

Deep-Sea Corals Importance

“Marine scientists have observed large numbers of commercially important but increasingly uncommon groupers, rockfishes, and other deep-sea fishes among the sheltering structures of some deep-sea corals. And because of their longevity, some deep-sea corals can serve as archives of past climate conditions that are important to understanding global climate change. In short, based on current knowledge, deep-sea coral communities appear to be as important to the biodiversity of the oceans and the sustainability of fisheries as their better recognized cousins in shallow tropical seas.” From: http://mcbi.marine-conservation.org/what/what_pdfs/Current_Magazine/What_are_DSC.pdf

Deep-sea corals:

- Provide habitat for a diverse array of species, including commercially important ones
- Are hotspots of biological diversity

“As our understanding of deep-sea coral communities has increased, so has our appreciation of their value. Deep-sea corals provide pockets of three-dimensional habitat for a diverse array of invertebrates and fishes in the vast expanse of the ocean... The three-dimensional structure of deep-sea coral may function in very similar ways to kelp forests, shallow coral reefs, and seagrass beds, providing enhanced feeding possibilities, a hiding place from predators, a nursery area for juveniles, and substrate for invertebrates. Stony coral "reefs," as well as deep-sea coral thickets, are often associated with a large number of other species and appear to form biodiversity "hotspots" in deeper waters. Deep-sea coral structures may provide habitat for commercially important fishes. For example, a study from southeast Alaska found that 85 percent of large rockfish occurred in and around deep-sea coral colonies and commercially valuable species of shrimp and crabs use the coral branches for feeding or protection from predators ^[6]. Off the coast of Florida, deep ivory coral (*Oculina* sp.) reefs serve as spawning grounds for groupers and snappers and are home to a rich invertebrate community that possibly rivals the diversity of shallow coral reef systems. In other cases, however, the linkages between commercial fisheries species and deep-sea corals remain unclear and may be indirect. From : http://coralreef.noaa.gov/deepseacorals/about/facts/dsc_important.html