Appendix A. Considered But Eliminated Alternatives

This section describes actions and alternatives that the South Atlantic Council considered in developing this document, but decided not to pursue in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 (CE-BA 3). The description of each alternative is followed by a summary statement of why it was eliminated from more detailed summary in CE-BA 3.

Coral Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) actions

Action 1. Expand Boundaries of Oculina Bank HAPC

Alternative 1. (No Action) Do not revise boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC

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, as represented in the simplified polygon (Figure 2-1).

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, as represented in the simplified polygon (Figure 2-2).

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, as represented in the simplified polygon (Figure 2-3).

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, as represented in the simplified polygon (Figure 2-4).

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). 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 (Figure 2-5).

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.

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

Alternative 1. (No Action) Do not revise the boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC. 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 2-6).

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 2-7).

Action 3. Expand Cape Lookout Coral HAPC

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

Latitude	Longitude
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 2-8):

Latitude	Longitude
34°24.6166’	75°45.1833’
34°23.4833’	75°43.9667’
34°27.9’	75°42.75’
34°27.0’	75°41.5’

Discussion

The measures to expand Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (Coral HAPC) stem from recommendations made by the SAFMC’s Coral Advisory Panel (AP) during their October 2011 meeting. The recommendations are based on recent research that has identified new areas of deepwater coral resources that lie outside of the current Coral HAPC boundaries. These measures were scoped as a part of CE-BA 3 during January and February, 2012. During the scoping meetings, considerable feedback was received from the shrimp industry primarily concerned over impacts they may face as a result of these expansions. The Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs met jointly in April 2012 and recommended modifications to the Coral HAPC expansions proposed by the Coral AP. The Coral AP convened again in May 2012 and refined the recommended expansions they presented during the fall of 2011. At the June 2012 Council meeting in Orlando, FL, both representatives from the Deepwater Shrimp and Coral APs presented their respective group’s reports from the recent AP meetings. The Council discussed the benefit of convening a joint meeting of the Deepwater Shrimp and Coral APs to develop a compromise, agreed upon by both groups, for expansion of the Coral HAPCs. The Council removed expansion of Coral HAPC actions from consideration in CE-BA 3, and deferred development of these measures to CE-BA 4 (2013) after the Deepwater Shrimp and Coral APs have had an opportunity to jointly meet. Additionally, the Council approved a motion to solicit participation for the joint meeting also from the Chair of the Law Enforcement AP and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Habitat AP.

<u>Additional protection for speckled hind and warsaw grouper actions</u>

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

Discussion

During the June 2012 meeting, the Council continued discussions of pursuing additional protections for speckled hind and warsaw grouper. They deliberated at length the consideration of expanding existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), developing new targeted MPAs along the mid-shelf region to offer increased biological protections for speckled hind and warsaw grouper, and potential spawning season closures.

Council staff presented a summary of the MPA workshops in SC and GA (April, 18th in Charleston, SC and May 16th in Pooler, GA) and a report of the MPA Expert Workgroup (May 16-17th in Pooler, GA). These meetings were held as a result of Council guidance during the March 2012 meeting to gather data on areas of occurrence and habitat for these two species. The Council recognizes there is limited fishery-independent and dependent data on speckled hind and warsaw grouper. At the June 2012 meeting, they provided guidance to convene additional public workshops (three will be held in FL and one in NC) to collect more data and input from the public and researchers in the FL and NC areas that have not had a chance to participate in the previously held workshops in SC and GA.

At the June meeting, Dr. Nick Farmer (NMFS SERO) gave a presentation on a possible approach to select candidate sites for MPA designation, including an overview of the data used and recommendations of criteria to consider in the siting of MPAs. The Council directed staff to develop alternatives to look at reconfiguring existing MPAs (first tier), new MPAs (second tier), and a combination of the two (third tier).

Further, the Council directed staff to request the SSC to review the current fishing levels for speckled hind and warsaw grouper and apply the ORCS methodology to develop an overfishing limit (OFL) for both species. The SSC will be discussing this issue at their next meeting October 23-25th in Charleston, SC.

With a need to further develop a suite of refined alternatives for these measures, the scheduling of additional public workshops, and the request for further review by the SSC in the fall of 2012, management measures for speckled hind and warsaw grouper were moved from CE-BA 3 to CE-BA 4 to allow the Council continued discussions on this issue at the September and December 2012 Council meetings.

Data Collection Actions

Action 7, Alternative 2. Modify permits and data-reporting for commercial vessels as follows:
Sub-Alternative 2a. Require all vessels with a Federal commercial permit to have an electronic logbook tied to the vessel's GPS onboard the vessel.

Discussion
Sub-alternative 2a under Action 7, Alternative 2 was removed from consideration in CE-BA 3 during the June 2012 Council meeting. The Council discussed that fishermen may not be ready for a requirement to have an electronic logbook tied to their vessel's GPS at this time given the large number of small vessels in the fishery.

Action 7, Alternative 2. Modify permits and data-reporting for commercial vessels as follows:
Sub-Alternative 2c. Require that commercial landings and catch/effort data be submitted in accordance with ACCSP standards, using the SAFIS system.

Discussion
This alternative was removed from consideration in CE-BA 3 during the June 2012 Council meeting. The Council discussed this alternative being similar to data reporting requirements already in place for commercial vessels. NMFS stated that the commercial landings and catch and effort data currently meet the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) standards and the data are being provided to the Standard Atlantic Fisheries Information System (SAFIS).

The partners (States, Councils, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Commissions) of the ACCSP created SAFIS to meet the increasing need for real-time commercial landings data. Through a cooperative, consensus driven process, ACCSP developed a set of data collection standards. All program partners have agreed to these standards and have been adopted for almost all aspects of fisheries dependent data collection. A process has been put into place to fund research and implementation of these standards in the partner agencies. Since its creation in 2003, SAFIS has been used to report data for the majority of states in the Northeast (North Carolina north participate in the program).