

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT
ON CORDELL BANK CONSERVATION AREA REVISIONS

During the preparation of the draft regulatory changes that would result from the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) on this action, staff from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Council, discovered an additional impact that removing the geographic coordinates for the Cordell Bank Groundfish Conservation Area (GCA) at [50 CFR 660.70\(u\)](#) would have. The action alternative would remove the coordinates known as the "100 fathom ring" around Cordell Bank from Federal regulations. Removing these coordinates would inadvertently allow fishing with large footrope gear in the 10.2 square miles (sq. mi.) that would be opened to trawl gear under the Council's PPA. At the Council's November 2024 meeting, the Groundfish Management Team report ([Agenda Item I.5.a GMT Report 1](#)) noted that this area would only be opened to small footrope trawl gear because of the regulation at [50 CFR 660.130\(c\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#), which prohibits fishing with large footrope gear shoreward of 100 fathoms in the area south of 46° 16' North latitude. In order for that restriction to continue to be in effect, there needs to be a 100 fathom line defined in regulation around Cordell Bank. Therefore, if the Council adopts the PPA as their final preferred alternative, NMFS recommends moving the existing 100 fm coordinates around the bank from the GCA into the regulations at 50 CFR 660.73, which is where the coordinates for the coastwide 100 fm line and other lines around islands and banks are defined. This would maintain a "100 fathom ring" around Cordell Bank, thus maintaining a prohibition on large footrope in the area that would be opened to trawl gear. This is an administrative modification to the action alternative in order to better implement the Council's stated intent from November 2024.