



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Oculina Experimental Closed Area

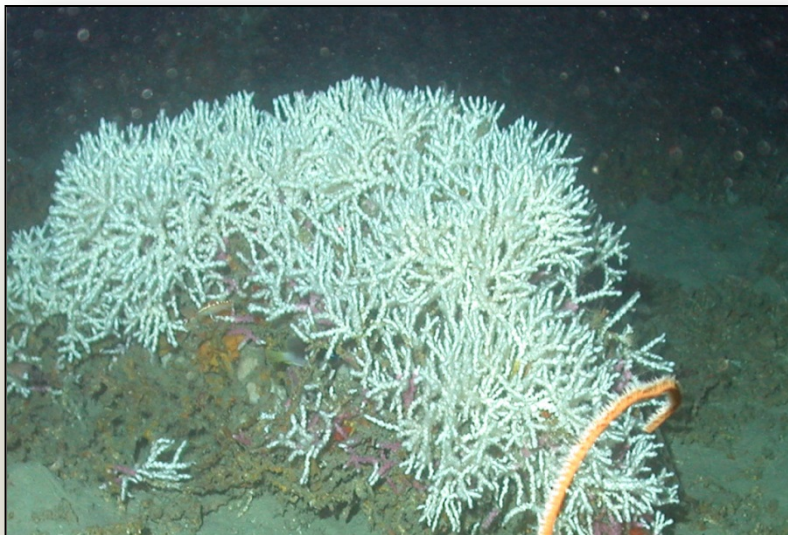
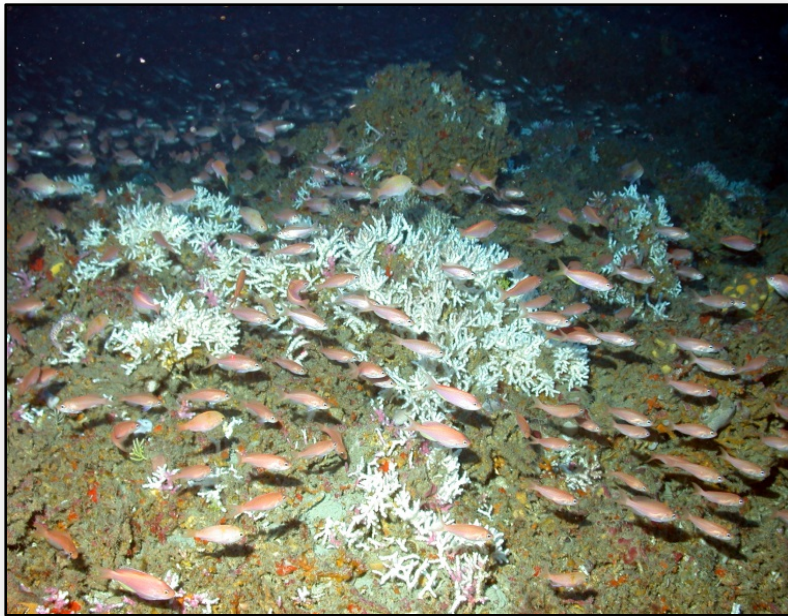
Background on SAFMC Management Actions

Oculina Evaluation Team Webinar

March 12th, 2014

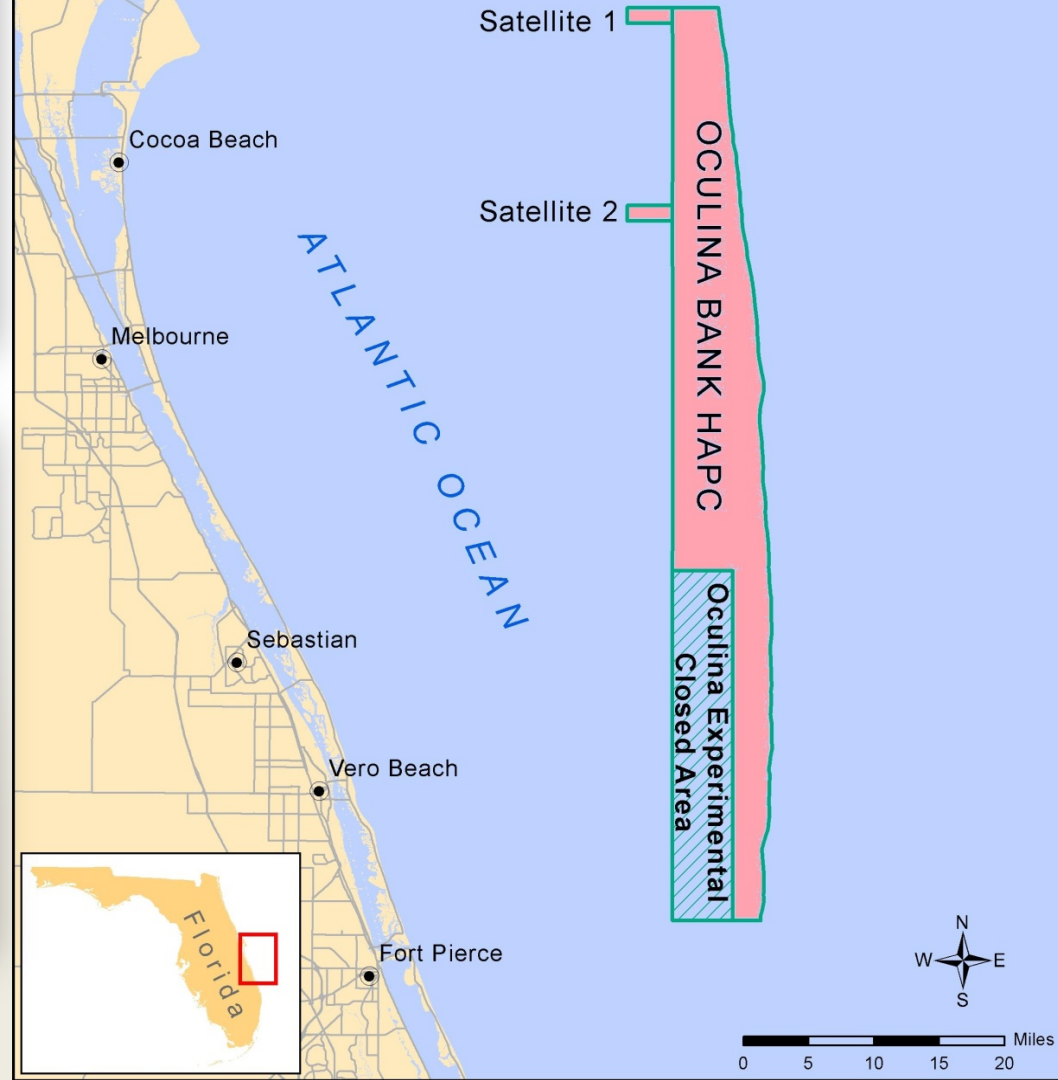


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Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern

- Expanded Oculina Bank and Satellite HAPCs
(Coral FMP Regulations Effective June 2000 - Present)
- Oculina Experimental Closed Area
(Snapper Grouper FMP Regulations Effective June 1994 - Present)

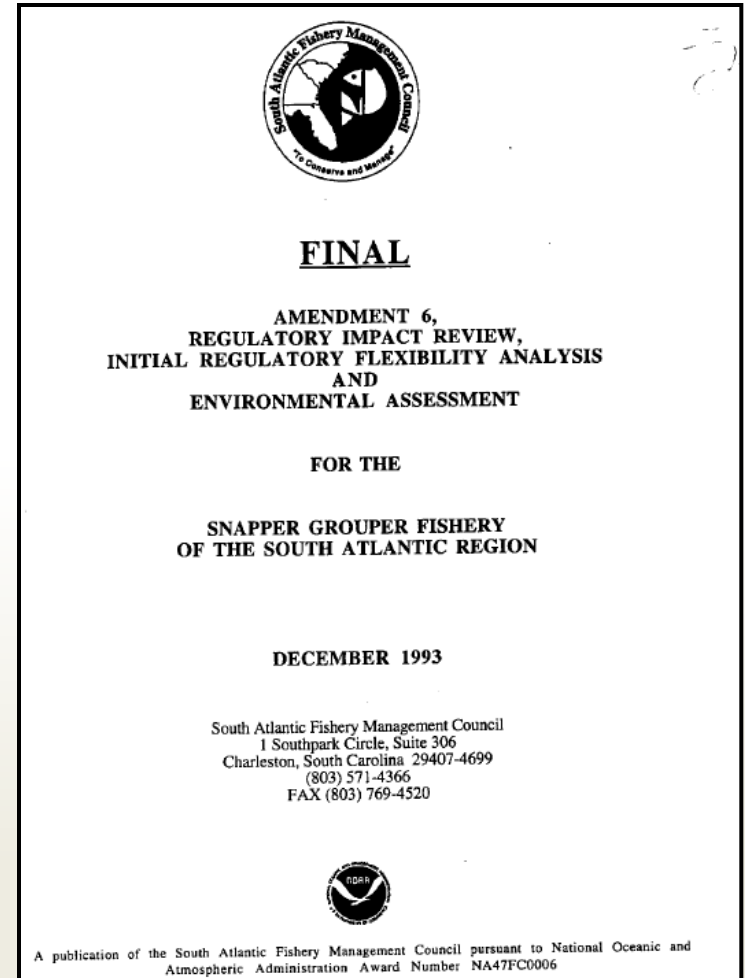




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Timeline of Plan Amendments

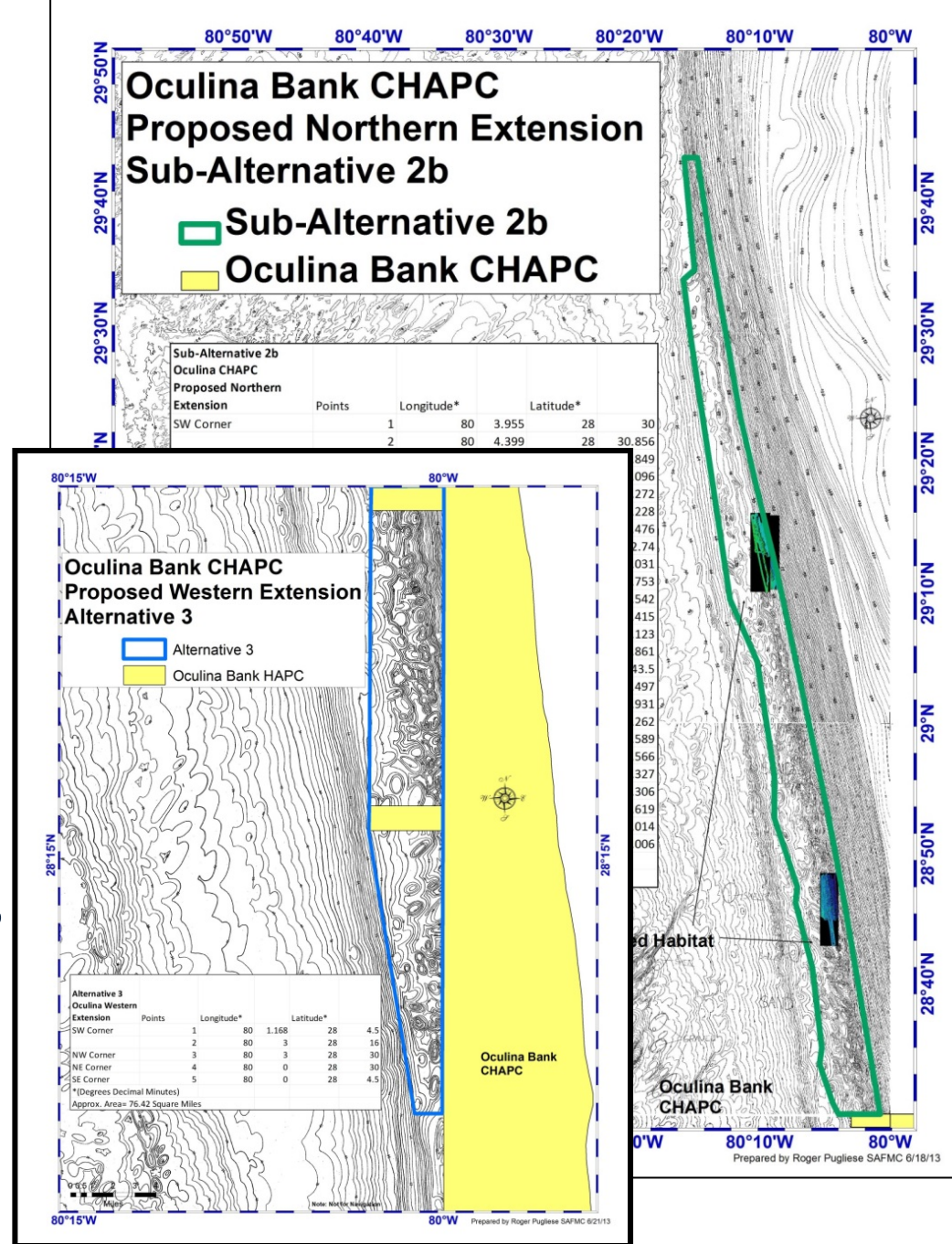
- 92 mi² of Oculina Bank designated as an HAPC (**Coral FMP** - 1984)
- **Snapper Grouper Amendment 6** (1994) – prohibited anchoring by vessels fishing for SG species and prohibited fishing for/retention of SG species within the HAPC. Area became OECA.
- **Coral Amendment 3** (1995) – prohibited all vessels from anchoring in HAPC
- Trawling for rock shrimp prohibited east of 80°W longitude (between 27°30'N and 28°30'N latitude), in depths less than 100 fathoms. (**Shrimp Amendment 1** - 1996)



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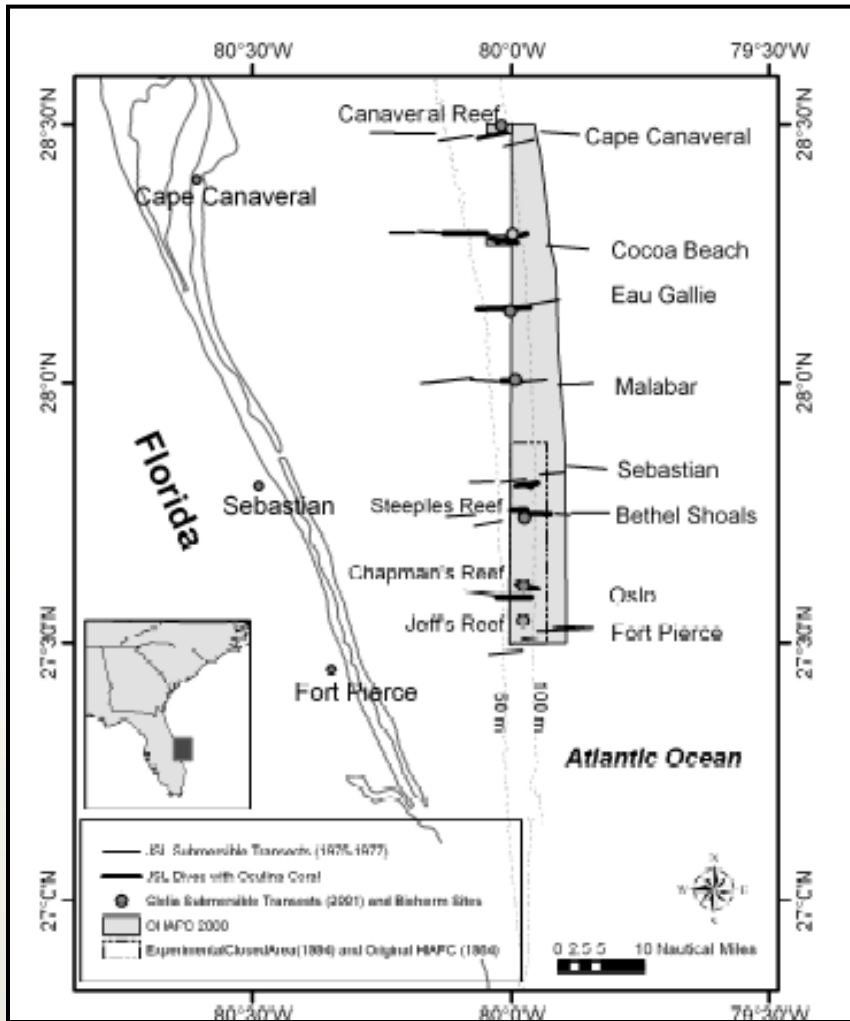
Other Amendments

- Oculina HAPC expanded to include rock shrimp closed area (**Coral Amendment 4; Comprehensive EFH Amendment – 1998**)
- **Shrimp Amendment 5 (2003)** – required use of VMS for rock shrimp fleet
- **Coral Amendment 8** (approved by SAFMC in 2013; under NMFS review) extends northern and western Oculina Bank HAPC by 343 mi²



Snapper Grouper Amendment 13A

- **Purpose** of action in 13A was to provide continued protection of snapper grouper populations and associated *Oculina* coral.
- The **need** was to provide a hedge against high degree of scientific uncertainty associated with SG species, reduce the possibility that these stocks may fall below sustainable levels and help rebuild stocks already below sustainable levels. Also, provide high level of protection to *Oculina*.



From Reed et al 2007





Scope of Alternatives

- **Alternative 1 (Preferred).** Extend regulations within the OECA that prohibit fishing for and retention of SG species for an indefinite period with a 10 year re-evaluation by the Council. The Council will review the configuration and size of OECA within 3 years or the publication date of the final rule.
- **Alternative 2.** Extend regulations within OECA that prohibit fishing for and retention of SG species for an additional 10 year period.
- **Alternative 3.** “ ” ...for an additional 20 year period.
- **Alternative 4.** “ ”...for an additional 50 year period.
- **Alternative 5.** “ ”...for an indefinite period.
- **Alternative 6.** No Action. Regulations within OECA would sunset on 6/27/04.





SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

The Preferred Alternative...

- Species appear to have begun to recover within the affected area; if opened, any gains during previous decade would be lost
- Alternative 1 provides most biological, social and economic benefits while allowing adaptive management
- Evaluation Plan may result in increased public support and more protection of SG species and *Oculina* coral and result in a decrease in illegal fishing
 - Outreach
 - Enforcement
 - Research & Monitoring



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FINAL Evaluation Plan For the *Oculina* Experimental Closed Area

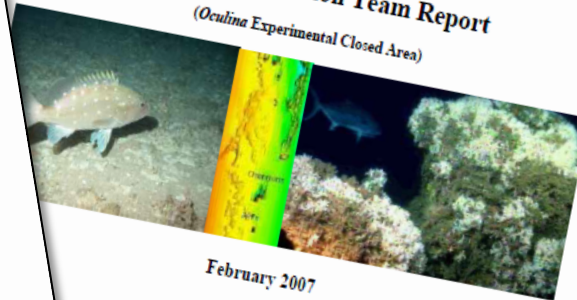


March 22, 2005

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
1 Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, South Carolina 29407-4699
(843) 571-4366 / FAX (843) 769-4520
Toll Free: 866-SAFMC-10



Final Oculina Evaluation Team Report (*Oculina* Experimental Closed Area)



February 2007

Submitted to:
The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Southpark Circle, Suite 306, Charleston, South Carolina 29407-4699
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SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2005 Evaluation Plan

Outreach Plan

- SAFMC I&E Committee
- Draft proposal developed in 2003 for HAPC by research partners (NOAA, UNC-W, SEFSC)
- Informal meetings around Ft. Pierce and Port Canaveral in 2004
- Identified 4 primary objectives
 - Support development of Outreach Plan
 - Focused outreach campaign targeting fishermen
 - Broad media campaign
 - Evaluation

THE OCULINA BANK
Nature's Hidden Coral Treasure

The deep waters off the Treasure Coast of Florida are the only place on Earth where the Ivory Tree Coral builds living reefs as tall as three-story buildings.

Florida is well known for its shallow coral reefs, but it is also home to the lesser-known yet equally spectacular deepwater reefs of the Oculina Bank. The reefs are located along the central eastern coast of Florida, from Daytona Beach to Ft. Pierce, at depths of 200-300 feet along the continental shelf. Built by the slow-growing Ivory Tree Coral, Oculina reefs are known to exist anywhere else on the planet.

The Oculina reefs are true deep reefs, offering vital refuge to hundreds of different fish and invertebrates. The massive equivalent of old growth underwater forests, the reefs may be over 1,000 years old. It can take over 100 years for corals to grow 3-6 feet tall.

In the past, fishing activities and natural events have damaged the fragile coral. However, over 300-square miles of the Oculina Bank are now designated as the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern. Within the southern end of the Oculina Bank HAPC is the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, where additional fishing restrictions help protect and restore snapper and grouper populations (see below).

Fishermen should be aware of the value of intact coral habitat, know the rules before going offshore, and help managers enforce measures intended to sustain healthy fisheries for everyone.

SPECIES: SCORPION, "MUD MAID"
WEIGHT: 17 LBS.
LENGTH: 42 IN.
LOCATION: 18 MILES OFF EAST OF FT. PIERCE, FLORIDA

Though known fishing for snapper and grouper is prohibited in the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, anglers may fish the area to help fish such as triggerfish, wrasse, snappers, eels, and toads. These spots fish are stocked by smaller fish that feed on natural coral rubble collected away from healthy reefs.

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AREA RESTRICTIONS
Fishing Restrictions in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern

- 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

Oculina Experimental Closed Area Restrictions

All restrictions in the Oculina Bank HAPC apply PLUS:

- 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.safmc.com
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
www.safmc.com
BONSAI Research Oceanographic Institution
www.bonai.com
NOAA's Coral Reef Information System
1-800-853-1864

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS:
NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline
1-800-853-1864

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
1-888-484-FWCC or
Call - 877-FCW - 877-FCW
U.S. Coast Guard
Port Canaveral - 321-868-4100
Ft. Pierce - 772-464-6100



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SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2005 Evaluation Plan

Enforcement Plan

- Council motion passed in March 2003 stating the OECA closure to be a priority and requested NOAA GC revise the penalty schedule
- Special Agent assigned to area
- LE Committee & AP established 5 enforcement principles
- Oculina Bank Enforcement meeting was held (December 2004)
 - VMS
 - Cooperative Enforcement
 - Increase Presence
 - Enforcement Reports
 - Outreach & Education

USCG AND FL FWCC OCULINA BANK PATROL EFFORT REPORT: OCT-DEC 2007						
	USCG		FWCC		MONTHLY TOTAL	Notes
	OCT	YTD	OCT	YTD		
COMMERCIAL F/V DETECTED	5	5	0	0	5	USCG 1 day on scene
COMMERCIAL F/V BOARDED	3	3	0	0	3	
RECREATIONAL F/V DETECTED	0	0	0	0	0	FWCC P/V RANDALL in dry dock entire month
RECREATIONAL F/V BOARDED	0	0	0	0	0	
PRIMARY AIRCRAFT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
SECONDARY AIRCRAFT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
PRIMARY CUTTER - P/V HRS	8	8	0	0	8	
SECONDARY CUTTER - P/V HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
PRIMARY BOAT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
SECONDARY BOAT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
VIOLATIONS DETECTED	0	0	0	0	0	
SUB TOTAL PATROL HRS	8	8	0	0	8	
Fiscal Year 2008 - 1st QUARTER	NOV	YTD	NOV	YTD	MONTHLY TOTAL	Notes
	0	5	0	0	0	FWCC 1 day on scene
	0	3	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	8	7	7	7	
	0	0	2	2	2	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	0	
	0	8	9	9	9	
	DEC	YTD	DEC	YTD	MONTHLY TOTAL	Notes
COMMERCIAL F/V DETECTED	0	5	0	0	0	FWCC 2 days on scene
COMMERCIAL F/V BOARDED	0	3	0	0	0	
RECREATIONAL F/V DETECTED	0	0	3	3	3	
RECREATIONAL F/V BOARDED	0	0	1	1	1	
PRIMARY AIRCRAFT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
SECONDARY AIRCRAFT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
PRIMARY CUTTER - P/V HRS	0	8	16	25	18	
SECONDARY CUTTER - P/V HRS	0	0	4	6	4	
PRIMARY BOAT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
SECONDARY BOAT HRS	0	0	0	0	0	
VIOLATIONS DETECTED	0	0	0	0	0	
SUB TOTAL PATROL HRS	0	8	22	31	22	



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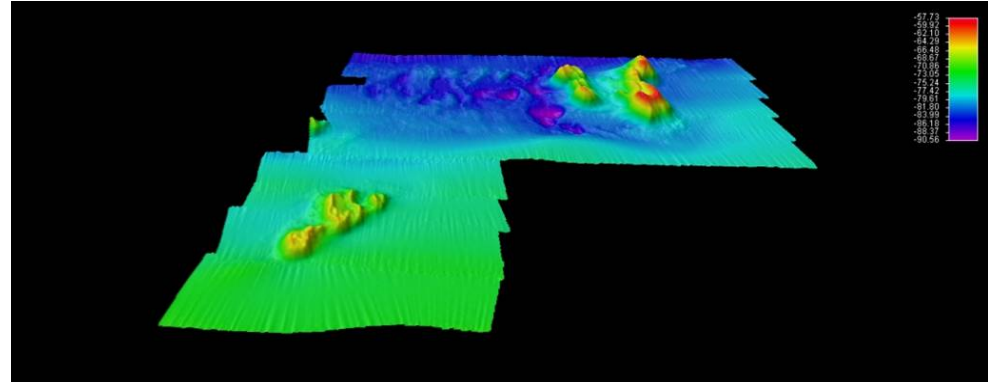


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2005 Evaluation Plan

Research & Monitoring Plan

- 2004 Deepwater Coral Research and Monitoring Workshop in Cape Canaveral
- Identified 7 objectives
 - Habitat recovery
 - Effect on fish distribution and status
 - Population structure of corals
 - Stressors affecting OECA
 - Key trophodynamic groups
 - Physical/chemical parameters that define a healthy ecosystem
 - Research on coral feeding ecology



NURC, Chapman's Reef



NURC, A. Shepard



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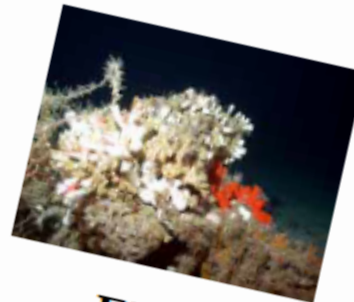


FINAL
Evaluation Plan
For the
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