

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Spiny Lobster Committee Report
Doubletree Hotel
New Orleans, Louisiana
October 26, 2011

Committee Members Present:

Teehan, Chair
Gill, V. Chair

Simpson
Perret

The agenda was adopted as written and the committee minutes from the June 7, 2011, Joint Gulf and South Atlantic Spiny Lobster Committee were adopted without modifications (**Tab F, No. 2**).

Mr. Herndon summarized the meeting held with NOAA, Industry, and the Sanctuary staff by phone (**Tab F, No. 3**). Mr. Perret asked how many industry representatives were present during these meetings and Mr. Kelly, from Florida Keys Commercial Fishing Association, stated around 18 members present at the first meeting and about 15 members present at the second meeting. Mr. Herndon reviewed the primary reason the Councils decided to move the two actions in Amendment 11 out of Amendment 10 for further development. During the Industry meetings the locations of threatened corals were checked more closely thereby correcting the old or incorrect coral areas including areas of good recruitment (i.e., nursery grounds). Now that the threatened coral locations are better identified, the proposed area closures are more accurately identified in Amendment 11. Mr. Herndon stated the industry meeting was successful because stakeholders indicated the updated and revised coral locations were more accurate. Mr. Perret wanted clarification that these were not new data points where coral had been identified, but instead had been checked for accuracy based on additional studies and research that better identified these areas.

Next, Ms. Gerhart summarized the alternatives under Action 1 in Amendment 11 (**Tab F, No. 4**) that would limit spiny lobster fishing in certain areas in the EEZ off Florida to protect threatened staghorn and elkhorn corals (*Acropora* spp.). Dr. Crabtree asked if the Gulf Council wanted to wait to select preferred alternatives until the South Atlantic Council had a chance to review the alternates. All the closed areas are within the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction. Mr. Gill pointed out that the Gulf Council would not meet again prior to the South Atlantic Council's public hearings.

The committee recommends and I so move: **In Action 1, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 3, Option a.**

Alternative 3. Create new closed areas in the EEZ off Florida consisting of identified *Acropora* spp. colonies with straight-line boundaries.

Option a. In the closed areas, spiny lobster trapping would be prohibited.

Motion carried at full Council.

Ms. Gerhart summarized the alternatives under Action 2 which would require gear markings for spiny lobster trap lines in the EEZ off Florida. She also reviewed the changes to the Biological Opinion extending the gear marking requirements until August 6, 2017.

Originally the committee made the following motion: *To move Action 2 to the considered but rejected section.*

Mr. Grimes and Dr. Crabtree strongly cautioned the committee about moving Action 2 to the considered but rejected section because of the regulations and laws that govern protected resources. Mr. Gill stated he wanted to make a strong statement with the motion. Mr. Grimes stated it would be beneficial to wait until the Florida FWC meets to determine whether they would adopt compatible regulations for proposed gear marking requirements in state waters.

A substitute motion was given by Mr. Simpson to at least wait until the Amendment goes through the public hearing process. The committee recommends and I so **move: in Action 2, that the preferred alternative be Alternative 1, no action.**

Motion carried at full Council one opposed.

The committee recommends and I so **move: to prepare Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 for public hearings.**

Motion carried at full Council with no opposition.

Dr. Carrie Simmons reviewed (**Tab F, No. 5**) the listing of the South Atlantic Council public hearing locations and ask if additional public hearing locations were necessary. Mr. Teehan stated he thinks definitely one, maybe two public hearings may be necessary in the lower and middle keys. During full Council the locations of additional public hearings will be provided.

Full Council Motion: To add a Marathon, FL and a Key West, FL public hearing to the list of those for Spiny Lobster Amendment 11.

Motion carried.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.