XX May 2012

To: FWC Commissioner Rodney Barreto
FWC Commissioner Richard Corbett
FWC Commissioner Kathy Barco
FWC Commissioner Ronald Bergeron
FWC Commissioner Dwight Stevenson
FWC Commissioner Kenneth Wright
FWC Commissioner Brian Yablonski

Cc: Mr. Nick Wiley
Mr. Gil McRae

From: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Subject: Issuance of Support for the State of Florida to Adopt Conservation Measures similar to those identified in the Spiny Lobster Amendment 11

Dear Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners,

Amendment 11 of the Spiny Lobster Fisheries Management Plan, has been developed, publically vetted, and approved by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and the Gulf of Mexico Marine Fisheries Council, and the Amendment has been submitted to the Secretary of Commerce for final review and adoption. The conservation guidelines instituted by this Amendment will restrict lobster trap fishing in specifically designated areas in federal waters known to contain high densities of the ESA Threatened coral species *Acropora cervicornis* and/or *A. palmata*. These pre-determined areas were selected with the help of stakeholders (and in particular, with substantial input from local fishermen) and researchers in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and will serve as added protection for the Threatened coral species. The conservation actions in Spiny Lobster Amendment 11 were developed to comply with federal measures established in the 2009 biological opinion on the spiny lobster fishery.

The Council, and its Coral Advisory Panel recognizes that a substantial proportion of Florida's *Acropora cervicornis* and *A. palmata* colonies currently reside in state waters. Additionally, the state of Florida lists *Dendrogyra cylindrus* as "Threatened" and FWC is currently developing a management plan for the species in state waters. As such, we would recommend that the State of Florida initiate efforts to identify and evaluate conservation measures for implementation in state waters, that offer similar protection, for the federally and state-listed corals *Acropora palmata, A. cervicornis,* and *Dendrogyra cylindrus,* as those identified in the Spiny Lobster Amendment 11. We recommend that the state work closely with lobster fisherman, the scientific community, and other stakeholders to restrict lobster trap fishing in areas with high *Acropora* spp. and *D. cylindrus* abundance or locations where large "super" colonies occur (i.e., have substantial contribute to the populations' gene pools). This added protection of the remaining colonies is of the utmost importance for future efforts to restore the populations of these Threatened coral species in Florida.

Sincerely,

SAFMC