

## COD HABITAT (from page 29)

Similarly, areas with engineered rip-rap fill don't have enough variation and complexity for young cod.

### PROTECTING IMPORTANT HABITAT FOR THE SACRED COD

At first glance, the new "Habitat Areas of Particular Concern" (HAPC) for cod appears to cover all coastal waters from Maine to Rhode Island, out to 20 meters in depth. But, the juvenile cod Essential Fish Habitat text description limits the HAPC application to areas of rocky or vegetated habitats, and sandy areas for feeding next to these habitats.

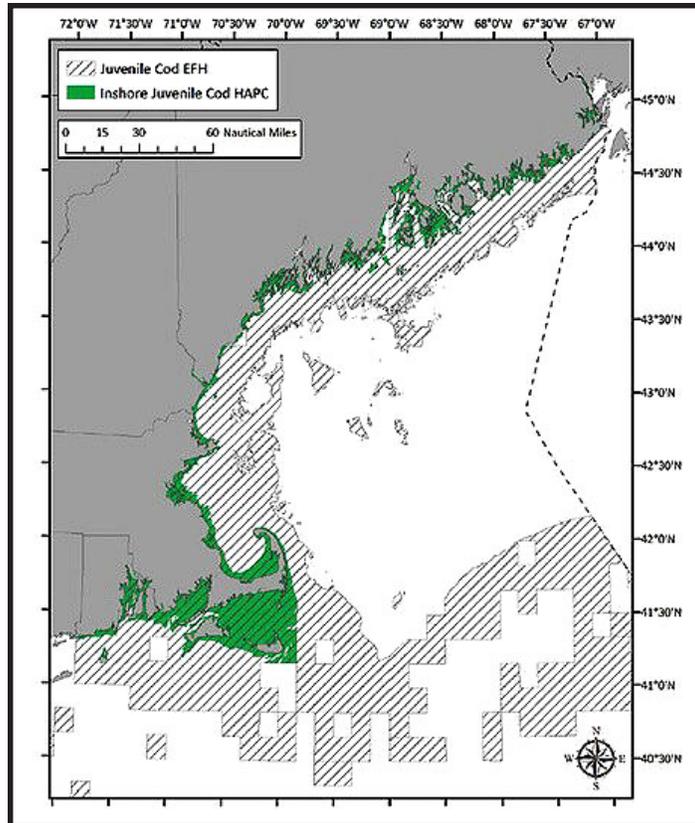
While these habitats are not rare in the Gulf of Maine, they need special protection for three reasons:

- They provide young-of-the-year and year-old cod shelter from predators and important feeding habitat.
- They are particularly sensitive to human activities.
- They are also important habitats for many other fish.

### DISTURBING ROCKY HABITATS

While it might seem like rocky habitats would be hard to damage, there are actually a number of human activities that can make them less valuable for young cod. Activities like dredging, pile-driving, bridge or pier building, sand-mining, or shipping can:

- Entirely remove, or flatten and roll the rocks, making the areas less complex



Inshore juvenile Atlantic cod *Habitat Area of Particular Concern*

- Fill the crevices with sediment
- Reduce plant growth
- Scrape off the attached animals and algae that provide

food and complexity. Any of these activities could reduce the ability of young cod to survive and grow. Recovery of rocky habitats after disturbance is very slow, typically taking decades or more.

### NOAA'S ROLE IN HABITAT PROTECTION

NOAA's role in protecting the Council's designated Habitat Areas of Particular Concern is to review activities that require a federal permit, or are being funded or done by a federal agency. NOAA provides conservation recommendations to our federal partners in order to avoid, minimize, or offset adverse impacts from these

activities. The new designations help prioritize these areas for protection, and make sure we focus our recommendations on the most important areas for these fish.

Lower intertidal and shallow water rocky habitat



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