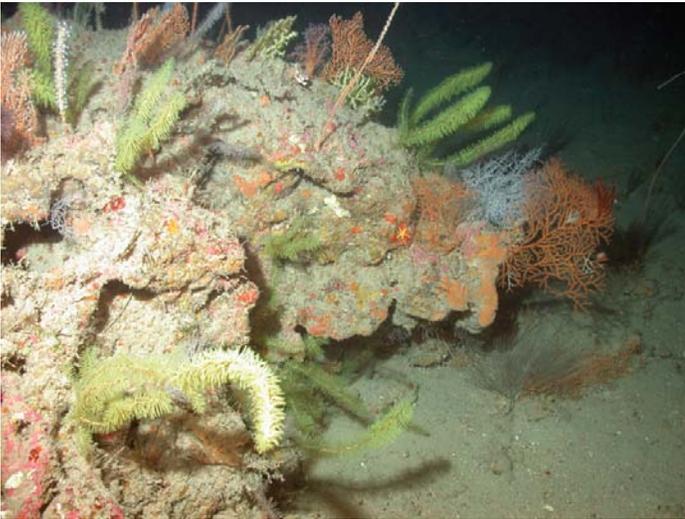


## Deep Coral Zone

The deep coral zone is consistent with what Bright et al. (1985) called the “drowned reef zone”, and includes the “Antipatharian transitional zone” of Rezak et. al (1985, 1990). This zone occurs in water depths below that which support active photosynthesis by coralline algae (90 m and greater). Solitary corals and deepwater branching corals, such as *Madrepora* and *Oculina* are also found in this zone.



**Fig. 6.19.** Photograph at 108 m (355 ft) depicting a deep coral community. In this image is a soft coral, *Chironophthya caribaea*, octocorals: *Nicella deichmani*, *Ellisella* sp., *Caliacis nutans*, *Scleracis* sp., and antipatharians: *Antipathes furcata*, *Elatopathes abientina*, *Phanopathes expansa*, and *Tanacetipathes tanacetum* (Photo credit: FGBNMS/ NURC-UNCW)

The deep coral zone is characterized by a diverse assemblage of antipatharian and alcyonarian corals, crinoids, bryozoans, sponges, azooxanthellate branching corals and small, solitary hard corals (Fig. 6.19). It includes both low and high relief rock outcroppings of various origins. Rock outcrops are often highly eroded, and lack coralline algal growth. Reef outcrops may be covered with a thin layer of silt in areas subject to frequent resuspension of sediments. This area of high sediment resuspension and turbid water was identified as the “Nepheloid” zone by Bright et al. (1985) and Rezak et al. (1985). Since this terminology refers to a physical oceanographic condition and not a biological classification, it is not used here.

## References

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