

From: [Shari Anker](#)
To: [SAFMC Administrator](#)
Subject: Resubmission of Amendment 10 to open up Oculina habitat
Date: Monday, September 9, 2024 4:41:19 PM
Attachments: [CASLCOculinaReefContinuedProtectionAppeal.pdf](#)
[CASLCOculinaReefContProtectionAppeal2.pdf](#)
[CASLC_NOAAcomments_Oculina.pdf](#)
[Petition Cover Letter FINAL FINAL.docx](#)
[Oculina Bank NGO sign on Version FILED.docx](#)
[Pew opinion piece in The Hill.docx](#)

Dear Administrator:

It is with a heavy heart that we write today to once again submit our comments against consideration of any opening of Oculina Coral's already designated OHAPC to bottom trawling for rock shrimp, either directly or as a consequence of too-close proximity of fishing activities.

In our opinion, nothing has changed to spur any reconsideration of this action since we submitted our comments in in two separate letters in 2021. Our recommendation was that the Council choose the "No action" or "Status Quo" option. We also submitted comments to NOAA as they were deciding on SAFMC's proposal in 2022. See the first three attachments below.

As part of our advocacy we created a petition that culminated in 1700 signatures from folks who are also steadfast against the taking of an already conserved area that will result in its further degradation and/or destruction. Together with the Marine Conservation Institute's petition over 43,000 signatures were obtained. We also created NGO sign-on letter in which 48 organizations registered their opposition to re-opening the OHAPC area. See the second two attachments below.

In closing, we wish to emphasize that concern for Oculina Corals is a national issue. Below is a June 27, 2022 article published in The Hill by Pew Charitable Trust that states that opening up the OHAP "defies science and economics." In that spirit, we again quote Dr. Sylvia Earle's statement on the shrimp industry's proposal to open up OHAP. As you know, Dr. Earle is a legendary marine biologist, oceanographer, and explorer, and is an advocate for our oceans par excellence.

"The science is clear. The economics are clear. The ethical and moral mandates are clear. What remains of the intact East Florida Oculina reef system and the associated damaged areas, if left alone -- that is, protected from fishing, especially trawling, will yield enduring benefits now and forever. Giving a few shrimpers a green light to trawl these ancient systems into oblivion will destroy what could be an on-going source of life and livelihoods in exchange for a few bucks for a few people and then it will be over."

Sincerely,

Shari R. Anker
President
Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County

P.O. Box 12515
Fort Pierce, FL 34979

1. Public comment letters from Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County:
2. Petition cover letter and signatures plus NGO sign-on letter:
3. Revisit PEW Charitable Trust article, "Reopening Florida corals to fishing defies science and economics".