

Voluntary Code of Conduct for SFSAG vessels operating in the Rockall Bank Haddock Fishery (Map attached at Annex 1).¹

All vessels which are part of the Rockall Haddock MSC Certification shall ensure that they abide by the following Voluntary Code of Conduct:

This voluntary code follows the NEAFC *Recommendation 19 2014: Protection of VMEs in NEAFC Regulatory Areas, as Amended by Recommendation 09:2015 and Recommendation 10:2018*

The recommendation pertains to the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area

The objective of the NEAFC Recommendation and this Voluntary Code of Conduct is to ensure the implementation by NEAFC of effective measures to prevent significant adverse impacts of bottom fishing activities on vulnerable marine ecosystems known to occur or likely to occur in the NEAFC Regulatory Area based on the best available scientific information provided or endorsed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

The SFSAG Code of Conduct covers:

1. Encounters with possible VMEs

1. All vessels which are part of the Rockall Haddock MSC Certification shall ensure that they abide by the following Code of Conduct, where, in the course of bottom fishing activities, evidence of VMEs is encountered:

- a) fishing vessels shall quantify catch of VME indicators;
- b) if the quantity of VME indicators caught in a fishing operation is beyond the thresholds defined in, section 2, the following shall apply:
 - i. if an encounter is discovered in connection with the hauling of a trawl gear, the fishing vessel shall cease fishing and move out of an area defined as a wide band (polygon) of a distance determined from Table.1 on both sides of the “track” of the trawl haul during which an encounter occurred. The “track” is defined as the line joining consecutive VMS positions, supplemented by more exact information, between the start and the end of the tow, extended by the distance determined in Table.1 at both ends;
 - ii. if an encounter is discovered in connection with other bottom fishing gears the fishing vessel shall cease fishing and move away

¹ Area definition based on an area of Rockall Bank within UK Exclusive Economic Zone, at a depth less than 350m (350m identified as limit of haddock distribution at Rockall:

<https://blogs.gov.scot/marine-scotland/2017/09/01/surveying-haddock-rockall-scotland/>)

- at least the distance determined in Table.1 from the position that the evidence suggests is closest to the exact encounter location. The master shall use his or her best judgment based on all available sources of information; and
- iii. the master shall report the incident, including the “track” or position determined under sub-paragraphs (i) and (ii), without delay SFSAG which shall forward the information to Marine Scotland.

Table. 1: Width band to be applied to polygon (buffer) based on depth of encounter.²

Depth (m) of encounter	(Buffer) width band (m)
0 - 150	450
150 - 200	600
200 - 250	750
250 - 350	1050

2. Threshold levels

An encounter with a possible VME is defined as:

(a) for a trawl tow, and other fishing gear than longlines: the presence of more than 30 kg of live coral and/or 400 kg of live sponge of VME indicators; and

3. Species included in the Code of Conduct

VME Indicator Species

²The potential for fishing gear to stray into the VME is related to the uncertainty of the location of the fishing gear relative to the known location of the vessel. This will be a function of water depth and the trawl warp length deployed. In deep-water trawling, the typical warp length deployed decreases with water depth, from around 3:1 at 200 m to 2:1 at 500 m and more. For VMEs that occur on flat or undulating seabed a buffer zone of approximately two (>500 m depth) or three times (< 500 m depth) the local depth is advised.

http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2013/Special%20requests/NEA_FC_Evaluation_of_buffer_zones.pdf

The following is a list of seven habitat types as well as physical elements for the NEAFC Regulatory Area, with the taxa most likely to be found in these habitats, which shall be considered as VME indicators.

VME Habitat type

1. Cold-water coral reef
 1. *Lophelia pertusa* reef
 2. *Solenosmilia variabilis* reef
2. Coral garden
 1. Hard bottom garden
 - i. Hard bottom gorgonian and black coral gardens
 - ii. Colonial scleractinians on rocky outcrops
 - iii. Non-reefal scleractinian aggregations
 2. Soft-bottom coral gardens
 - i. Soft-bottom gorgonian and black coral gardens
 - ii. Cup-coral fields
 - iii. Cauliflower coral fields
3. Deep-sea sponge aggregations
 1. Other sponge aggregations
 2. Hard-bottom sponge gardens
4. Seapen fields
5. Tube-dwelling anemone patches
6. Mud- and sand-emergent fauna
7. Bryzoan patches

From NAFO SCR Doc. 11/73

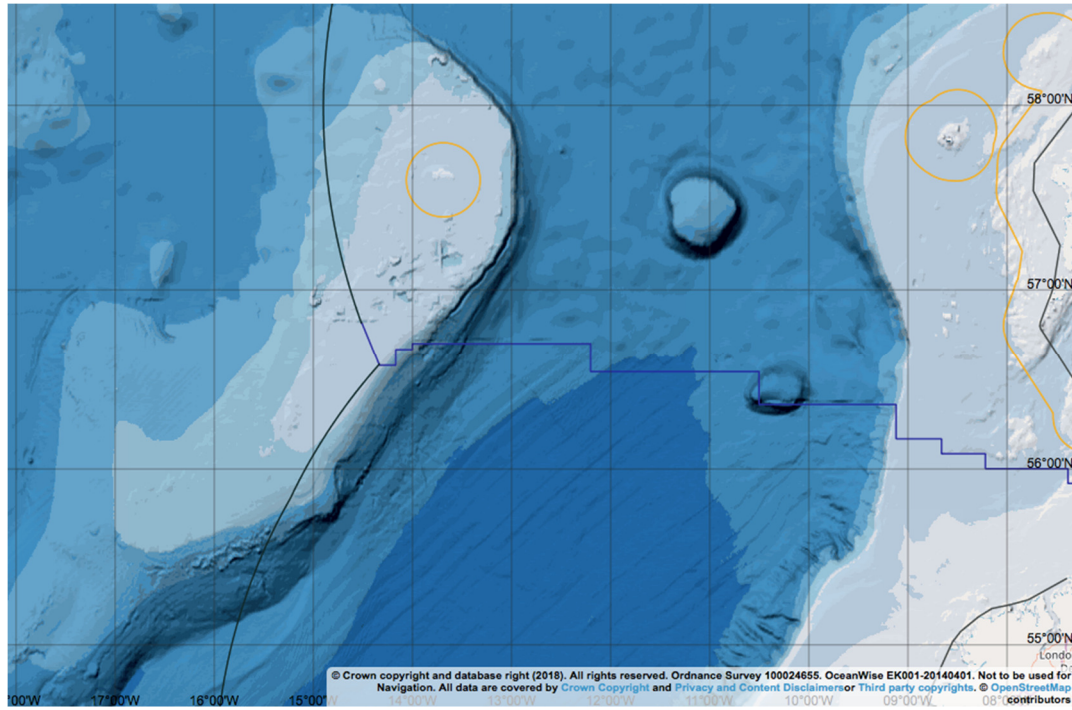
Monitoring and Communication

1. SFSAG will notify any areas, which meet the criteria above, to Marine Scotland who will alarm the area and notify us of any vessels entering at fishing speed.
2. All SFSAG vessels will be notified by the SFSAG Coordinator of any voluntary closed areas with a register of fishing intrusions recorded by SFSAG.
3. Warnings will be given to any vessel intruding at fishing speed and continued non compliance will result in vessels being removed from the SFSAG vessel list.

Annex 1:

Rockall Bank Haddock Fishery Area.

Nb: The Rockall Bank Haddock Fishery Area, to which this Code of Conduct applies, is defined as the area of Rockall Bank, that lies within the UK Exclusive Economic Zone and at depth no more than 350 metres.



Limits and Boundaries - 12 Nautical Miles (12M) limit - Scottish territorial seas - March 2011

Limits and Boundaries - VLIZ World Maritime EEZ Boundaries v10 (WMS)

- ⋯ Archipelagic Baseline
- Straight Baseline
- 200 NM
- Median line
- Treaty
- Joint regime
- Unilateral claim (undisputed)
- Unsettled
- Unsettled median line
- Connection line