

SC-03-06.3.2(04)

3rd Meeting of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) Scientific
Committee
20-24 March 2017, Saint Denis, La Reunion

Proposal for designation of the 'BRIDLE' fishery closure for the purpose
of the protection of its unique geographical representation

Relates to agenda item: 6.3.2

Working paper Info paper

Delegation of Australia

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to propose that the Bridle feature meets the following criteria in the SIOFA protocol for protected areas designation (see Annex H of SC2 report):

3a. Geographic and/or unique representation – The area proposed is known to contain unique or unusual geomorphological features that fishing operations may damage.

Recommendations *(working papers only)*

It is recommended that the SC:

- **Note** that the proposed Bridle feature meets the following criteria in the protocol: 3a. Geographic and/or unique representation – The area proposed is known to contain unique or unusual geomorphological features that fishing operations may damage.
 - **Recall** Article 4(c) of the Agreement which obliges Contracting Parties to apply the precautionary approach in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, whereby the absence of adequate scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures.
 - **Recommend** to the Meeting of the Parties that, in line with the precautionary approach, the Bridle feature be designated as a fishery closure for the purpose of the protection of its unique geographical representation, with a prohibition on all fishing to be reviewed after 2 to 5 years.
-

Proposal for designation of the 'BRIDLE' fishery closure for the purpose of the protection of its unique geographical representation

Australia

Acknowledgement

Australia have prepared this proposal in consultation with the Cook Islands, SIODFA, Ms Lynda Goldsworthy AM, and an informal steering committee of SIOFA SC members who met to advise Australia on its review of the SIOFA Standard protocol for future protected areas designation.

Purpose and rationale

The purpose of this paper is to propose that the Bridle feature meets the following criteria in the SIOFA protocol for protected areas designation (see Annex H of SC2 report):

- 3a. Geographic and/or unique representation – The area proposed is known to contain unique or unusual geomorphological features that fishing operations may damage.

Background

At the 4th Meeting of the Parties in 2017, Australia signalled its intention to review the SIODFA 'benthic protected areas' against the protocol for protected area designation. The proposal follows a template suggested at the intersessional meeting of the informal SIOFA steering committee in November 2017.

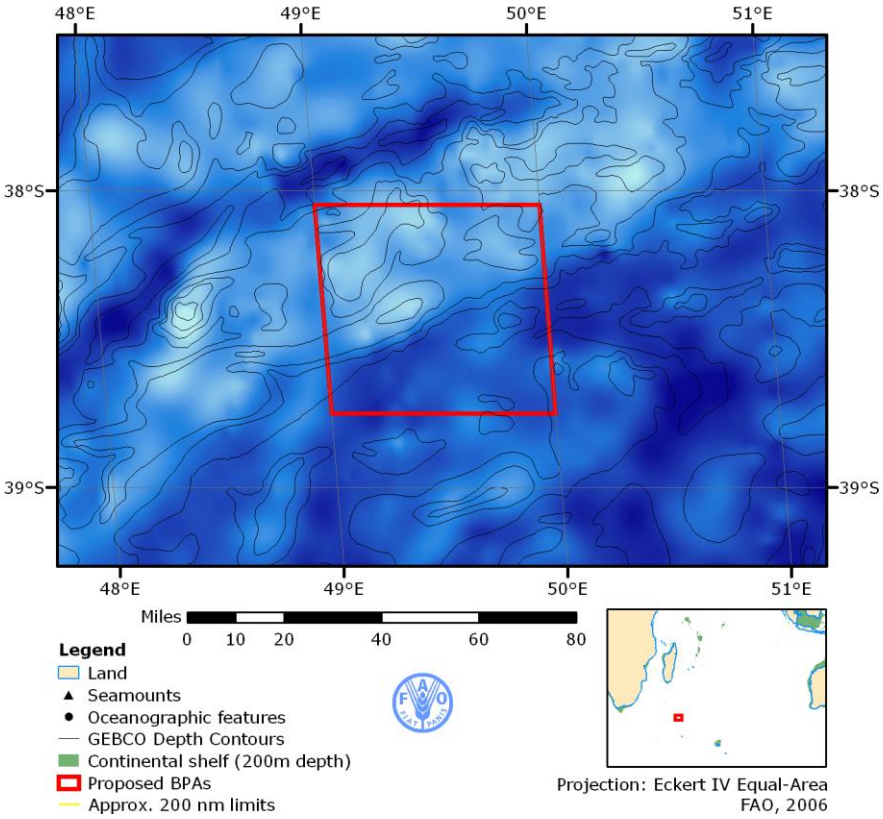
Name	Bridle								
Proponent/s	Australia (SIOFA Contracting Parties) <i>Prepared in collaboration with the Southern Indian Ocean Deepsea Fishers Association (SIOFA Observer)</i>								
Geographic description	<p>Coordinates: Latitude 38° 03' S, 49° 00' E and 38° 45' S and 50° 00' E Area: 6788 km²</p> <p>Area by depth range:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="459 551 1378 622"> <thead> <tr> <th>700-1000 m</th> <th>1000-1500 m</th> <th>>1500 m</th> <th>Total area (km2)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>130</td> <td>6658</td> <td>6788</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 1 General bathymetry and location of the Bridle seafloor feature</p>  <p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land ▲ Seamounts ● Oceanographic features — GEBCO Depth Contours ■ Continental shelf (200m depth) ▭ Proposed BPAs — Approx. 200 nm limits <p style="text-align: right;">Projection: Eckert IV Equal-Area FAO, 2006</p>	700-1000 m	1000-1500 m	>1500 m	Total area (km2)	0	130	6658	6788
700-1000 m	1000-1500 m	>1500 m	Total area (km2)						
0	130	6658	6788						

Figure 2

Swathe map of the Bridle seafloor features area

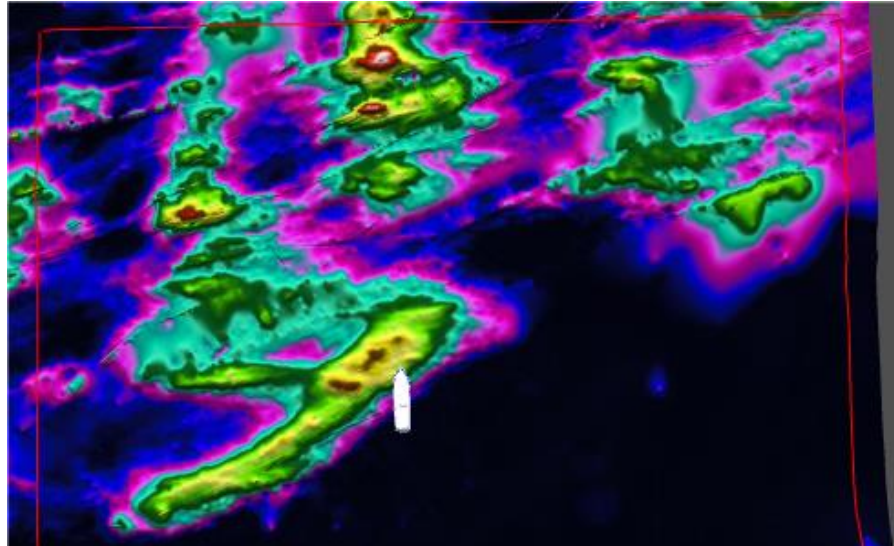
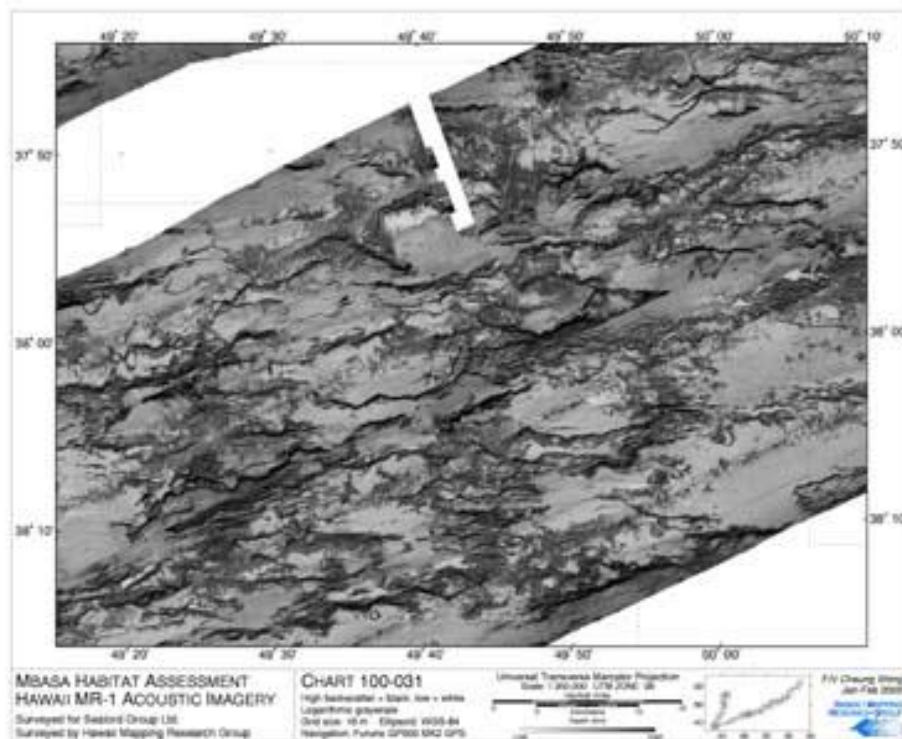


Figure 3

Habitat assessment, Bridle 'Benthic Protected Area' region



Objectives

The objective for this area is to protect its unique geographic representation.

Criteria that the protected area meets

This area meets the following criteria:
 3a. Geographic and/or unique representation – The area proposed is known to contain unique or unusual geomorphological features that fishing operations may damage.

Feature description and geographic representation

	<p>This seafloor region is located in the mid-region of the South Indian Ridge. The benthic substrate is characterized by many small ridges and reportedly has an abundance of brain corals, especially further south (SIODFA 2016). There appears to be heavy sedimentation from surface productivity in many areas and the extent of sedimentation in the region highlights the productivity in the water column and potentially the benthos in this area (Figure 3).</p> <p><u>Biodiversity representation</u> While this area reportedly has important benthic faunal populations and communities, these have not as yet been documented for this proposal.</p> <p><u>Fishing history</u> The region surrounding this area was reportedly heavily fished in the past with reports of 18 boats fishing one feature in one day and 36 boats fishing the region during the 2000 fishing season (SIODFA 2016). Commercial estimates of past catches from this region are reportedly in the range of 5000 to 10000 tonnes, which is thought to have reduced biomass of stocks (SIODFA 2016). The area developed a reputation for breaking trawl bridles, the wires that connect the trawl doors to the net, and hence the name.</p> <p>There has been only limited trawling effort in proposed area, with only small catches of orange roughy and oreo dories. There are reportedly five historically significant spawning stocks of orange roughy within 50 miles of this area.</p> <p><u>Other information to support this proposal</u> Industry members from Australia, the Cook Islands and Japan support the designation of the Bridle feature. No trawling by SIODFA vessels is permitted.</p>
Social, cultural and economic interests	Historical fishing data may assist with understanding any social, cultural and/or economic costs associated with designating this as a protected area. It is possible that designation could have adverse social, cultural or economic impacts in terms of forgone opportunity for fishing.
Proposed activities to be restricted or prohibited	Fishing within this proposed area with all gears could detrimentally impact the feature. The MoP should consider closure to all fishing.
Review periods	The scientific evidence to support a closure is uncertain and it is proposed that this fishery closure be regarded as an interim measure in accordance with the requirements of the precautionary approach. It is recommended that this designation be reviewed after 2 and not more than 5 years, or sooner if new information becomes available that enhances or degrades the justification for its protection.
Outline of monitoring and/or research needed	A desk-top compilation of publications from research undertaken within this area would assist with future reviews of the designation.
Compliance	Compliance-related issues are outside of the remit of the SIOFA SC.

References

SIODFA 2016, Southern Indian Ocean Deepwater Fisheries Association (SIODFA), Benthic Protected Areas in the Southern Indian Ocean. SIODFA Technical Report XVII 16/01. 40 pp