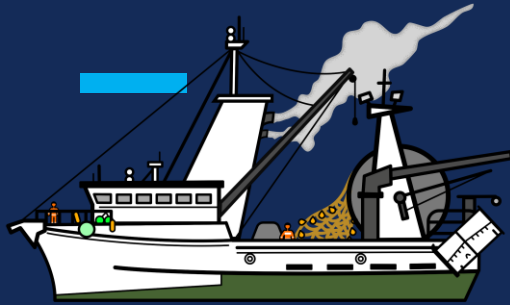
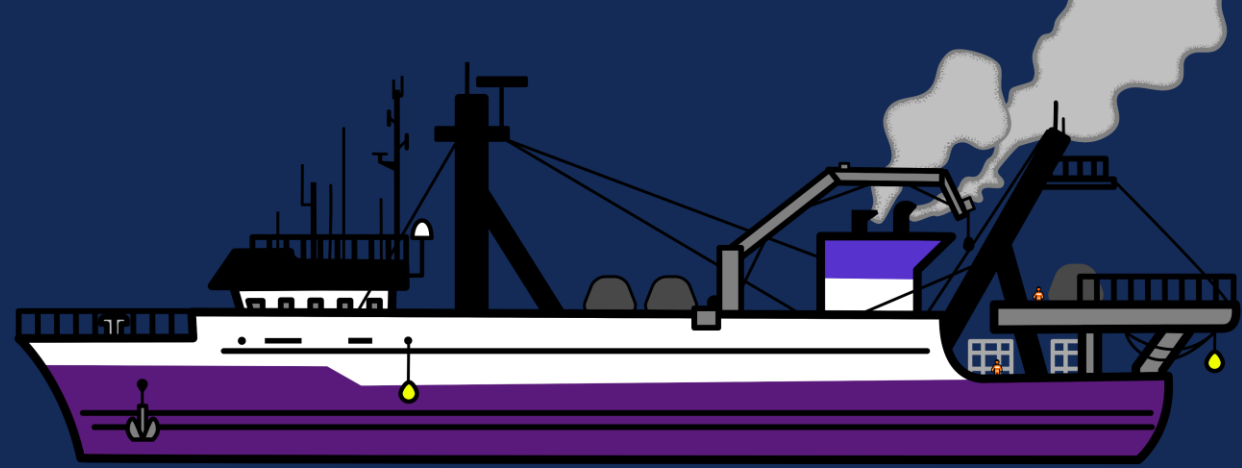


## Gulf of Alaska Trawl Vessel Discards



68 Trawl catcher vessels

+



11 Factory trawlers

Average\* 24 million lbs of discarded bycatch per year including:



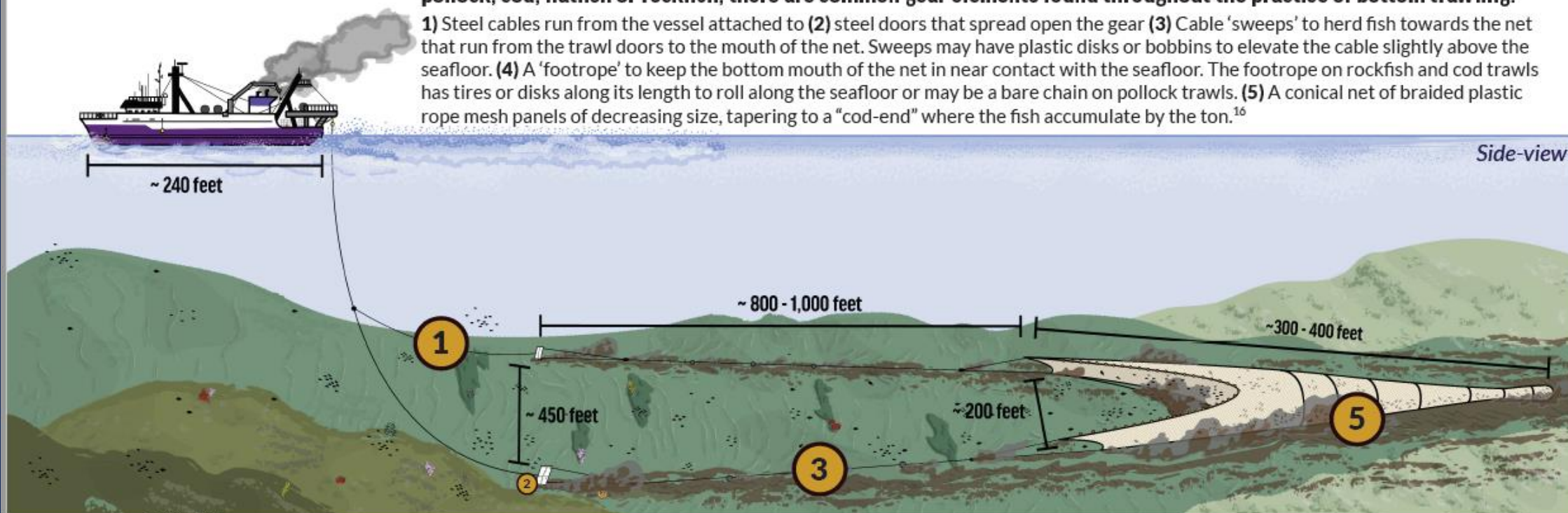
- 5.5 million lbs. of rockfish
- 4.6 million lbs. of flatfish
- 3.1 million lbs. of pollock
- 2.7 million lbs. of halibut
- 1.6 million lbs. of sablefish
- 1.2 million lbs. of sharks
- 0.9 million lbs. of Pacific cod
- 150,000 lbs. of habitat-forming invertebrates
- 21,000 Chinook salmon
- 100,000 tanner crab

\*Avg. 2015-2019

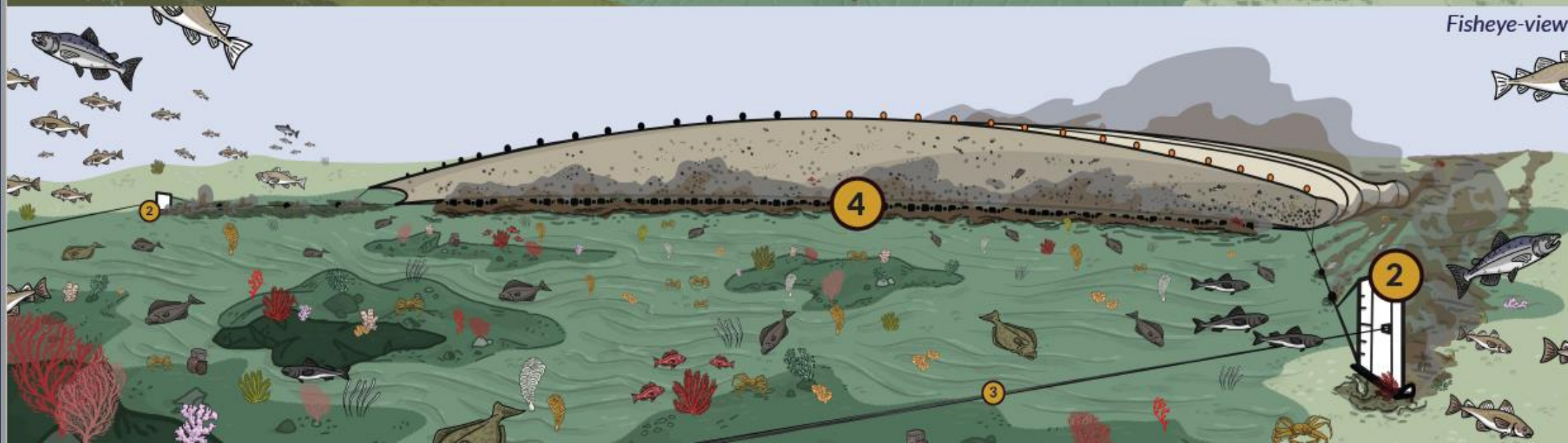


While factory trawlers and catcher vessel trawlers use different types of trawl gear for targeting pollock, cod, flatfish or rockfish, there are common gear elements found throughout the practice of bottom trawling:

**(1)** Steel cables run from the vessel attached to **(2)** steel doors that spread open the gear **(3)** Cable 'sweeps' to herd fish towards the net that run from the trawl doors to the mouth of the net. Sweeps may have plastic disks or bobbins to elevate the cable slightly above the seafloor. **(4)** A 'footrope' to keep the bottom mouth of the net in near contact with the seafloor. The footrope on rockfish and cod trawls has tires or disks along its length to roll along the seafloor or may be a bare chain on pollock trawls. **(5)** A conical net of braided plastic rope mesh panels of decreasing size, tapering to a "cod-end" where the fish accumulate by the ton.<sup>16</sup>

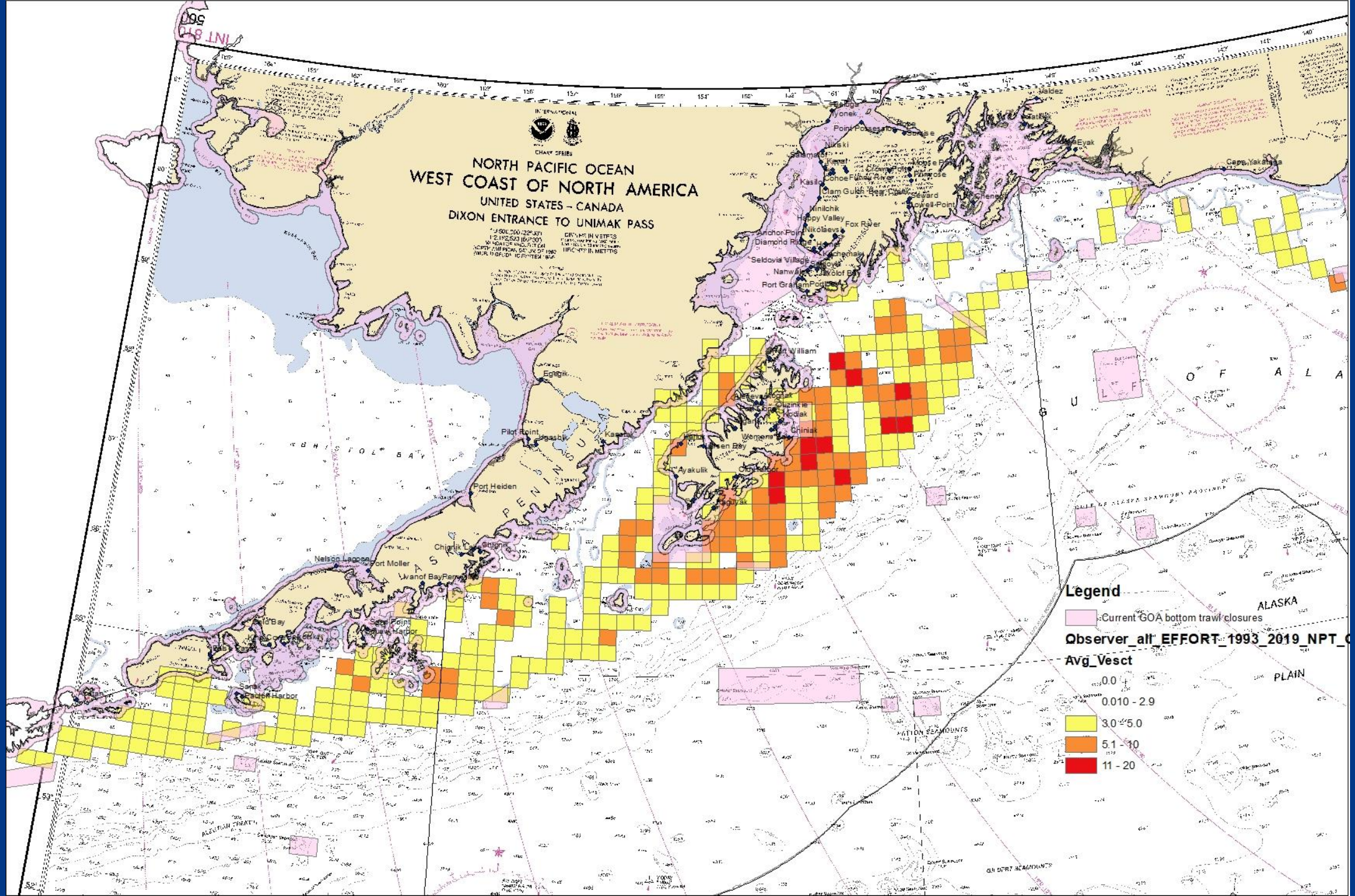


Side-view

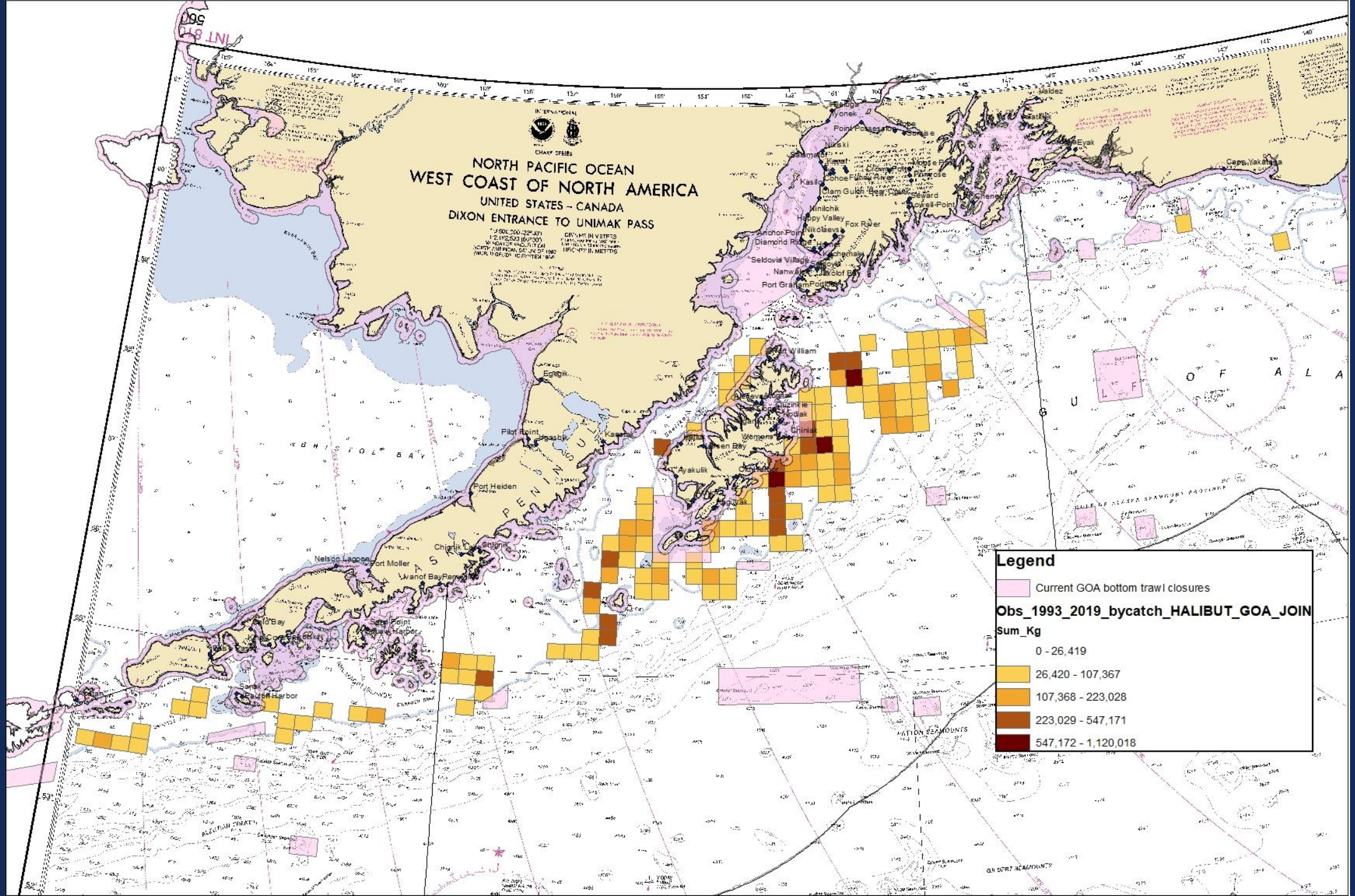


Fisheye-view



















# Policy Recommendations

*Bottom trawling damages seafloor habitats and threatens the sustainability of local fisheries throughout the Gulf of Alaska. Fishery managers have a responsibility to take action to protect ocean habitats and minimize the damage from trawling. This can be done in a way that helps ensure vibrant fisheries, healthy oceans and thriving local communities into the future.*



## 1. Freeze the Bottom Trawl Footprint in the Gulf of Alaska

Federal fishery managers must build on their precautionary approach to habitat conservation by freezing the footprint of bottom trawling in the Gulf of Alaska and protecting key areas within the footprint. This fundamental conservation approach is necessary to prevent the expansion of bottom trawling into new areas, and to protect corals, sponges and other living seafloor habitat that still exist inside the footprint. This approach is an established practice in many regions and it is consistent with NOAA's Deep-sea Coral and Sponge Strategic Plan.<sup>28</sup> It has already been implemented off much of the U.S. West Coast, British Columbia, Bering Sea and Arctic. But not, however, in the Gulf of Alaska.

While some areas in the Gulf of Alaska have already been closed to bottom trawling, including off Southeast Alaska and some offshore seamounts, the vast majority of the central and western Gulf of Alaska remains open to bottom trawling.

## 2. Protect Priority Habitats Within the Trawl Footprint

Ecologically important and sensitive habitat features like rocky reefs, coral and sponge gardens, sea whip groves, and submarine canyons that are within the bottom trawl footprint should also be protected. Bottom trawl closures are an important tool for protecting areas known to contain sensitive habitats. Conservation areas can be identified by mapping the location and extent of priority habitat features and bottom trawl fishing effort, so that conservation actions protect important ecological areas but avoid core fishing grounds.

## 3. Reduce Bycatch and Establish 100% Observer Coverage in Gulf of Alaska Trawl Fisheries

Observer coverage is needed on all Gulf of Alaska trawling vessels. This will provide the best and most timely data that managers need to ensure trawl vessels do not exceed bycatch limits. Fishery managers must also look to establish caps on the amount of valuable fish trawlers are allowed to catch, especially as fish populations around Alaska are in decline and many local, directed fisheries are asked to catch less.



