Integrated Spatial Data Modeling Tools for auto-classification and delineation of species-specific habitat maps from high-resolution, digital hydrographic data

Authors: E. Summers-Morris¹, P. Iampietro¹, R. Kvitek¹

¹ California State University, Monterey Bay, Seafloor Mapping Lab

Abstract

We used high-resolution multibeam bathymetry, together with precisely geolocated (± 5m) ROV observations of fish distribution, to produce species-specific and genus-specific habitat suitability models for eight rockfish (Sebastes) species in the Del Monte shale beds of Monterey Bay, California. A high-resolution (2m) digital elevation model (DEM) was generated and used to produce derived habitat characteristic layers using repeatable, non-subjective algorithmic methods. These data layers, together with the positions and counts of observed species were then used to create predictive models of habitat suitability. Factors evaluated for incorporation in the models included depth, slope, rugosity, and TPI at various scales. Statistical and empirical testing revealed that distance to a TPI50 “peak” was the most effective predictor of fish location. Thus, distance to TPI50 peak was used as a simple indicator of habitat suitability for all species. An average of 80% of all Sebastes were found within optimal habitat as defined by this simple model (Model 1). By incorporating depth, a refined suitability model (Model 4) was created for five species. Both models were used to produce stock estimates for all species and for all Sebastes, based on observed densities of rockfish within the ROV survey area and total area of habitat suitability classes in the overall shale bed study area.

Methods

- Multibeam bathymetric data with 2m resolution used to generate ROV survey and derivative grids: slope, rugosity, Topographic Position Index (TPI)
- ROV survey transects run perpendicular to the strike of the shale reef
- Evaluation of fish distribution and abundance data from ROV survey to generate habitat suitability models using ArcGIS.

Study site

- R/V MacGinitie fitted with Reson 8101 Seabat multibeam sonar
- Hyball ROV with digital video recorder

Results

Analysis of ROV survey data relative to the four factors analyzed (depth, slope, rugosity and TPI) suggested that proximity to features classified as “peaks” by a 50m scale Topographic Position Index analysis (TPI50) seemed to be the most significant factor affecting rockfish distribution. Habitat suitability Model 1, representing distance to TPI50 peaks was generated and reclassified into 10 categories at 10m intervals, with category 1 representing 0-10m to a peak (including peak features) and the last category (10) representing ≥90m distance to a peak. “Most suitable” habitat was considered to be 0-10m to a peak (category 1). Habitat suitability Model 4 - Deep incorporated species-specific depth preference and distance to: TPI50 peaks, rugosity, and slope, which further refined the model. Model 1 captured 80% of all Sebastes, and Model 4 - Deep captured 69% of Sebastes serranoides/S. flavidus.

Conclusions

- The methods and models developed for this project are geared to assess Sebastes species on the shale beds of Monterey Bay, CA, and appear to be an accurate predictive model of distribution and abundance.
- With these habitat suitability models, we can accurately predict type of habitat within which approximately 80% of Sebastes spp. fishes in the shale beds will be found.
- The use of multibeam bathymetry to generate habitat suitability models has potential to be an effective tool in predicting Sebastes species distribution and abundance.
- This project has shown that using repeatable algorithmic terrain analysis techniques, products can be derived from high-resolution multibeam DEMs that can be used to develop cost-effective, non-subjective, scaleable habitat suitability models.

References


Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Seafloor Mapping Lab: R Kvitek, P Iampietro, K Thomas, J Goicochea, C Bretz, S Zurita, B Jones, C Engalla, T O’Neill, J Samboly