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- HOME
- WHAT IS REGIONAL COLLABORATION?
- NOAA IN THE REGION
- NORTH ATLANTIC'S REGION TEAM
- CONTACT US



North Atlantic Region

First Marine National Monument created in the Atlantic

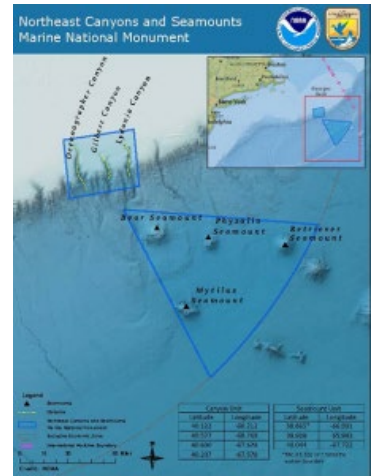
On Sept 15 2016, President Obama designated the first marine national monument in the Atlantic Ocean, the **Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument**.

The monument is more than 100 miles southeast of Cape Cod in the northwest Atlantic Ocean, is home to undersea canyons and seamounts that comprise fragile and largely pristine deep marine ecosystems and rich biodiversity, including important deep sea corals, endangered whales and sea turtles, other marine mammals and numerous fish species.

The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument includes two areas: one that includes four undersea mountains – Bear, Mytilus, Physalia, and Retriever; and an area that includes three undersea canyons – Oceanographer, Lydonia, and Gilbert that cut deep into the continental shelf. The combined area is approximately 4,913 square miles. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will manage the monument.

These areas are home to deep-sea coral ecosystems with rich biodiversity and unique species. Additionally, these geographic features result in oceanographic conditions that concentrate pelagic species, including whales, dolphins, and turtles; and highly migratory fish such as tunas, bullfish, and sharks. A large number of birds also rely on this area for foraging. The purpose of the proposed monument designation is to protect these fragile and largely pristine deep-sea habitats, and species, and ecosystems. Designating the monument ensures continuing and expanded protection of the area for future generations.

Both areas have been the sites of active scientific exploration, investigation, and discovery by oceanographic researchers. The New England seamounts have been found to have many rare and native species, several of which are new to science and known to live nowhere else on Earth. Recently, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's research vessel Okeanos Explorer identified 15 species of coral in the area that had not been previously reported.



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