

Southeast Fishery-Independent Survey (SEFIS) Survey Area

Trap and video sampling by MARMAP/SEFIS targets reef fish species associated with hard substrates on the continental shelf and continental shelf-break in the SEUS (Figure 1). The continental shelf and shelf-break in the SEUS are dominated by sand and mud substrates, within which areas of hard, rocky substrates (“hardbottom”) occur and a highly diverse reef fish assemblage associates. Hardbottom habitats range in complexity from flat limestone pavement, sometimes covered with a sand or gravel veneer, to high-relief rocky ledges (Schobernd and Sedberry, 2009; Glasgow, 2010). Hardbottom often hosts diverse epifauna that can provide food and shelter for reef fish. The major oceanographic feature of the SEUS is the Gulf Stream, which influences outer sections of the continental shelf as it flows northward. Consistently warm Gulf Stream waters along the outer SEUS shelf allow tropical and subtropical species to inhabit areas at least as far north as North Carolina (Miller and Richards, 1980). Sampling by MARMAP has historically occurred from approximately Cape Lookout, North Carolina, to St. Lucie Inlet, Florida. Beginning in 2011, SEFIS sampled Georgia and Florida waters and MARMAP sampled North and South Carolina waters.

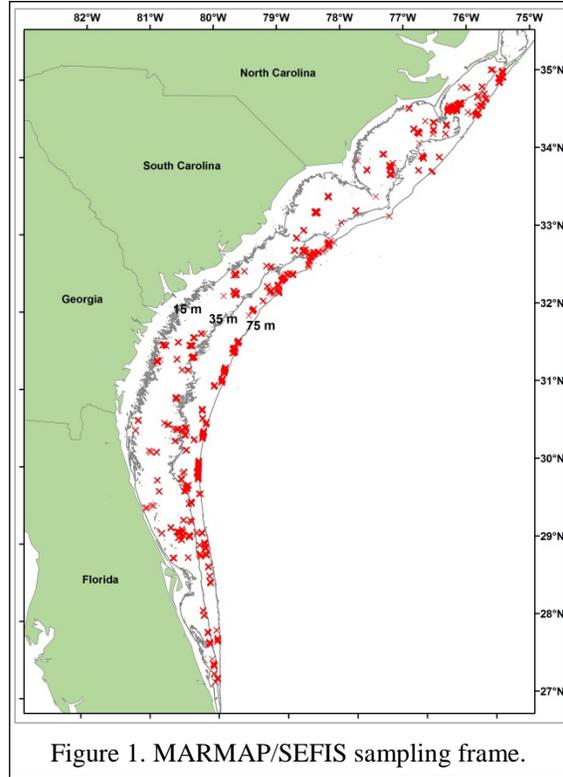


Figure 1. MARMAP/SEFIS sampling frame.