

REGULATIONS FOR THE OCULINA BANK

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS:

NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline

1-800-853-1964

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

1-888-404-FWCC or
Cell - *FWC or #FWC

U.S. Coast Guard

Port Canaveral - 321-868-4200

Ft. Pierce - 772-464-6100

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

843-571-4366;

1-866-SAFMC-10

www.safmc.net

www.safmc.net/managed-areas/oculina-bank



KNOW YOUR REGULATIONS!

Download the FREE SAFMC mobile app,
SA Fishing Regulations



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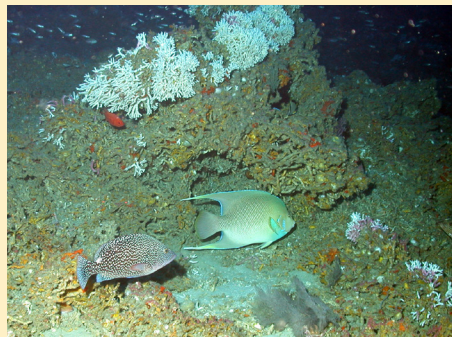
Photo Credits: NOAA SEFSC NURC/UNCW: Cover, fish school and coral, and Inside, small coral head; Stacy Harter: Cover, Coral and fish; Tim Fletcher, Cool Beans Charters, Cover, fishermen; Tina Udouj, FWRI, map.

This is an unofficial summary of the federal regulations prepared for the information and convenience of interested persons. This summary has no legal force or effect.

Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern

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Oculina Experimental Closed Area



Florida is well known for its shallow coral reefs, but is also home to the equally spectacular deepwater coral reefs of the Oculina Bank. Restrictions are in place along Florida's east coast from Flagler Beach to Fort Pierce to help protect the coral and associated fish in the area.

THE OCULINA BANK Nature's Hidden Coral Treasure



KNOW THE RULES BEFORE YOU GO





Restrictions are in place in order to protect fragile *Oculina* coral found in the area. The Experimental Closed Area within the Oculina Bank HAPC has further restrictions to protect species in the snapper grouper complex.

Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC)

COORDINATES:

The Oculina Bank HAPC encompasses an area bounded on the north by 29°43.5' N. lat., on the south by 27°30' N. lat., and irregular lines on the eastern and western boundaries, designed to protect coral habitat. Please see the federal register or the Managed Areas page of the SAFMC website for exact coordinates at www.safmc.net.

REGULATIONS WITHIN THE OHAPC:

-  No anchoring or use of grapples
-  No trawling, use of fish traps, or bottom-longlines
-  No fishing for or possession of rock shrimp
-  No possession of coral or bottom habitat, including *Oculina*



The *Oculina* Bank, a narrow strip of reefs off the central east coast of Florida, is unique among coral reefs and exists nowhere else on earth! The area is named after the slow-growing ivory tree coral, *Oculina varicosa*, which forms massive thickets at depths ranging from 200 to 350 feet, supporting diverse communities

of finfish and invertebrates. The coral provides essential habitat for many species of fish, including those managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

Restricted Areas







In 1984, the Council designated a 92-square mile area, where *Oculina varicosa* had been observed, as habitat area of particular concern and closed the area to bottom-tending fishing gear (bottom trawls, bottom long lines, dredges, and fish traps) in order to protect the fragile coral. In 1994, the 92-square mile area was designated as the **Oculina Experimental Closed Area (OECA)**, and possession of or fishing for snapper/grouper species was prohibited for a period of 10 years to protect juvenile and adult snapper and grouper species and their habitat. Subsequent management measures provided further protection by prohibiting anchoring, trawling for rock shrimp, and requiring vessel monitoring systems (VMS) on rock shrimp vessels. The Council has extended the closure indefinitely with periodic review of the management, monitoring, and research of the area. The **Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC)** includes the Oculina Experimental Closed Area as well as areas that were added in 2000 and 2015 to include additional areas where *Oculina* has been discovered.

Oculina Experimental Closed Area (OECA)

COORDINATES:

Located within the Oculina Bank HAPC, the Experimental Closed Area is bounded on the north by 27°53' N. lat., on the south by 27°30' N. lat., on the east by 79°56' W. long., and on the west by 80°00' W. long. This provides researchers with the opportunity to evaluate the effect of prohibiting bottom fishing and fishing-related impacts to habitat in a closed area in the South Atlantic region.

REGULATIONS WITHIN THE OECA:

-  No fishing for or possession of snapper/grouper species
-  All snapper/grouper taken incidentally by hook-and-line gear must be released immediately by cutting the line without removing the fish from water.
-  No anchoring or use of grapples
-  No trawling, use of fish traps, or bottom-longlines
-  No fishing for or possession of rock shrimp
-  No possession of coral or bottom habitat, including *Oculina*