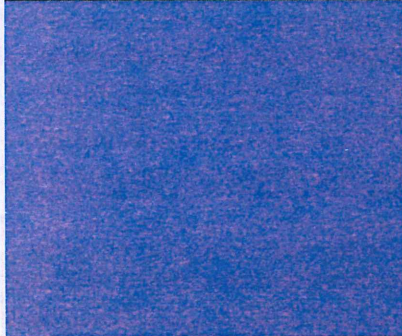
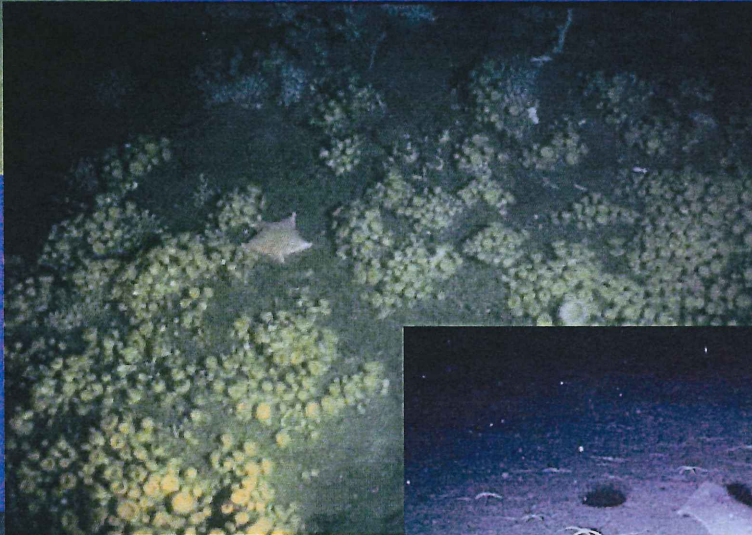
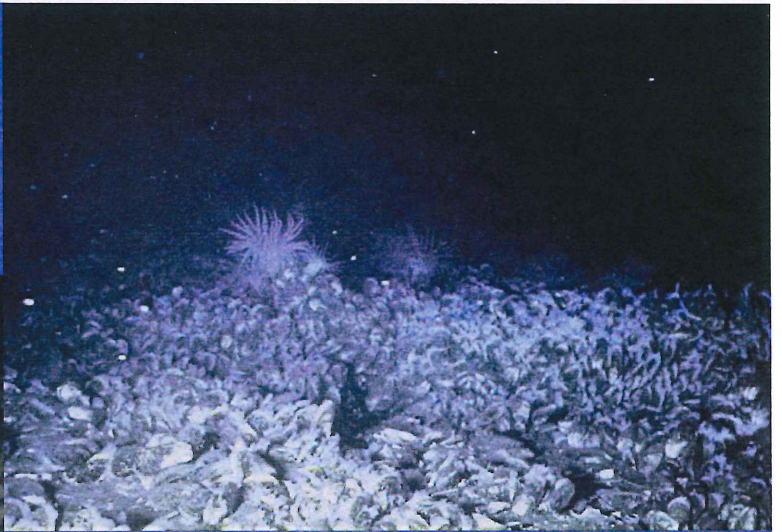
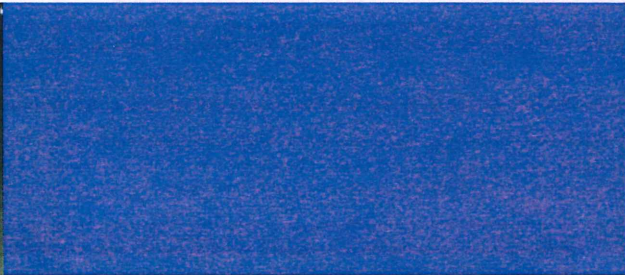
Norfolk Canyon area



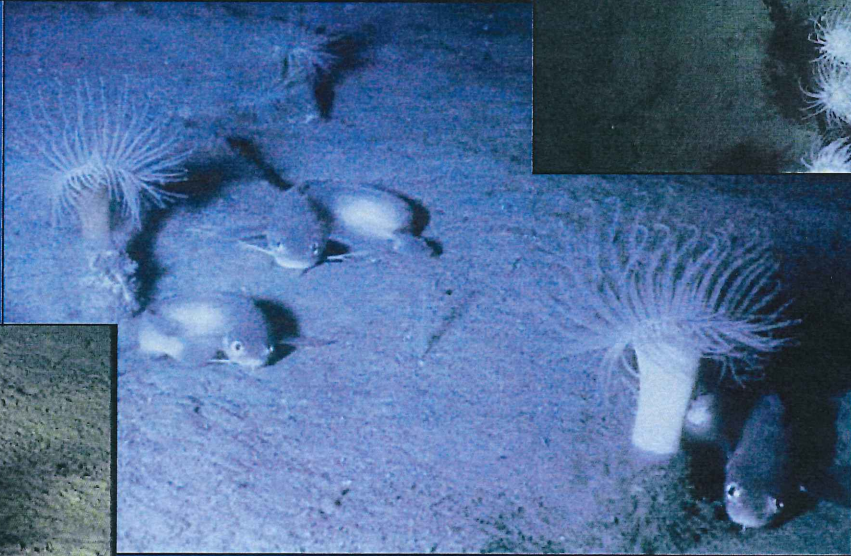
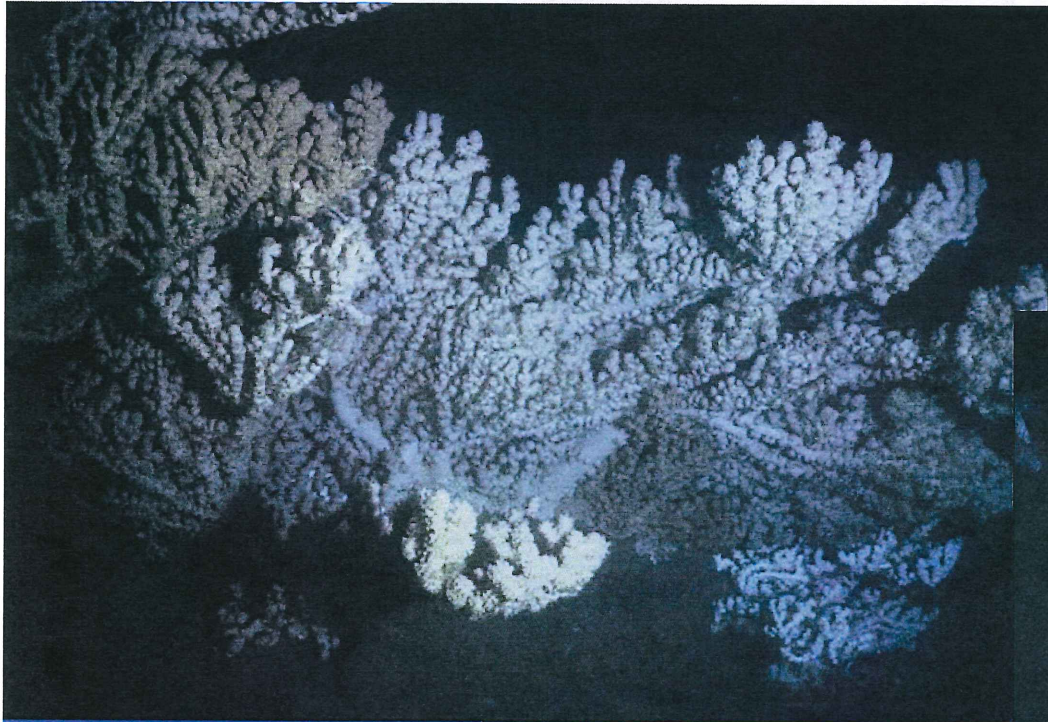


Wrecks from Billy Mitchell fleet near Norfolk Canyon located with MB sonar

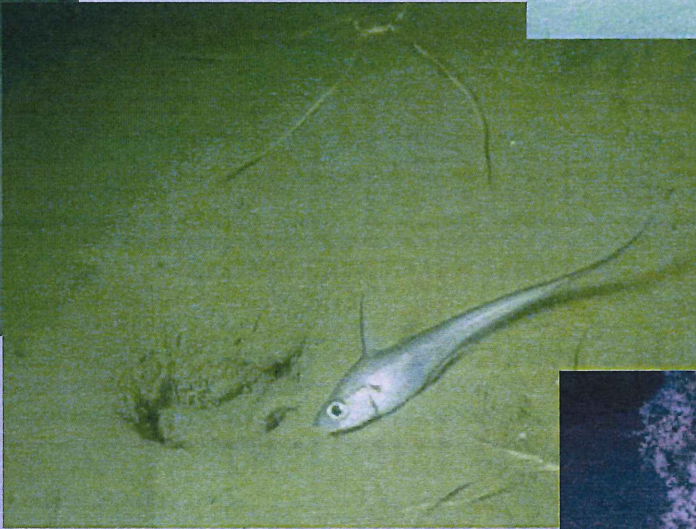
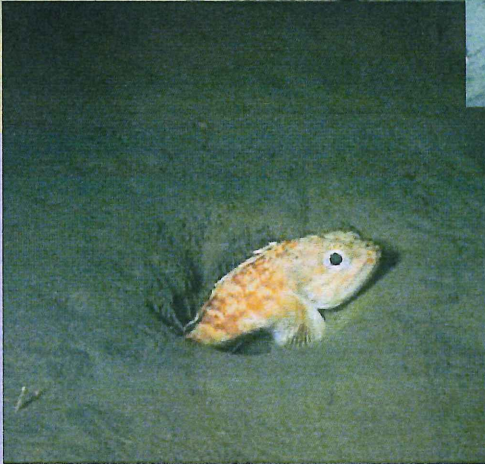
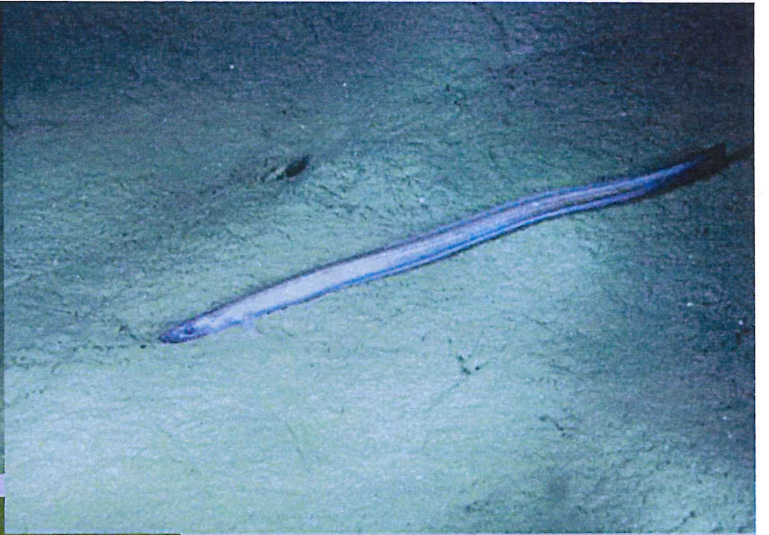




Photos: Hecker & Ross



Photos: B. Hecker



Photos: Ross & Hecker



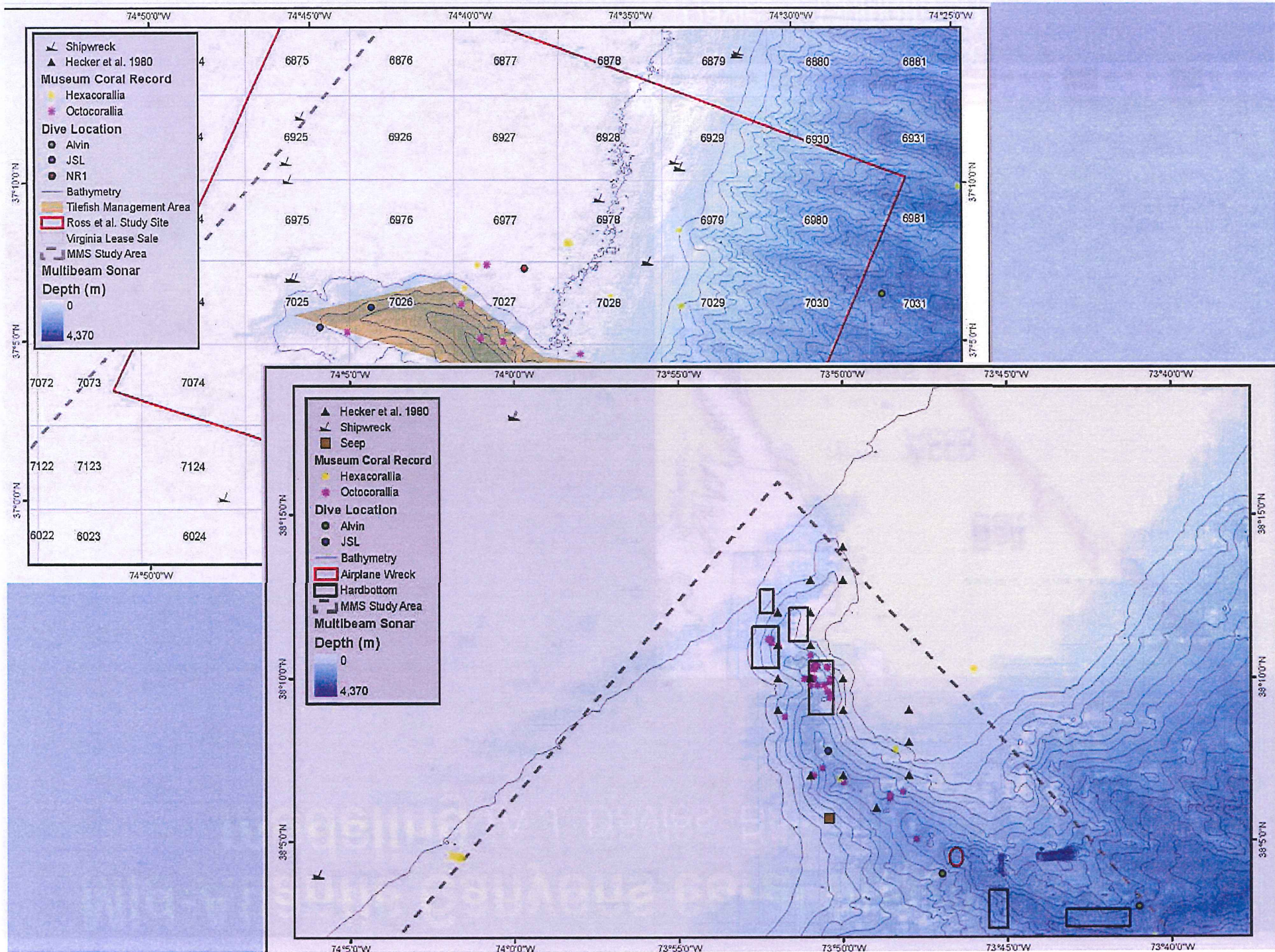
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MAB Deep-sea Corals

- Poorly known compared with other regions
- Many species occur on soft bottom (penatulids, cup corals); most occur in canyons associated with hard substrata, patchy distributions

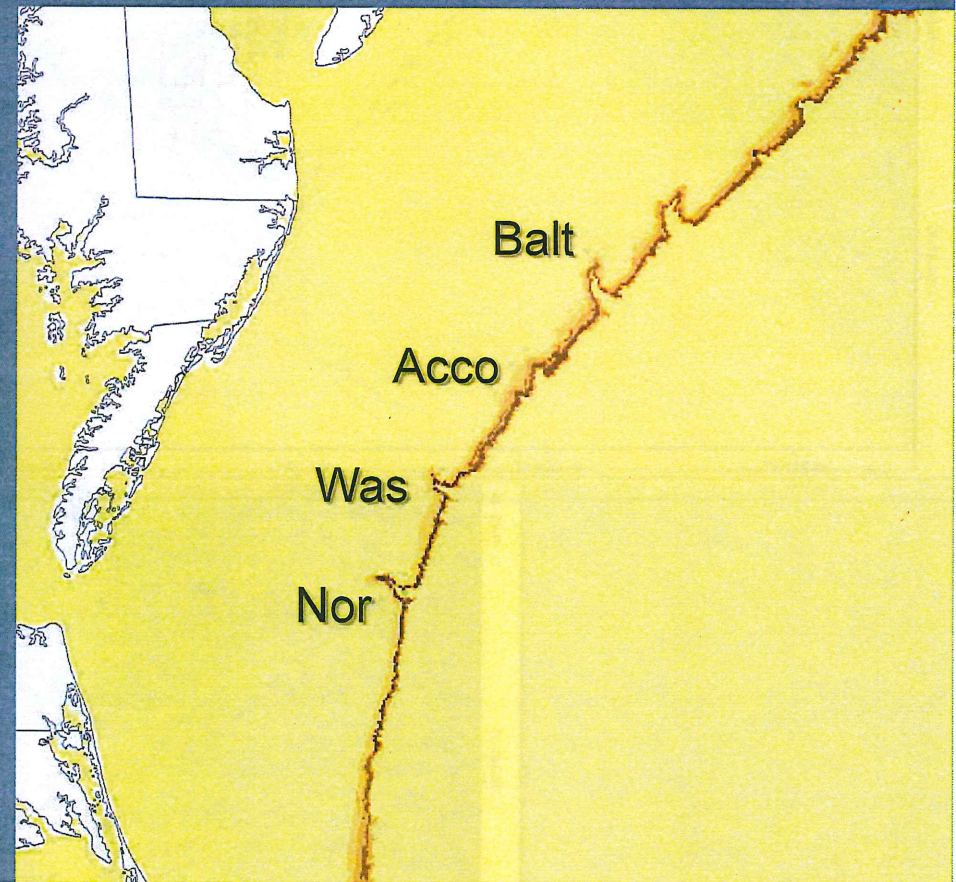
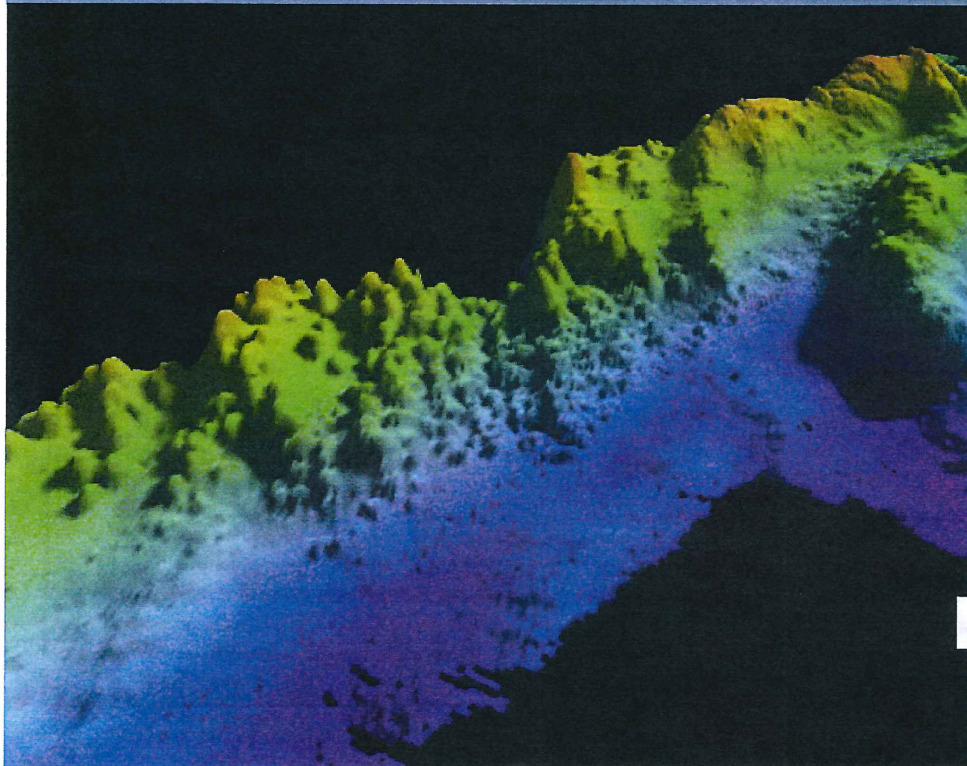
- Octocorals & solitary hard corals dominant
- Structure forming species rare





Mid-Atlantic Canyons coral distribution modeling (A.J. Davies, Bangor Univ.)

Habitat suitability modeling will complement coral locations from field work, yielding greater understanding of DSC environmental requirements.



Habitat suitability 0 - 20% 20 - 40% 40 - 60% 60 - 80% 80 - 100%

Framework forming scleractinian spp.
(Davies & Guinotte 2011)

Future

- First field sampling cruise (summer-fall 2012)
 - NOAA vessel & Kraken II ROV
 - Ship based & ROV sampling + lander deployments
 - First focal areas are Norfolk & Baltimore canyons
- Second field sampling cruise (summer, fall 2013?)
 - Similar logistics & objectives to 2012 cruise
- Final year for data analysis & reporting

MEMO

To: Chris Moore, Rick Robins
From: Peter deFur
Date: 26 January 2012
Re: staff time for Ecosystems and Ocean Planning Committee

Following up on our conversation in December about the work of the Ecosystems Committee and staff support, I am providing some explanation around the Committee discussion and concern regarding staff resources.

At present, the staff allocation for the Committee is about 1/2 FTE: 1/3 FTE of Tom Hoff and 1/6 FTE Jim Armstrong

The Committee identified actions to be pursued in the coming year, all of which are ongoing or will continue for several years at least. Many of the activities under the auspices of the Ecosystems Committee are initiatives that we all expect to continue for the foreseeable future. The following items are not in a ranked order; the Committee has not officially ranked the work as such.

1) The Committee strongly believes we need to continue our coordinating efforts with other entities: BOEM (formerly BOEMRE), protection of deep-sea corals (and other activities with NEFMC Omnibus Habitat amendment), MARCO, MARACOOS, and the Regional Planning Body, as it develops; efforts on marine spatial planning and any administration initiatives on Oceans. These multiple activities all involve time on task at meetings, on calls and following the associated paperwork. BOEM is now moving at a rapid pace and has the backing of the White House, support that is not likely to change under any political scenario. Everyone agrees that we have to stay in discussions on wind farms and other coastal energy development projects. The combination of meetings of these committees now takes substantial staff time, and more can be anticipated.

2) Digitize the Essential Fish Habitat maps. This work can be done by an outside consultant, or the equivalent, and needs coordination with other offices (e.g. Regional Office and Science Center). The basic work may easily be non-permanent staff, but someone in the MA office will have to at the least coordinate or oversee the project. We see this project as important because of the work of so many other groups is enhanced if they can access our EFH maps in digital form, and obtain our "perspective" on fishery needs and uses in the coastal zone.

3) Deep Sea Coral Protection - This effort is a Council priority, a Committee priority and is joint with NEFMC. The effort is related to canyons management as MPA's, GRA's, or other protected status, in coordination with NEFMC. While I can and will take part as liaison to the NEFMC Habitat Committee, the effort requires technical input and evaluation from MAFMC, as it has thus far. In addition, MA will need to put more effort into this area and perhaps take more of

the lead, depending on discussion among the NE and MA leadership.

4) Follow-up on the recommendations from the December 2010 workshop is another high priority of the Committee. Several activities, projects, initiatives are underway, in no small part, coordinating with other entities, we need to follow these efforts and insure their success.

5) Essential Fish Habitat maps need to be up to date and we understand that several are in need of updating, and have been so for several years. This effort is technical and requires coordination with other entities and offices.

6) Currently, the Committee expects increased activity in Ecosystem Based Management and will play a role in the Council effort on the topic, largely in coordinating among other (outside) entities and with other MAFMC work. the Committee also recognizes that the Exec Comm has the lead in MAFMC adopting Ecosystem Based Management, and that the Committee will play an important role in policy direction, support and implementation of the Exec Comm. effort currently being done by the Ecosystems Subcommittee of the SSC.

7) As the Council, the Committee and other groups such as NEFMC and Regional Planning bodies undertake various efforts, the Committee envisions utility in convening advisors, which would require staff time to assemble and maintain a group. At this time, the Committee does not see an immediate need, but does not discount the advantage of an advisory group.

Committee believes that they will not have resources to add new areas for MPAs, National Marine Sanctuaries, or the development of a policy for outside speakers.