SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
JOINT HABITAT AND CORAL ADVISORY PANEL

Hilton Garden Inn
North Charleston, South Carolina

May 8, 2013

SUMMARY MINUTES

Jt Habitat and Coral Advisory Panel Members:

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Dr. Christopher Elkins
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Priscilla Wendt
Mark Caldwell
Susan Hilfer
Jenkins Mikell
Thomas Jones
Alice Lawrence
Terry Gibson
Dr. Amber Whittle
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Dr. David Gilliam
Dr. Clark Alexander
Dr. Kenneth Banks
John Cramer
Dr. Henry Feddern
Jocelyn Karazsia
Dr. Kate Lunz
Kimberly Puglise
Margot Stiles
Dr. Joshua Voss

Council Members:

Tom Burgess

Council Staff:

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Anna Martin

Roger Pugliese
Julie O'Dell

Additional Observers/Participants:

Rusty Hudson

Mike Merrifield

The Joint Habitat and Environmental Protection and Coral Advisory Panels of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, Wednesday morning, May 8, 2013, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Pace Wilber.

MR WILBER: It is nice to be able to get together every year or so or every couple years to have a joint meeting of the two APs. We have a fairly ambitious schedule this morning, a lot of ground to cover. Hopefully, we'll be able to break by noon. Given that it has been a while since the two APs have met at the same time and many of us may not know each other, even though we did introductions in the separate APs yesterday, we'll go through and do introductions again today.

We would like them to be short and succinct; who you are, where you are from, and who you represent and not get into the philosophical statements that we at least allowed yesterday during the Habitat AP meeting. I do want you to note that we have pretty much the Coral folks and the Habitat folks on opposite sides of the room.

We did that so we can keep track of the effective use of the talk buttons on the microphones and whichever AP actually does the best job in ensuring that they talked only into a red microphone will get a special prize from Anna at the end of the day. Let's start with the introductions on the Habitat side with the folks on the right.

MR. PRATT: Terry Pratt; North Carolina; 50 years commercial fishing and 40 years working with environmental organizations on a state and a national level. I'm working to set a better policy to help us all.

MR. GIBSON: I'm Terry Gibson. I'm the editor of Fly & Light Tackle Angler Magazine, and I'm the Florida recreational fishing representative.

MR. CALDWELL: I'm Mark Caldwell; I'm with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service here in the Charleston Ecological Services Office.

MR. TROWELL: I'm Steve Trowell. I'm from North Carolina. I work for the state of North Carolina Division of Coastal Management in permitting and enforcement of coastal development in the Washington Regional Office on Albemarle/Pamlico Peninsula.

MS. HILFER: I'M Susan Hilfer. I'm a recreational fisherman from Beaufort, South Carolina.

MR. MIKELL: I'm Jenks Mikell from Edisto Island, no job, no title. As I said yesterday, a burning desire to leave this world a better place than I found it.

MR. JONES: Tom Jones; the recreational fishermen's representative from Georgia.

MR. WATTERSON: Carter Watterson; I'm a Fisheries Habitat Biologist with the Navy.

MR. STREET: Mike Street; North Carolina; retired from the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

DR. WHITTLE: Amber Whittle with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission.

DR. ELKINS: Chris Elkins; Gloucester, North Carolina, recreational seat.

MR. BLAIR: Steve Blair with Miami-Dade County's Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources in their Environmental Resources Management Group, and I presently serve as the Chair for the Coral AP.

MR. WILBER: I'm Pace Wilber with NOAA Fisheries Service in the Southeast Region. I'm based here in Charleston and presently the Chair of the Habitat AP.

MR. PUGLIESE: Roger Pugliese; South Atlantic Council Staff, responsible for our habitat and ecosystem activities.

MS. MARTIN: I'm Anna Martin; council staff. I work with the Coral Advisory Panel and our Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels in developing coral and shrimp amendments for the council; and a number of other hats, too.

MS. KARAZSIA: I'm Jocelyn Karazsia with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Region. I'm located in West Palm Beach.

MS. DEATON: I'm Anne Deaton. I'm with North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, and I work in the Habitat Protection Section.

MS. LAWRENCE: I'm Alice Lawrence. I work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Georgia.

MS. WENDT: Pricilla Wendt; South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

MS. STILES: Margot Stiles. I work for Oceana in the Science Department. As a conservation organization, we focus on habitat protection, bycatch and overfishing.

MS. PUGLISE: Kimberly Puglise. I work for NOAA's Center for Coastal Ocean Research. I manage their Mesophotic Coral Ecosystem Research Programs and also their South Florida Program.

DR. VOSS: I'm Joshua Voss. I'm a coral reef and molecular ecologist at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University.

DR. FEDDERN: Henry Feddern; Marine Biologist PhD; a marine life fisherman for most of my life. I've worked in the Coral Advisory Panel it seems like forever and we work closely with the state of Florida on all fisheries' issues also.

DR. GILLIAM: Dave Gilliam; Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Coral Reef Ecologist.

MS. LUNZ: Kate Lunz; Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in Florida.

DR. BANKS: I'm Ken Banks. I'm with the Broward County, Florida Environmental Protection. I manage marine resources. That is in Fort Lauderdale.

MR. CRAMER: Jeff Cramer; commercial fisherman, mostly lobster and stone crab down in the Florida Keys.

DR. ALEXANDER: Clark Alexander with Skidaway Institute of Oceanography in Georgia.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Mike Merrifield with Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company out of Port Canaveral, Florida. I am currently the Chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP.

MR. WILBER: The way we decided to run the meeting today is that we're going to open the agenda up now for public comments for the folks who are not officially members of the Coral or Habitat AP or the designated chairmen of other APs that the council has asked to be included in this meeting. I am kind of looking behind me and to the side. Are there any folks who have attended today that wish to make some comments about Amendment 8 and the other things that will be discussed this morning?

MR. HUDSON: Rusty Hudson. I'm president of Directed Sustainable Fisheries here on behalf of the East Coast Fisheries Section. We represent commercial, for-hire, private recreational and consumers mostly out of Florida. It's a group that we formed four years ago under the auspices of Southeastern Fisheries Association, which has been around since the early sixties.

Essentially I believe the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Chairman was not able to make it due to some family medical issues. I had asked for the opportunity to be able to speak to the Coral Amendment 8. The reason why is because the participants in the Snapper Grouper Fishery have not really been as full a part of this process up until more recently, and we have some concerns.

With regards to the amendment, we are still waiting to see the socio-economic component, which I believe might be finished by June in time for the public hearings that will come up later this year. We believe there is a proposal to increase the current Oculina HAPC to the north to 29 degrees 43 minutes; mostly under the contours that we don't have a problem with of 70 meter off to 100 meter.

Basically the 100 meter is 330 foot to put it into 328 foot, to put it into the kind of ways that we think when we're out on the water. I'm a fifth generation waterman. My grandfather had taught me since the early sixties to deep sea fishing, particularly once he started bringing me out into the deeper areas like where all this oculina is back in the early seventies. A lot of what I have to say is based on experience.

With the Steeples, as we call them – some people refer to them as Pinnacles – I've fished those as far south as Vero Beach. They are very prevalent once you get up around the Cape Canaveral region and to the north of there a short ways. Essentially some of those mounds at the base, the ones that I call the 40 footers, are found at the depth of 240 foot at the base of the Steeple.

The ones that are the offshore row – and if I can point it out; that is the Titusville ROV stuff from 2011 off of Titusville, and this is the Daytona area; but it is really almost directly off the

Ponce Inlet that my family has been at since 1907. That region right there, between those two and on to the south, there is a lot of oculina.

In fact, Chris Koenig had even pointed out how the subs during World War II would lay up in between some Steeples to be able to avoid being found by the navy ships, and they dropped a lot of depth charges and stuff down through there at that time. Well, as far as being fishing, that is not an area that you can go and shrimp in, but I have also rock shrimped in those areas, both offshore of what we call the Big Ledge, which is 27, 28 fathoms and to the inshore side of it.

I believe Mike Merrifield is the Deepwater Shrimp AP Chairman, has a lot of knowledge that he shared already through this process. But when you get to this northern end right here with the Daytona stuff, I've given a lot of numbers, a lot of Loran C numbers with the fact that I was part of the Marine Protected Area Expert Working Group.

Some of that has been groundtruthed. In other words, some of our fishermen went out and verified Loran C and converted them into lat/long and then we, of course, made a lot of that available to various people, including Roger, Nick Farmer, Todd Kellison and the MARMAP people, so they all have it.

Part of it started with the red snapper stuff back in '09, some of it morphed into snowies and golden tiles, and then things like what we call Kitty Mitchells, which are speckled hinds and stuff. Some of these Steeples are dead and some of them are alive. Some of these fish that aggregate, some of them at the base like the snowies, blueline tile, red porgies – up above the bottom in the 240, for instance, we have big red snappers that are 30 pounds with Kitty Mitchells or speckled hinds and amberjack.

They will be about 40 or 50 foot off the bottom, generally speaking, depending on the current of the Gulf Stream. There is a lot of Gulf Stream there. But once you get to the north of this northern part; that Daytona ROV stuff; you get into a sparse area of oculina. In fact, you get into a lot of low relief all the way for that last 20 or 25 miles. We used to call it the roll down.

We would start in 220 foot and we would drift and roll down out to 300 foot. We'd catch a lot of snowies, a lot of blueline tile, red porgies and stuff like that. It is a very interesting place, but it is about 55 miles to the northeast of Ponce Inlet, which gets me to the three inlets that are affected; Cape Canaveral, Ponce Inlet, and St. Augustine Inlet. It is a wide area.

With those areas, I was real glad with the way the staff has put together the Coral Amendment 8 and broke it out by counties as to the number of permits. I am only going to reference the snapper grouper permits that are in existence; because out of roughly 688 permits, 568 of them are unlimited, so those would be the people that it would have the most to gain by going out and fishing in those regions. Only a small percentage do.

Roughly 294 of these 668 total snapper grouper permits are found down in the Keys and in Dade County; but in Brevard County where Cape Canaveral is there is 28 of them. I haven't broken out the component of 225 pound limited ones or the unlimited, but that is neither here nor now. That is something an analysis on socio-economic should bring out; even under an environmental assessment, even though sometimes we would rather have an environmental impact statement.

With Ponce Inlet, Volusia County, Daytona Beach area, there are 16 snapper grouper permits, and at St. Johns County, which is St. Augustine, there are 10. Essentially you've got about 8 or 9 percent of the total snapper grouper permits available that are in these three inlet areas, these three counties. There is really a fourth county in between St. Johns and Volusia that is called Flagler, but there are no inlets there.

With all that said, with that low relief; we don't believe up on the very northern end, up right in here; that is that roll down area; and I could reference it all day long in 44 and 61 numbers, but that is something that once I stepped off the ocean and started getting into other types of onshore marketing of different saltwater fish, I basically wasn't there for the conversion into the GPS to be able to do all the lat/long.

I have to rely on my other commercial fishermen and the for-hire boats to do that for me, which they have done. Essentially that region up there, I understand it is like an ecosystem thing. It is nothing to do with oculina at that point. We'll submit all that into our written comments later this year.

But, in essence, whenever they did the first Oculina HAPC back in a decade plus ago, we submitted comments at that time. We opposed going out to the 600 foot. I know it was a law enforcement desire in order to be able to make straight lines and whatever, but it took away some of our yellowedge grouper area, our snowy grouper area, a nice ledge that is out in the 400 and something foot; and also about the time you get to 600, 550, a lot of golden tile.

Well, the guys have to work around that now, and they do. But I am kind of glad to see that at least with 100 meter start of this new extension that it doesn't go on out to 600 foot and try to join up with the existing one. In fact, if I had my desires, I would rather see you kind of clean up that muddy part on the northeast end, but that is beside the point.

We are going to be expanding to the north; I know it is going to happen. At least this doesn't intrude on the inshore side into the Big Ledge. That Big Ledge is so important and for a big stretch of the bottom up to about the time you get to here, the Big Ledge is still pretty much in existence.

Then it breaks up and it stays that way for 20 something miles also, so we have various rocks between 26 and 32 fathoms that we normally fish for shallow water groupers and snappers. That is all, whatever it is. We won't be allowed to anchor anymore. When I did fish the Steeples, to be able to catch the speckled hinds and big snappers, that was always having to anchor up.

Now we won't have that ability once this expansion takes place. I think that overall; I heard something about ESA listings that potentially will be occurring for coral. I wanted to be able to look at Jennifer's presentation from yesterday a little bit more to be able to see it and just make sure that there is nothing going to come and bite us in our area, because Roy Crabtree told us we didn't have a whole lot to worry about there. Now to wind it all up; we have also been opposing the acoustic arrays with the seismic testing by the oil companies, particularly the fact that they want to do stuff from Jersey to Brevard County, and that is the Cape Canaveral area.

We would like to not see that happen, and there are two reasons why. One is that every time in the past, back in the seventies when they did come in, the CPUEs would just drop off the map for

everything. Chris Koenig explained to me the fish get their ear bones blown out and stuff like that when they are in the array, and they just run that grid fashion and stuff.

I believe it probably has like an air gun; the air guns have a dynamite effect that even affects your coral. The second is if they do go and put some of those oil rigs into those depths with the west edge of the Gulf Stream, as powerful as it gets, 3 to 5 knots and stuff like that; if anything busts lose like the Deepwater Horizon disaster over there; all that oculina, if they put the dispersants right at the base, if it is occurring like it was which we watched on the video; then your oculina is going to be covered. I don't know how you will ever clean it up.

You would almost have to make sure that if they are going to do oil rigs, it is going to have to be north of here; and that way you've got a vectoring effect that takes place down here at the Cape Canaveral area. The Gulf Stream starts vectoring up and out, and it winds up coming back in up at Hatteras; whereas, the coastline of Florida vectors off to the northwest and that is the difference.

That is why we have a huge shelf with a lot of benefits. As you can see from what I just told you, the number of snapper grouper commercial vessels has declined significantly in the last couple of decades. Part of it is the two-for-one; part of it is just the reality of the effects of overfishing; but we have turned a lot of that around.

And particularly since '92 when we started logbooks and other types of management measures, I have got to do an "Atta Boy" for a lot of the folks that are involved on the council level. They have done a great job, but unfortunately some of the science has not caught up with our realities at the side of the boat. We're still working on that.

We show up at all the science meetings, we show up at all of the management stuff, and we try to work with everybody at the table. With that said, that is my public comment. I hope that you can take that to heart. I'm sorry if I ran over five minutes. Thank you.

MR. WILBER: Thank you very much, Rusty. We are going to turn it over now to Roger and Anna, who are going to provide an overview of Amendment 8.

MS. MARTIN: Okay, what we would like to do, I am going to give you a background of the actual amendment; the alternatives, the management measures that we have in the document as sort of a review. Then we're going to get into some of the specifics with the vessel monitoring system analysis and some of the spatial representation for these alternatives that you're about to see.

Hopefully everyone has had a chance to take a look at Coral Amendment 8 before this meeting this morning. This does consist of regulatory actions that focus on conservation of deepwater coral ecosystems. We are talking about three specific areas in this amendment, the Oculina Bank habitat area of particular concern and transit through the Oculina Bank; the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC; and the Cape Lookout Coral HAPC.

The Habitat and Coral and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels have seen these actions and alternatives before. We held a joint meeting last fall in Cape Canaveral where many of you

participated in the discussions. Progress was made towards developing consensus in these recommendations to the council for how these areas should be modified.

What you see now and I guess the difference from what you saw at your meeting in Cape Canaveral in October of last year and now; we do have the complete VMS analysis. Previously we only had VMS data representative of 2007 to 2011. That kind of only showed you a snapshot of the rock shrimp fishery impacts associated with these actions and alternatives.

Now we have the complete dataset going back to 2003. That was when VMS was first required for the rock shrimp fishery. At the December council meeting last year they did do a little bit of cleaning up, a little bit of housekeeping with this amendment. You will see that we don't have the large number of alternatives that we previously did with some of these scenarios for expansion of the HAPCs.

As far as timing for moving forward and developing this amendment; the council has asked for your input, which is the reason why we're here today, once again and final AP input as a group before they consider selecting preferred alternatives for these actions at their next council meeting, which is in June.

They are potentially also going to be approving this document for public hearing at the June meeting. Public hearings would then be held later this summer; and as you know that is just the next step in the process. The council is also tentatively scheduled to finalize this amendment in September.

They wanted to bring the APs together to provide additional discussion on these areas and recommendations before they take this up again at the June council meeting. That gives you a little bit of background on why we are here and timing for this amendment, which is important to know as we move forward.

Action 1 pertains to the Oculina Bank. Representatives on the Coral Advisory Panel presented findings of discovery of habitat north and west of the existing HAPC. When this was presented, they presented it as these are areas that are a continuation of the original reef track depicted in the NOAA bathymetric charts.

These were bathymetric charts that were used by the scientists to determine where to select sites for further mapping. We've already projected that image where it shows that the mapping and the ROV dives were conducted off of Daytona and Titusville. They indicated that the high-relief features were indeed oculina bioherms.

The observations resulted in these recommendations for modification of the Oculina Bank. Again, it is something that the Habitat and Coral Advisory Panel have seen before. Alternative 2 and the subalternatives under Alternative 2 apply to a northern extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC.

Alternative 2A is the original Coral Advisory Panel and Habitat Advisory Panel recommendation. This is based on the multibeam mapping off of Daytona and Titusville, and incorporating probable extent of habitat. Alternative 2B was developed during the joint advisory

panel meeting last fall by both the Deepwater Shrimp AP and the Coral AP, and the representatives from the Habitat AP and Law Enforcement AP that were at the meeting.

The groups were in agreement for this particular scenario for northern expansion at the meeting last fall. The coral scientists that were at the meeting discussed that predominantly the high-relief coral mounds do occur between 70 and 100 meters. Establishing this northern extension along these boundaries would incorporate most of the deepwater coral habitat presumed to occur in this particular area.

We did have quite a number of other scenarios for a northern extension, and like I said the council kind of removed a lot of those options to the considered but rejected list for northern extensions. These remain the only two options right now for a northern expansion.

MS. STILES: The area in the map with the green boundary; is that showing the extension and not the current Oculina boundaries? Okay just checking.

MS. MARTIN: Yes; I'm sorry, I should have clarified. What I was displaying here in the charts, the green polygon is the extension that we are talking about. In the very bottom right corner you can see the yellow box there; that is the existing Oculina Bank. The other area we will be talking about today for extension of the Oculina Bank is the western boundary, and this is Alternative 3 under Action 1.

This area proposed modification lies primarily between the two existing satellite sites. Again, the recommendation is based on analysis of the multibeam bathymetry data and observation of high-relief habitat in this area west of the existing HAPC. Again, the yellow polygon here is the existing HAPC. These two fingerling structures are the satellite sites of the existing Oculina Bank; and the blue line there indicates the area of proposed expansion of the western boundary.

Moving on to Action 2; because of the large swath of area that is proposed for expansion to the northern boundary under the previous action, the Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel has recommended that the council consider a transit provision through the Oculina Bank. They did express concern because they would not be able to access traditional fishing areas off of the eastern boundary of the HAPC and recognizing that it is not realistic for the rock shrimp vessels to motor all the way around such a large area for the northern extension.

The concerns are primarily safety-at-sea issues and fuel efficiency. As you know, currently rock shrimp vessels cannot possess rock shrimp on board within the HAPC. Action 2 considers a provision that would allow these vessels to transit through the HAPC in possession of rock shrimp on board their vessel with some specific provisions in place.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Did you want to take comments as you're going through this or how did you want to do that?

MS. MARTIN: If you have some general comments, I think now is a good time. We're going to get into the specifics with the VMS and the spatial representation with the presentation that Roger has prepared. I guess it depends on the type of question.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, I just wanted to know when the best time is because there is a slight modification to 2B. In general, 2B looks really great but there is a slight modification that the Deepwater Shrimp AP is going to recommend, and I guess I can just bring that up later.

MS. MARTIN: Sure, so Action 1, the northern extension of Oculina Bank; is that what you're talking about?

MR. MERRIFIELD: Yes.

MS. MARTIN: I think after Roger goes through his discussion; then we'll open up for discussion and new recommendations. I think that would be the appropriate time. Alternative 2 here was originally recommended by the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. This alternative references the transit regulations that are currently in place for the marine protected areas in the South Atlantic.

This alternative would require rock shrimp vessels to maintain a minimum speed of 5 knots. Vessels must disconnect their trawl doors from the nets and stow and secure them on deck. That is what the snapper grouper vessels are required to do within the marine protected areas. Alternative 3 was developed during the joint advisory panel meeting that we held in Cape Canaveral last fall.

This alternative stipulates four things in a transit provision; one, that gear and rigging can be in the doors; they do not have to be disassembled. Representatives from the rock shrimp industry were at the meeting and discussed the amount of time that it takes to disassemble the doors from the nets.

As you all know, the turbulent conditions around Oculina would cause some safety-at-sea kind of concerns there. The second clause here; vessels must travel at a minimum of 6 knots. Trawlable speeds were identified by the rock shrimp fleet as 3.5 knots at most. Mike, correct me if I am misstating something that you all brought to the table.

The third stipulation is that a ping rate must be five minutes in order to detect transit. Right now these vessels are pinging hourly. The transit clause would be going through the HAPC they would be pinging every five minutes. The fourth stipulation is a call-in specification in case of mechanical failure or emergency.

MS. STILES: I was wondering if you could share more detail on the Law Enforcement AP's comments on transit. I know in general I don't think they like transit, but I wasn't there for the discussion; so if you had any more detail about the conversation, that would be helpful.

MR. PUGLIESE: Let me respond to that. One thing I think that is really encouraging is that there has been a very significant change in perspective in the law enforcement in the ability to use the VMS for what it was intended; to be able to really know where vessels are and use it in a refined way to be able to allow something like the transit.

I think the fact that they can adjust the system so that they can actually characterize a vessel when it drops into a trawling speed; Office of Law Enforcement is a lot more amenable to it actually functioning and being able to use to be able to ensure that there is not an issue. Two of

the reasons that have driven that is the fact that some of the control and ability at the regional level to be able to use the information has been shifted from the national level to the regional capabilities, which makes that a lot more hands on.

The techniques and capabilities are just a lot more effective in being able to use the information. There has been a revelation that this can actually be used for something. Before there was a lot more apprehensions that you could even use it to be able to do this kind of fine monitoring of vessels; so I think that is a real big plus and a real positive from Office of Law Enforcement.

MS. MARTIN: Also, Margot, the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel was involved in the joint AP session that we had in Cape Canaveral last October. They were involved in the discussion for developing Alternative 3. They did discuss increasing that ping rate from hourly to five minutes while transiting through the HAPC would be a good, enforceable aspect for them in this transit provision. Coming from the Law Enforcement AP, they have been involved certainly.

Again, we're moving further offshore now, talking about modifications to the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC. Fishery impacts associated with this action are dealing primarily with the royal red shrimp fishery. Alternative 2 was the scenario developed during the joint AP meeting last fall. This was what the Deepwater Shrimp and Coral Advisory Panels came up with collectively.

The Habitat AP; obviously, you are familiar with endorsing this alternative at your meeting in November of last fall. This alternative releases the sandy bottom in the southern region of the HAPC where royal red fishermen are currently operating. This scenario incorporates the area of known habitat while opening up this area of sandy bottom based on the VMS data.

Roger again is going to get into the spatial representations for all of these alternatives in more detail. Alternative 3 really is no longer applicable to this scenario. This may be something that we recommend the council consider removing from further consideration. This was developed by the Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel after the Coral and Habitat Advisory Panel's original recommendation for expansion of this area.

MR. MIKELL: Is it fair to ask which one of all of these alternatives did Dr. Reed propose at that November meeting? Is that a fair question?

MS. MARTIN: Sure, I think so. John was instrumental in providing the rationale for the Oculina Bank Expansion; talking about Action 1. Steve Ross and Sandra Brooke provided the initial data and observations for expansion of the Stetson-Miami Terrace HAPC.

MR. MIKELL: All of these alternatives have come out of that November meeting?

MS. MARTIN: Yes; not all of them; but at least one for each action, there was an alternative that was agreed upon at the October meeting.

MR. PUGLIESE: Jenks, actually that alternative is what we had brought forward. The Habitat Advisory Panel, Alternative 2, was the first to see this reconfiguration and the comparison to known information on VMS at our November meeting. Really, Habitat had the first ability to actually look at the refined information.

This came to the council and where we are now. I will state one other thing – I was going to raise it when I go through the detailed discussion – is one of the other significant players really in this was the navy in providing their very high-resolution detailed information on mapping and characterization.

I think that provided the ability to do this tweaking especially in that southern area. That is some of the most comprehensive mapping and characterization of benthic habitats ever done. I do applaud Carter's and the Navy's participation and the ability to get this into our forum. A lot of this is being integrated into our broader habitat and mapping information. That was a major player in getting that fine adjustment, too.

MS. MARTIN: Before we get into the specifics, the other area that is included in Coral Amendment 8 is expansion of the Cape Lookout Coral HAPC. This is the deepest of the HAPCs in waters off of Wilmington up in North Carolina. This was originally recommended by the Coral Advisory Panel.

Steve Ross on the panel brought this forward with a recommendation to extend the northern boundary by approximately 8 miles. You can see here where this came from; the multibeam bathymetry data observations of lophelia mounds in this northern extension here; so the green polygon is the proposed extension to the Cape Lookout HAPC. Steve also provided museum records as a basis for this proposed extension.

This is an action that really doesn't have impacts associated with managed fisheries in the South Atlantic. The only alternative we have is Alternative 2 under this action. It has been endorsed by both the Habitat and the Coral Advisory Panels. That is a very quick-and-dirty snapshot of the amendment actions and alternatives. Now we are going to get into some specifics with the VMS data.

MR. PUGLIESE: I've got a presentation. What I'll do is I am going to run through the entire presentation and then drop back and drop out of it. Then we can actually zoom in and out if we want to look at any specifics of the maps or areas. Let me just run through the overall discussion and information that we've updated and added.

It has been integrated into the latest draft you all have for Coral Amendment 8. What I want to do is touch on the spatial presentations of both the fishery operations and habitat. The fishery operations are relative to the vessel monitoring information; the most refined fishery information we have in literally the southeast region because of that capability.

In order to look at this, one of the things that we did was look at the footprints of both the royal red and rock shrimp fisheries. On the original analysis I actually had split the difference in terms of the operation areas of the penaeid fishery and the offshore fisheries. What I did here was I was able to really kind of zoom down and get in a lot tighter to both the royal red and the shrimp fishery.

Some of it is a wash; because if you really look at a fishing trip, the transit from the inshore to the offshore is part of the trip. What this did is it really focused the area, but the analysis really went beyond here, because it gets into actually the operations, the 2 to 4 knots. While this shows

this, any of the transit areas on the inside are eliminated in the analysis; but it does at least give at least an operation.

This is important to have, because when we get into things a lot further beyond what we're working on this; having some characterization of where the fishery operates in the southeast is going to have a lot of other implications for other non-fishing activities, so these are important. We probably will follow up and do a characterization of penaeid relative to what we know on the VMS. too. But that gives us a footprint.

Now this is the overall snapshot of the entire vessel monitoring information that we have. Now this includes everything from transit to actual fishing operations. It is a very great image, because what it shows is a very distinct three fishery occurrence. You're looking at the penaeid inshore fishery, you are looking at the rock shrimp fishery and the footprint of the existing HAPC area, and then the royal red fishery; that tight band in the offshore area.

It is the best information we have on fishery operations and on specifically our shrimp fisheries. What this brings us to then is the alternatives that have been in discussion, the original alternative; that 60 to 100 meters that had come out of what was the entire bounded understanding of the distribution, how far inshore and offshore in that area, the oculina and deep coral ecosystem, because that is one thing that I think needs to be continually emphasized.

When we're looking at these areas, it is just not the pinnacle, it is not just the coral head; it is the entire system, the HAPC that includes hard bottom and all the other habitats as a complex. That is how the council has managed these HAPCs. As a followup, these have also been designated as habitat areas of particular concern so that we cover all those combined habitats as part of a functional deepwater ecosystem.

This gives you the snapshot of the original proposal. Now what are the deliberations as Anna has indicated over time has worked with the Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel, Habitat and Coral to come up with something that acknowledges moving in – acknowledging some of that area may be impacted already on the western bound and what habitat mapping we have, and capture also the eastern bound, which limits the – it really does not eliminate much of the fishery on the eastern side right at the Hundred Meter Contour.

Now one thing I will note is that these maps were used to really characterize the habitat bathymetries as well as the detailed mapping. The actual lines, we use line bathymetry at 10 meter resolution to come up with the functional 70 or 100 meter contour lines; but this was adjusted to capture high-relief additional habitats in response to the approved motion to council.

The information, we had as Anna indicated earlier, was originally I think it was August 2007 through September of 2011; I was able to do the original analysis. We wanted to – there was concern about knowing what the historic area is, and at the same time the opportunity to look at maybe some of the more recent; integrate it all and look at the entire footprint of the fishery. What we did, I was able to capture the information and be able to provide the – what you see here is the footprint of what vessel VMS points actually occurred within the area.

Now the image that you see here is actually all the VMS points. What it comes down to, the analysis actually is tied directly to – and the same with the present alternative that is under

discussion 2B, what the analysis really focuses on of these points; the ones that is actually involved in fishing, which we defined a little liberally with the 3.5 knots as being – now it is just 4 knots, so we kind of go bound on the upper end, 2 to 4 knots as being the areas.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Did you say that is all VMS points or is it within that range?

MR. PUGLIESE: That is VMS points in the boundary, both transit and fishing.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, so it doesn't have the speed?

MR. PUGLIESE: Not on the image, but on the analysis it does. As we move forward in the continuation of the Oculina Extension; the additional area is the western extension, and what you see in terms of the information we have here is the high resolution. Again the bathymetry is some of the most distinct high-relief pinnacles and combination of habitats occurring between the two satellite HAPCs.

To some degree, the reason the satellite HAPCs were originally adopted is that is all the information we had for those areas originally. There has been mapping actually done along the line of some of those pinnacles showing and reaffirming that those high-relief habitats do occur within the areas.

Again, the same situation in terms of taking this alternative, looking at what VMS information is within there, parsing out the transit versus the fishing activities and coming up with the analysis. In total context, what it does show is the alternative that is under consideration, which is green to the north and then the western extension is the blue, in combination with the Oculina Bank HAPC and Experimental Closed Area.

That brings us to actually what is identified as fishing associated with the areas. What I've got is the two alternatives for the extension of the northern area. The original alternative – and this is what raised some of the discussion about the ability to modify or adjust that alternative. Through the entire time series, between 2003 and 2013, the partial on both ends; you are looking at about 12.3 percent of what are fishing points within the area. Those are the points that were identified as the 2 to 4 knots.

There has been discussion about there had been some higher activity in the earlier end. If you look at the more historic component of it, 2003 to 2007, there had been about 13.9 percent in that area. There was a significant amount of area captured or reduced by going to the next one, which is Alternative 2B.

If you look at Alternative 2B through the entire series, what it does identify is that it drops it down to 5.5 percent of VMS points between 2 to 4 knots. Again, that may be a little liberal with some of the comments.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Just some context there, too, what you really have there is about a four-year section at the top, a four-year section in the middle and a two-year section at the bottom. It is two four years and then two years at the bottom, because there has really been nothing done in '13. This year it is not even rock shrimp season yet so there is no activity out there. That kind of puts those numbers into a four, four and two-year perspective.

MR. PUGLIESE: Well, I think the most important is looking also at the total. That is really we're looking at the fishery operations. Yes, you can see some variation, and it is lower in some of the – but, I mean, we're talking about a percent difference in between some of those. It does increase it from what we had talked about earlier on.

The bottom line is overall the impact being at the 5.5 percent versus 12.3 percent for Alternative 2B versus 2A. Moving to the western extension, this area we had identified as having fairly limited amount of activity in very few VMS points in the area to begin with, let alone fishing activity. What it did show is that the historic actually was less than 1 percent.

The overall ended up being 0.8 percent, so it is 0.8 of 1 percent of activity within the entire area. It was interesting to me that there had been some effort to try to move into some – I don't know if there is some exploratory fishing going on or whatever, but again those numbers are very low. We're talking about 80 points for the entire, 90 points for the – so you have to look at that 2.8 percent in relationship, too. The bottom line is it is less than – in terms of operation for the entire fishery over the time, it is less than 1 percent.

MR. MERRIFIELD: My comment to that would be that is probably the result of some of the upwellings that have pushed the shrimp inshore of the Oculina as opposed to offshore.

MR. PUGLIESE: In context of all these, the reality is that the percentages, while modified, I think the biggest thing is that there has been a significant reduction by going to the new alternative that had been selected by the Habitat and Coral AP with input from the Shrimp AP to be able to get that revision that has reduced the impact to 5.5 percent to the northern extension and 0.8 percent for the entire time series for the western extension of the Oculina.

Moving on, I was going to move into the Deepwater HAPC consideration in the Stetson-Miami. What I wanted to do was reshow one of the things that helped provide the foundation for discussion. While Steve provided some of the recommendations on where to go, I think they were very specifically using some of the Navy information to identify this bounded area.

This was where we originally kind of started. That is the biggest footprint of what the HAPC originally was looked at to try to capture a broad area. We had the high-resolution imagery as well as some of the characterization work very specific, and finer resolution characterization. Out of the original scoping and collaboration with the industry, we came up with that alternative that had been shown earlier that provided that kind of a tongue all the way down; but it also extended to the entire northern part of that original one.

It was acknowledged that there had not been any mapping in that northern portion, and the fact that the area south of the mapped habitat really didn't necessarily have types of habitat that really were going to be needed to be protected within this region, which brings us to that Alternative 2, which provides a movement up – you have a drop-down in the northern component, you have a move up in the southern, and a tweaking around. What is interesting to me is again this is going to the revelation of our VMS partners at the Office of Law Enforcement.

I assumed that we were going to have some issues when we started talking about this kind of interesting adjustments, but the bottom line is that they are a lot more confident in the ability to

use the VMS to be able to accurately have finer resolution designation. This is something that ultimately was developed and is the standing position.

Now with regard to the impact on this area, the one thing that changed also in the last analysis, I was able to get the entire time series and get the fine point information. Before we were using the historic kind of collapsed royal red shrimp fishery information, which didn't give us percentages.

It just said that at the top end of the fishery; which if you go back and look at the Coral Amendment 8, it does show the range of that fishery; and if you remember that I showed the entire VMS points; this is right at that top little cap, which ultimately shows exactly what we see here.

On the two alternatives, the one that presently is being considered, Alternative 2; it is about 0.7 percent of VMS actually being identified; so again less than 1 percent. Given the fact that it is at the absolute top of the fishery, it is there. Now, the alternative that was looked at before, again it had really extended further. It was down to 0.1, but I think the desire was to try to compensate some of the impact on the fishery and add in some of the other habitats and remove areas that we didn't map.

The bottom line is that Alternative 2 shows 0.7 percent for the entire time series; so less than 1 percent of all VMS for the – and this is specifically for royal red, because what I did is I didn't do it for the entire fishery; so it focuses only on those VMS points that are occurring in deep system. Before I had it collapsed, I had it for the entire fishery, for the deepwater fishery and for the royal red. This is very specifically just for the royal red.

It is less than 1 percent of the overall royal red and far less than that of the entire fishery. Now that brings us to where we are. On Cape Lookout HAPC, I think with regard to the mapping information, Anna had made it clear that a lot of this was being driven by the high-resolution bathymetry that was created.

There had been some concern at one time about the configuration being not quite aligned; but I think the bottom line was it is intentional, because it is the best track that captures that – if you see how that habitat kind of veers to the north and west; that little variation. Given OLE, it doesn't have as much problem with being able to do some slight adjustments. This is where we stand with that recommendation. That is the habitat information.

There is no fishing information associated with this area that we have that we know of. This is the standing proposal and recommended from all APs so far. With that, those are the things I wanted to show. What we can do is if you want to zoom in at whatever, we can go and look at that. Are there any specific questions on the alternatives, on the analysis, on where we are?

MS. STILES: I really love seeing the maps; it makes a big difference. I was going to ask because – and it might be you or it might be Mr. Merrifield, but I don't have the experience to know. For the Oculina Bank; how long does it take to cross at 4 knots the width of the area that we're talking about? Is that like an hour or is that 10 minutes?

MR. PUGLIESE: It is a pretty narrow area. Mike can clarify, and it is going to be probably relative to the sea conditions, too.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Yes, it is definitely going to be relative to conditions, but also at the southern end it is much wider than it is at this new expansion end. It would take a lot longer down there than it would here. There are places here where it is going to be a relatively short period of time.

What you are talking width-wise, it is not going to take very long. That is why they wanted to increase the ping rate to every five minutes or whatever it was, because that way they have the ability to know speed and direction. But down at the southern end, it is a lot wider and it would take a lot longer to get across.

MR. BLAIR: Margot, just as a point of clarification; that 4 knots is going to be what they are not allowed to do anything slower than that. They will mostly be transiting at speeds above that to try to get across the area.

MS. STILES: That is helpful. I was trying to put it in context of the ping every five minutes to understand what that really means.

MR. BLAIR: One of the things – and Mike can go to this as well. During the conversations associated with developing this; the Deepwater Shrimp and the Law Enforcement AP representatives discussed aspects of it. Deepwater Shrimp AP individuals noted that a lot of the VMS are capable of modifying or changing the ping rates at specific preset latitude/longitudes.

The intent I believe was to have it so that they would be able to have the geographic representation in the VMS; so that as they crossed into the boundary of the areas, it would go from a once per hour ping rate to a five-minute ping rate, so that they could get that more intense ping rate during the period that they were transiting the area to validate their speed. Do I have that right, Mike?

MR. MERRIFIELD: Yes; and that is a crucial component of that is that equipment is capable of doing that. We've been assured that there is equipment out there. There are five approved vendors for VMS today, and I think of those five only two or three that will actually have that capability.

We are going to get into that further probably tomorrow in our meeting with a presentation from Pat; but that is a crucial component of this transit because with the length of this thing; to be blockaded to one side of it and have to either go around to the north or the south would be a safety hazard as well as economically not feasible.

MR. PUGLIESE: One additional point to that; the benefit of being to actually be able to do the transit is great enough that the present recommendation is that actually if they drop below 6 knots, is that correct, so I mean they intentionally kind of put in somewhat of a buffer so that it is very clear that these vessels are moving.

They've added in a little bit more of a speed higher than actually the fishing. It is the benefit to do that so that they can have that; because right now, as indicated, there is no possession allowed

in the southern in the Oculina area itself. The law enforcement felt again that some kind of insurance, that you have – if they're moving at that speed, then if they drop below that; then it helps the case to be able to ensure that they are actually transiting versus fishing.

DR. ELKINS: Can we get an answer to Margot's question in something other than not very long; maybe some units like minutes, an hour.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Time to transit; I mean in the northern portion there, I'd say an hour or less, yes.

MS. MARTIN: Right now they are pinging hourly and they are trying to decrease that because depending on the conditions takes them likely less than an hour to transit through.

MR. PUGLIESE: Were there any other questions on the information we've got on habitat or on the operation?

MR. MIKELL: Since there are no streetlights out there, is it inside or outside the hundred fathom curve; the box?

MR. PUGLIESE: Hundred fathom curve? This is a hundred meters so this is 330 or whatever, so it's inside.

MR. MIKELL: Is it inside?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Right at the outside is at the 50 fathom line. As you can see, the biggest impact is at the southeastern portion of that box there, which is to the offshore of that reef. There is a soft substrate bottom in about 50 fathoms or 100 meters. That is the area that traditionally where the rock shrimp fishery has existed.

There is an issue that we're going to be talking about tomorrow. I think I sent some coordinates to Roger and Anna last year about possibly moving that border in a little bit. According to some of the stuff that I have and talking with some of the fishermen, there is an issue as to whether that line sits at the 100 or the 110 meter.

If you look at the southern half of that eastern border, there are a lot of dots in there. That is area that is being cut out of the fishery. There is a request of ours to basically move it in just slightly to what the fishermen consider to be that 50 fathom line. They know they don't fish inside the 50 fathom there, because that is where the bottom gets harder. It starts that incline where the Oculina starts.

MR. BLAIR: Just for kind of reiteration and clarification; it is the intent for it to be at the 100 meter mark, and that is how it will be described in the alternative.

MR. PUGLIESE: I'll follow up with that. Yes, and I think some of the – and I've talked to Mike about this. We can get into the deepwater shrimp further, because I think the point is if there is a desire to move inshore of the 100 meter, because right now that line from the beginning

has been used in multiple alternatives. The difference is I think, Mike, you're looking at the scan bathymetry which we have here.

Most of what we used the scan bathymetry for was to really document that high-relief habitat and where you could see the pinnacles and different things. When we developed a line, we used the 10 meter line bathymetry, because I went back and I was double checking. This entire area, I was looking at how closely that tracks that 100 meter.

It absolutely tracks that 100 meter right – especially on the eastern boundary; that area is so distinct. Those lines are almost from I'd say 100 to 140 are almost absolutely parallel all the way up. That 100 meter line is exactly that. We can look at it further. I think the distinction is going to be whether there is a desire to go inshore of that with other information.

I think that is what it really does come down to, because right now this accurately represents the hundred meter contour. I've worked with John Reed and worked with the NRDC – I can't remember – the CRM 10 meter NAD 83 data to get this line as close to what the recommendation from the Coral and concurred by the Habitat AP was. We can talk further about and look at that; but I want to make it clear that it is not an error in what we're looking at.

MR. MIKELL: The bottom line in the box is that there is no bottom fishing?

MR. PUGLIESE: Correct, no use.

MS. MARTIN: Right, no mid and bottom trawl and anchoring are gear prohibitions.

MR. PUGLIESE: Any bottom-tending gear. Now, I think to make a clarification; it ties back to some of the comments Rusty made. In talking with them further, there is motor fishing that goes on in some of these different areas; so I think it is not going to be impacted. As long as they're not using gear that is damaging the bottom, bottom longlines, mid-water trawls or bottom trawls or anchoring or grapples; I think there are still opportunities to catch species like amberjack or different things like that. The bottom line is, yes, you cannot do any type of fishing that has bottom gear and potentially can impact any of those habitats associated with deepwater complex.

MR. BLAIR: Any other comments or discussion at this time?

MS. STILES: Just briefly; is there a concern either technical or otherwise with having the VMS ping every five minutes just in general; because it sounds like if you have to purchase a new box to be able to put in the geographic specifications; that seems overly complicated. I don't know if there is a constraint on just having it ping more frequently in general.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Cost; you pay for every ping.

MS. STILES: So you pay for the data.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Every ping.

MS. STILES: Okay, that is a constraint.

MR. BLAIR: Again, for some of these things, and Mike can elaborate, at least from what I remember at the October meeting, it was something that the Deepwater Shrimp AP members felt was something that would be a workable alternative to provide them this ability to be able to transit. Obviously, I think it does have its benefits. I am not sure if you have been able to do any cost-benefit type stuff for the impact on that at this time.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Well, it is going to impact the boats that fish the offshore side. Those are the guys that are going to have to upgrade to a newer version or a piece of equipment that will allow them to vary the ping rate. Those are the ones that will be most concerned with that. Honestly, the transit capability with product on board is just if you are going to make something this long and not make it crossable, it would be a huge problem. The ability to transit is very important to them from that aspect.

They will deal with that cost as far as that is concerned, but the variable ping rate seems to be the best answer for mitigating some of that cost. Like I said, that is going to be really just the ones that will do the offshore side. That is with the bigger boats. The smaller boats typically probably won't even worry about that equipment.

MR. PUGLIESE: I'll follow up and then Anna has a comment. Also the focus; it is not just the northern area. I think the big benefit is that they were talking about once they allowed the transit – and really some of this discussion came from the fact that there isn't a transit in the existing Oculina Bank, which is a larger area and has a deeper component, et cetera. I think that also is something that is provided in that. I think again that adds to the benefit to the industry that had been acknowledged.

MS. MARTIN: Yes, I was going to make that same point. That was clarified by law enforcement. This won't be just transit through the northern extension; it will be through the entire HAPC. I recognize you are likely only fishing off of the eastern boundary of the proposed northern extension, but there is some going on off of the existing HAPC as well, Mike?

MR. MERRIFIELD: There is no fishing on the eastern side of existing. I mean it goes all the way out to great depths. There is nothing out there. The issue is that if someone is rock shrimping and then goes out red shrimping and then wants to come inshore, if they are in this area they cannot go through that box if they have rock shrimp on board. It has been an imposition already. This just gives them that ability to come across there. There is no interest in dragging any of this bottom; it is not draggable at least on the northern portion of it.

DR. FEDDERN: Are these transit corridors or can you transit anywhere along that as long as you keep your speed up?

MS. MARTIN: Anywhere, Henry. There was the discussion of corridors early in the process for this amendment, but law enforcement said that is not going to work.

DR. FEDDERN: I don't see why corridors would have been useful, anyway, because transiting you are not touching the bottom. That is good for safety also. If the storm comes up, they want to be able to get in as soon as possible.

MR. PUGLIESE: Again to that point; again, the fact is that OLE really is figuring out a way to use the technology. Before I think some of the discussion on transit; corridors was really trying to – well, if we limit it to these areas, we can monitor it more effectively and see this; the effectiveness of that with the ability to really use the VMS.

Anybody that crosses the line, then it can acknowledge that and provide it to the system. That made the corridors really kind of a moot point and really the overall monitoring, using the technology the way it can is what drove it to let's just do it that way and allow the technology to be able to deal with the issue.

Everything that I had in Attachment 2 for the habitat – and I'm not sure what number it was for that – talks about this analysis is exactly what I presented. You all do have virtually everything that was in this presentation. The only other thing is it had the larger coordinates at the end of that. Everything has been covered that is included and that also has all been integrated into the Coral Amendment 8.

MR. BLAIR: I will defer somewhat to Roger and Anna. Right now at this point both the Habitat and the Coral AP have made their recommendations relative to their preferred alternatives for these. This will be going forward for consideration at the June council meeting for it to be approved for public in August?

MS. MARTIN: Right, so the council again is looking for final input from these groups as a whole. The council has not yet selected any preferred alternatives. They were interested in your discussion once again on these areas before they consider preferred alternatives at their June council meeting; and approving this document for public hearings, which is the next step in the process.

Those public hearings would then be held in August. They would take public hearing comments into consideration when they take this amendment up again at their September meeting. If we're talking timing, they are looking at finalizing this amendment at the September council meeting.

MR. BLAIR: Okay, so this again was brought back because it did have the updates with the VMS data that we stated was going to be brought in. If there are no other further discussions – yes, Anne.

MS. DEATON: I just have a question because I wasn't at the last meeting. Which did everybody support; was it 2A, 2B or 3 for the Oculina?

MR. BLAIR: We can kind of go back through that just real quick if you wish, but for the northern extension – and I'm going to go ahead and pull it up to make sure that I don't misspeak myself – 2B was the alternative that came out from the joint meeting with the Deepwater Shrimp AP and the Coral Advisory Panel in October of last year.

It was further kind of tweaked and provided back to both the Habitat AP and the Coral AP has seen it as well so that 2B is the alternative for the northern extension. Alternative 3 is for the western. That is essentially relatively kind of unchanged from its prior format. The implementation for the transit is Alternative 3; yes, Alternative 3 that includes the provisions for speed, ping rate as well as a call-in provision in case of mechanical failure or emergency.

The alternative for Stetson-Miami Terrace, the proposed extension for it is Alternative 2, which is the one that again is one that used more recent mapping information as well as discussions with Deepwater Shrimp AP to minimize the boundaries into the areas and points of concern. Then finally for the Cape Lookout; that pretty much has remained unchanged from its original orientation based on the mapping that was provided by Steve Ross and Sandra Brooke.

MS. DEATON: I guess my question was the 2B and 3, not either/or. It will be both.

MR. WILBER: Correct, we are bringing forward 2B and 3.

MS. MARTIN: Right; and the council can select more than one preferred alternative for an action. There can be multiple.

MR. PUGLIESE: Quick comment. Under the Stetson-Miami – Anna has already raised and we probably as staff were going to raise that; but the post scoping alternative for Stetson-Miami that had the big tongue and all that stuff; we've gone and worked with the Shrimp AP to come up with a refined one on that.

We would probably recommend that the council remove that as an extra alternative. Is there any concern by having that? I was going to kind of go to Mike and ask him if he thought that the old scoping one that was put together versus what was kind of deliberated to come up with that newer version; was there any reason to keep the old in the hopper? We're at that kind of collaboration between all the groups that the subsequent one with getting that area refined, adding back in that area trawlable to the south of the mapped habitat was where we are.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think everybody was pretty much in agreement with that new one that was developed at the meeting. I wouldn't eliminate it until we talked to them tomorrow and make sure that everybody is in agreement. As far as I know, everybody is in agreement with that one there. There is not a problem.

But my question is if we do develop another alternative for the northern extension because of the concerns of that southeastern border; these will not be presented to these two APs. They will not have the opportunity to look at that to see if that would be a preferred alternative or not. That is why my question all along has been when is the right time to give you this input as to what concerns we have?

When can they be incorporated into an alternative that can be looked at by the other APs? What happened was we developed a lot of these and we all said we all agreed on the 70/100 at our last joint meeting, and that was a great leap, and I think we made a lot of progress at that meeting. Then the task was to go from there and develop and refine that; which John and you did, and that was mainly on the 70 meter side.

Then after we looked at that and saw the impact to the 100 meter side, there was a request to take a look at that boundary on that side. I guess we'll bring this up tomorrow, but these guys will never get a chance to see or hear any explanation as to why we want to present that.

MR. PUGLIESE: We're still at the getting ready to go to public hearing process here. I think the directive to these groups in the last round was to look at what the habitat implications were,

and really that last iteration was to make the adjustment based on habitat distribution in those areas. As I indicated earlier, the eastern boundary accurately represents the 100 meter contour. If there is a desire to look at a different alternative based on fishing impacts or fishing operations, that can come out of tomorrow's recommendations to the council.

The APs are going to have opportunity to get this material as it goes to public hearing and beyond. It is not as if whatever comes out of the AP recommendation tomorrow will go away. It is going to go to the council in June for consideration as part of the recommendations that are coming out of this group as well as from the Deepwater Shrimp AP.

MR. MERRIFIELD: But not as an alternative; it just gets presented to them as a concern and then they can decide whether – I'm sorry, I just don't understand the process that well since I have not been involved in it that long. I'm just trying to get a handle on when things occur and when is the right time to put things in. That would go to them and they would say develop another alternative based upon this input; is that how this works?

MS. MARTIN: That's right, Mike, that is how it works. The advisory panels can make recommendations to the council. The advisory panels cannot make an alternative. The council would take your recommendations into consideration and determine in June whether or not they want to add that into the document for analysis as an actual alternative. Pending the outcome of the session tomorrow, there might be a recommendation that they would consider another northern extension recommendation. They would not make that an alternative until the June meeting.

MS. STILES: Mike, is it a real specific thing that you have in mind that you could just tell us about now so that there is some sort of anticipation of what might happen? If it is not specific in your mind, then I don't think we could have the discussion now. But if you have a specific idea already of what is going to be talked about, I don't see why we couldn't. I mean if we have the time to understand what that is going to be.

MR. MERRIFIELD: There were a set of coordinates for the southeastern – it is basically from about the middle of the northern extension southward to the bottom of the extension. There is just a movement westward with that boundary just a little bit that would release some of that area that is currently a fishery.

I don't want to get out of turn here if this is something that needs to be done tomorrow and then go through the process. That's fine; I just needed to know where in the process this needs to go so that everybody has a chance to look at it and understand what the request is. The request, whether it is 100 or the 110, whatever, there is a significant amount of trawling that is done.

We have a situation here where adjacent to this Oculina reef offshore is a soft substrate bottom, which is prime rock shrimp habitat. They coincide with one another. That is an area that is fertile; in the right seasons it is fertile grounds for rock shrimp. That has been an area that has traditionally been trawled for rock shrimp. We're just looking to see if that border could be moved to release some of that track area that they have traditionally trawled.

MR. BLAIR: It sounds as though at this point it would probably be best to see what the Deepwater Shrimp would like to make a recommendation for. It will be made available so that

we can look at it and get comments back on it as well. It will be considered. I think that we can make it so the APs are able to review it, see it and have their general comments and so forth made on it so that by June meeting it can be brought to the council for their consideration as an inclusion if they desire it as an alternative.

MS. MARTIN: We do have one council member here; I neglected to introduce him earlier. Tom Burgess is a representative from North Carolina. Did you want to say something, Tom?

MR. BURGESS: Yes, Mike, just to make sure that I understand and that the group understands; that is in that bottom corner on the east side you feel that the 100 meter curve or the 100 meters is not represented accurately with what you're looking at on the map. If you look into it as you have with your people that you do not want to come inside of 100 meters, but you just don't think it is represented there; is that correct?

MR. MERRIFIELD: I don't know that for sure, because Roger says that he's got – and he probably has the latest data so he probably has better charts than I do. The charts I have show it a little bit differently. The guys that are trawling out there, this is the one that they're using; and just the general knowledge out there is that you don't trawl inside the 50 fathoms.

That is where everything slopes up to harder bottom. There is no rock shrimp habitat there. I'm just basing it off of that and off of their concerns that it is moved out into the softer substrate bottom where they have trawled in the past. I have all the track data that kind of shows that history; but the VMS also does a good job of depicting that as well.

I don't know if it is the 100 or the 110. Roger has got it drawn at the 100 according to his data, and I have to take that; but there is this question as to – I mean where they are dragging and where there is productive bottom is soft substrate bottom, so that is what they're looking at. I've asked guys to go out there and groundtruth that for me and I haven't gotten any results back yet from that.

MR. BURGESS: Okay, thank you. I just wanted to be clear on what your thoughts were.

MR. PUGLIESE: We'll get a chance to get into it deeper in the Deepwater Shrimp AP discussions tomorrow. Just for a quick clarification; the high-resolution bathymetry maps are what you – when we were dealing with this and crafting it; that is essentially the lines that you are looking at on it.

I think that was the point I was trying to make is that these high resolutions are good for looking at the habitat distribution: but when it came to the actual use of the lines, those are based on the high-resolution 10 meter bathymetries, and so it is an accurate representation. I guess going back to when you get to the Deepwater Shrimp AP, especially since it hasn't been groundtruthed; if you are just using this, if their input is that we don't fish inshore of 100 meters, then that is something you need to consider, because right now that is at 100 meters. I just want to kind of put it into context. We can have and get into kind of more of the nitty-gritty when we get into the AP meeting.

MR. BLAIR: Okay, are there any further comments?

MS. STILES: I'm not hearing a big substantive like concern or disagreement there. It sounds like the maps need to be aligned and it sounds like a communication issue. I'm not concerned if this comes up between now. If the chairs of the APs have a chance to sort of review and make sure the concept is the same; I'm not hearing a big conceptual change in the alternative. That is just my opinion.

MR. BLAIR: Right; if it turns out that this is more towards that end, then we'll communicate that. If it turns out that the Deepwater Shrimp AP does develop a different alternative, we'll come back to all members of the APs. Are there any other final comments on Amendment 8? Okay, I believe we've just completed the agenda.

MS. STILES: Do you need us to suggest preferred alternatives?

MR. BLAIR: As we have stated, both the Coral and the Habitat have already done it. This again was the last opportunity for the two APs to have any input on aspects that have been modified or care for modification. We brought it back because there was a statement that it would come back to the APs with a new VMS data. There really haven't been other changes other than the information associated with the new VMS data. Okay, is there any other business to come up before the Joint AP? Hearing none; I will ask for a motion to adjourn.

AP MEMBER: So moved.

MR. WILBER: Second. All in favor; aye. We are adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 o'clock a.m., May 8, 2013.)

Certified By:_____Date:_____

Transcribed By:
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May 2013

JT HAB + CORAL

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