CORAL ADVISORY PANEL REPORT
MAY 7-8, 2013
CHARLESTON, SC

1. Update on Proposed ESA Listing on Coral Species

Jen Moore with NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources Division presented via webinar on the proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) Listing Determinations for 66 coral species. Moore reviewed the Determination Tool that was developed to distill relevant information from the Status Review Report on the 82 coral species petitioned for listing under ESA. NOAA has proposed 66 of the 82 species petitioned for listing under the ESA. Seven of the 66 species are located in the Atlantic/Caribbean (5 are proposed to be listed as endangered and 2 are proposed to be listed as threatened). Additionally, NOAA proposes to upgrade the listing of staghorn and elkhorn corals (*Acropora cervicornis* and *A. plamata*) from threatened to endangered. A final listing determination on the proposed rule is due by December 2013.

2. Update on Coral Nursery Restoration Work and Utilization

Dave Gilliam updated the AP on the collaborative work among many agencies and partners to develop staghorn coral nurseries along the Florida reef tract. The project initiated in 2000 and being a recipient of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding from NOAA in 2009 allowed for significant scaling up of project efforts over a larger geographic region in FL. To-date, over 30,000 staghorn corals currently reside in FL nurseries on a variety of platforms with over 5,000 staghorn nursery-reared corals having been outplanted with a goal of enhanced reproductive capability and recovery.

3. Update on NOAA Fisheries Habitat Conservation Division

Jocelyn Karazsia updated the AP on NOAA Fisheries Habitat Conservation Division's Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) activities. Project activities involved in an EFH consultation include the Port Everglades Port Expansion and Florida Atlantic University's Southeast National Marine Renewable Energy Center's planned hydrokinetic technology testing project.

4. Coral AP recommendations in Coral Amendment 8

The Coral AP met in a joint session on Wednesday, May 8th 2013 with the Habitat AP to discuss final recommendations for the alternatives under consideration in Coral Amendment 8. The APs received an overview of the most recent version of the amendment, and received a presentation on spatial information on habitat and fishery operations associated with the proposed CHAPC extensions. The APs discussed that aside from incorporating the updated Vessel Monitoring System analysis, there were no significant changes to the document since review of Coral Amendment 8 during their last AP meetings. The Coral AP reaffirmed their recommendations for preferred alternatives in Coral Amendment 8 that they developed

during the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting in October 2012 in Cape Canaveral, FL:

- Regarding Action 1, the APs recommend Sub-Alternative 2b and Alternative 3 as preferred alternatives. The Coral AP has stated that establishing a northern extension for Oculina Bank HAPC along the 70-100 meter boundaries while annexing obvious hard bottom features would incorporate most of the known deepwater coral habitat presumed to occur in this area. The Coral AP was instrumental in developing Sub-Alternative 2b as a recommendation to the Council during their last meeting. Alternative 3 was recommended by the Coral AP prior to public scoping for the CHAPC actions. The AP's original recommendation was the result of obtaining new data in areas surrounding the Oculina Bank HAPC satellite sites identifying high relief habitat in the area west of the existing boundary.
- The Coral AP noted no objections to the transit provision specifications identified in Action 2, Alternative 3, which was developed by the Deepwater Shrimp AP during their joint meeting with the Coral AP in October 2012.
- The AP reaffirmed their preferred recommendation, Alternative 2, for modification to the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC (Action 3). In conjunction with the Deepwater Shrimp AP, the Coral AP developed Alternative 2 during their joint meeting in 2012. Alternative 2 modifies the original Coral AP recommendation to minimize the area of productive sand bottom for royal red shrimp, while maintaining protection to deepwater coral habitat based on data from multibeam mapping and high resolution bathymetry.
- Regarding Action 4, the APs reaffirmed their original recommendation for expansion of Cape Lookout CHAPC. Alternative 2 was brought forward as a recommendation by the Coral AP prior to public scoping, to incorporate an area of *Lophelia* habitat north of the CHAPC that is based on bathymetric data and museum records.

5. <u>Other Business</u>

Jocelyn Karazsia was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Coral AP.