SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE
JOINT ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MEETING
Wilmington, NC
December 3, 2012

The joint Ecosystem-Based Management and Habitat and Environmental Protection Committee met on Monday, December 3rd, 2012 in Wilmington, NC. The Committee received a report on the status of landings for octocorals from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Because the management unit was shortened to include octocorals in waters off the South Atlantic where harvest is prohibited (through Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2), the Committee requested that future reports of octocoral landings be provided on an annual basis from FWC. Mike Merrifield, Chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP, and Steve Blair, Chair of the Coral AP, reviewed recommendations for Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) that resulted from the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting on October 18th, 2012. Roger Pugliese provided a review of the Habitat AP report from their November 14-15th, 2012 meeting. The Committee reviewed the Coral Amendment 8 Options Paper which considers modifications to the Oculina Bank, Stetson-Miami Terrace, and Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs.

The joint Ecosystem-Based Management and Habitat and Environmental Protection Committee developed the following motions in discussion of the Coral Amendment 8 Options Paper:

MOTION #1: PROCEED WITH OPTION 1 TIMING.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
Option 1 Timing. Delay approval of Coral Amendment 8 for public hearings at December 2012 meeting until after earlier years of VMS data (2003-2006) and rock shrimp trawl track data have been received and the analyses are updated. Under this scenario, the Council would review the updated VMS and rock shrimp trawl track analyses during the March 2013 meeting. This timeline allows scheduling of spring 2013 AP meetings with all involved APs to review the complete VMS analysis and revised modifications to Coral HAPC areas, and provides the APs and the SSC additional opportunity for input to the Council before approval of Coral Amendment 8 for public hearings.

MOTION #2: PROCEED WITH PLANNING A JOINT LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DEEPWATER SHRIMP AP MEETING AND ALSO A JOINT CORAL AND HABITAT AP MEETING.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
SUBSTITUTE MOTION: ALLOW STAFF TO DETERMINE MOST APPROPRIATE FORMAT TO HAVE APS MEET.
SUBSTITUTE MOTION WITHDRAWN.

Note: The Committee discussed giving deference to staff for determining appropriate timing and details in scheduling 2013 AP meetings. The Committee also discussed having a representative from each AP at the respective meetings.

MOTION #3: ACCEPT IPT RECOMMENDATION FOR PURPOSE AND NEED.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #4: ADD SUB-ALTERNATIVE 2E TO ACTION 1 FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
Sub-Alternative 2e. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC from the current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow close to the 70 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines, respectively, while annexing obvious hard bottom features as represented in the simplified polygon (Figure 6).

MOTION #5: MOVE SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2B, 2C AND 2D TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
Note: This refers to Action 1.

MOTION #6: DO NOT CONSIDER THE FISHERY ACCESS AREA RECOMMENDATION AT THIS TIME UNTIL FURTHER INFORMATION WARRANTS COUNCIL DISCUSSION
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL

MOTION #7: ADD ALTERNATIVE 3 TO ACTION 2 FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
Alternative 3. Allow for transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC with possession of rock shrimp on board. When transiting through the Oculina Bank HAPC vessels must maintain a speed of not less than 6 knots, determined by ping rate that is acceptable by law enforcement (i.e. 5 minutes), with gear appropriately stowed (stowed is defined as doors and nets out of water). The transit provision includes a call-in specification in case of mechanical failure or emergency.

MOTION #8: INCLUDE NEW ALTERNATIVE 4 UNDER ACTION 3 AND THIS WOULD REPLACE EXISTING ALTERNATIVE 2 AND MOVE ALTERNATIVE 2 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX AND RENUMBER AS APPROPRIATE.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL
Alternative 4. Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC western extension in a manner that releases the flatbottom region to the extent possible while maintaining protection of coral habitat (as depicted in Figure 11).

Timing and Task

MOTION #9: ADOPT THE TIMING AND TASK ITEMS APPROVED BY COUNCIL

1. Council staff will coordinate scheduling of AP meetings (Deepwater Shrimp, Law Enforcement, Snapper Grouper, Coral, Habitat APs) in the spring of 2013 to review updated analyses and modifications to Coral HAPCs.

2. Council will review updated VMS analyses at the March 2013 meeting and consider approval of Coral Amendment 8 for public hearings at the June 2013 meeting.