

ECOREGION **General advice**
SUBJECT **New information regarding the impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem**

Advice summary

ICES advises that the following seven areas contain habitats sensitive to bottom fishing activities:

- Hebrides Terrace Seamount;
- Rosemary Bank Seamount;
- Porcupine Sea Bight;
- Faroe–Shetland Channel and Tampen area;
- Irish Margin/Bay of Biscay;
- Gulf of Cadiz;
- Northwest Rockall Bank.

Request

Provide any new information regarding the impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem incl. small cetaceans and other marine mammals, seabirds and habitats. This should include any new information on the location of habitats sensitive to particular fishing activities. [Memorandum of understanding between the European Union and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, 2013].

ICES advice

The advice in this section covers new information on the location of habitats sensitive to particular fishing activities (i.e. vulnerable marine ecosystems, VMEs). Advice on the impact of fisheries on seabirds is being collated under the heading of another special request from the European Commission that will be answered in the second half of 2013. The focus of ICES work in 2013 on bycatch of marine mammals and other components of the marine ecosystem has been more towards reviewing and advising on an improved monitoring and assessment system. This has been advised upon already to the [European Commission](#) (on 25 April 2013; ICES, 2013a). The only new data available to ICES in 2013 on the issue of bycatch is that contained in Member States' reports to the Commission under Regulation 812/2004. ICES considers that no new issues have arisen as a consequence of the information in those reports.

New information on the location of habitats sensitive to particular fishing activities

New data that indicate the presence of VMEs were submitted to ICES in 2013 (ICES, 2013b). Some of these data were within the EEZs of Member States of the EU.

ICES has no information (i.e. VMS data) available on actual fishing activity in these areas at the spatial resolution required to evaluate the pressure on the habitats.

1) Hebrides Terrace Seamount

The Hebrides Terrace Seamount lies to the west of the UK, being partially joined to the continental slope. The summit is around 1000 m and the steep-sided flanks descend to below 2000 m. In 2012 a research survey completed two ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) transects of the steep flanks of the seamount and one transect across the summit. On the seamount summit, three ROV still images contained VME indicator species and none were at densities that would indicate actual VMEs. On the steep flanks, however, between the depths of 1200 m and 1700 m, coldwater corals were consistently observed at high densities, indicating VMEs (Figure 1.5.1.2.1).

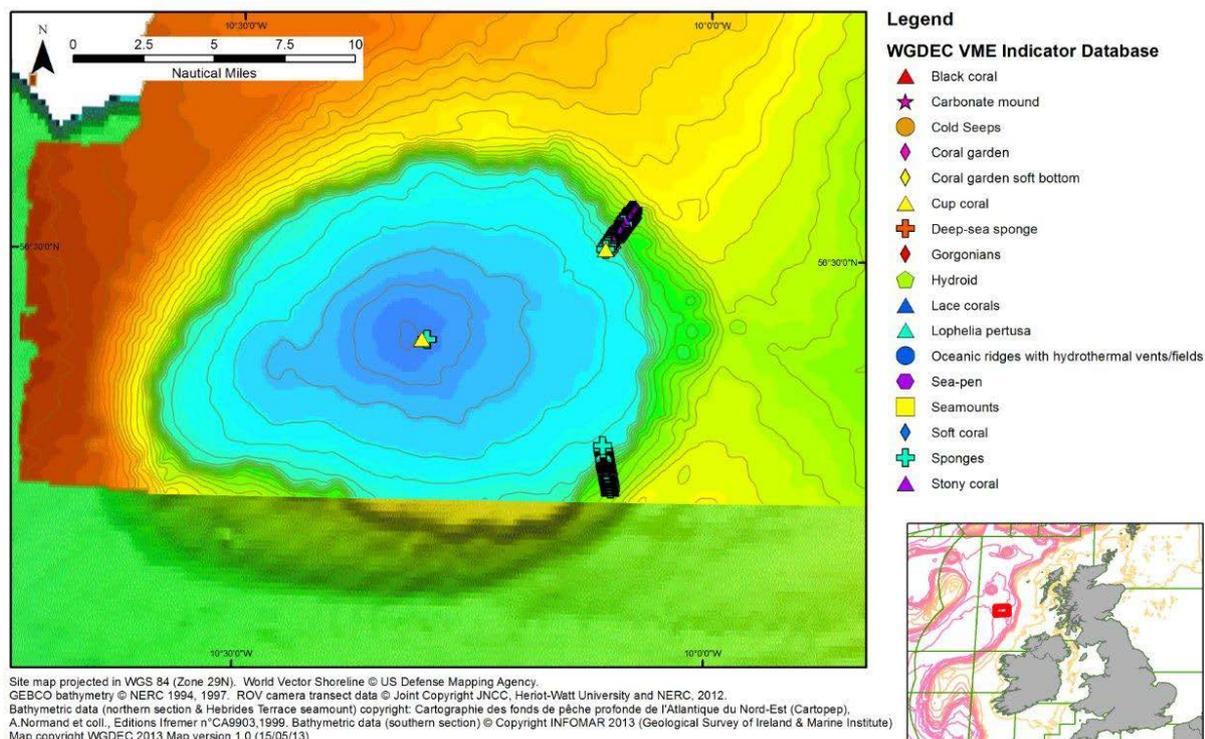


Figure 1.5.1.2.1 Observations of VME indicators on the Hebrides Terrace Seamount.

2) Rosemary Bank Seamount

The Rosemary Bank Seamount lies at the north end of the Rockall Trough. In 2012 a trawl sample was obtained from the lower muddy slope on the eastern side of the bank at a depth of around 1300 m (59.245°N; -9.525°W). A large bycatch (>1000 kg) of *Geodia* sponges (a species vulnerable to bottom fisheries) was taken.

3) Porcupine Sea Bight

Positions of deep-sea sponge aggregations reported by Rice *et al.* (1990) have become available. These were collected during scientific trawl surveys at depths between approximately 1000 and 1500 m (Figure 1.5.1.2.2).

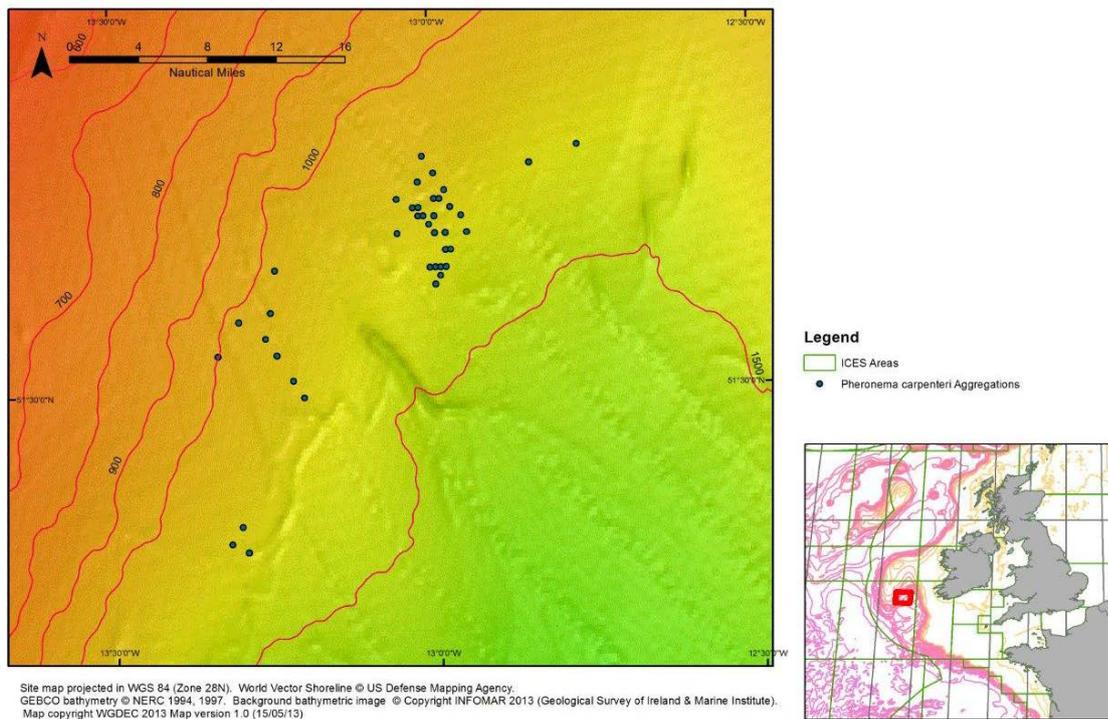


Figure 1.5.1.2.2 Positions of deep-sea sponges in the Porcupine Seabight area.

4) Faroe–Shetland Channel and Tampen area

A recent (2011) trawl bycatch record of a deep-sea sponge aggregation (estimated weight >1000 kg) confirms the northern part of the Faroe–Shetland Channel and Tampen area as important for deep-sea sponge habitat (Figure 1.5.1.2.3).

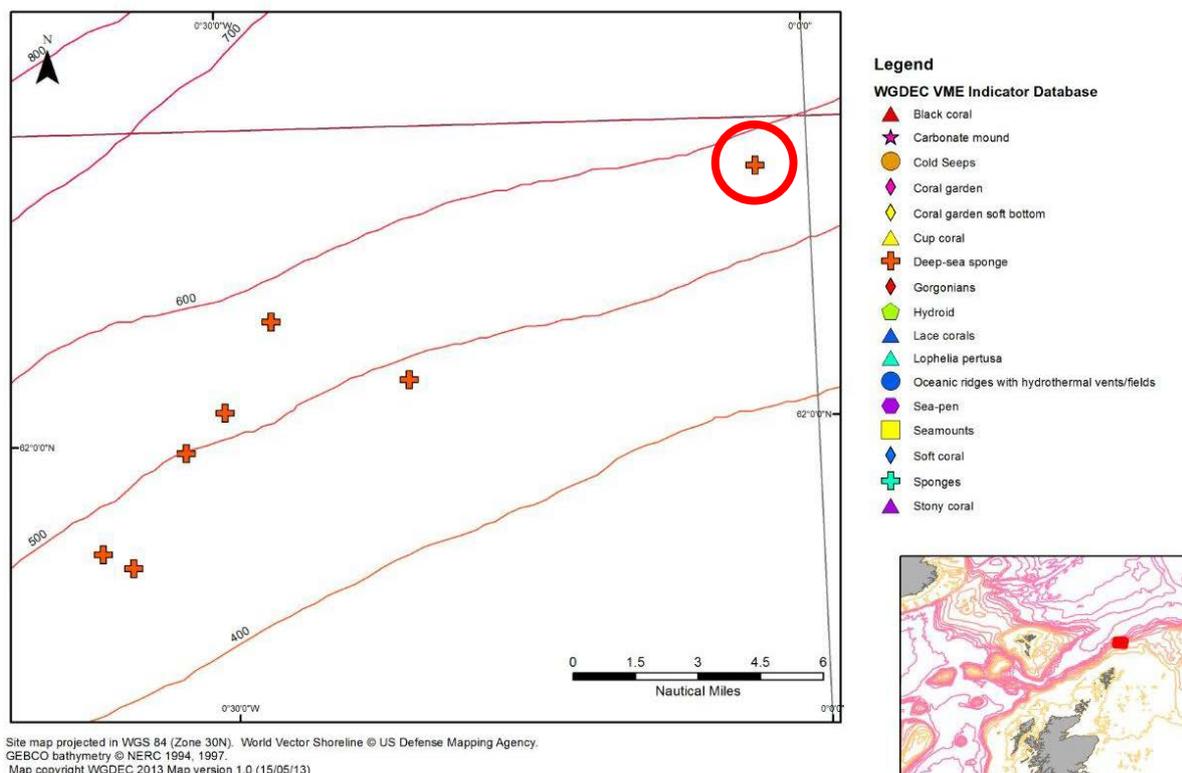


Figure 1.5.1.2.3 Positions of deep-sea sponge observations in the Tampen area. The red circle indicates the new observation.

5) Whittard Canyon (Irish Margin)

ROV transects found VMEs throughout the Whittard Canyon along with dead coral rubble fields (Figure 1.5.1.2.4). VME indicator species observed included Schizopathidae, Carophylliidae, Gorgonacea, Alcyoniidae, Paragorgiidae, Chrysogorgiidae, Isididae, Stylasteridae, Primnoidae, and Pennatulacea.

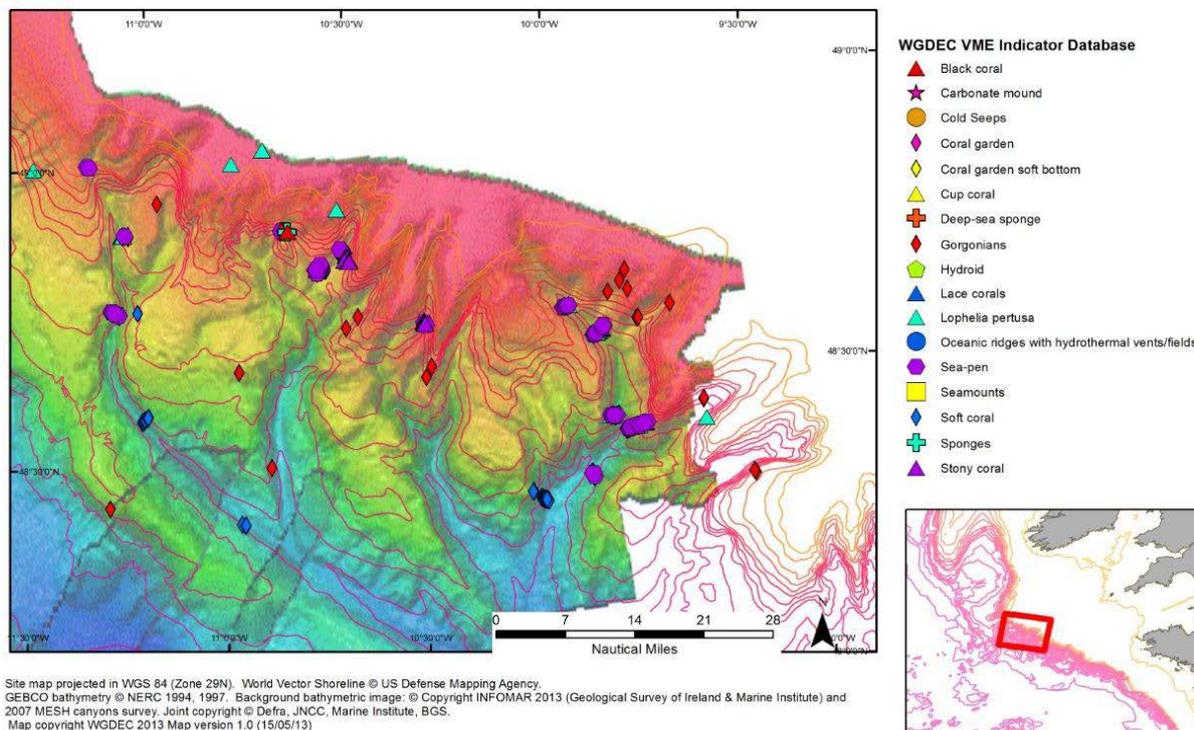


Figure 1.5.1.2.4 Positions of VME indicator species in the Whittard Canyon.

6) Gulf of Cadiz (Spain)

There are cold-seeps and mud-volcanoes on the Guadalquivir Diapiric ridge in the Gulf of Cadiz (36.5°N; -7.25°W). These VMEs are at depths of approximately 550 m and therefore potentially at risk from bottom fishing activity.

7) Northwest Rockall Bank

Rockall Bank is a large plateau that lies partly in EU waters and partly in international waters regulated by NEAFC. Six further video transects revealed extensive patches of coral reefs in the centre and toward the southern end of the current closure (Figure 1.5.1.2.5). Another video transect revealed new observations of coral reefs outside the eastern part of the closure. No VMEs were observed along a transect to the north of the closure.

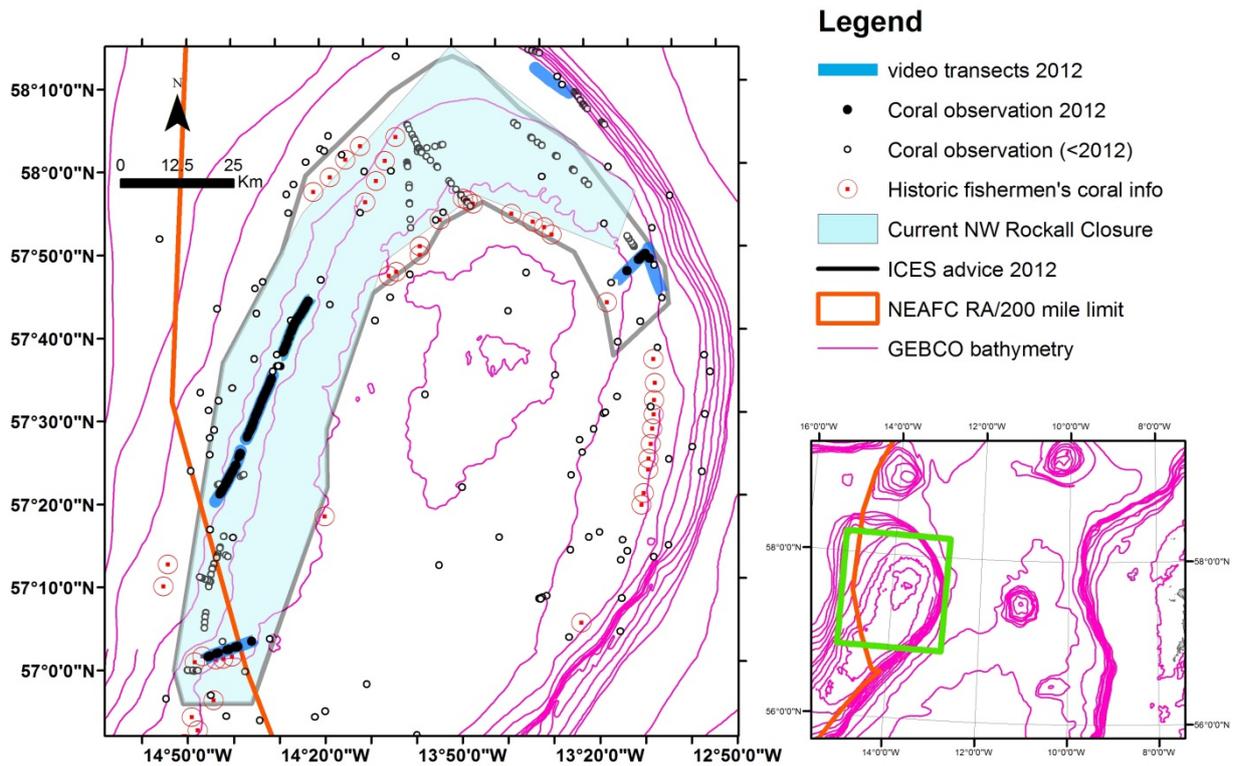


Figure 1.5.1.2.5 Map of Northwest Rockall showing locations of video transects and new findings of VMEs.

References

ICES. 2013a. Report of the ICES Advisory Committee 2013. ICES Advice, 2013. Book 1, Section 1.5.1.

ICES. 2013b. Report of the ICES\NAFO Joint Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC), ICES CM 2013/ACOM:28. 5 pp.

Rice, A. L., Thurston, M. H., and New, A. L. 1990. Dense aggregations of a hexactinellid sponge, *Pheronema carpenteri*, in the Porcupine Sea Bight (northeast Atlantic Ocean), and possible causes. *Progress in Oceanography*, 24: 179–196.