



COLD WATER CORALS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) recently contracted Nicole Pellegrin to research and collect knowledge of cold water corals (deep sea corals) on our coast. The project's objectives include the gathering of knowledge from science and fishers on the location and abundance of corals, developing a species list and mapping the locations of corals in British Columbia.

Cold Water Corals

Globally, cold water corals are being recognized for providing an important habitat for various fish and invertebrate species. Here in BC, we are starting to recognize the importance of these long lived species. On our coast, 36 species of cold water corals have been identified, with records dating back to 1834. See *'Sample of Deep Sea Corals in BC: Identification Key'* for some of the more common species.

Very little is known about the cold water corals on our coast, but studies from Alaskan and Washington waters suggest their preference to deep water of 180m (approximately 600 feet) or greater (although some species are common in shallower waters), and areas of high current or high flow.



Why Gather Fishers' Knowledge?

As part of this project, we wish to gather the historical and current locations of corals. Information on corals is being gathered from multiple user groups including research scientists and fishing sectors on our coast. Science on cold water corals is limited and only provides a fraction of the knowledge that is out there. Fishers' knowledge on cold water corals include observations, estimates on quantity, personal experiences, word-of-mouth and socio-economic views based on the financial interests and potential economic costs and benefits to your industry. Collaboration allows each group to provide their specialized, relevant knowledge and an opportunity to offer input at the ground roots of this project.

Conservation Concerns

Internationally, cold water corals are gaining recognition for providing a valuable habitat. We are starting to see pressure in Canada to gather more knowledge on the cold water corals found in our waters. Conservation of important habitats is being encouraged BUT there is a need through collaboration, to develop a better understanding of the industries that use these environments. This will ultimately achieve minimal impact by various fishing and marine industries, while maintaining for YOU, an active fishery.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return via mail in the pre-paid, addressed envelopes provided.

Feel free to contact Nicole if you have any questions.

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