Report on the
Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel Meeting and Eco-Regional Partner Coordination Meeting

Charleston Marriott , Charleston, South Carolina

November 15-16, 2011

Roger Pugliese SAFMC

AP Comments on Preliminary List for Scoping Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3

Protective measures for Speckled Hind and Warsaw grouper in the mid-shelf fishery

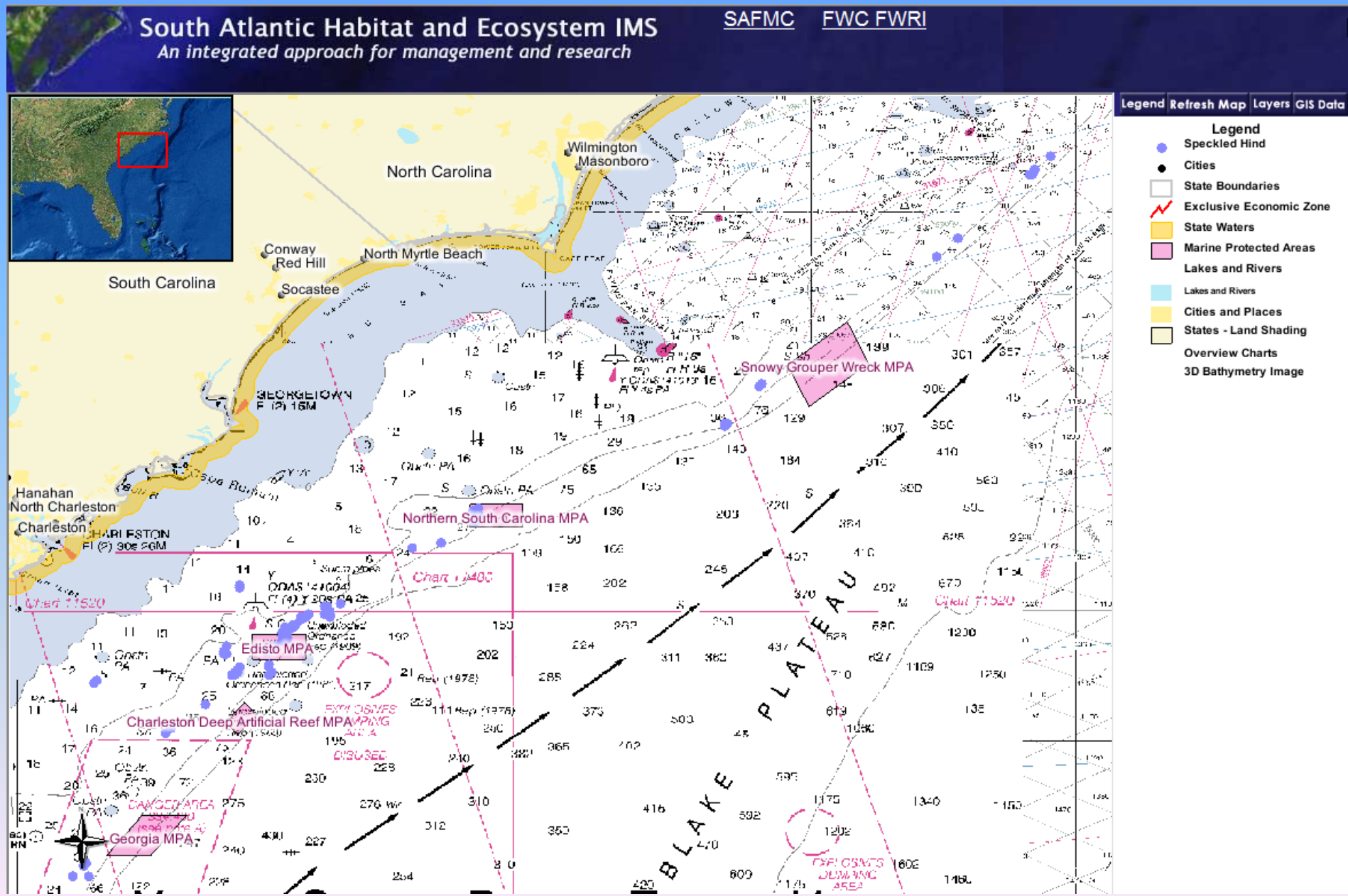
Recommendation

- Consider designating EFH-HAPCs for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper

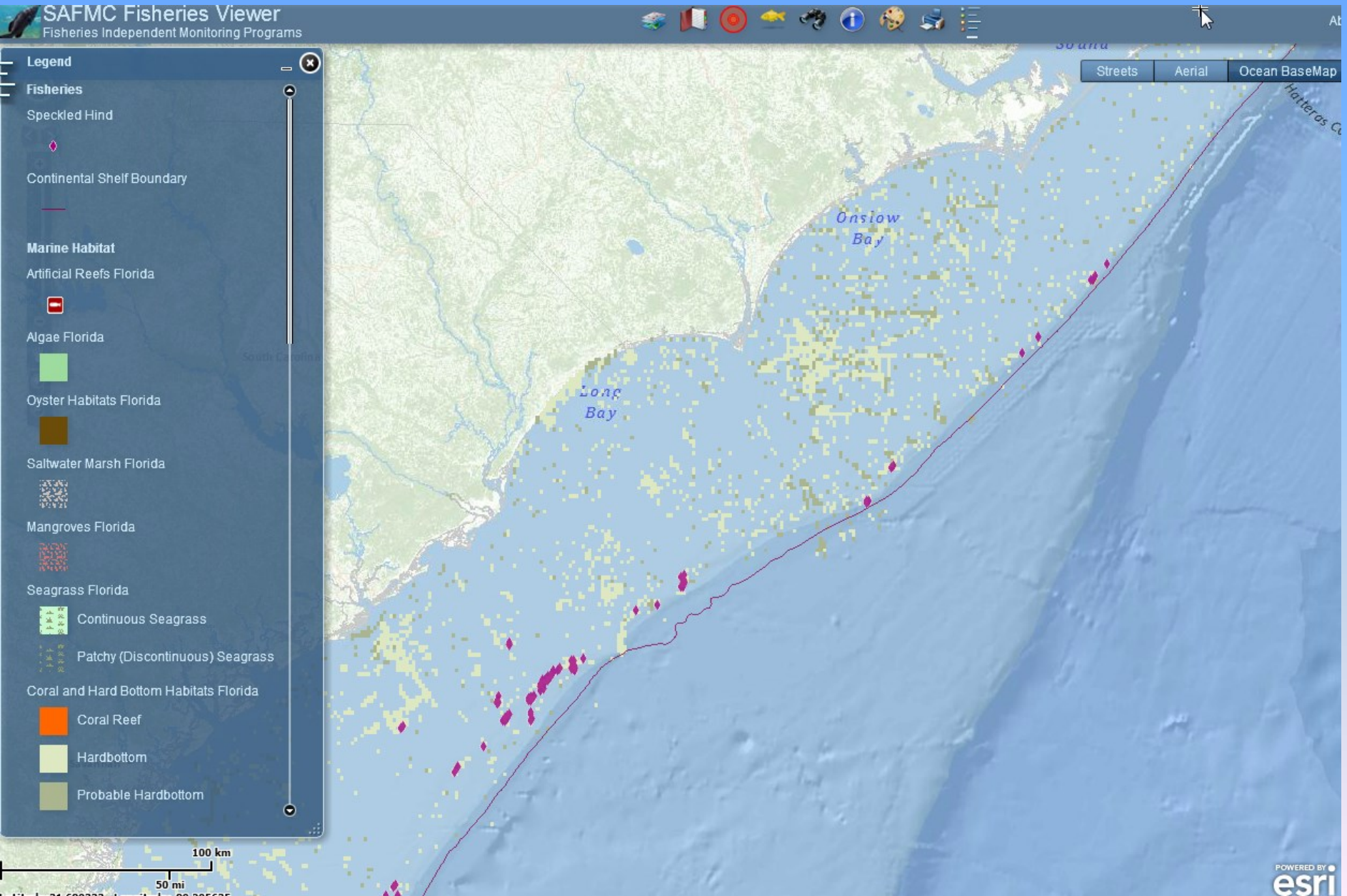
Preliminary Rationale

- Protections on mid-shelf are important to address bycatch responsibilities of the Council and will address other species in the mid-shelf fishery
- Information (video footage) on aggregations of Warsaw off St. Lucie is available
- Detailed study on speckled hind is available (Ziskin et al.)

Speckled Hind and MPAs



Speckled Hind and SEAMAP Hard Bottom Distribution



Powerhead Prohibition in the EEZ off NC

Recommendation

- Consider a Coastwide Prohibition in South Atlantic Region

Preliminary Rationale

- Noise sensitivity impact on aggregation
- Breakage of habitat
- Shifting effort occurs so coastwide prohibition should be considered
- Targeting large male grouper reef engineers and removal of significant spawning stock
- Potential to deplete specific sex / sex ratio problems

Potential CHAPC Modifications

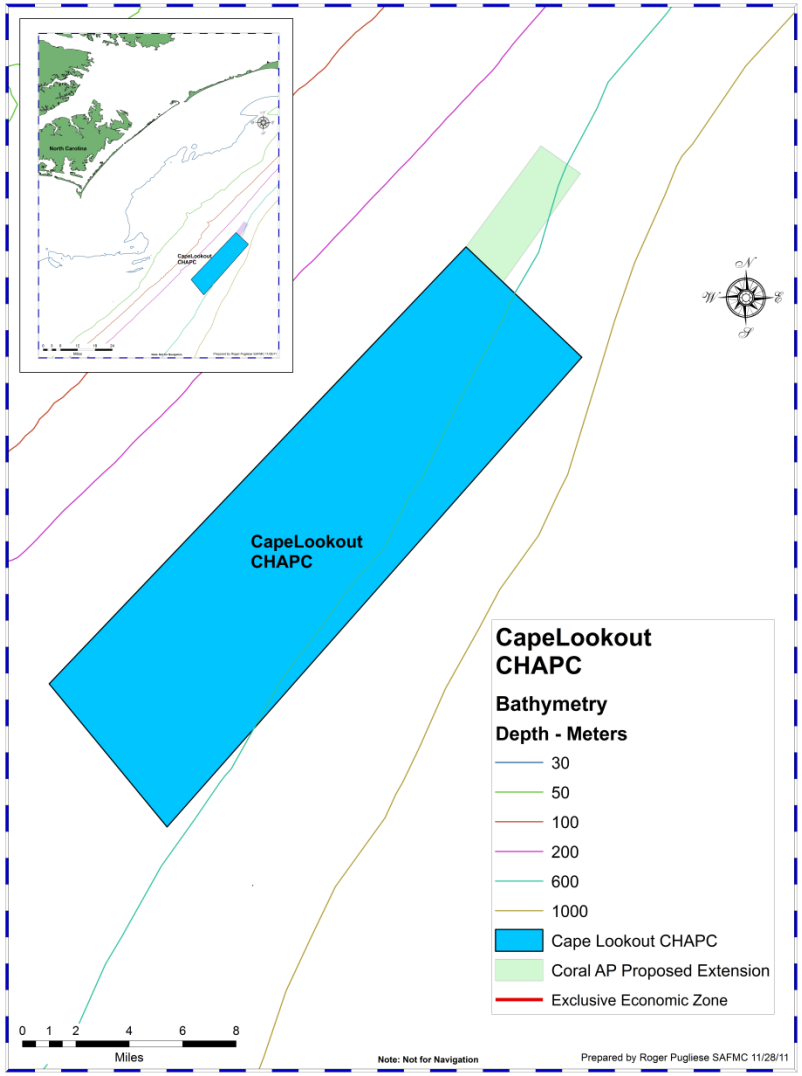
Recommendation

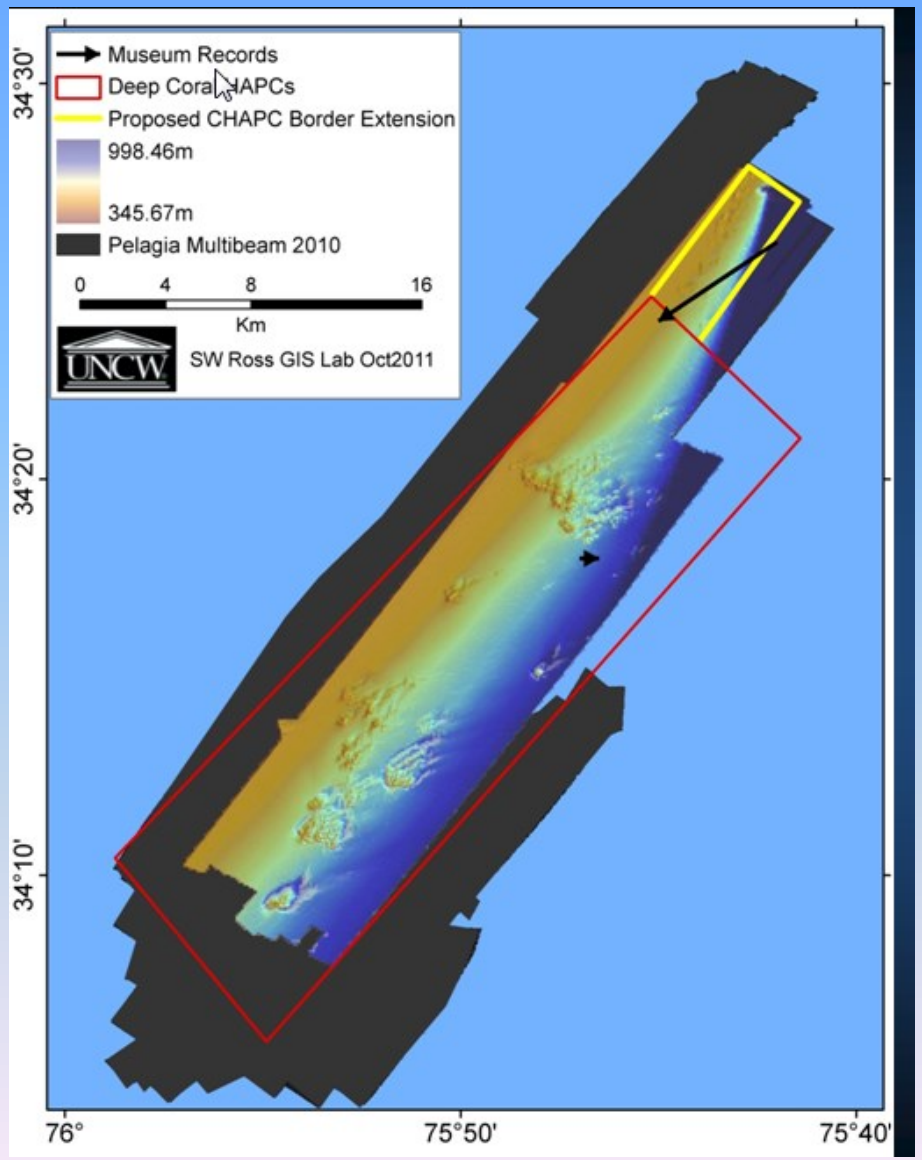
- Consider expansion of CHAPCs if habitat is present in areas under consideration
- Also co-designate as an EFH-HAPC if expansion warranted

Preliminary Rationale

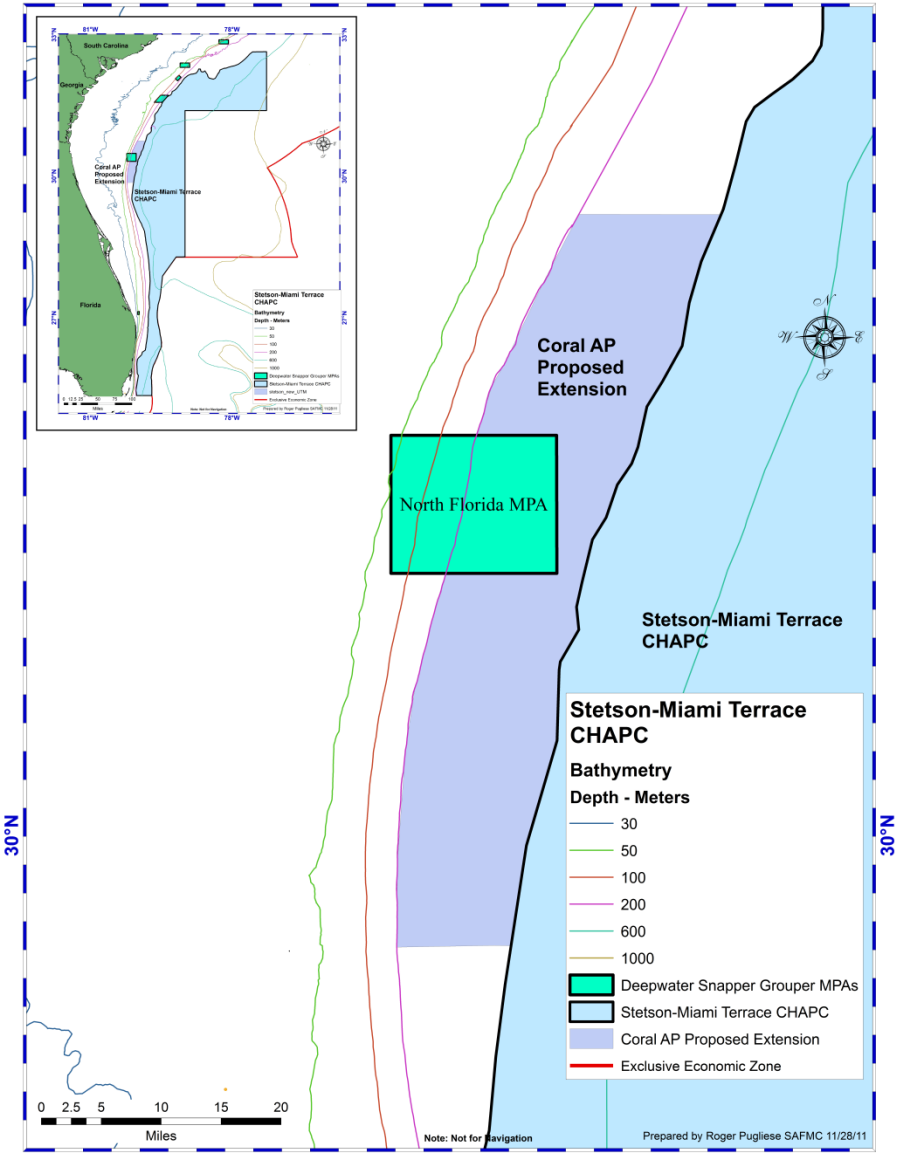
- Based on multibeam data from a 2010 research cruise, a recommendation surfaced at the Coral AP meeting to consider expansion of boundary of Cape Lookout HAPC north where *Lophelia* mounds were observed.
- A shallow water Lophelia site off of Jacksonville that was first examined during the DSC cruise in November 2010 represents the shallowest known Lophelia community in the SE region, and it lies outside of the Stetson Miami HAPC.
- Discovery of new coral mounds during June 2011 Deep Sea Coral expedition north of HAPC New sonar maps and ROV dives explore areas 260-328’ depths in Outer continental shelf-edge between St. Augustine and Cape Canaveral

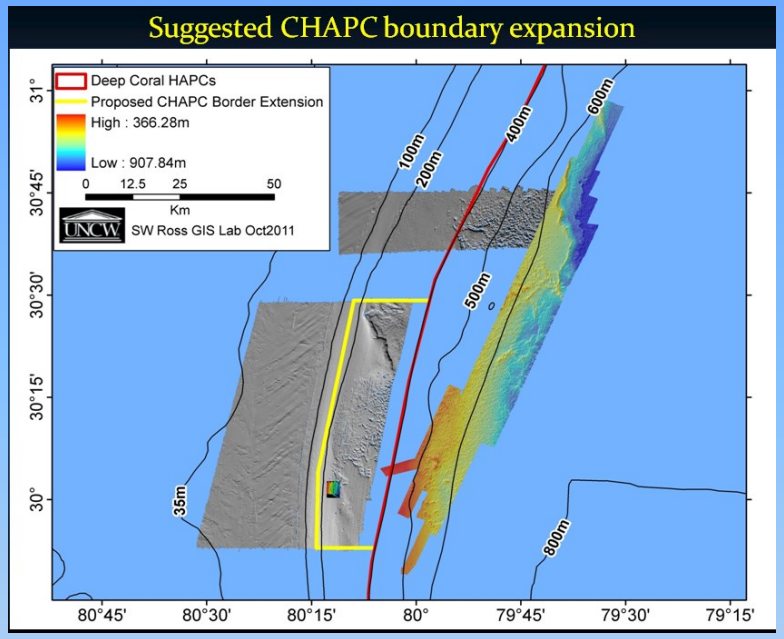
Potential Cape Lookout CHAPC Modifications

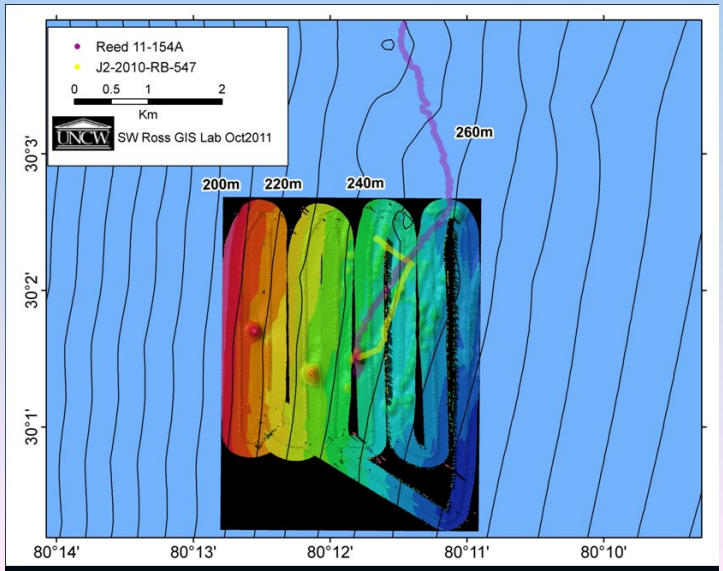




Potential Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC Modifications







Research Items: Snowy Wreck MPA and Wreckfish Fishery and Deep Dropping

- Investigate other habitat closely associated with existing Snowy Wreck MPA. Noted: Sampling is ongoing inside and outside MPA
- Request a research priority be the examination of the habitat impacts of the wreckfish fishery and deep dropping. Noted: Potential impact may be point impact

Recommendations on Ecosystem Linkages

- Forage fish
  - Enhance descriptions of the roles forage fish play in EFH
  - Consider development of a policy document to protect forage fish
    - ASMFC actions on forage fish (shad, river herring and menhaden) habitat
    - Consideration of Blueback herring ESA Listing
    - USFWS reconsideration of American Eel ESA Listing

- Nearshore hardbottom
  - Enhance information on nearshore hardbottom use by snapper grouper species (limited information especially Georgia North)
  - Clarification of “nearshore” and relief associated with it

Other Recommendations

Support research and EFH designation of habitats associated with specific species use of estuarine, nearshore hardbottom or other habitats

Evaluate issue of Sand Berm creation as habitat

- Need to address policy and recommendations on sand berms and all beneficial uses of dredged material
- Site specific impacts - creating die off of seagrass in some areas where berms were created in the Gulf of Mexico
- Should not be considered EFH
- Natural sand mounds do occur offshore and may be habitat

Readdress existing EFH policy statement on beach dredge and fill activities, and related large-scale coastal engineering projects

Other Recommendations (cont.)

Develop a Framework for a new SAFMC Policy Statement: Protection and Restoration of Habitat and Ecosystem Function in the South Atlantic Region.

- To be developed prior to next Habitat AP Meeting for approval by Council at subsequent meeting
- To use the FEP and related existing documents to establish goals and targets
- To engage State AP Chairs and draw on Regional Partners efforts
- To provide a State of the SA Ocean and Goals

South Atlantic Eco-Regional Partner Coordination Meeting

In conjunction with the SAFMC Habitat Advisory Panel Meeting - November 15-16, 2011

November 16, 2011, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Marriott Charleston, South Carolina

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), through the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel, has forged collaborations leading to a regional habitat and ecosystem network supporting development of a regional Habitat plan supporting designation of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for all federally managed species, the first Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) for the South Atlantic Region and Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendments (CE-BAs). The Panel provides guidance to the Council and serves as the in-the-field mechanism to coordinate with local, state and regional partner efforts supporting habitat conservation and ecosystem-based and spatial management. To build on this system, an Eco-Regional Partner Coordination meeting is integrated into the second half of the Advisory Panel meeting on Wednesday November 16. Invited representatives from the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA), the Governors South Atlantic Alliance (SAA), the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP), the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC), Navy Fleet Forces Command, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) are being engaged to facilitate coordination with the Council as well as between each other. Panel Members and a number of Council members on the Ecosystem and Habitat Committees will be briefed on each organization's mandates, strategic documents, activities supported and technical capabilities to highlight existing and identify new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with the Council and between efforts and organizations. The meeting will have a working lunch where participants will be provided an overview of the Councils regional habitat and ecosystem spatial information systems developed in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute and highlight their integration into a developing Digital Dashboard for Habitat Conservation, Ecosystem-Based and Spatial Management. Invited leadership and key technical representatives for each organization are identified and a brief background on the organization and initial opportunities for collaboration with the Council are highlighted in the following support document for the meeting.

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Invited South Atlantic Eco-Regional Partners

Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA): SECOORA is the regional solution to integrating coastal and ocean observing data in the Southeast United States to inform decision makers and the general public. The SECOORA region encompasses 4 states, over 42 million people and spans the coastal ocean from North Carolina to the west Coast of Florida. We are creating customized products to address these thematic areas: Marine Operations; Coastal Hazards; Ecosystems, Water Quality, and Living Marine Resources; and Climate Change. To read more about the thematic areas, click the images below. SECOORA approved a Strategic priorities plan in 2010 (SECOORA 2010) which sets forth a guiding vision to protect people, conserve marine environments and enhance the coastal economy. The Priorities plan focuses on addressing four initial themes; ecosystems, living marine resources and water quality; marine operations; and climate change.

Cooperation with SAFMC and other regional partners is important to guide, direct and integrate with priority needs for observation and modeling to support fisheries oceanography and integration into stock assessment process through SEDAR. Initial products already under development bring together biological and oceanographic data to support active research conducted by SEAMAP, to enhance fishery operations, to support model development and assessment of fish stocks and enhance characterization of benthic and pelagic habitat.

Presenter: Jennifer Dorton, NOAA in the Carolina and SECOORA Member

Additional Contacts: Debra Hernandez SECOORA Executive Director

Vembu Subramanian, SECOORA RCOOS (Data Manager)

Associated documentation provided in the briefing package: (Attachments 14-22)

14) SECOORA Changing Ecosystems, Economies, and Climate: Strategic Priorities for the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association 2010-2015
15) SECOORA Business Plan
16) SECOORA Revised Scope of Work 2011-2015
17), 18), 19), 20) State Activities Flyers
21) US IOOS: A Blueprint for Full Capacity
22) Building Strategies: National MPA System and IOOS

Web Links: http://secoora.org/

Opportunities for collaboration: The Council serves as a member and on the Board of Directors for SECOORA to guide and direct priority needs for observation and modeling to support fisheries oceanography and integration into the stock assessment process through the SouthEast Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR) process. Cooperation through SECOORA is envisioned to facilitate the following that will benefit the Council and regional partners:

•Refining current or water column designations of EFH and EFH-HAPCs (e.g., Gulf Stream and Florida Current).
•Providing oceanographic models linking benthic-pelagic habitats and food webs.
•Providing oceanographic input parameters for ecosystem models.
•Integration of ocean observing system information into the stock assessment process in the south Atlantic region.
•Facilitating ocean observing system collection of fish and fishery data and other research necessary to support the SAFMC's use of area-based management tools in the region including, but not limited to, EFH, EFH-HAPCs, Marine Protected Areas, Deepwater Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, Special Management Zones, and Allowable Gear Areas.
•Integration of ocean observing system program capabilities and research Needs into the South Atlantic Fishery Ecosystem Plan.
•Collaboration with SECOORA to link/integrate ocean observing system products on the SAFMC's Habitat and Habitat and Ecosystem Web Services to facilitate model and tool development.
•Linking to to Flex Web Services and a Council Digital Dashboard will provide permissioned researchers access to data or products including those collected/developed by South Atlantic ocean observing system partners.

SAFMC has contributed to SECOORAs development of a 10 year build out plan highlighting oceanographic characterization and monitoring need to enhance fishing operations and conservation and management of fish stocks, fish habitat and fisheries in the region. SAFMC is working with SECOORA to expand fishery stakeholder, researcher and manager input into the ongoing development process for our region.

Governor's South Atlantic Alliance (SAA): The SAA provides regional guidance and resources to address broader habitat and ecosystem conservation goals of the States and regional partners. The initial focus areas include, Healthy Ecosystems, Working Waterfronts, Clean Coastal and Ocean Waters and Disaster-Resilient Communities. SAFMC addresses the focus area of Healthy Ecosystems by providing species and habitat data. This goal seeks to ensure the sustainability of the diverse array of coastal and marine environments vital to the ecological and economic stability of the region by: enhancing and supporting ecosystem-based management of regional biological resources; improving ecosystem structure and function by developing and applying sound scientific data to support habitat conservation, enhancement, and restoration; increasing the understanding of the scope and scale of the region's human and natural resources; and developing communication networks, research frameworks, and outreach/education.

Presenters and Contacts:
Carolyn Bolton-Kelly SCDHEC Chair, SAA Executive Planning Team
Michele, Duval, NCDMF, SAA Healthy Ecosystems Implementation Team Mentor

Associated documentation provided in the briefing package: (Attachments 23-24)
23) SAA Action Plan
24) SAA Working Document - Implementation Plan

Web Links: http://www.southatlanticalliance.org/index.htm

Opportunities for Collaboration: Initially discussed as a South Atlantic Eco-regional Compact, the SAFMC has also cooperated with South Atlantic states in the formation of a Governor's South Atlantic Alliance. This will also provide regional guidance and resources that will address state and SAFMC broader habitat and ecosystem conservation goals. The Alliance was initiated in 2006. An Executive Planning Team (EPT), by the end of 2007, had created a framework for the Governors South Atlantic Alliance. The formal agreement between the four states (NC, SC, GA, and FL) was executed in May 2009. The Agreement specifies that the Alliance will prepare a "Governors South Atlantic Alliance Action Plan" which will be reviewed annually for progress and updated every five years for relevance of content. Alliance mission and purpose is to promote collaboration among the four states, and with the support and interaction of federal agencies, academia, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, to sustain and enhance the region's coastal and marine resources. The Alliance proposes to regionally implement science-based actions and policies that balance coastal and marine ecosystems capacities to support both human and natural systems. Recent activities endorsed by the Steering Committee with support from the EPT include the completion of an SAA Action plan in 2011 and development of a living more detailed guidance document an Implementation Plan in July 2011. The opportunity for collaboration exists for the Habitat AP to provide input on initial priority activities and work plans developed for the issue areas in a recently developed living Implementation Plan. The Council through the AP members, some which serve on the SAA Technical Teams contributing to the Implementation Plan can draw on expertise and available regional and member capabilities to collaborate on completion of priority activities under the Healthy Ecosystems and other Issue Areas.

South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC): The SALCC is an applied conservation science partnership focused on a defined geographic area that informs on-the-ground strategic conservation efforts at landscape scales. LCC partners include DOI agencies, other federal agencies, states, tribes, non-governmental organizations, universities and others. The scope of the SALCC encompasses both land and ocean components and the Council information on estuarine dependant and marine species, prey and habitat that may be affected by climate change. In addition, with the resources being brought to bear with the developing regional DOI Southeast Climate Science Center (CSC), collaborations with SAFMC are envisioned to mutually build a better understanding of linkages between land and sea and the long-term impact of climate change on watersheds and their associated river, estuarine and marine habitats/ecosystems and Southeast species. The SALCC has launched a strategic planning process and has engaged consulting firm Group Solutions and engaged a planning team which SAFMC participates on, to facilitate development of a Strategic Plan for consideration by the Steering Committee in January 2012.

Presenters and Contacts: Ken McDermond, SALCC Executive Director

Rua Mordaci, Science Coordinator

Associated documentation provided in briefing package: (Attachments 25-29)

25) SALCC Fact Sheet
26) 26) SALCC November 2011 Newsletter
27) SALCC 2011 Partner Projects
28) SALCC Charter
29) SALCC Development and Operations Plan

Web Links: SALCC

1) http://www.southatlanticlcc.org/
2) Optimization Conservation Strategy - http://www.southatlanticlcc.org/page/optimal-conservation-strategy

SALCC is a primary client for **DOI USGS Southeast Climate Science Center:** On September 14, 2009, the Secretary of the Interior signed a Secretarial Order (No. 3289) entitled, "Addressing the Impacts of Climate Change on America's Water, Land, and Other Natural and Cultural Resources." The Order effectively established the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Climate Science Centers (CSCs), which will integrate DOI science and management expertise with similar contributions from our partners to provide information to support adaptation and mitigation efforts on both public and private lands, across the United States and internationally. The Southeast CSC, hosted by NC State University (NCSU), will collaborate with a number of other universities, State and Federal agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with interest and expertise in climate science. The primary partner for the Southeast CSC will be the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the Southeast, including the Appalachian, Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks, Gulf Coast Prairie, Peninsular Florida, and the South Atlantic. CSC collaborations are focused on common science priorities, addressing priority partner needs, minimizing redundancies in science, sharing scientific findings, and expanding understanding of climate change impacts in the Southeast. One example of current research, funded in part by the Southeast CSC, includes the Southeast Regional Assessment Project (SERAP).

Representatives from the associated LCCs will be viewed as key stakeholders and principal conduits for communication about management and scientific needs. It will be important for the Southeast CSC and associated LCCs to collaborate on science needs to ensure that the highest priorities are met, redundancies are minimized, and that significant opportunities are available for sharing resources and communicating climate science information and needs. One recent across

organization collaborations is the funding through SALCC of additional SARP instream flow work in cooperation with SIFN again addressing a priority need identified in the SAFMC FEP and by state partners.

Web Links: USGS, Southeast Climate Science Center

- *SE Climate Science Center - http://www.doi.gov/whatwedo/climate/strategy/Southeast_CSC.cfm*
- *Southeast Regional Assessment Project (SERAP)* - http://serap.er.usgs.gov/.

Opportunities for collaboration: With the resources being brought to bear with the developing regional DOI Southeast Climate Science Center, collaborations with SAFMC are envisioned to mutually build a better understanding of linkages between land and sea and the long-term impact of climate change on watersheds and their associated river, estuarine and marine habitats/ecosystems and Southeast species.

Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP): SARP covering both South Atlantic and Gulf States and adjacent marine environments developed the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SARP 2008) which presents watershed conservation restoration targets directly addressing habitat, water quality, and water quantity conservation needs identified by regional partners. Information from or collaboration with SAFMC partners will help the organization characterize and prioritize fish habitat restoration and conservation efforts intended to increase the viability of fish populations and fishing opportunity. This enhances States conservation of marine habitat and management of species as well as Essential Fish Habitat for designated by the South Atlantic Council. The partnership is also developing a prioritization tool for directing conservation and restoration of marine and inland habitat. The Council is collaborating through SARP Steering Committee and the Science and Data Committee to integrate importance of Essential Fish Habitat and instream flow which maintains those habitats into prioritization tools and a developing costal habitat assessment.

Presenter and Contact: Scott Robinson SARP Coordinator

Associated documentation provided in briefing package: Attachments 30-37)

30) SARP 2010 Year in Review
31) SARP Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan - Summary
32) SARP Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan
33) National Fish Habitat Action Plan
34) Through a Fish's Eye: The Status of Fish Habitats in the United States
35) SALCC SARP Aquatic Resource Management Project – Assessment of Hydrologic Model Availability
36) SARP GIS-Based Riparian Assessment 2010
37) Presentation on NFHAP Coastal Assessment

Web Links:

1) SARP Website- http://www.sarpaquatic.org/
2) SARP/NOAA Coastal Community Restoration Program - http://www.southeastaquatics.net/programs/noaa-community-based-restoration-program-noaa-crp
3) Southern Instream Flow Network (SIFN) - http://www.southeastaquatics.net/programs/southern-instream-flow-network-sifn

Opportunities for collaboration: The SAFMC serves on the National Fish Habitat Board and, as a member of the SARP Steering Committee and Co-Chair of the Science and Data Committee. The Council highlighted the ongoing collaboration by including the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan and associated watershed conservation restoration targets into the SAFMC's FEP. To fulfill requirements of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (NFHAP), to support and enhance the national assessment effort, and to provide a condition assessment of the 8 primary habitat elements of the Southeast Aquatic Habitat Plan (SAHP), SARP has initiated a comprehensive evaluation of the status of aquatic habitat throughout the Southeast region. Many of the habitat, water quality, and water quantity conservation needs identified in the threats and recommendations volume of the FEP are directly addressed by on-the-ground projects supported by SARP. This cooperation results in funding fish habitat restoration and conservation intended to increase the viability of fish populations and fishing opportunities which also meets the needs to conserve and manage EFH for SAFMC managed species or habitat important to their prey. One opportunity exist to tap in on the state Sub-Panel structure of the Habitat AP and provide input on identifying state and watershed priorities for conservation and restoration. The panels could also provide additional guidance on both the developing Coastal Habitat Assessment as well as aid in refining the developing SARP prioritization tool. In addition, the continued development of instream flow information system and tools through SARP and SIFN addresses a priority need identified in the Fishery Ecosystem Plan, the establishment of flow regimes for major rivers in South Atlantic watersheds to support healthy and productive habitat of managed species and prey.

Navy Fleet Forces Command: The United States Navy is involved in significant at-sea training and data collection activities in the South Atlantic Region. Training exercises occur in the region in the Cherry Point (CHPT) Range Complex, Jacksonville (JAX) Range Complex and Undersea Warfare Training Range (USWTR). US Navy FFC conducts fish and habitat data collection including seafloor mapping and habitat characterization in the USWTR and JAX Gunnery Ranges.

Presenters and Contacts:

Laura Busch, US Navy Fleet Forces Command

Contact: Carter Waterson, US Navy Fleet Forces Command (New Member of Habitat AP)

Opportunities for collaboration: US Navy FFC conducts fish and habitat data collection including seafloor mapping and habitat characterization in the USWTR and JAX Gunnery Ranges.

Representation on the Advisory Panel now provides a direct contact and opportunity for sharing of existing information and collaboration on integrating fishery information and research needs in future operations.

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM): Since the early 1980s no federal leasing has taken place offshore of the South Atlantic coast and as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, no drilling will be permitted through 2017. The alternative energy sources under consideration for use on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) —wind, solar, wave, and current power—hold significant potential to alleviate the growing energy demands of society. As a result, interest in using these technologies for commercial energy generation in the U.S. is increasing, and the Energy Policy Act of 2005, authorizes the Department of the Interior to grant leases, easements or rights-of-way on the OCS for the development and support of energy resources other than oil and gas. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) was established in October 2011 and is responsible for managing development of the nation's offshore resources which involves ensuring that the environment is protected and that the nation's offshore energy resources – including renewable energy resources – are developed wisely, economically and in the country's best interests.

Presenters and Contacts:

Brian Hooker, BOEM Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs

Will Waskes,* Oceanographer*, BOEM Office of Offshore Alternative Energy Programs

Associated documentation provided in briefing package: (Attachment 38-39)

38) *MOU Coordination and Collaboration Regarding Outer Continental Shelf Energy Development and Environmental Stewardship – DOI and DOC*
39) *Multipurpose Marine Cadastre- Quick Start Guide*

Opportunities for collaboration: The SAFMC has indicated a need for collaborative planning related to all aspects of energy development in their region. In an effort to assist this process, FWRI is creating an AGS GIS service of relevant spatial data for general distribution to SAFMC staff and its partners. FWRI will seek SAFMC's guidance to identify and compile appropriate marine and terrestrial data for the energy development service. The energy development service will be available for viewing through a variety of clients including: Web application; ArcMap; ArcExplorer; and Google Earth. BOEM has engaged the Council in developing priority fishery and fish habitat research needs to support evaluation of alternative energy development in the region. In order to accomplish this, we are engaging NOAA Fisheries and the Habitat Advisory Panel to provide input on a developing priority document that will become an Appendix to the Council approved EFH Policy Statement on Energy.

South Atlantic Habitat and Ecosystem GIS Integration and Availability: Since 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) has worked closely with SAFMC staff to compile, create and host GIS data through the SAFMC Habitat and Ecosystem Internet Map Server. ESRI's ArcIMS provided the initial solution for SAFMC to distribute coral, habitat, fisheries, and other relevant data via the Web. As SAFMC's technological requirements have expanded, FWRI is transitioning to ArcGIS Server (AGS) a cutting edge technology that will enable collaboration among various federal, state and local agencies to evaluate and analyze fisheries-related information in a new way. By transitioning to the AGS platform, the SAFMC will enhance their online suite of tools to support fisheries management in their region. The transition to AGS leverages FWRI's hardware, software and personnel to publish and promote SAFMC ecosystem data in the form of shared maps. This approach reduces software deployment costs for SAFMC and disseminates the geographic knowledge needed to improve decision making. The AGS web applications for SAFMC are each based on a particular management issue including Essential Fish Habitat, Managed Areas, Fisheries Data, Regulations, Habitat and Ocean Energy Development. FWRI continues to refine and expand capabilities including a developing Eco Species profile and habitat information system. In addition, the regional habitat and ecosystem spatial information systems developed in cooperation with the FWRI with links to regional partner's efforts are being integrated into a developing Digital Dashboard for Habitat Conservation, Ecosystem-Based and Spatial Management.

Presenter: Tina Udouj, FWRI

SAFMC Contact: Roger Pugliese, SAFMC

Web Links: SAFMC Habitat and Ecosystem Internet Map Server: http://www.safmc.net/EcosystemManagement/EcosystemBoundaries/MappingandGISData/tabid/62/Default.aspx

SAFMC Regulations Service: http://ocean.floridamarine.org/SAFMC_Regulations/

SAFMC EFH Service: http://ocean.floridamarine.org/SAFMC_EFH/

List of Invited Participants:
South Atlantic Eco-Regional Coordination Meeting
(November 16, 2011)

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