

**SAFMC
OPTIONS PAPER
March 2012**

**Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based
Amendment 3
(CE-BA 3)**



March 2012

Background

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3) is being developed to address a number of measures that involve various fisheries, as opposed to multiple amendments and frameworks addressing single species issues. The measures that were identified for public scoping, approved during the December 2011 Council meeting, pertain to management of deepwater coral resources, designation of spatially managed areas, and changes in management of the snapper grouper fishery. CE-BA 3 is intended to provide a holistic approach to fisheries management and foster greater public awareness and understanding of the entire amendment development process, from initiation to implementation.

Actions in CE-BA 3 (These items and others were scoped in January/February 2012)

1. Expand Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC):
 - a. Oculina Bank HAPC
 - b. Stetson-Miami Terrace HAPC
 - c. Cape Lookout HAPC
2. Establish Marine Protected Areas across the mid-shelf and designate HAPCs for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.
3. Modify permits, data reporting (commercial and for-hire), and bycatch reporting to ensure Annual Catch Limits (ACLs) are not exceeded.

Document Preparation

1. Ecosystem-Based Management Committee will develop alternatives for actions relative to Coral HAPCs.
2. Snapper Grouper Committee will develop alternatives for actions addressing Marine Protected Areas and HAPCs for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.
3. Ad Hoc Data Collection Committee will develop alternatives for actions specific to modifying permits, data reporting, and bycatch reporting.

Timeline

In order to meet the timeline goal specified for this developing amendment, the Council will need to:

- Receive input from the SSC (April 3rd-5th) and the associated Advisory Panels (Snapper Grouper April 18th-19th; Joint Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp April 20th; Coral May 9th-10th) during the spring 2012. The Habitat AP will provide comments electronically.
- Review input from the APs and SSC, select preferred alternatives, and approve for public hearings during the June 2012 Council meeting.
- Public hearings will be held in August 6th-9th, 14th & 16th, 2012.
- Review public hearing comments and approve CE-BA 3 for formal Secretarial review during the September or December 2012 Council meeting.

Amendment 7 to the South Atlantic Coral FMP

Expand Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) **(Ecosystem Committee)**

The Coral AP recommends the Council move forward with expanding the Oculina, Stetson-Miami Terrace, and Cape Lookout HAPCs. The recommendations were developed during the October 2011 Coral AP meeting and were presented to the Council during their December 2011 meeting.

The Habitat AP also recommends that any potential revisions to HAPCs incorporate an EFH-HAPC designation.

Action 1. Expand boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC.

**Selection of multi-Preferred Alternatives for this Action is possible.*

Alternative 1. No Action. The existing Oculina Bank HAPC is delineated by the following boundaries: on the north by 28°30' N, on the south by 27°30' N., on the east by the 100-fathom (183-m) contour, and on the west by 80°00' W.; and two adjacent satellite sites: the first bounded on the north by 28°30' N., on the south by 28°29' N., on the east by 80°00' W., and on the west by 80°03' W.; and the second bounded on the north by 28°17' N., on the south by 28°16' N., on the east by 80°00' W., and on the west by 80°03' W.

Alternative 2. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC.

Sub-Alternative 2a. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC: from the current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow the 60 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines, respectively (**Figure 1**). Total area = 393 square nautical miles. (Coral AP recommendation)

Sub-Alternative 2b. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC: from the current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow the 70 meter and 90 meter depth contour lines, respectively (**Figure 2**).

Sub-Alternative 2c. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC: from the current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow the 70 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines, respectively (refer to table in **Figure 2**).

Sub-Alternative 2d. Modify the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC: from the current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow the 60 meter and 90 meter depth contour lines, respectively (refer to table in **Figure 2**).

Alternative 3. Modify the western boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC from 28° 4.5'N to the north boundary of the current Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) (**Figure 3**). The east boundary would coincide with the current western boundary of the Oculina HAPC (80° W). The west boundary could either use the 60 meter contour line, or the 80° 03'W longitude (which is the west border of the Oculina HAPC satellite regions). Total area = 75 square nautical miles. (Coral AP recommendation)

Alternative 4. Allow for transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC based on recommendations by the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel:

- Consult CFR §622.35 (i)(2) for reference to stowing gear and transit (pertains to MPAs but language can be adopted and altered accordingly to be applicable to the deepwater shrimp fisheries).
- If transit is allowed through the HAPC, request that industry increase ping rate for VMS.
- Stowing of gear is recommended by the LE AP instead of corridors for transiting Oculina Bank HAPC, in addition to speed restrictions (no less than 5 knots). In the event minimal speed is not sustainable, vessel must communicate to appropriate contact.

Public Scoping Comments Summary

Many representatives from the shrimp industry expressed concern that information presented during the scoping process for CE-BA 3 was developed without adequate input from the Shrimp and Deepwater APs. Generally, the majority of comments opposed the Coral AP's recommendations to expand the Oculina Bank HAPC. Fishermen spoke about the lack of coral habitat within the existing Oculina Bank HAPC boundary, and expressed concern about anticipated socioeconomic hardship if the boundaries were modified according to the Coral AP recommendation (lengthy transit time to access rock shrimp grounds). Many fishermen reiterated their practice of dragging nets for rock shrimp away from coral habitat because of damage incurred to gear. Several representatives from the shrimp industry provided specific recommendations in response to the Coral AP proposal.

SAFMC Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends working with the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs (meeting April 20) and the Coral AP (meeting May 9-10) to refine alternatives for this action to present to the Council in June. The Council will need to select preferred alternatives for this action in June.

Figure 2 was developed by staff to incorporate the shrimp industry's recommendations provided during the public scoping process.

Council Decisions (March 2012)

MOTION #5: Include the range of alternatives presented for the northern extension of Oculina HAPC, including the Coral AP recommendation.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

The current northern boundary of the Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N) would extend to 29° 43.5'W. The west and east boundaries would follow the:

- *60 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines (Coral AP recommendation)*
- *70 meter and 90 meter depth contour lines*
- *70 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines*
- *60 meter and 90 meter depth contour lines*

MOTION #6: Adopt the Coral AP recommendation for extending the Oculina HAPC western boundary as an alternative.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

From 28° 4.5'N to the north boundary of the current Oculina HAPC (28° 30'N). The east boundary would coincide with the current western boundary of the Oculina HAPC (80° W). The west boundary would follow the 60 meter contour line.

MOTION #7: Include a transit provision as an alternative as defined by the LE AP.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

- *Consult 622.35 (i)(2) CFR reference for stowing gear and transit provision*
- *The Law Enforcement AP favors using stowing of gear instead of corridors for transiting closed areas in addition to speed restrictions (i.e., no less than 5 knots)*
- *In the event minimal speed is not sustainable, vessel must communicate to appropriate contact*

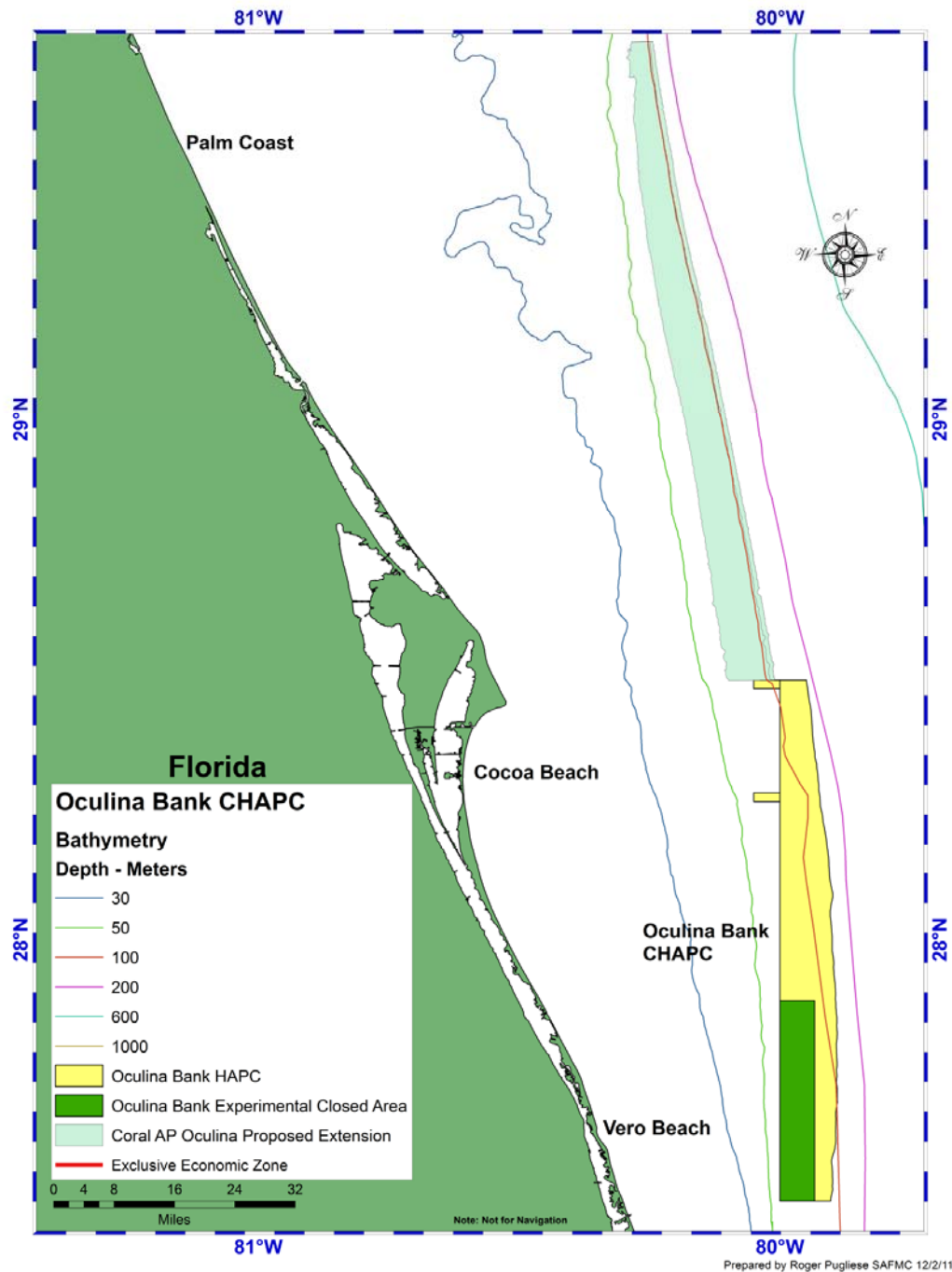


Figure 1. Coral Advisory Panel's proposed expansion of the Oculina HAPC northern boundary.

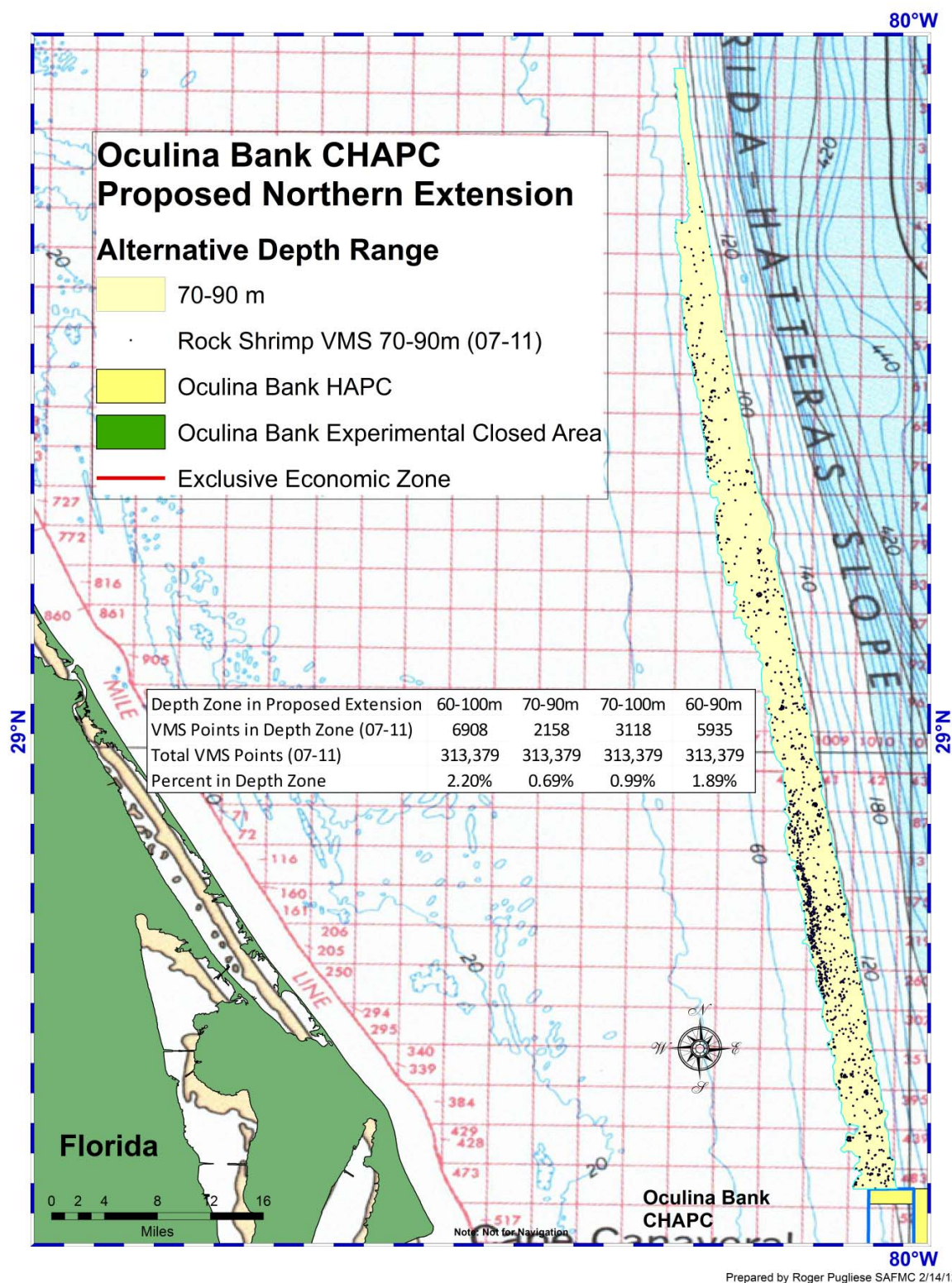


Figure 2. Modifications to the Coral AP's recommendation for expansion of Oculina Bank HAPC based on suggestions from shrimp industry representatives during the CE-BA 3 public scoping process. This figure modifies the western and eastern boundary of the northern extension recommendation, approximating the 70 and 90 meter depth counter, respectively.

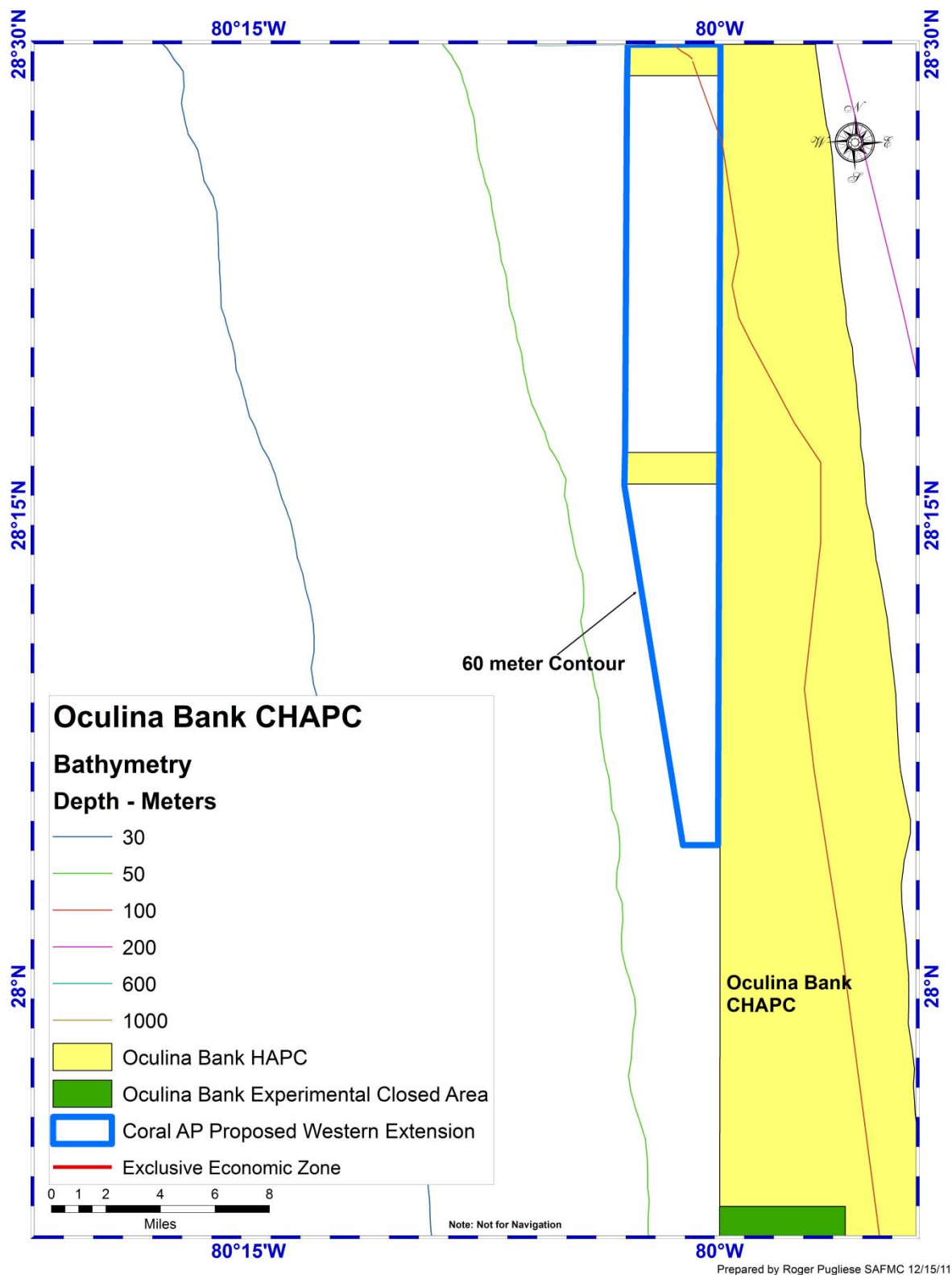


Figure 3. Coral Advisory Panel's proposed expansion of the Oculina Bank HAPC western boundary.

Action 2. Expand Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC to incorporate a *Lophelia* site off Jacksonville.

Alternative 1. No Action. The existing Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC is delineated by the coordinates identified in CFR §633.35 (n)(iii).

Alternative 2. Expand Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC in the area west of the existing boundary approximately by the 200 meter depth contour between latitude 30°45.0' to the north and latitude 29°52.0' to the south (**Figure 4**). (Coral AP recommendation)

Alternative 3. Modify the Coral AP recommendation for expanding the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC to include area of mapped habitat within the expansion, and exclude areas of royal red fishery activity based on VMS data (**Figure 5**).

Public Scoping Comments Summary

Most comments regarding this measure were opposed to the Coral AP's recommended extension of the HAPC without some modification (see above). Fishermen expressed concern that the proposed extension of this area would impact traditional royal red shrimping grounds, and questioned the magnitude of the proposed extension in relation to the presence of *Lophelia* coral.

SAFMC Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends working with the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs (meeting April 20) and the Coral AP (meeting May 9-10) to refine alternatives for this action to present to the Council in June. The Council will need to select preferred alternatives for this action in June.

Figure 5 was developed by staff and incorporates a recommendation from shrimp industry representatives during the public scoping process.

Council Decisions (March 2012)

MOTION #8: For the Stetson-Miami Terrace HAPC, include the Coral AP recommendation as an alternative, the staff recommendation as an alternative, and no action alternative.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

Coral AP recommendation: Area west of the existing Stetson-Miami Coral HAPC bounded approximately by the 200 meter depth contour between latitude 30°45.0' to the north and latitude 29°52.0' to the south.

Staff recommendation: Modify the Coral AP recommendation by including the area of mapped habitat within the proposed extension of Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC, and excluding the areas of royal red fishery activity based on VMS data (Figure 5).

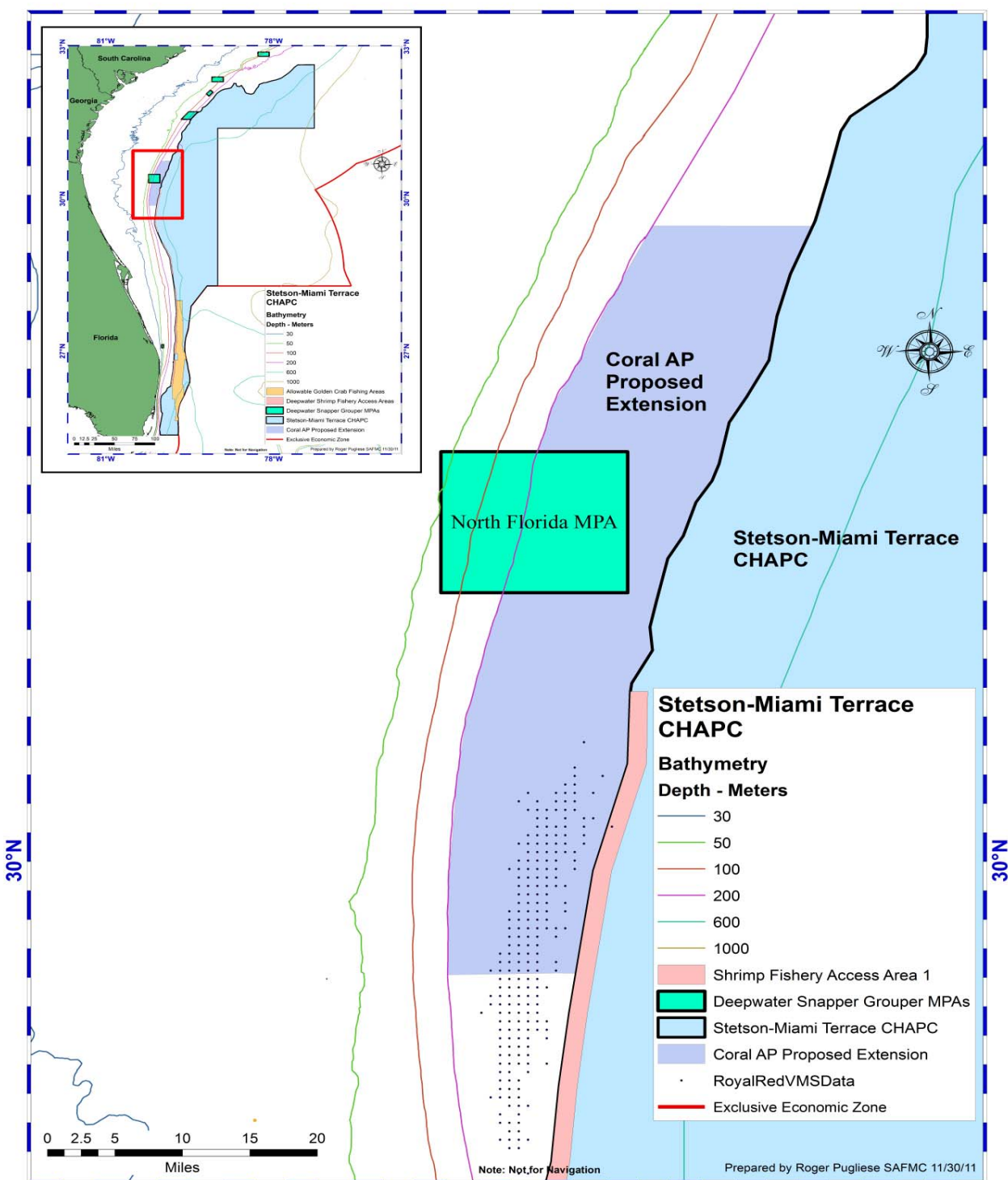


Figure 4. Coral Advisory Panel's proposed expansion of the Stetson-Miami Terrace HAPC western boundary.

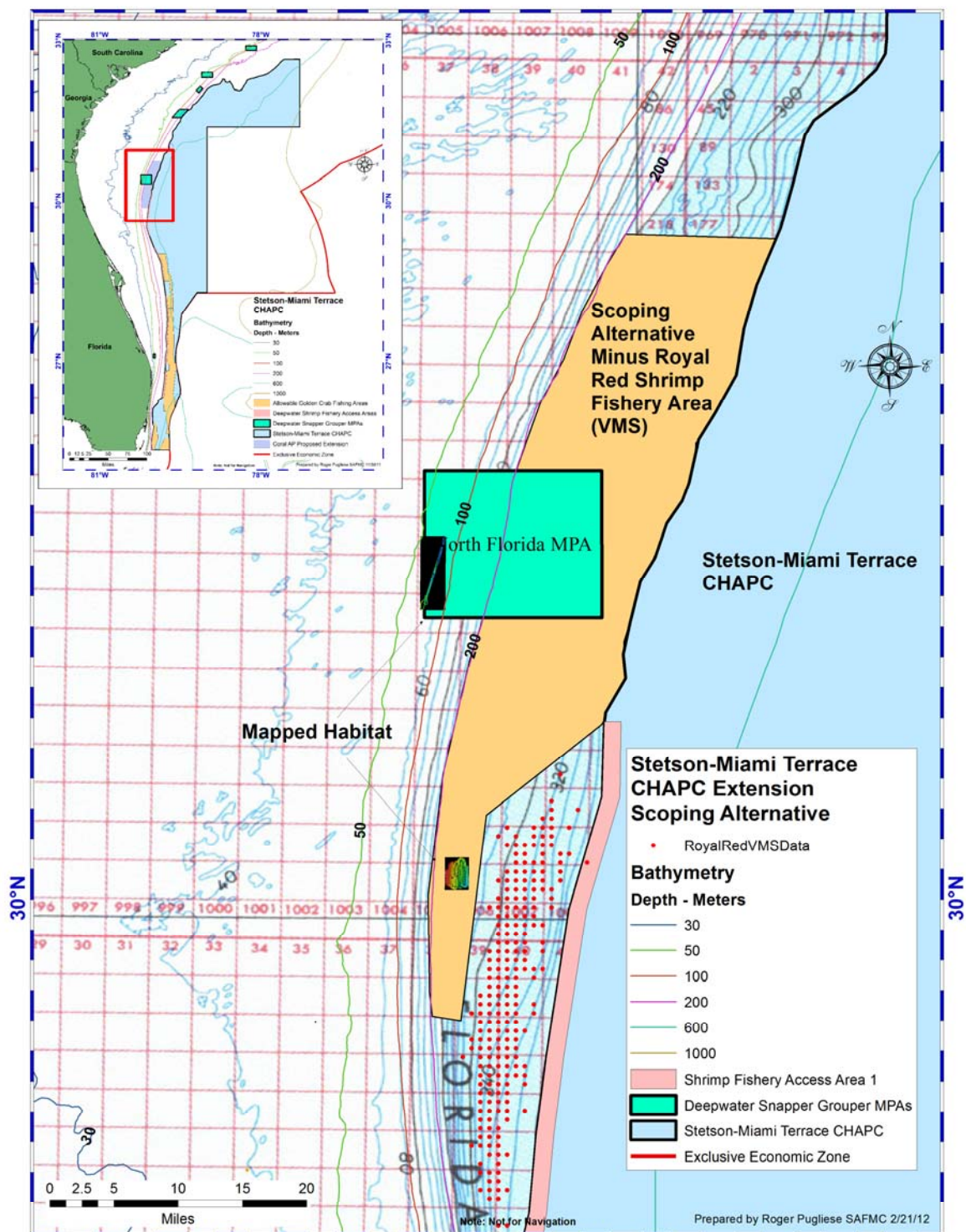


Figure 5. Modifications to the Coral AP's recommendation for expanding the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC based on suggestions from shrimp industry representatives during the CE-BA 3 public scoping process. This figure includes area of mapped habitat within the Coral AP's proposed extension and excludes areas of royal red fishery activity based on VMS data.

Action 3. Expand Cape Lookout Coral HAPC.

Alternative 1. No Action. The existing Cape Lookout Coral HAPC is identified by the following coordinates:

<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
34°24'37"	75°45'11"
34°10'26"	75°58'44"
34°05'47"	75°54'54"
34°21'02"	75°41'25"

Alternative 2. Extend the northern boundary to encompass the area identified by the following coordinates (**Figure 6**):

<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
34°24.6166'	75°45.1833'
34°23.4833'	75°43.9667'
34°27.9'	75°42.75'
34°27.0'	75°41.5'

Public Scoping Comments Summary

Few comments were received on this measure. Those that were expressed a general interest in not supporting an expansion of the Cape Lookout Coral HAPC without additional details on the recommended area.

SAFMC Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends working with the Coral AP (meeting May 9-10) to refine alternatives for this action to present to the Council in June. The Council will need to select preferred alternatives for this action in June.

Council Decisions (March 2012)

MOTION #9: Accept staff recommendation (for extension of Cape Lookout HAPC) and the No Action as alternatives for AP input and IPT analysis.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.

Extend the northern boundary of Cape Lookout Coral HAPC to encompass the area identified by the following coordinates:

<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
34°24.6166'	75°45.1833'
34°23.4833'	75°43.9667'
34°27.9'	75°42.75'
34°27.0'	75°41.5'

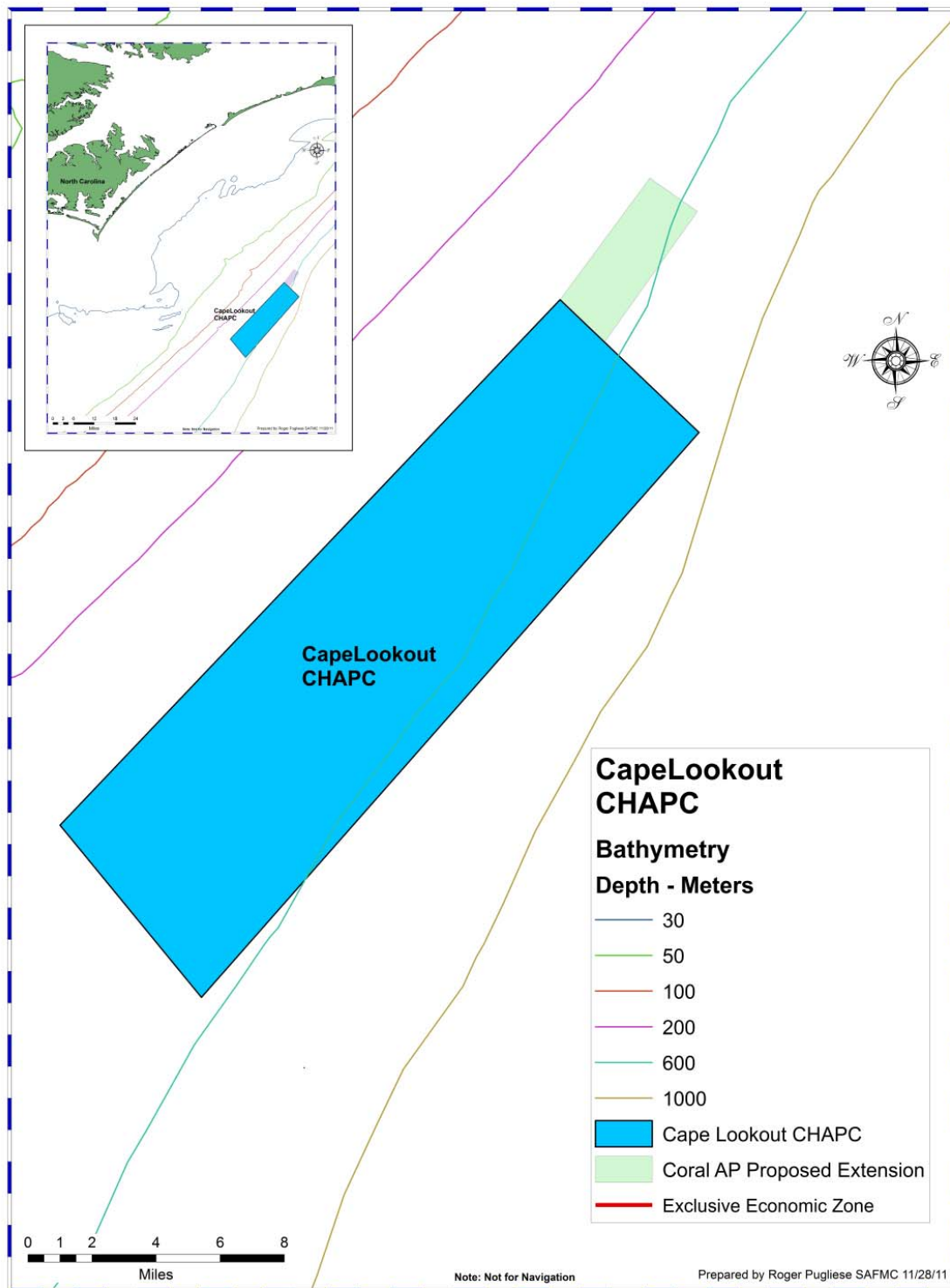


Figure 6. Coral Advisory Panel’s proposed expansion of the Cape Lookout Coral HAPC northern boundary.

Amendment 25 to the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper FMP

Establish Marine Protected Areas across the mid-shelf region and designate Habitat Areas of Particular Concern for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper **(Snapper Grouper Committee)**

In CE-BA 3, the Council is seeking to implement additional protections for these two species, including targeted Marine Protected Areas across the mid-shelf region to reduce bycatch mortality of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. MPAs would be established (and/or existing type II MPAs could be expanded) based on concentrated landings and catch history data analyzed in Regulatory Amendment 11.

Action 4. Designate Habitat Areas of Particular Concern for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.

Alternative 1. No Action. Essential Fish Habitat(EFH)-HAPCs for species in the South Atlantic snapper grouper management unit have been defined as shown below:

Areas which meet the criteria for EFH-HAPCs for species in the snapper-grouper management unit include medium to high profile offshore hard bottoms where spawning normally occurs; localities of known or likely periodic spawning aggregations; nearshore hard bottom areas; The Point, The Ten Fathom Ledge, and Big Rock (North Carolina); The Charleston Bump (South Carolina); mangrove habitat; seagrass habitat; oyster/shell habitat; all coastal inlets; all state-designated nursery habitats of particular importance to snapper grouper (e.g., Primary and Secondary Nursery Areas designated in North Carolina); pelagic and benthic *Sargassum*; Hoyt Hills for wreckfish; the *Oculina* Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern; all hermatypic coral habitats and reefs; manganese outcroppings on the Blake Plateau; and Council-designated Artificial Reef Special Management Zones (SMZs).

EFH-HAPCs for golden tilefish include irregular bottom comprised of troughs and terraces inter-mingled with sand, mud, or shell hash bottom. Mud-clay bottoms in depths of 150-300 meters are HAPC. Golden tilefish are generally found in 80-540 meters, but most commonly found in 200-meter depths.

EFH-HAPCs for blueline tilefish include irregular bottom habitats along the shelf edge in 45-65 meters depth; shelf break; or upper slope along the 100-fathom contour (150-225 meters); hardbottom habitats characterized as rock overhangs, rock outcrops, manganese-phosphorite rock slab formations, or rocky reefs in the South Atlantic Bight; and the Georgetown Hole (Charleston Lumps) off Georgetown, SC.

EFH-HAPCs for the snapper grouper complex include the following deepwater Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as designated in Snapper Grouper Amendment 14; Snowy Grouper Wreck MPA, Northern South Carolina MPA, Edisto MPA, Charleston Deep Artificial Reef MPA, Georgia MPA, North Florida MPA, St. Lucie Hump MPA and East Hump MPA.

Alternative 2. Designate new and/or expanded MPAs as EFH-HAPCs for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.

Action 5. Establish Marine Protected Areas for additional protections for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.

Public Scoping Comments Summary

Many comments were opposed to additional protections for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper if they include time restrictions (spawning season closures) and MPAs. Several comments expressed unfavorable opinions of the value of MPAs as a fisheries management tool and the lack of appropriate education and outreach on current areas. Fishermen discussed that many of the existing protected areas may already house speckled hind and Warsaw grouper, and these connections should be presented. Some understand the data available now on speckled hind and Warsaw grouper to be the same data that was available during the analysis of Snapper Grouper Amendment 17B that implemented the 240' closure to protect these species. A couple of comments caution the Council including this measure in CE-BA 3 due to the urgency and attention they feel this measure should receive.

A few comments were received in favor of the Council pursuing additional protections for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. They noted that the Council should initiate regional working groups with fishermen and stakeholders to determine appropriate areas to protect these two species (spawning locations throughout their range, not just the mid-shelf alone.)

One comment was received identifying specific recommendations the Council should analyze in efforts to implement protections, including: develop a full range of potential area protections (ranging from fixed large area closures to spawning and/or seasonal closures); evaluate time and area closures, a network of no-take MPAs, and caps on total mortality; develop an EIS that identifies essential data collection elements and methods for collection such as methods for more accurately assessing effort, monitoring bycatch, identification of fishing locations and important habitat areas; include a broad range of options for a total mortality management system and consult with regions that are facing/have faced similar issues; and SSC evaluate impacts of discards and categorize real allowable mortality of the new management measures.

SAFMC Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends pursuing this measure in CE-BA 3, which is currently scheduled to proceed at a timeframe conducive for implementing additional protections for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. The Council will need to select preferred alternatives for this action in June.

During the March 2012 Council meeting, the Snapper Grouper Committee discussed the approach to be taken regarding possible establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to reduce mortality of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. The Council provided the following guidance to staff on timing and approach:

DECISION #1. Type of Closures to be evaluated.
Evaluate Alternatives 3 and 4:

Alternative 3. Area closures where all bottom fishing is prohibited (same type of MPAs currently in place).

Alternative 4. Temporary area closures that would remain in place until we get an assessment for speckled hind and Warsaw grouper and the results indicate some relaxation of regulations is warranted.

DECISION #2. Approaches for developing potential area closures (MPAs).
Alternatives are sufficient; the Council directed staff to look at Tortugas and other areas that may be providing protection.

Alternative 1. Use the known distribution (sites of occurrence) of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper as reflected in data from analyses in Regulatory Amendment 11 (this was also used for the Scoping Document) and additional known sites of occurrence provided by fishermen and from scoping during CEBA-3.

Note: Alternative 1 would result in protection based on where these two species were observed, sampled, or caught in the past.

Alternative 2. Use the known habitat distribution of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper similar to what was done for deepwater corals (areas of similar habitat would be expected to contain the species and once sampled, they are found).

Note: Alternative 2 would result in protection based on the habitat distribution of these two species.

DECISION #3. Guidance on what percentage (of occurrence or habitat) is “appropriate” to be closed.
Evaluate alternatives 3, 4 and 5:

Alternative 3. Establish a goal of 20%.

Alternative 4. Establish a goal of 30%.

Alternative 5. Establish a goal of 40%.

DECISION #4. Who develops alternative sites?

Staff are providing the capability for the Council, Advisory Panels (APs), and public to modify existing MPAs (first) and then draw new MPAs (second) and in each case calculating the percentage of known

distribution or known habitat included. Staff are proposing that this approach be used with the SSC during their April 3-5, 2012 meeting in Savannah, GA; with the Snapper Grouper AP during their April 18-19, 2012 meeting in Charleston, SC; and with the public during 5 workshops the Council has recommended staff convene. Two of the workshops will be held prior to the June 11-15, 2012 Council meeting in Orlando, FL, and the remaining 3 will be held afterwards.

DECISION #5. Guidance on measuring impacts: what percentage of reduction in catches of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper is recommended?
Analyze a 20%, 30%, & 40% reduction in catches.

Amend the Following South Atlantic FMPs (To Be Determined) to Address Data Reporting

Modify permits and data reporting (commercial, for-hire) to ensure ACLs are not exceeded

(Data Collection Committee)

The Council has discussed improvements to permits and data reporting, including a universal permit versus separate Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic permits; electronic dealer reporting (daily, weekly, or monthly); and modifications to penalties and permit renewal requirements. Modifications to dealer permits/reporting are being addressed in a joint Gulf/South Atlantic Council Generic Dealer Amendment. The Council opted to include measures to modify commercial and for-hire vessel permits/reporting in CE-BA 3.

Action 6. Modify permits and data-reporting for for-hire vessels pursuant to CFR § 622.2-622.5.

Alternative 1. No Action. Retain existing permits and data reporting systems for the for-hire sector.

Alternative 2. Data Collection Committee motion says modify as per Attachment 4, which is the CFR excerpt pasted below:

*** Code of Federal Regulations: Title 50**

§ 622.2 Definitions and acronyms. Science and Research Director (SRD), for the purposes of this part, means the Science and Research Director, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, NMFS (see Table 1 of § 600.502 of this chapter).

§ 622.4 Permits and fees.

(a) Permits required. To conduct activities in fisheries governed in this part, valid permits, licenses, and endorsements are required as follows:

(1) Charter vessel/headboat permits. (i) For a person aboard a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat to fish for or possess, in or from the EEZ, species in any of the following species groups, a valid charter vessel/headboat permit for that species group must have been issued to the vessel and must be on board--

(A) Gulf coastal migratory pelagic fish.

(B) South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic fish.

(C) Gulf reef fish.

(D) South Atlantic snapper-grouper.

(E) Atlantic dolphin and wahoo. (See paragraph (a)(5) of this section for the requirements for operator permits in the dolphin and wahoo fishery.)

(ii) See paragraph (r) of this section regarding a limited access system for charter vessel/headboat permits for Gulf reef fish and Gulf coastal migratory pelagic fish.

(iii) A charter vessel or headboat may have both a charter vessel/headboat permit and a commercial vessel permit. However, when a vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat, a person aboard must adhere to the bag limits.

§ 622.5 Recordkeeping and reporting. Participants in fisheries governed in this part are required to keep records and report as follows.

(b) Charter vessel/headboat owners and operators—

(1) Coastal migratory pelagic fish, reef fish, snapper-grouper, and Atlantic dolphin and wahoo. The owner or operator of a vessel 2

for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf coastal migratory pelagic fish, South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic fish, Gulf reef fish, South Atlantic snapper-grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, as required under § 622.4(a)(1), or whose vessel fishes for or lands such coastal migratory pelagic fish, reef fish, snapper-grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable Gulf, South Atlantic, or Atlantic EEZ, and who is selected to report by the SRD, must maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the SRD, on forms provided by the SRD and must submit such record as specified in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(2) Reporting deadlines--(i) Charter vessels. Completed fishing records required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section for charter vessels must be submitted to the SRD weekly, postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). Information to be reported is indicated on the form and its accompanying instructions.

(ii) Headboats. Completed fishing records required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section for headboats must be submitted to the SRD monthly and must either be made available to an authorized statistical reporting agent or be postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each month. Information to be reported is indicated on the form and its accompanying instructions.

Amendment, Proposed Changes:

I. Timing

(2) Reporting deadlines--(i) Charter vessels and headboats. Completed fishing records required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section for charter vessels and headboats must be submitted to the SRD weekly, or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD. These records must be electronically stamped or postmarked not later than 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). Information to be reported is indicated on the form and its accompanying instructions.

Option 1. Weekly.

Option 2. Daily.

Option 3. Weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD.

Action 7. Modify permits and data-reporting for commercial vessels.

Alternative 1. No Action. Retain existing permits and data reporting systems for the commercial sector.

Alternative 2. Modify permits and data-reporting for commercial vessels similarly to how this was done in SG Amendment 18A (Council chose No Action as their preferred at that time).

Sub-Alternative 2a. Require all vessels with a Federal snapper grouper commercial permit to have an electronic logbook tied to the vessel's GPS onboard the vessel.

(Note: Sub-Alternative 2a would require 100% of vessels to have an electronic logbook; whereas, current data reporting programs only require electronic logbooks if selected.)

Sub-Alternative 2b. Provide the option for fishermen to submit their logbook entries electronically via an electronic version of the logbook made available online.

Sub-Alternative 2c. Require that commercial landings and catch/effort data be submitted in accordance with ACCSP standards, using the SAFIS system.

Action 8. Modify bycatch and discard reporting.

Alternative 1. No Action. Adopt the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) Release, Discard and Protected Species Module as the preferred methodology. Until this module is fully funded, require the use of a variety of sources to assess and monitor bycatch including: observer coverage on vessels; logbooks; electronic logbook; video monitoring; MRFSS; state cooperation; and grant funded projects. After the ACCSP Bycatch Module is implemented, continue the use of technologies to augment and verify observer data. Require that commercial vessels with a snapper grouper permit, for-hire vessels with a for-hire permit, and private recreational vessels if fishing for snapper grouper species in the EEZ, if selected, shall use observer coverage, logbooks, electronic logbooks, video monitoring, or any other method deemed necessary to measure bycatch by NOAA Fisheries.

Alternative 2. Adopt the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Release, Discard and Protected Species Module as the preferred methodology. Require that commercial vessels with a snapper grouper permit, for-hire vessels with a for-hire permit, and private recreational vessels if fishing for snapper grouper species in the EEZ, if selected, shall use observer coverage, logbooks, electronic logbooks, video monitoring, or any other method deemed necessary to measure bycatch by NOAA Fisheries.

Alternative 3. Require the use of a variety of sources to assess and monitor bycatch including: observer coverage on vessels; logbooks; electronic logbook; video monitoring; MRFSS; state cooperation; and grant funded projects. Require that commercial vessels with a snapper grouper permit, for-hire vessels with a for-hire permit, and private recreational vessels if fishing for snapper grouper species in the EEZ, if selected, shall use observer coverage, logbooks, electronic logbooks, video monitoring, or any other method deemed necessary to measure bycatch by NOAA Fisheries.

Public Scoping Comments Summary

Generally, the comments for this measure were in support of modifications to commercial and for-hire permits and data reporting. Many suggested that weekly electronic reporting should be implemented as protocol, and voiced frustrations that the existing system is positioning fishermen for failure with delays in submission of reports and subsequent overages in annual limits. A few commented that permit sanctions should be implemented to penalize those reporting late. One comment suggested this measure would be better addressed through a framework or plan amendment.

SAFMC Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Council pursue this measure in CE-BA 3 in order to effectively address commercial and for-hire vessel reporting and bycatch mortality and discards in a timely manner. With the pending annual catch limits and urgency among fishermen to avoid overages in their limits, inclusion of this measure in CE-BA 3 is recommended as the appropriate vehicle. The Council will need to select preferred alternatives for this action in June.

Council Decision (March 2012)

MOTION #13 (from Data Collection Committee): Direct staff to develop these items (Action 6, 7&8) further and bring back to this committee at the June meeting.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE.

APPROVED BY COUNCIL.