

# Navigating the Future

## Management Plan Review



### Deep Sea Corals Research and Monitoring



These living corals provide important habitat in a relatively featureless deep-sea environment.

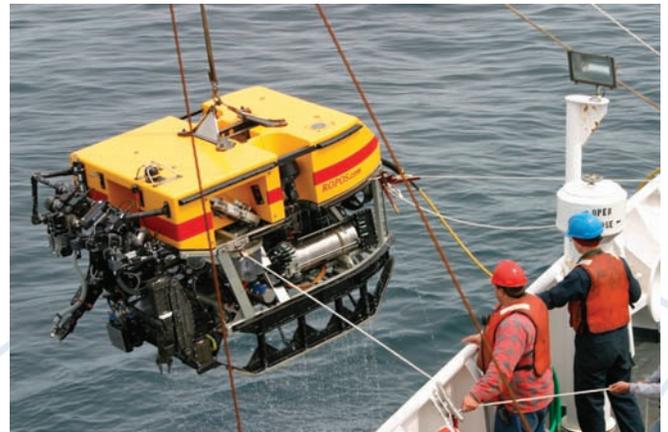
Coral reefs are among the world's richest ecosystems in terms of diversity and abundance of life, which is why they are often called the "rainforests of the ocean." Although much information exists about shallow, tropical coral communities, relatively little is known about deep-sea or cold-water coral habitats.

Sanctuary researchers have documented deep-sea corals and sponges in the offshore shelf and canyon habitats at depths in excess of 80 meters off Washington's coast. To find these organisms, researchers first use sonar mapping techniques to locate appropriate substrates. Later, they return to deploy remotely operated vehicles or manned submersibles to see if they can find and photograph actual corals and sponges.

Deep-sea corals and sponges are living animals, often with branching, upright structures that provide habitat for many other invertebrate and fish species.

These corals and sponges serve as hiding places, attachment sites, feeding sites, and breeding and nursery grounds for other organisms.

Worldwide, scientists have documented damage to deep-sea corals and sponges caused by bottom contact fishing gear. In the Olympic Coast region, the distribution of existing and historic deep-sea coral and sponges is poorly understood, as is the extent of impacts to these important habitats.



A remotely operated vehicle is launched to explore the seafloor.

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