



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Summary of Recommendations

HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

November 16-17, 2010

Charleston Marriott Hotel
170 Lockwood Boulevard
Charleston, SC 29403

Issues were addressed at this meeting during three separate working sessions.

Session I focused on Essential Fish Habitat and issues included: 1) Refinement of EFH; 2) NMFS Habitat Conservation Division update on permit and policy activities; and 3) Proposed Actions/Alternatives in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CE-BA2)

Session II focused on Regional Research Coordination and issues included: 1) Fishery Independent Research Program MARMAP/SEAMAP; 2) NMFS Beaufort Laboratory Fisheries and Ecosystem Research; and 3) Seabird Habitat in the South Atlantic Region.

Session III focused on Ecosystem Coordination and issues included: 1) Southeast Coastal and Ocean Regional Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) Action Plan and Integrated Proposal; 2) The South Atlantic Governor's Alliance Action Plan and Regional Marine Spatial Planning; and 3) SAFMC Regional Habitat and Ecosystem Internet Map Server and Arc Services

After each Session, Panel Members held roundtable discussions and developed recommendations where appropriate.

Session 1: Refinement of EFH

3) Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2

After receiving a briefing on CE-BA 2, the Habitat Advisory Panel developed the following recommendations:

HABITAT AP CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS:

Panel members were requested to provide comments on the list of actions/alternatives for consideration in the Public Hearing Draft of Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CE-BA 2). Discussions revolved around EFH or habitat related actions/alternatives for the Amendment and the following recommendations were provided:

Action 1. Remove octocorals from the Fishery Management Unit (FMU) under the South Atlantic Coral FMP.

Alternative 1. No action. Do not remove octocorals from the FMU under the South Atlantic Coral FMP.

(Motion Approved by Habitat AP for Alternative 1 No Action)

Action 2 – Extend the FMU for octocorals into the Gulf Council’s jurisdiction

Comments: Discussion about the many jurisdictional zones for a fishery and the confusion that this may cause

(Habitat AP Consensus Recommendation for the No Action alternative)

Action 3 – Modify ACL for octocorals in SA

Comments: No objection to SSC recommendation to modify ACL to include both State and Federal waters for South Atlantic and Gulf

Action 4 – Modify SMZs in SC

Comments: More information is needed, no general consensus on a recommendation; Evidence of damage to reefs in NC from use of spearguns, handspear (Anne Deaton)

Action 5 – Modify sea turtle release gear requirements

Comments: Support for modifying the required items relative to size of the vessel

Action 6. Amend the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to designate new Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

Alternative 2. Amend the Snapper Grouper FMP to designate one or more of the following EFH-HAPCs.

Sub-alternative 2a. Designate EFH-HAPCs for golden tilefish to include soft bottom substrate comprised of mud, sand, or clay; burrows found in soft bottom; irregular bottom comprised of troughs and terraces inter-mingled with sand, mud, or shell hash bottom. Mud-clay bottoms in depths of 150-225 meters are HAPC. Golden tilefish are generally found in 80-540 meters, but most commonly found in 200-meter depths.

Sub-alternative 2b. Designate EFH-HAPC for blueline tilefish to 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.

Alternative 3. Designate EFH-HAPCs for the snapper-grouper complex to include Deepwater Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

(Habitat AP Consensus Recommendation for Alternatives 2 (2a & 2b) & 3)

Action 7. Amend the Coral, Coral Reefs and Live/Hardbottom Habitat Fishery Management Plan (Coral FMP) to designate new Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

Alternative 2. Amend the Coral FMP to designate Deepwater Coral HAPCs as EFH-HAPCs.

(Habitat AP Consensus Recommendation for Alternative 2)

Action 8. Amend the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Pelagic *Sargassum* Habitat to designate new Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

Alternative 2. Amend the *Sargassum* FMP to designate the top ten meters of the water column in the South Atlantic EEZ as EFH for pelagic *Sargassum*.

(Habitat AP Consensus Recommendation for Alternative 2)

Action 9. Amend the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Pelagic *Sargassum* Habitat to designate Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

Alternative 2. Amend the *Sargassum* FMP to designate one or more of the following as EFH-HAPCs:

Sub-Alternative 2a. The Charleston Bump Complex

Sub-Alternative 2b. The Point, NC

(Habitat AP Consensus Recommendation for Alternative 2 (2a & 2b))