



# Habitat areas of particular concern: Coral in Alaska

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Gorgonian coral such as this red-tree coral (*Primnoa*) provides structural habitat for rockfish and other species.

Habitat types and specific areas that are important for fish and need protection from adverse impacts are classified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). Habitats at risk from fishing gear impacts are appropriate for this classification. Criteria for HAPC includes ecological importance, sensitivity, rarity, and exposure to adverse conditions. Corals have been identified as HAPC.

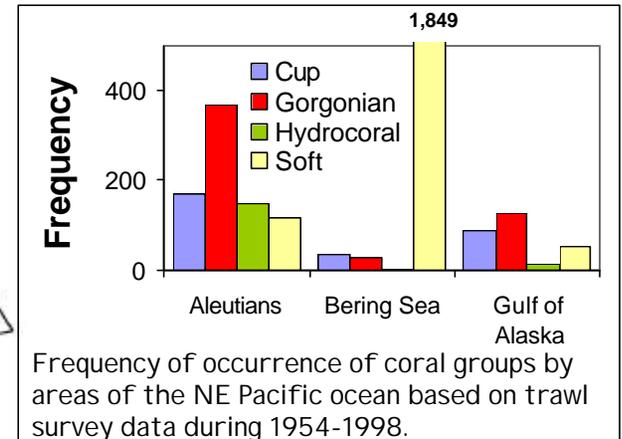
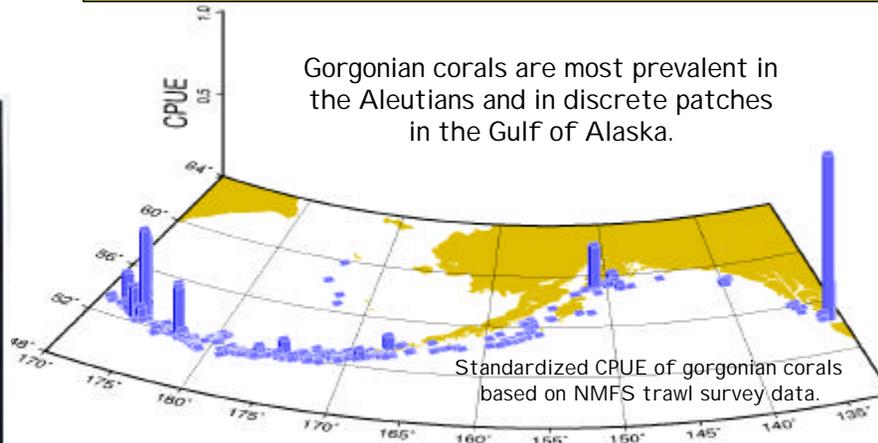


Coral can be damaged by bottom trawls, longlines, and pots. Shown here is coral growing on a boulder that was tipped over by a bottom trawl.

Given their large size and longevity, gorgonian corals are sensitive to fishing impacts. Large colonies of the gorgonian *Primnoa* are thought to be hundreds of years old.



There are at least 34 species of coral in Alaska. Shown above are some examples of cup corals in the order Scleractinia. The taxonomy of Alaskan coral is in question and there are some undescribed species.



This large piece of *Primnoa* was entangled in a crab pot in the Aleutians.



- Alternatives being considered to protect gorgonian coral from the adverse impacts of fishing include;
- establishing marine protected areas (MPA)
    - prohibit all fishing or fishing with bottom gear in MPA
  - classify coral as a prohibited species