

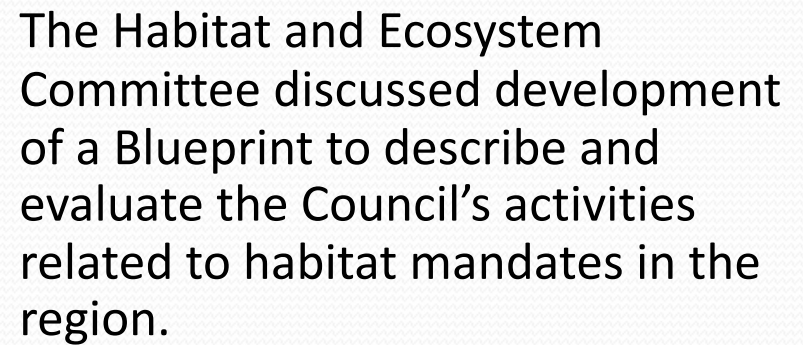


Habitat Program Evaluation and Blueprint

Update for Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel
November 2021



Photos: Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary



The Council directed staff to establish a Habitat Blueprint Development Team to develop the scope of the project and the process to develop a Blueprint document.



Workgroup's Membership

Council members:

1. Mel Bell, SAFMC Chair
2. Carolyn Belcher, SAFMC Vice Chair
3. Steve Poland, Former Habitat Committee Chair and Council Vice Chair

Council Staff:

1. John Carmichael, Executive Director
2. Roger Pugliese, Habitat and Ecosystem Scientist
3. Myra Brouwer, Deputy Dir. For Management (Lead)



Workgroup's Purpose

- a. Develop evaluation plan and strategy (Blueprint)
- b. Assist in preparing and reviewing materials for Council discussion and decision-making.
 - Facilitate Council discussion and ensure efficient use of Council discussion time
 - All decisions will be made by the Council through official Council meetings noticed in the *Federal Register*
- c. Assist in reviewing the Blueprint prior to Council approval



Progress To Date

- Four workgroup meetings
- Scope of work for Blueprint
- Habitat Program purpose statement, goals and objectives
- Draft blueprint document
- Role of the Habitat AP and OC AP - *underway*
- Inventory/evaluation of online tools - *underway*



Photo: Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

To support the identification, monitoring, and protection of the habitats required by the species managed by the South Atlantic Council to preserve their ecosystem function and ensure their long-term sustainable use.





Goals and Objectives

Goal I. Comply with the habitat mandates of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and its amendments.

- Describe and identify essential fish habitat (EFH)
- Provide information to minimize adverse effects on EFH caused by fishing
- Encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH
- Support the Council's role in mandatory EFH reviews
- Support Council comments on activities by Federal or State agencies that may impact the habitat of managed resources



Goals and Objectives

Goal II. Provide information to support Council communication on habitat issues.

- Habitat research needs for Research and Monitoring Plans
- Habitat research needs and priorities to inform regional planning and research efforts
- Support Council's responses to habitat related requests for information
- Support Council outreach activities on habitat issues



Next Steps



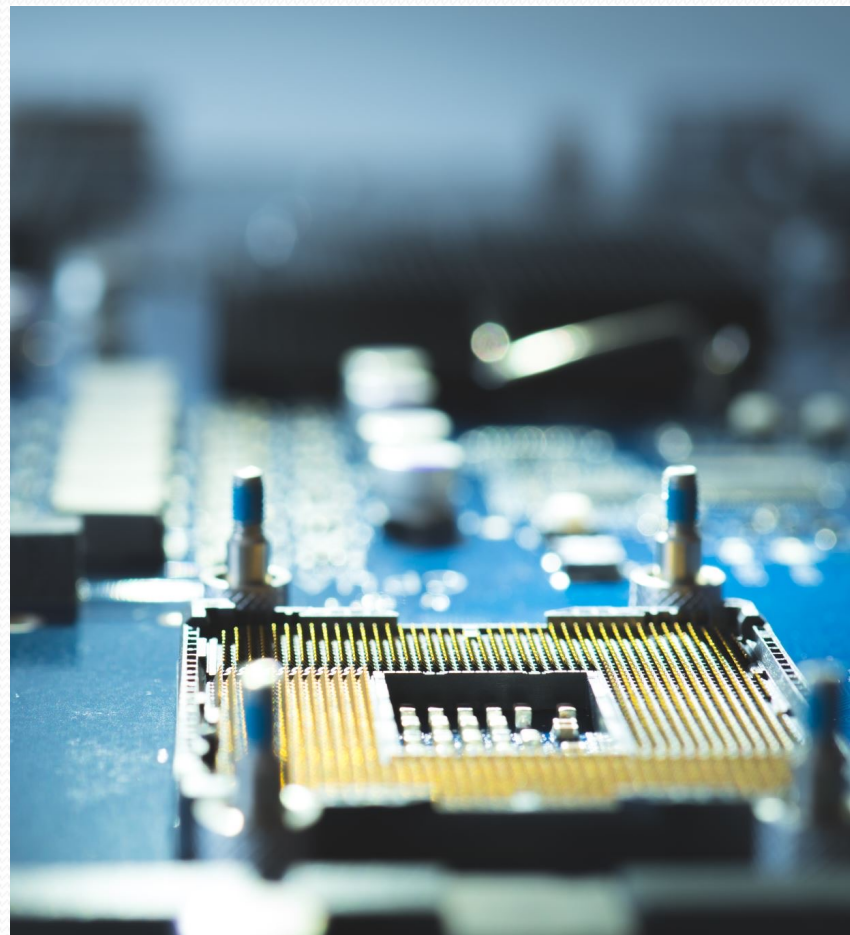
- Continue evaluation of tools and services
- Outreach and communication component
- Draft Blueprint ready for approval in March 2022



Tools and Services

- Hosted remotely and analytics are not readily available
- Who is using them and how useful are they?
- How to improve access and convey relevance?

Note that current habitat & ecosystem content on website is not being considered by website contractor at this time



Outreach and Communication

- Goal is to better communicate Council's role on habitat
 - Elevate/improve access to policies used in EFH consultations
 - Explain policy/consultation process and the Council's role
 - Explain what the Council can and cannot do relative to habitat
 - Highlight what the Council has already done
 - Fishery Ecosystem Plan
 - Climate Change?

