Summary Report
SAFMC Coral Advisory Panel Meeting
May 9 - 10, 2012
Charleston, SC

The Coral Advisory Panel (AP) met in Charleston on Wednesday, May 9th and Thursday, May 10th, 2012. The main items for discussion were the measures included in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3) pertaining to expansion of Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. The AP received an update on the final version of Spiny Lobster Amendment 11, submitted for Secretarial Review in March 2012. Additionally, the AP received a number of informational presentations by AP members on specific projects, reports, and agency updates. Below is a summary of the APs recommendations, motions, and other business.

AP Recommendations

Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 update

Recommendation 1. Based on the knowledge of the spatial and temporal variability of the species of *Acropora* (especially A. *cervicornis)*., the Coral AP recommends the Spiny Lobster AP consider inclusion of a periodic (suggested 5-year) review and update of closed areas identified in Spiny Lobster Amendment 11, to allow 'release' of those areas that no longer support significant cover *Acropora* species, and inclusion of any locations outside of the presently identified sites that are found to contain significant *Acropora* spp. colonies.

Recommendation 2. The Coral AP draft, for Council approval and forwarding, a letter to the State of Florida requesting they identify and evaluate conservation measures similar to those indentified in the Spiny Lobster Amendment 11, for implementation in State waters. (AP point of contact: Kate Lunz)

Overview of Dept. Of Energy Report: Protocols for Survey Methodology for Offshore Marine Hydrokinetic Energy Projects

Recommendation 3. The Coral AP draft a policy regarding appropriate assessment protocols for deepwater corals and benthic habitats, to be utilized during habitat and environmental impact assessments within Lease tracks and other areas with indentified Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (C-HAPCs) for submission to, and approval by, the Council. Said Policy will be based on the recommendations in Section 9 of the "*Final Report: Siting Study for a Hydrokinetic Energy Project Located Offshore Southeastern Florida: Protocols for Survey Methodology for Offshore Marine Hydrokinetic Energy Projects"* (Vinick et al., 2012. Submitted to: United States Department of Energy; DOE Grant Award Number: DE-EE0002655.000). Such

recommendations should include a 'tiered' approach which allows for methods suitable for evaluation of the activity needs and the anticipated habitat complexity, as well as provides for increased information needs associated with increased magnitude and complexity of the habitat found in the areas under investigation.

Recommendation 4. The Council forward a comment letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM); *Docket No. BOEM–2011–0012* (Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Renewable Energy Program Interim Policy Leasing for Marine Hydrokinetic Technology Testing Offshore Florida), prior to May 24, 2012, expressing that information available to the Council indicates significant deepwater resources exist within the areas of proposed activities for Lease Blocks (LB) 7003, 7053 and 7054, and the proposed anchoring and repeated deployments of anchors in those areas (excepting the northwestern portion of LB 7053), pose significant risk to deepwater coral and benthic community habitats.

Shallow Jacksonville *Lophelia* site

Recommendation 5. The Coral AP draft, for Council approval and forwarding, a letter to NOAA (and appropriate other agencies) supporting continued efforts to provide much needed mapping and better coordination of information exchange among agencies. Better coordinated mapping efforts are intended to provide additional information on benthic communities and habitats (and associated linkages and distribution) within Coral Habit Areas of Particular Concern. (AP point of contact: Steve Ross)

<u>AP Approved Motions</u>

Exotic Hard Coral Species

Motion 1. The Coral AP deems the presence of *Tubastrea* in the South Atlantic region a threat to coral reef systems and recommends that the species of the genus *Tubastraea* be removed from the Coral FMP, and that the states within the Council (South Atlantic region) modify existing rules as necessary to allow for the take of the Genus in waters of the state and EEZ. Take may be through a regulatory or non-regulatory process as deemed appropriate by the state. Motion approved 9 "Yes" and 3 "No"

HAPC Measures in CE-BA 3: Action 1. Expand boundaries of Oculina Bank HAPC

Motion 2. Northern Boundary: Recommend Alternative 2a, as depicted in Figure 1 and Table 1 (Coral AP Briefing Book Attachment 6b: Simplified Polygons and Draft Lists of Coordinates) as the preferred Action for modification of the northern Boundary of the Oculina Coral HAPC. Motion approved unanimously.

Motion 3. Recommend Alternative 3, as depicted in Figure 3 of the March 2012 "SAFMC OPTIONS PAPER for Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3)" as the preferred action for modification of the western Boundary of the Oculina C-HAPC. Motion approved unanimously.

HAPC Measures in CE-BA 3: Action 2. Expand Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC to incorporate a Lophelia site off Jacksonville

Motion 4. Recommend modification of Alternative 2a, with the northern boundary reduced to 30° 37.0' N latitude, and the southern limit modified to be bound by the following coordinates: 30° 0.0'N; 80° 13.0' W, then east to 30° 0.0' N; 80° 10.0' W, then northeasterly to 30° 4.0'N; 80° 4.0'W. These modifications are made to include known (mapped) benthic habitat, and exclude those areas where habitat has not been found. The western limit of the expanded zone remains as stated in Alternative 2 (the 200m contour). Motion approved unanimously.

HAPC Measures in CE-BA 3: Regarding Action 3. Expand Cape Lookout Coral HAPC.

Motion 5. Recommend selection of Alternative 2 as the preferred action.
Motion approved unanimously.

<u>Other Business</u>

Due to conflicting work schedule and time constraints, Dave Gilliam is stepping aside as the Coral AP Vice-Chair. The AP approved two nominees for the newly vacant Vice-Chair seat: Jocelyn Karazsia and Sandra Brooke. The AP is finalizing the election of the Vice-Chair remotely,over email correspondence with the AP Chair.