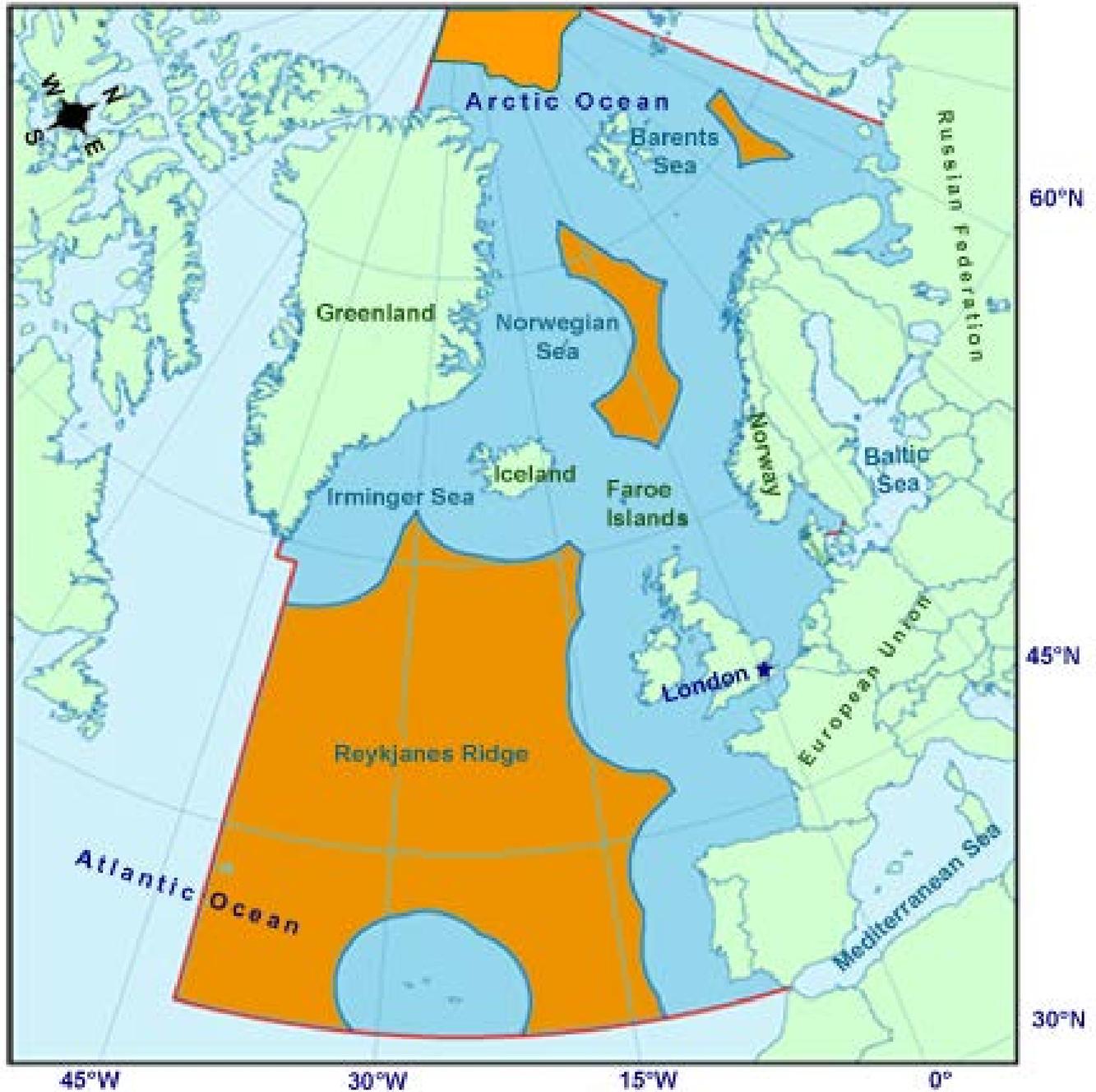




North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

Stefán Ásmundsson
Secretary of NEAFC

NEAFC's Protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems





Protection of VMEs

- Started closing VME areas in 2004: before UNGA resolutions and FAO Guidelines
- NEAFC's general approach was then later developed to ensure consistency with UNGA resolutions and FAO Guidelines
- Reviewed in 2012: Consistent with UNGA and FAO, but could still be improved
- 2014: New comprehensive NEAFC Recommendation



Protection of VMEs

- Identifying VMEs and adopting appropriate management measures (including area closures)
- Adopting precautionary measures in areas where VMEs are likely to occur
- Ensuring that encounters with VMEs result in an appropriate reaction (such as temporary closures)
- Ensure that prior assessments are made before exploratory fishing begins in new areas
- Ensure that new areas are only open to bottom fisheries after assessing results from fishing under exploratory fishing plan



Protection of VMEs

In 'existing bottom fishing areas': move-one rule applies, reporting, temporary closure.

In 'new bottom fishing areas': no bottom fishing without exploratory fishing plan, prior assessments, observers, move-on rules, temporary closures

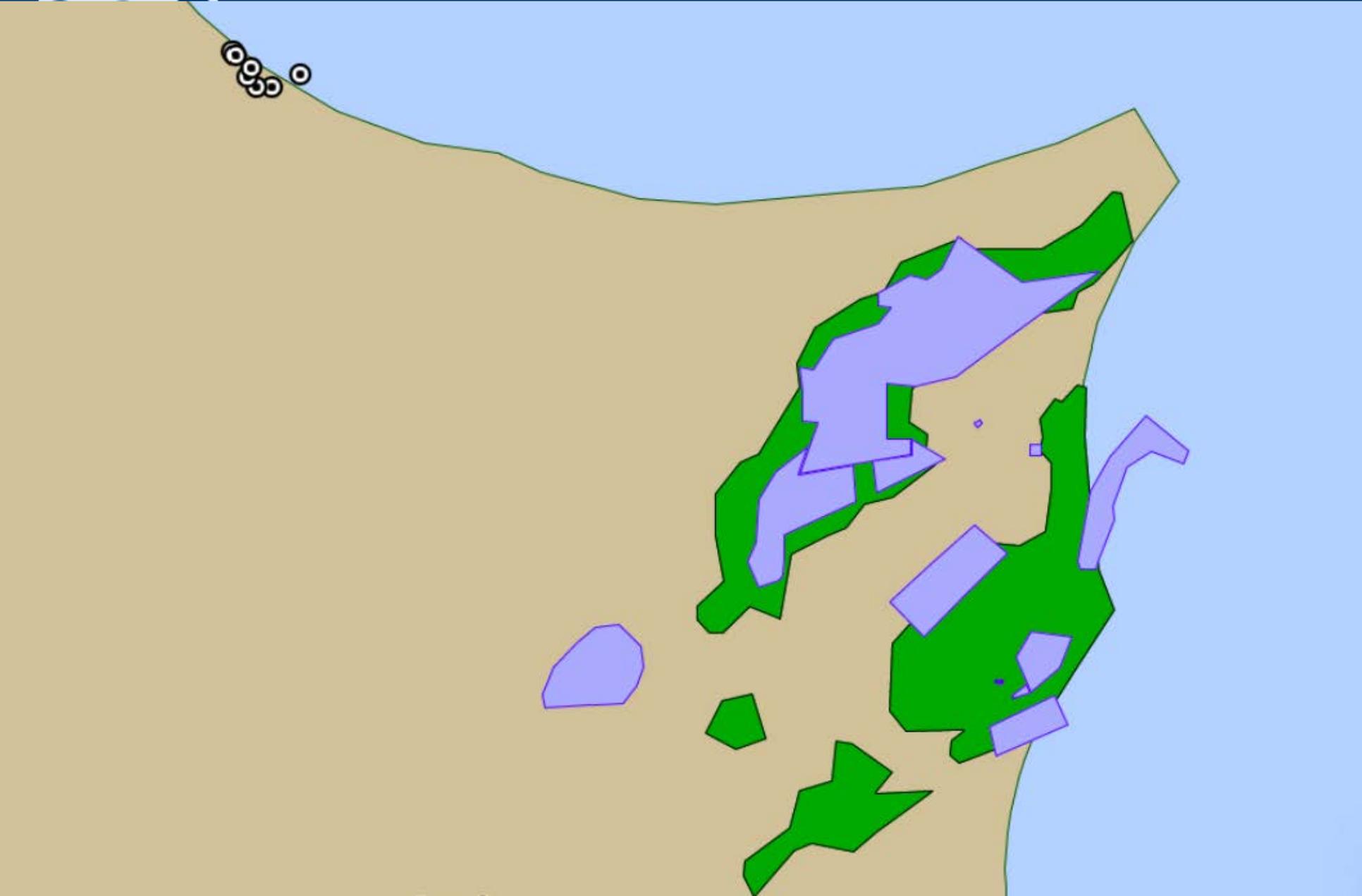
In closed areas: no fishing with bottom fishing gears

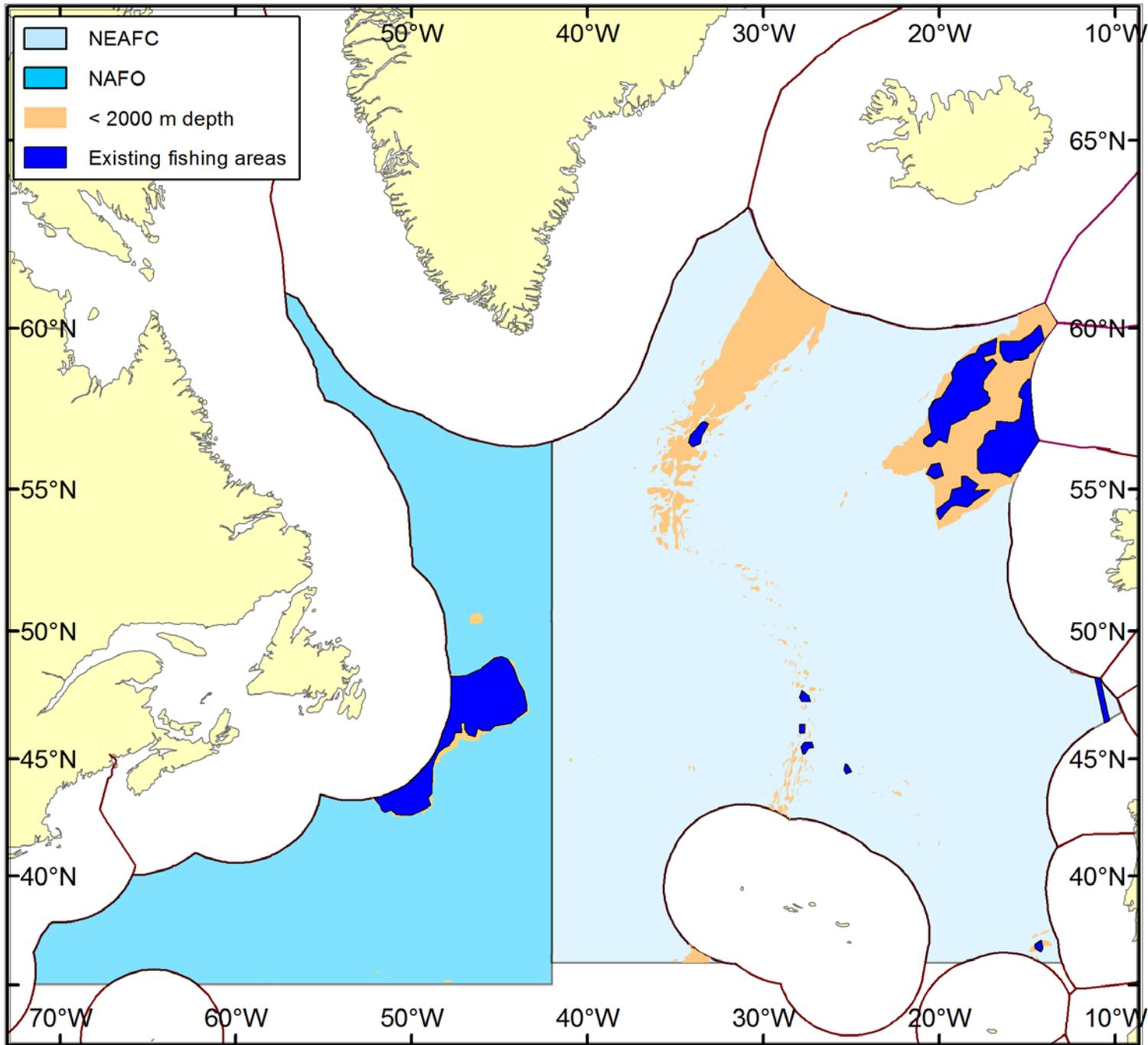
Encounter protocol: an encounter with a VME indicator is defined in terms of a quantity of VME indicator species sponges caught in a fishing operation.

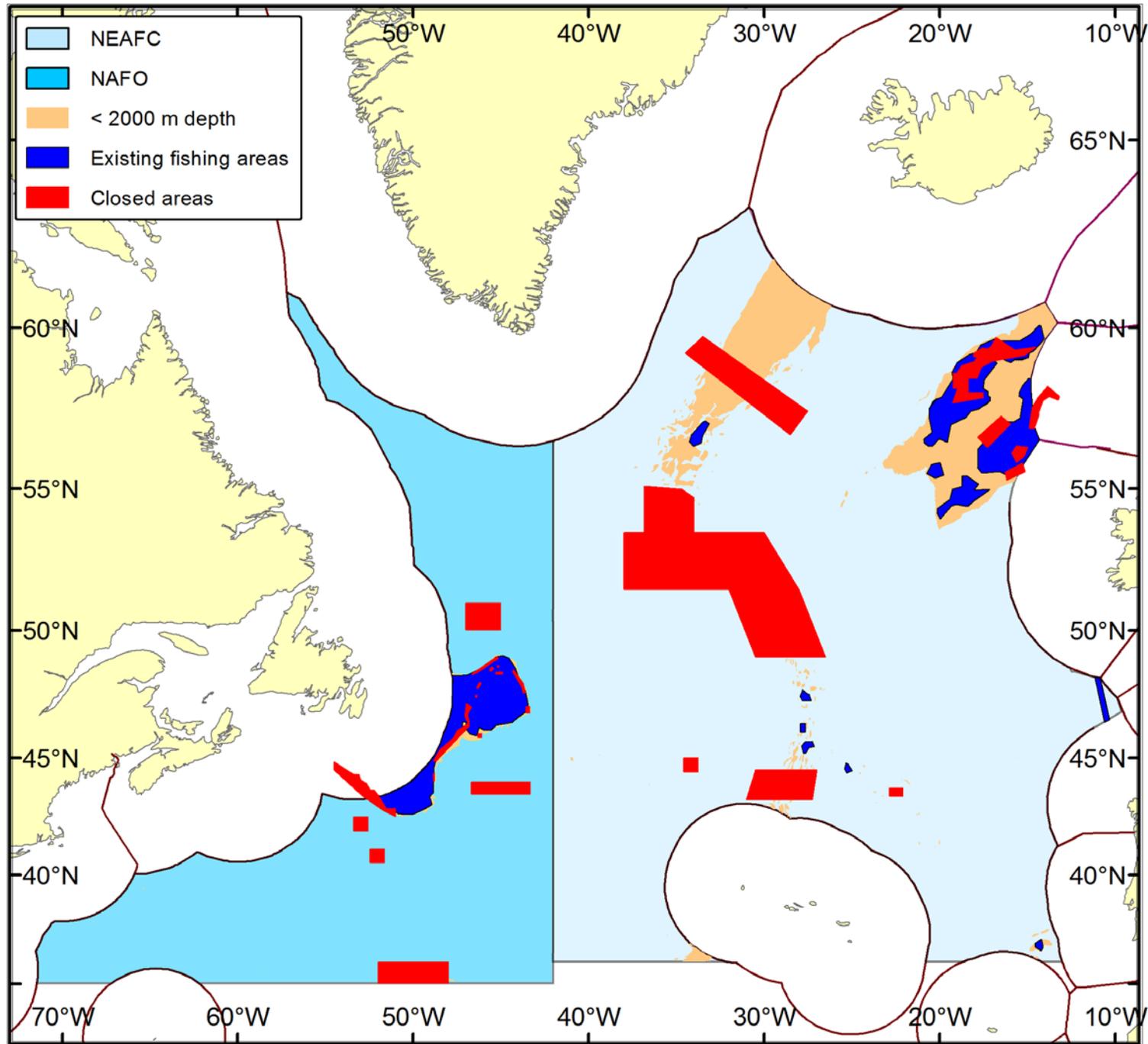
Move-on rule: move away certain distance, report, temporary closure



NEAFC









Linkages, cooperation and coordination

The marine ecosystem is infinitely complex.

However, we only affect human activities.



Linkages, cooperation and coordination

The high seas are not “global commons”.

Freedom of the high seas is not absolute, but clearly and explicitly limited.

Control of all relevant human activities, on a sectoral basis. Some regional, some global.



Where is the actual gap?

Lack of:

- full coverage of relevant bodies,
- proper linkages, cooperation and coordination.

NEAFC is already involved in addressing this, through its work with OSPAR and hopefully soon also ISA and IMO.



Solution?

Give FAO and other relevant organisations the funding they need to strengthen and establish the relevant bodies and to ensure proper participation by relevant states.



Conclusion

- We already know what must be done.
- However, it costs money to actually do it.
- Real question is not exactly what form linkages, cooperation and coordination will take, but whether states are really willing to pay for it.



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