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**Revision of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
Conservation and Enforcement Measures, Article 16.**

Background

In Article 16 of the NCEM concerning 'Seamount, Coral, and Sponge Protection Zones', bottom fishing closures defined in 16.1, 16.4 and 16.5 are in force until 31 December 2014. Article 16.6 furthermore calls for a review of the closures (at least those of Art. 16.5) by 31 Dec 2014. Recommendations 1-3 from the Fisheries Commission and Scientific Council Working Group on the Ecosystem Approach Framework to Fisheries Management (WG-EAFF, 2014) concerned this issue and advised deletion or amendment of the in force dates.

WG-EAFF furthermore recommends deleting or amending Article 16.6. This article refers to Article 16.5 only, and furthermore appears superfluous since the NCEM is regularly updated and the review requirements are expressed in Article 23.

The SC recognizes in the 2013 report that that at the present time, seamount protection zones referred to in Article 16.1, due to provisions in Article 16.2 and 16.3, provide no additional protection to these areas than the ones afforded by the exploratory fishing protocol for all areas outside the NAFO fishing footprint, i.e. in the 'unfished bottom areas'. Seamounts, constituting "VME elements" (as defined by NAFO), i.e. areas with a high likelihood to have VMEs, should be closed to bottom fishing. Deleting Article 16.2 and 16.3 would facilitate closing of the selected subset of seamounts to bottom fishing.

The SC recommends extending the seamount closures to encompass neighbouring shallow seamounts. Norway notes that these other seamounts lie in "unfished bottom areas" and are afforded substantial protection by the exploratory fishing protocol.

The SC further remarks that a portion of the seamount closure at Corner Rise encompasses a portion of the EEZ around Bermuda. The coordinates of that closure should be amended to only comprise areas of the NAFO RA.

Recommendations

1. In Article 16.1, 16.4, and 16.5, the text "Until 31 December 2014" is replaced by "Until 31 December 2020".
2. Articles 16.2, 16.3 and 16.6 are deleted.
3. Co-ordinates of the New England seamount closure defined in Article 16.1 shall be amended so that the closure is restricted to areas within the NAFO RA.