Essential fish habitat (EFH) means those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.

For more information on how NMFS protects essential fish habitat, visit [https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/essential-fish-habitat](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/essential-fish-habitat)
# Measures to Protect EFH from Fishing Impacts in the Gulf of Mexico

Established in 2005 Generic Amendment 3 to the FMPs of the Gulf of Mexico (EFH Amendment 3)

## Measures in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico EEZ

### Gulf EEZ – Bottom Trawl Weak Link Requirement

**§ 622.31 Prohibited gear and methods.** (m) *Weak link.* A bottom trawl that does not have a weak link in the tickler chain may not be used to fish in the Gulf EEZ. For the purposes of this paragraph, a weak link is defined as a length or section of the tickler chain that has a breaking strength less than the chain itself and is easily seen as such when visually inspected.

### Additional measures in specific areas of the Gulf of Mexico

#### EEZ Portion of Tortugas North – Tortugas marine reserves HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (d) *Tortugas marine reserves HAPC.* The following activities are prohibited within the Tortugas marine reserves HAPC: Fishing for any species and anchoring by fishing vessels.

1. **EEZ portion of Tortugas North**

#### West Flower Garden Banks HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (j) *West and East Flower Garden Banks HAPC.* The following activities are prohibited year-round in the HAPC: Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, dredge, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

1. **West Flower Garden Bank**

#### East Flower Garden Banks HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (j) *West and East Flower Garden Banks HAPC.* The following activities are prohibited year-round in the HAPC: Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, dredge, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

1. **East Flower Garden Bank**

#### Pulley Ridge HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (r) *Pulley Ridge HAPC.* Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the area of the HAPC bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points [coordinates listed].

#### Stetson Bank HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (s) *Stetson Bank HAPC.* Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the HAPC, which is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: [coordinates listed].

#### McGrail Bank HAPC

**§ 622.34 Gulf EEZ seasonal and/or area closures.** (t) *McGrail Bank HAPC.* Fishing with a bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear, pot, or trap and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the HAPC, which is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following points: [coordinates listed].