

**Extracted from Report of the Scientific Council, June 2014, SCS Doc. 14/17**

<http://archive.nafo.int/open/sc/2014/scs14-17.pdf>

*xi) Extent of current closures and areas for prioritization by WGEAFFM (Item 13b)*

*b. Based on these analyses, evaluate and provide advice in the context of current closures specified in the NCEM for the protection of VMEs and prioritize areas for consideration by the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Working Group.*

The Scientific Council responded:

**Priorities for WGEAFFM**

Scientific Council considered what area will benefit most from management action when considering this part of the request. Scientific Council notes that this is not an evaluation of the relative importance of VME as there is not enough information to do it. All VMEs are treated equally important in terms of their functionality. Scientific Council also notes that the closed areas should be viewed as connected systems.

Higher priority is given to those areas based on:

- multiple VME presence;
- the approximate proportion of the VME that is protected;
- close proximity to an existing closed area as this may imply continuity of the habitats;
- proximity to high fishing activity which could endanger the VME (increased threat);
- areas with no current protection

**Priorities (not listed in any particular order)**

<b>Closure No.</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>VME Inside Closure</b>	<b>Coverage of VME by closure</b>	<b>Reason for concern</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Div. 30	Coral Closure	Unknown	Moderate	Seapen, Gorgonians, Cerianthids	Moderate
1	Tail of Grand Bank	Sponge	Good	-	Low
2 (southern)	Flemish Pass/Eastern Canyon	Sponge & large Gorgonians	Good	-	Low
2 (northern)	Flemish Pass	Sponge, large Gorgonians & Seapen	Moderate	Seapen, large Gorgonians & Sponge	Moderate
3	Beothuk Knoll	Sponge	Poor	Sponge and large Gorgonians	High
4	Eastern Flemish Cap	Sponge & large Gorgonians	Poor	Sponge, large Gorgonians and Ceranthis	High
5	Northeast Flemish Cap	Sponge	Good	-	Low
6	Sackville Spur	Sponge	Good	-	Low
7,8,9,10,11, 12	Northwest and Northern Flemish Cap	Seapen System	Good	-	Low
New Area	Tail of Grand Bank (south)	-	Poor	Large and small Gorgonians, large sea-squirts, Bryozoans	High
Candidate Areas 13 & 14	East Flemish Cap	-	Poor	Seapen	High
Corner Rise Seamounts	-	Seamount	Moderate	Seamount	Moderate
New England Seamounts	-	Seamount	Moderate	Seamount	Moderate