

### 1.6.1.2 New information regarding the impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem

#### Advice summary

ICES has reviewed new evidence for the occurrence of vulnerable marine ecosystems in North Atlantic waters of the EU. No new locations of habitats sensitive to fishing activities were found; there are new records of VME indicators, but these are in areas already known to have such indicators present.

#### Request

Annex IIA in the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and ICES requests ICES, under “Fisheries-based advisory deliverables”, to:

*“provide any new information regarding the impact of fisheries on other components of the ecosystem including 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.”*

This advice section covers only aspects of impacts on habitats. Information relating to marine mammals, seabirds, and other marine vertebrates is advised separately (Section 1.6.1.1).

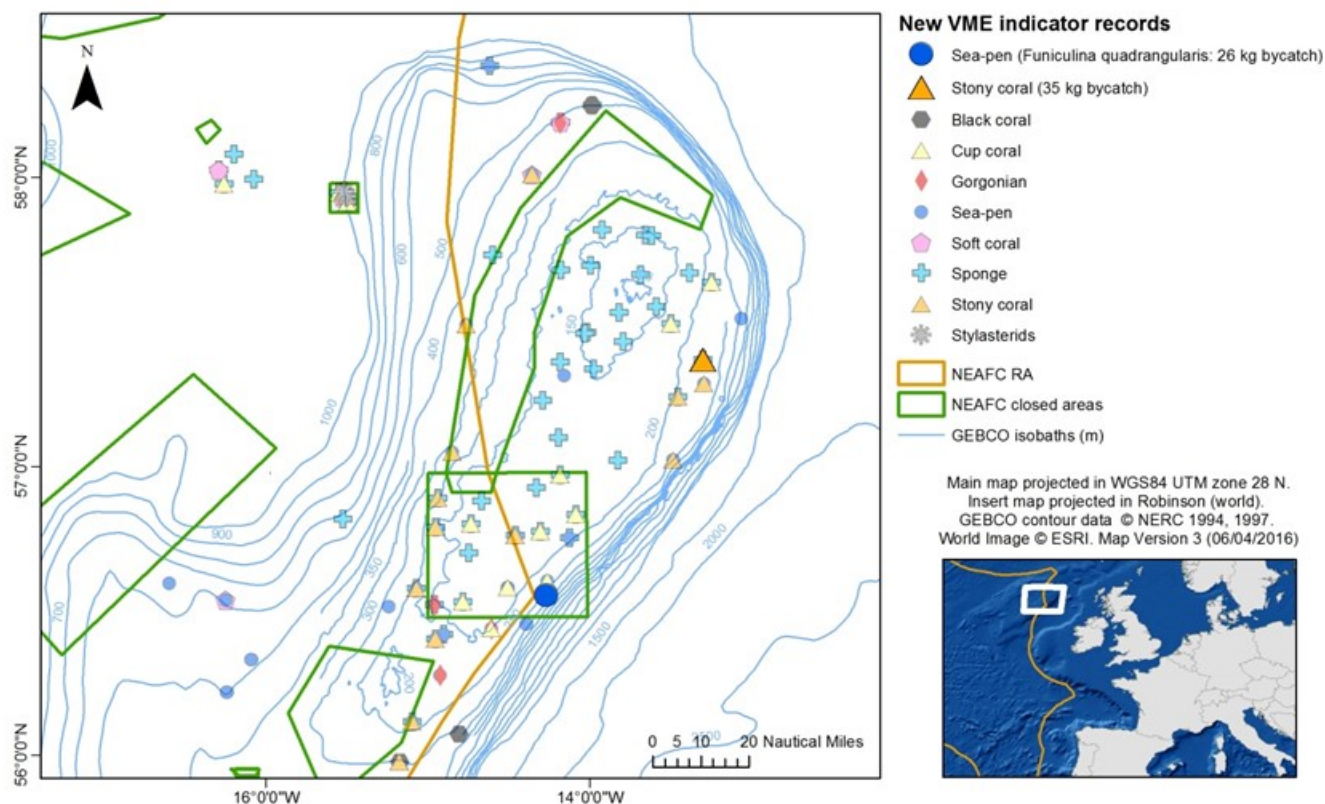
#### Elaboration on the advice

A total of 487 new records that indicate the presence of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) were submitted to ICES in 2016; the majority of these records are within the EEZs of EU Member States.

#### Rockall Bank, Rosemary Bank, and the adjacent continental slopes

Two fish stock assessment cruises undertaken in 2015 found VME indicators within the UK/Irish EEZ region of Rockall Bank (Figure 1.6.1.2.1). A variety of VME indicators were recorded, but not found in large quantities, except for two records: a haul of 35 kg of dead *Lophelia pertusa* taken as bycatch on the east of Rockall Bank, and a large bycatch of sea-pens *Funiculina quadrangularis* (estimate of 3000 individuals, combined weight of 26 kg) on the southeastern section of Rockall Bank.

An ecological research survey, also undertaken in 2015, covered the continental slope within the UK and Irish EEZs. VME indicators were recorded, but none were in sufficient quantity to suggest with confidence the presence of a VME. Scientific trawl sampling was undertaken at Rosemary Bank, aimed at validating deep-sea sponge aggregations visually identified in 2014 (ICES, 2015), yielding quantities of sponges (approximately 250 kg of mixed *Porifera* species in ten minutes of bottom trawling), in keeping with Rosemary Bank being classified as a VME.



**Figure 1.6.1.2.1** VME indicators taken as bycatch during fish stock assessment surveys in 2015. The large, bold orange triangle marks a large haul of dead *Lophelia pertusa* (35 kg) taken as trawl bycatch, while the large, bold blue circle marks a large bycatch of seapens *Funiculina quadrangularis* (estimated at around 3000 individuals, combined weight = 26 kg), both catches in the eastern part of Rockall Bank.

### Sources and references

ICES. 2015. Report of the ICES/NAFO Joint Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC), 16–20 February 2015, Horta, Azores, Portugal. ICES CM 2015/ACOM:27. 113 pp.

ICES. 2016. Report of the Joint ICES/NAFO Working Group on Deep-water Ecology (WGDEC), 15–19 February 2016, Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:28. 82 pp.