SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel Meeting Report

May 7-8, 2013

Hilton Garden Inn
5265 International Boulevard
North Charleston, SC 29418

The Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel met May 7-8 in North Charleston, South Carolina. The meeting was conducted with two major focuses with day one May 7th dedicated to habitat and ecosystem policy statement review and development and day two May 8th jointly with the Coral Advisory Panel dedicated to final habitat input on proposed actions in Coral Amendment 8 prior to Council consideration for selection of preferred alternatives and approval for public hearing. This report focuses on the Panel's continued efforts on policy development and indicates the Panel's reaffirmation of their previous position on preferred alternatives for actions proposed in Coral Amendment 8.

Habitat Policy Statement Review

Aquaculture Policy Roundtable Review:

The Panel received a presentation highlighting coordination of Dr. Christopher Elkins in facilitating a review, update and preliminary revision to the standing Council Aquaculture Policy Statement. Ken Riley, contractor with the Beaufort Laboratory engaged in the team tasked with developing the revised draft, made the presentation which updated aquaculture science and policy implications for conservation of Essential Fish Habitat and species dependent on that habitat. The Panel cooperated in a subsequent review of the statement and policy recommendations and edits to the significantly updated draft. An expanded team will be engaged to further review and refine the draft for completion at the November Habitat Panel meeting.

Other Roundtable Policy Review and Policy Development Breakout Groups

Panel members reviewed other policy statement recommendations and moved into breakout sessions to continue update of the remaining statements and open discussions of potential new statements.

The Advisory Panel's goal is to complete the revision of existing and development of new statements for Council consideration and approval during its December meeting. To achieve that goal, the development will continue over the summer and fall with final adjustments to the policy statements being made during the fall Habitat AP meeting in November.

Developing a State of the Fish Habitat Report and Ecosystem Coordination
The Panel discussed and further considered development and possible timing associated with preparation of a state of the South Atlantic fish habitat report. One key step will be tapping in on ongoing ecosystem partner/organization efforts and previous products available.

Joint Meeting with Coral Advisory Panel
The Habitat Advisory Panel, during the joint meeting with the Coral AP, reaffirmed their position regarding habitat and coral ecosystem conservation actions and preferred alternatives as now proposed in Coral Amendment 8 restated during the meeting:
Action 1, Alternative 2b for the northern extension of the Oculina CHAPC
Action 1, Alternative 3 for the western extension of the Oculina CHAPC
Action 3, Alternative 2 for the extension of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC, and
Action 4, Alternative 2 for the extension of the Cape Lookout CHAPC