Administrative Record for Coral Amendment 8

The documents within the Administrative Record for Coral Amendment 8 are intended to provide a chronological review of the development of management measures to modify Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (CHAPCs). Attachments include versions of Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3, Coral Amendment 8 and Scoping Documents (***Appendices 1&2***); Deepwater Shrimp, Coral, Habitat and Joint Advisory Panel (AP) meeting minutes (***Appendix 3***); AP meeting reports (***Appendix 4***); Ecosystem-Based Management Committee and joint Ecosystem-Based Management and Habitat Committees minutes (***Appendix 5***); and Ecosystem-Based Management Committee reports (***Appendix 6***).

The current actions in Coral Amendment 8 include:

Action 1. Expand boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC
Action 2. Implement a transit provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC
Action 3. Expand boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC
Action 4. Expand boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

Development Timeline

The management measures to expand boundaries of the CHAPCs and implement a transit provision through Oculina Bank HAPC were first introduced to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) during their December 2011 meeting in Raleigh, NC. The Ecosystem-Based Management Committee received a review of the Coral AP October 2011 meeting report and Habitat AP November 2011 report (***Appendices 4&6)***. The AP reports contained several recommendations that were based on results of presentations on recent field research observations of deepwater coral resources in the South Atlantic. An Options Paper for Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Management 3 (CE-BA 3), including the Coral and Habitat APs' recommendations for expansion of CHAPCs, was also presented to the Council in December 2011 and approved for public scoping (***Appendix 1***), initiating the amendment development process.

Public scoping meetings took place in January and February 2012 to gather input on management measures being considered in CE-BA 3 before the Council discussed the various options (***Appendix 2***). The options included in CE-BA 3 during the public scoping process were to:

a. Modify Oculina Bank HAPC north and west boundaries following coordinates and depth contours recommended by the Coral and Habitat APs
b. Expand Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC to incorporate a *Lophelia* site off of Jacksonville following depth contours recommended by the Coral and Habitat APs
c. Expand Cape Lookout CHAPC

The Council reviewed the public scoping comments on the CHAPC options in CE-BA 3 during their March 2012 meeting in Savannah, GA (***Appendices 2&6***). They approved the options for further development and analysis in CE-BA 3, and the range of alternatives recommended by the Interagency Planning Team for each area proposed for modification, including an alternative to consider a transit provision through Oculina Bank HAPC as recommended by the Law

Enforcement AP. At this time, the options became actions in the amendment. The Council advised that the CHAPC actions be further developed by the Ecosystem Committee at future Council meetings and provided guidance to convene the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp, Coral and Habitat APs for recommendations on preferred alternatives prior to the June 2012 Council meeting. The Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs met jointly in April 2012, the Coral AP met in May 2012 and the Habitat AP met via webinar in May 2012 (***Appendices 3&4***).

*Note: The transcription of minutes from the Joint Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp AP Meeting in April 2012 indicate there was a pause in the recording during the afternoon session of the meeting (**Appendix 3**).*

At the June 2012 Council meeting in Orlando, FL, the Council received reports from the Deepwater Shrimp and Coral AP Chairs and was scheduled to select preferred alternatives for CHAPC actions and approve CE-BA 3 for public hearings (***Appendices 4&6***). As a result of diverse recommendations from the APs on the CHAPC actions, the Council discussed the benefit of convening a joint meeting of the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs to discuss the alternatives and each AP's recommendations. Representatives from the Law Enforcement and Habitat APs were also requested to participate in a joint AP meeting to inform the discussion based on their respective charges to the Council. Other actions pertaining to the snapper grouper fishery were included in CE-BA 3 and the Council did not want to interrupt development of other measures as a result of delaying development of the CHAPC actions. Therefore, during the June 2012 Council meeting, actions to modify CHAPCs were split out from CE-BA 3 and guidance was provided to convene a joint AP meeting and develop the actions through a Coral Amendment/Environmental Assessment (***Appendix 6***). A joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting was scheduled for October 2012 and the Council did not discuss Coral Amendment 8 further until the December Council meeting.

The joint meeting of the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs and representatives from the Habitat and Law Enforcement APs was held in October 2012 in Cape Canaveral, FL (***Appendices 3&4***). The meeting was held to allow the APs an opportunity to discuss recommendations for modifications to the CHAPCs. During the joint meeting, the APs collectively developed the following preferred modifications for the CHAPC areas:

- For the northern extension of Oculina Bank HAPC (Action 1), both APs recommended development of a new alternative. The APs approved using the 70-100 meter contour line for a northern extension of Oculina Bank HAPC with a caveat that adjustments be made to annex obvious hard bottom features. Following the meeting, Council staff and Coral AP scientists developed the GIS interpretation of the motion for the Council's review at their December 2012 meeting.
- The Coral AP reaffirmed their position in recommending a western extension of Oculina Bank HAPC (Action 1, Alternative 3) and the Deepwater Shrimp AP did not consider an additional recommendation for a western extension of the HAPC but noted their interest in developing a new boundary modification for consideration in the future.
- The Deepwater Shrimp AP developed specifications for a transit provision alternative, with guidance from Law Enforcement AP representatives at the meeting. This recommendation was for a new alternative for this action. The specifications include allowance of possession of rock shrimp on board a vessel while within the HAPC, a

minimum speed provision, an increase in ping rate, the definition of stowage of gear, and a call-in provision.

Discussion during the joint AP session focused on the fluctuating fishing patterns of the rock shrimp fleet and the importance of including the entire Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) data into the alternative analysis. During the joint AP meeting in October 2012, the VMS analysis in the document incorporated activity representative of 2007-2011. A recommendation was carried forward to the Council at their December meeting to request and incorporate VMS data from 2003-2013, representing the full series of data since VMS was required for this fishery. The Habitat AP convened in November 2012 and reaffirmed the recommendations developed during the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting (***Appendix 4***).

*Note: Minutes from the Joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP Meeting in October 2012 were compromised due to a technical error and the transcription of the minutes reflects the morning session of the meeting only (**Appendix 3**).*

The timing of Coral Amendment 8 was delayed during the December 2012 Council meeting (***Appendix 6***). The Council was scheduled to consider Coral Amendment 8 for public hearings, however approval was deferred until the entire series of VMS data has been incorporated into the amendment analysis. The delayed timeline allowed the scheduling of AP meetings during spring 2013 to review the completed VMS analysis and revisions to the CHAPC alternatives based on the recommendations developed during the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting in October 2012. During the December 2012 meeting, the Council approved including the northern expansion recommendation that developed during the joint AP meeting as an alternative under Action 1 (Oculina Bank HAPC); removed other alternatives not discussed by the Coral, Deepwater Shrimp or Habitat APs to the considered but rejected appendix; approved including the transit provision recommendation developed by the Deepwater Shrimp AP as an alternative under Action 2; and approved revisions to Alternative 2 under Action 3 (Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC) developed by both the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs during the joint AP meeting. The completed VMS data was received after the March 2013 Council meeting and AP meetings were then scheduled for final review in May 2013. The Council did not review Coral Amendment 8 during their March 2013 meeting, however received an update on timing (***Appendices 5&6***).

The Coral and Habitat APs met jointly in May 2013 to discuss actions and alternatives in Coral Amendment 8 and review the complete VMS analysis (***Appendices 3&4***). The Deepwater Shrimp AP Chair participated in the joint meeting and representatives from the Snapper Grouper and Law Enforcement APs were also requested to participate. The Coral and Habitat APs reaffirmed their rationale for preferred alternatives for actions in Coral Amendment 8 that developed during the joint AP meeting in October (***Appendix 4***). The Deepwater Shrimp AP convened in May 2013 to provide final input on Coral Amendment 8 before Council deliberations for preferred alternatives during the June 2013 meeting. The Deepwater Shrimp AP developed new recommendations for preferred alternatives for all of the CHAPC areas considered for modification in Coral Amendment 8. The Deepwater Shrimp AP discussed that modifications were needed to further exclude historical trawlable areas currently included in the action alternatives. The AP also noted that the updated VMS

data indicates fishing activity occurred in more recent years within some of the proposed extensions and the AP revised their recommendations for preferred alternatives as a result (***Appendices 3&4***).

The Council is scheduled to review AP input and Coral Amendment 8 again during the joint Ecosystem-Based Management and Habitat and Environmental Protection Committees at the June 2013 meeting in Stuart, FL.