Outreach Overview
South Atlantic Deepwater Marine Protected Areas

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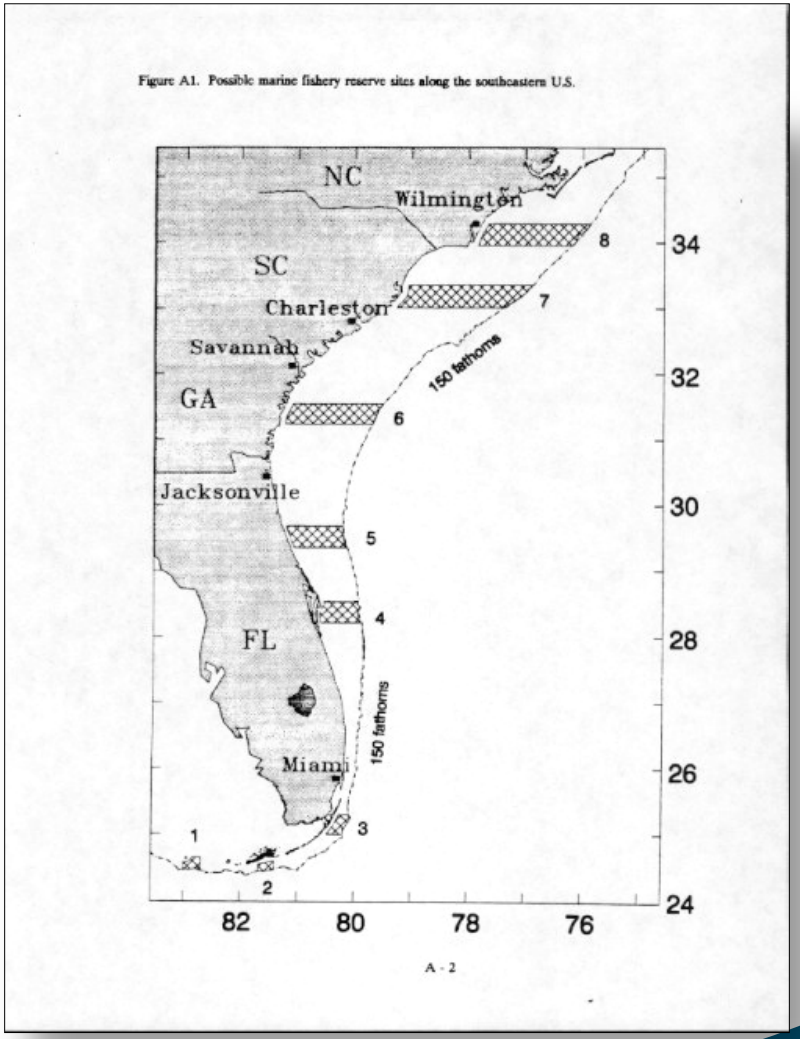
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
December 2013 SAFMC Meeting
Wilmington, NC

MPA Outreach: The Early Years

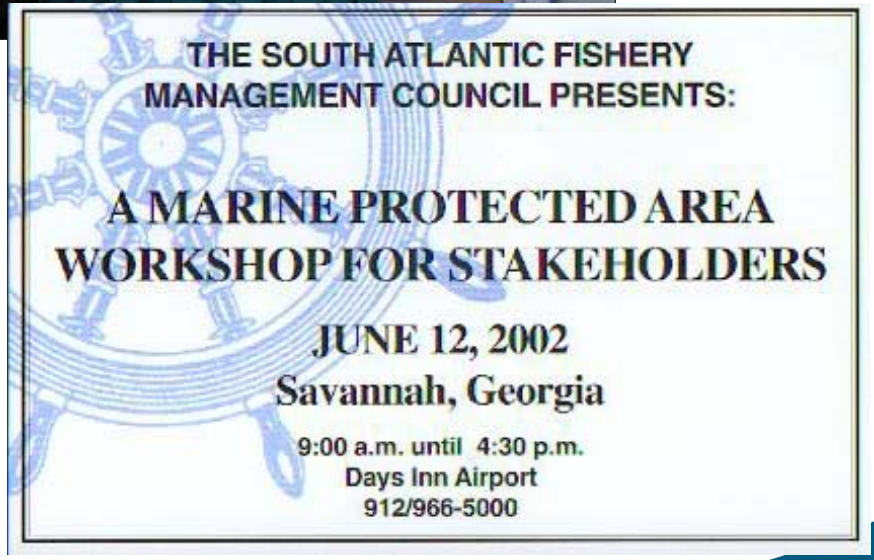
- **1992** – Public scoping meetings held for input on MPAs.
- Large areas identified as “no-take” zones for MPAs.
- Council reconsiders Top-Down approach



MPA Outreach – the Early Years

New Approach:

- **Marine Protected Area Advisory Panel** formed
- **2000** – "Mega Advisory Panel Meeting" – multiple APs meet to develop approach
- **2002 -** MPA Stakeholder Workshops



- **Outreach During MPA Development Process:**
  - News Releases
  - Newsletters
  - Public hearings
  - Extensive media coverage

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 18, 2006

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Public Hearings Scheduled for Proposed Marine Protected Areas
Areas to aid in management of deepwater snapper grouper species

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is holding a series of 8 pub
public comment on Amendment 14 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Manage
amendment would establish 8 marine protected areas in federal waters in the
MPAs are being considered to protect a portion of the population and habita
growing deepwater snapper grouper species (snowy grouper, misty grouper,
yellowedge grouper, warsaw grouper, golden tilefish, and blueline tilefish) f
pressure.

Proposed as "Type II" MPAs, fishing for or possession of snapper grouper s
prohibited in the areas, but fishermen would be allowed to troll for pelagic s
mackerel, and billfish. Amendment 14 includes alternatives for the use of V

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back to article

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Offshore refuge aims to revive fish stocks

By Gareth McGrath
Staff Writer

Published: Tuesday, January 13, 2009 at 5:26 p.m.

The planning took nearly 20 years and the terms of three presidents. But North Carolina finally has the first marine protected area off its coast.

Tuesday the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the parent agency of National Marine Fisheries, announced the creation of eight marine "wildlife refuges" off the Southeast coast, including one roughly 55 miles southeast of Southport.

The new protected zones, all in deep water, prohibit bottom fishing and trawling.

That should help protect hard-pressed snapper, grouper and sea bass stocks, which are lucrative fish for commercial fishermen and a favorite of the recreational guys.

The local, rectangle-shaped zone is dubbed the Snowy Grouper Wreck MPA, since it includes an old wreck that provides good habitat in an otherwise largely featureless landscape.

But Brian Cheuvront, who represents the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, said the wreck has been fished out over the years.

"They are long-lived fish, and they don't reproduce as quickly as other fish do, so they are much more vulnerable to fishing or other predation," he said of species such as snowy grouper.

Dan Whittle, director of Environmental Defense Fund's Southeast Oceans Program,

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The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's

South Atlantic Update

Published for fishermen and others interested in marine resource conservation issues — Spring 2007

Council One Step Closer to Creating Marine Protected Areas

epwater areas designed to protect snapper grouper species and habitat from fishing pressure

ewing comments on the Draft Environmental
ment and considering comments from the Snap-
Advisory Panel, the Council gave its approval for
ined in Amendment 14 to the Snapper Grouper
agement Plan to establish deepwater marine pro-
in the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone
move clears the way for the Council to give final
Amendment 14 for submission to the Secretary of
uring its next meeting scheduled for June 10-15,
West, Florida.
to approve the document, the Council reached
actions that would establish 8 deepwater "Type
otected areas. These areas, ranging in size from
tical miles to 150 square nautical miles, are de-
tect a portion of the long-lived, deepwater snap-
pecies complex and their habitat from directed
ure. The Type 2 designation specifies that, while
apper grouper species will be prohibited in the
for pelagic species such as tuna, dolphin, and
e allowed. "While there may be unknowns about
cted areas, what we do know is that if you keep
e bottom, we can protect that live bottom habitat,"
Chairman George Geiger. "It is imperative
de protection to these deepwater habitats where
curs for these species. The only way to do that is
e protected areas. I believe that this is the right

visions and Longline Prohibition
n to approving the 8 deepwater MPA sites, the
approved the addition of a provision to allow ves-
the areas with snapper grouper species onboard
regulations for stowing fishing gear while cross-
The transit provision will apply to all vessels,
reational, charter, headboat, and commercial
milar provision has been used for MPAs in the
co. This change was recommended by the Snap-
Advisory Panel in December 2006. The provi-
ported by the Council as a way to help improve
mpliance of regulations in the MPAs.
cil also intends to prohibit the use of shark bot-
gear in the MPAs and will work with NOAA
ghly Migratory Species Division in developing
ovisions. The Council is concerned about the
ttom longline gear on habitat in the area, inciden-
ortality of deepwater snapper grouper species,

and the ability of law enforcement personnel to enforce gear restrictions in the MPAs. The Council will address the issue of additional gear prohibitions in MPAs through the Comprehensive Amendment to the Fishery Ecosystem Plan. The Amendment will include alternatives to designate the areas as Snapper Grouper Essential Fish Habitat and Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, providing additional protection to the deepwater habitats.

Approval of the actions contained in Amendment 14, including the preferred site alternatives, is the culmination of over 16 years of a collaborative process that has included input from the public through scoping meetings, workshops, and public hearings. In addition, the Council has utilized its advisory panels, Scientific and Statistical Committee, Snapper Grouper Committee, and worked closely with NOAA Fisheries in developing the Amendment.

Creating this network of marine protected areas is precedent setting and will go a long way in establishing the use of marine protected areas as a management tool in the South Atlantic and other regions.
Dan Whittle, Environmental Defense

"We are glad to have been a part of the highly collaborative process used in developing Amendment 14, and believe these sites will meet their mark in protecting deepwater habitat and snapper grouper species," stated Dan Whittle, Director of the Southeast Oceans Program for Environmental Defense. Additional information, including area maps, and a history of the development of Amendment 14, can be found on the Council's web site at www.safmc.net.

Inside This Issue:

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Amendment 17 – Deepwater MPAs

- **Eight Deepwater MPAs Implemented Effective February 12, 2009**

- **Amendment Includes:**
  - **Outreach**
  - Research and Monitoring
  - Law Enforcement

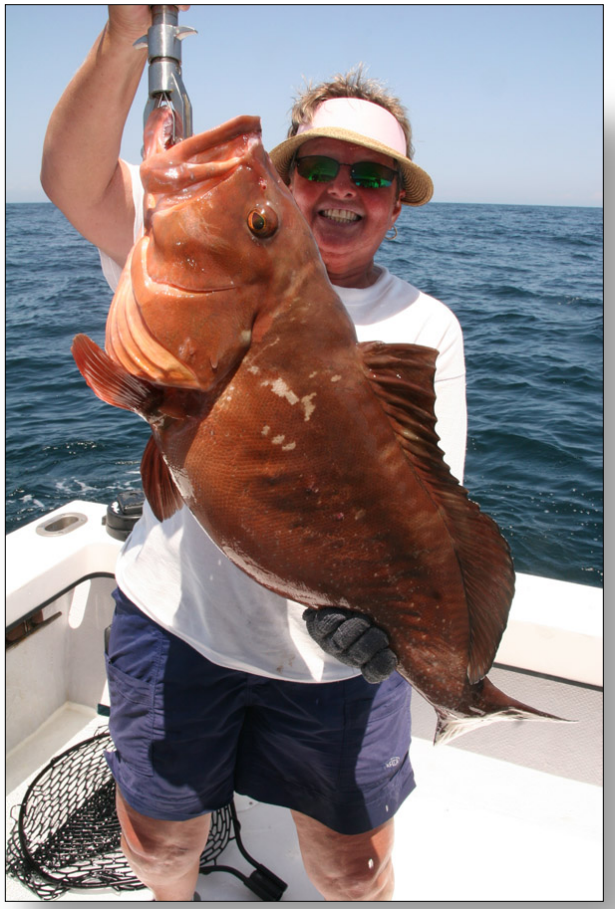
Amendment 17 - Outreach

- **Outreach component similar to Oculina Experimental Closed Area Evaluation Plan**

- **Goal:** *Increase awareness and understanding of deepwater Type 2 MPAs to the fishermen, citizens, and visitors of central eastern Florida and the U.S. Public.*

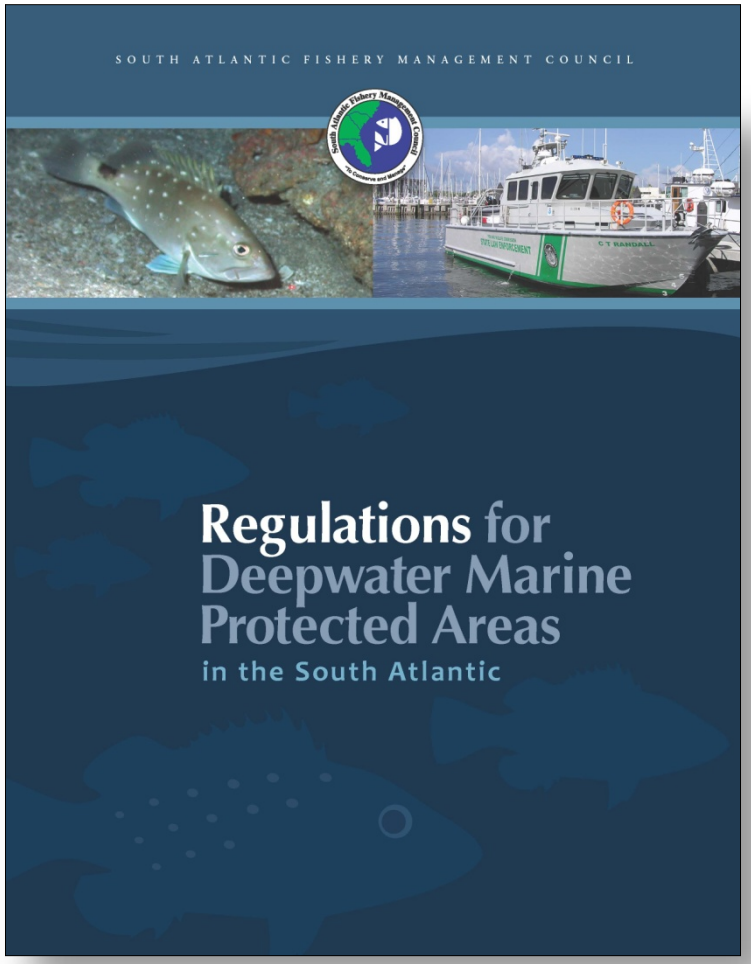
MPA Outreach Projects

1. Provide SAFMC Regulations to fishermen
2. Work with fishing chart manufacturers
3. News releases
4. Develop powerpoint presentation
5. Poster and rack cards
6. Expand website
7. Television documentaries



Project 1: Regulations to Fishermen

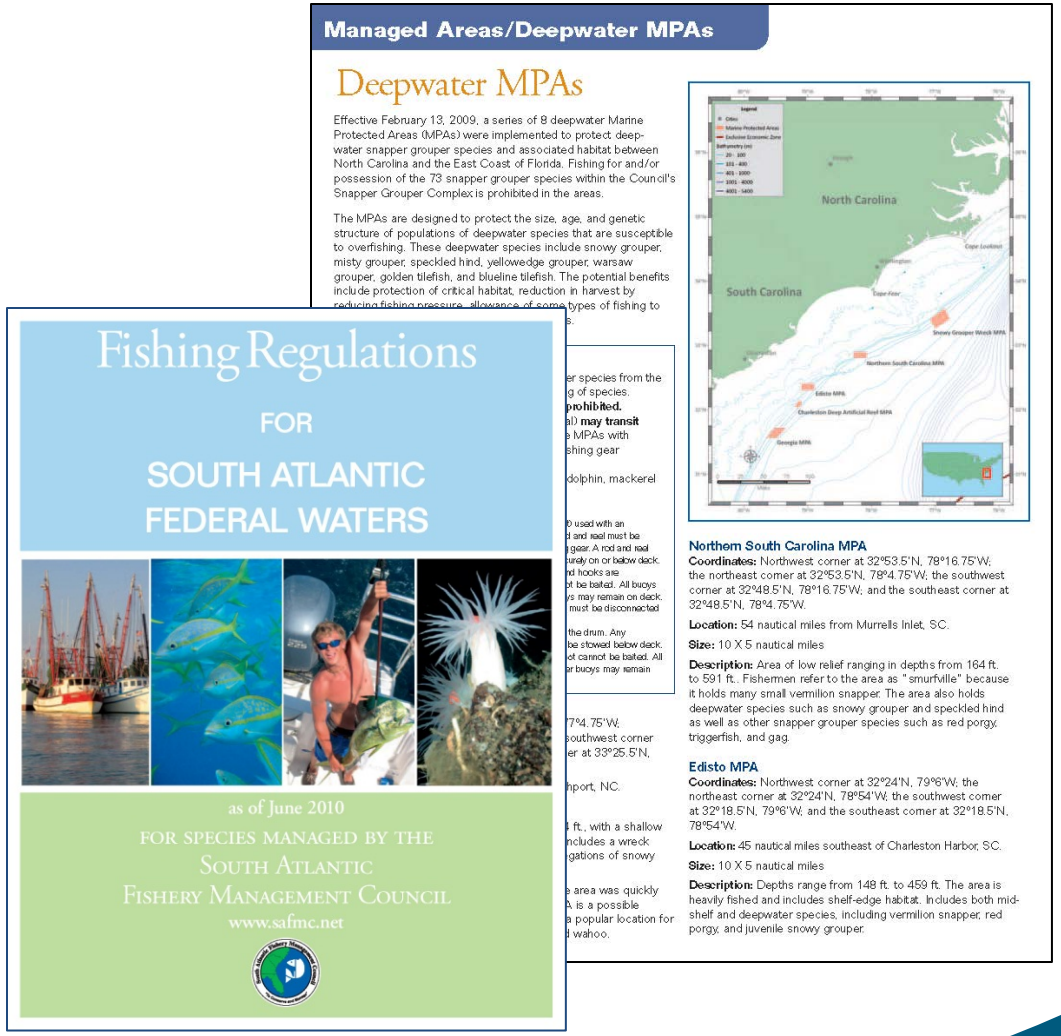
- **2009 – Publication**: *Regulations for Deepwater Marine Protected Areas in the South Atlantic*
  - Created in partnership with SC Sea Grant Consortium
  - 40,000 copies distributed and available online



MPA Regulations to Fishermen

- **2010 – Reprint**
  Fishing Regulations for SA Federal Waters

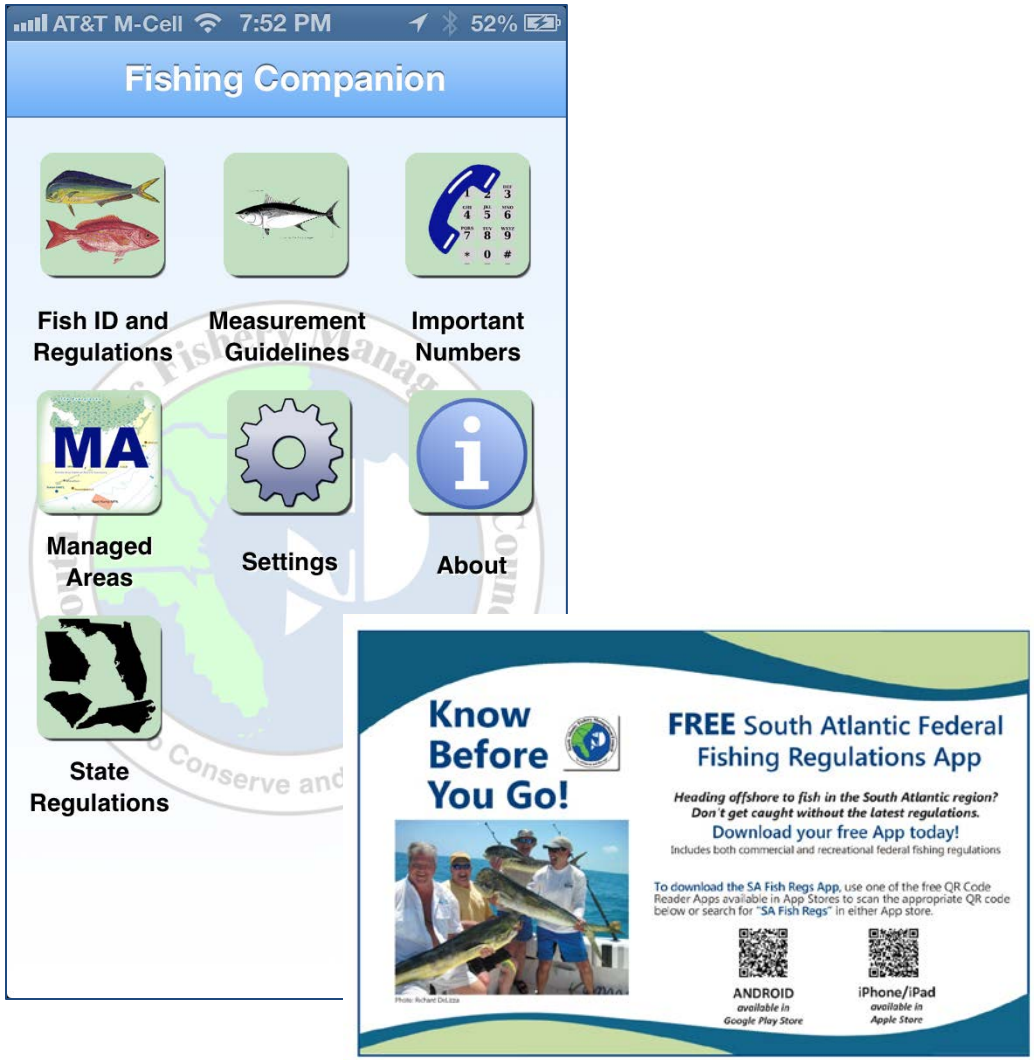
- 40,000 copies distributed to state and federal agencies, businesses, and individuals



MPA Regulations to Fishermen

- **2013: Smartphone Regulations App** with MPA Regulations

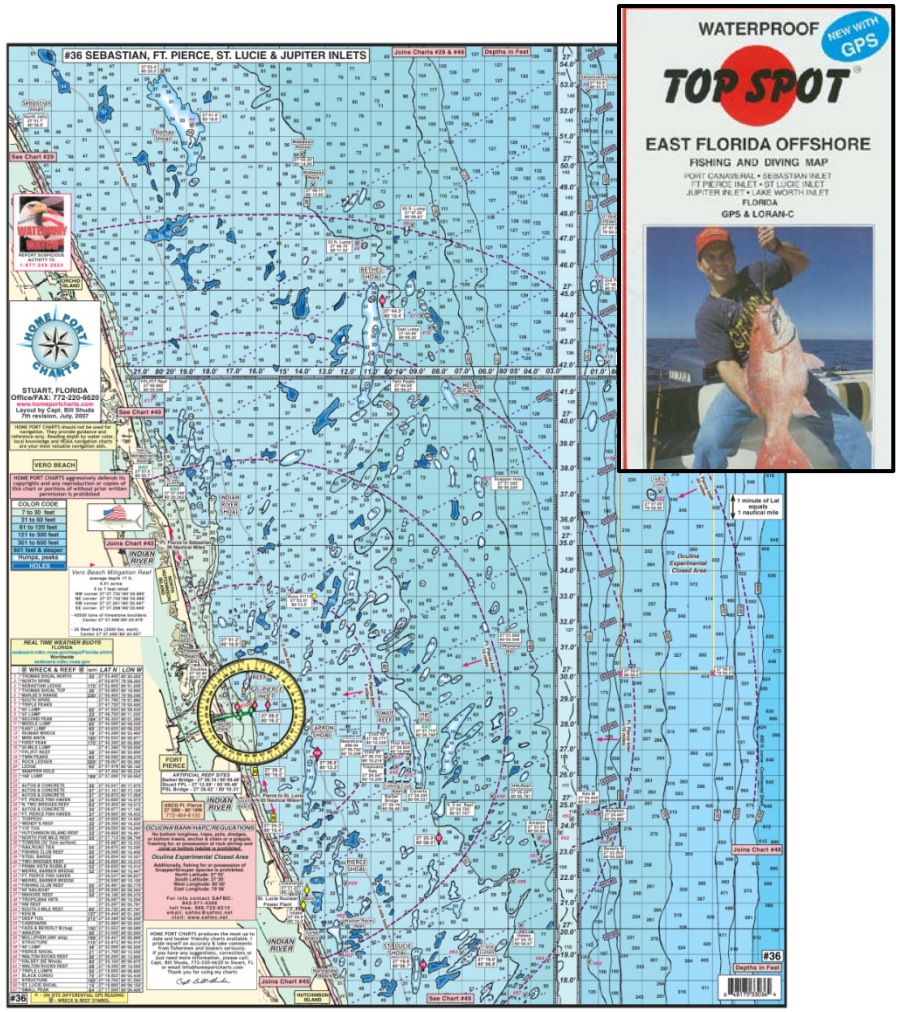
- Available in both Android and Apple platforms



Project 2: Fishing Charts

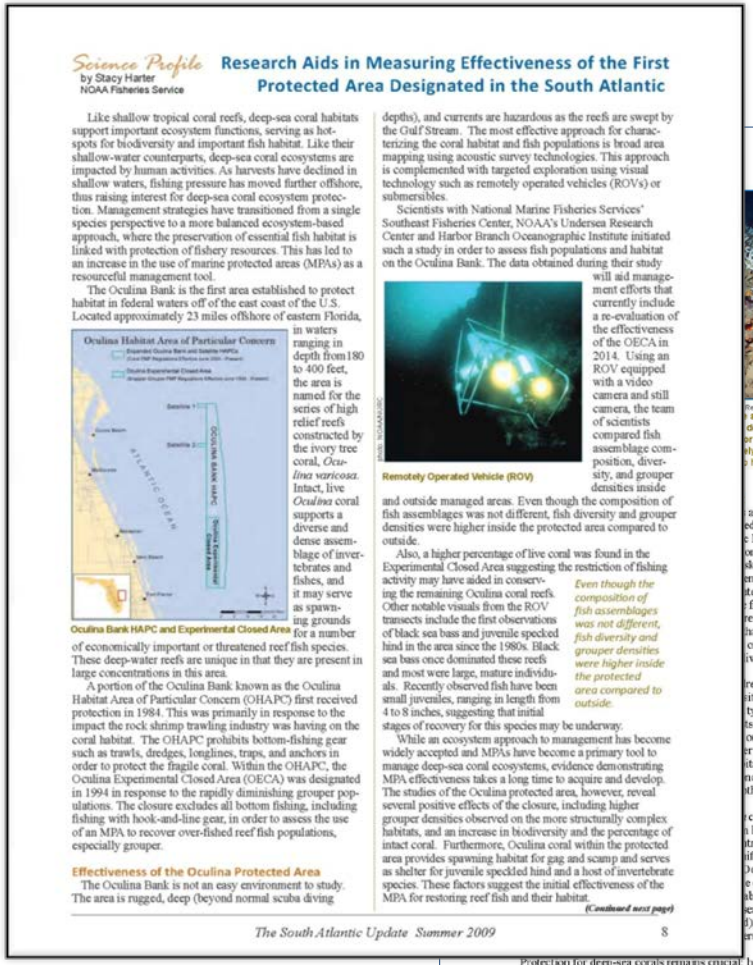
- Contacted local chart manufacturers and improved references to MPAs on printed charts

- Need: Follow up with electronic chart manufacturers



Project 3: News Releases

- Target news releases in conjunction with law enforcement and research and monitoring activities
- *SA Update* Newsletter featured articles



Science Profile
by Stacy Harter
NOAA Fisheries Service

Research Aids in Measuring Effectiveness of the First Protected Area Designated in the South Atlantic

Like shallow tropical coral reefs, deep-sea coral habitats support important ecosystem functions, serving as hot-spots for biodiversity and important fish habitat. Like their shallow-water counterparts, deep-sea coral ecosystems are impacted by human activities. As harvests have declined in shallow waters, fishing pressure has moved further offshore, thus raising interest for deep-sea coral ecosystem protection. Management strategies have transitioned from a single species perspective to a more balanced ecosystem-based approach, where the preservation of essential fish habitat is linked with protection of fishery resources. This has led to an increase in the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a resourceful management tool.

The Oculina Bank is the first area established to protect habitat in federal waters off of the east coast of the U.S. Located approximately 23 miles offshore of eastern Florida, in waters ranging in depth from 180 to 400 feet, the area is named for the series of high relief reefs constructed by the ivory tree coral, *Oculina varicosa*. Intact, live *Oculina* coral supports a diverse and dense assemblage of invertebrates and fishes, and it may serve as spawning grounds for a number of economically important or threatened reef fish species. These deep-water reefs are unique in that they are present in large concentrations in this area.

Oculina Bank HAPC and Experimental Closed Area

A portion of the Oculina Bank known as the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC) first received protection in 1984. This was primarily in response to the impact the rock shrimp trawling industry was having on the coral habitat. The OHAPC prohibits bottom-fishing gear such as trawls, dredges, longlines, traps, and anchors in order to protect the fragile coral. Within the OHAPC, the Oculina Experimental Closed Area (OECA) was designated in 1994 in response to the rapidly diminishing grouper populations. The closure excludes all bottom fishing, including fishing with hook-and-line gear, in order to assess the use of an MPA to recover over-fished reef fish populations, especially grouper.

Effectiveness of the Oculina Protected Area

The Oculina Bank is not an easy environment to study. The area is rugged, deep (beyond normal scuba diving depths), and currents are hazardous as the reefs are swept by the Gulf Stream. The most effective approach for characterizing the coral habitat and fish populations is broad area mapping using acoustic survey technologies. This approach is complemented with targeted exploration using visual technology such as remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) or submersibles.

Scientists with National Marine Fisheries Services' Southeast Fisheries Center, NOAA's Undersea Research Center and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute initiated such a study in order to assess fish populations and habitat on the Oculina Bank. The data obtained during their study will aid management efforts that currently include a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the OECA in 2014. Using an ROV equipped with a video camera and still camera, the team of scientists compared fish assemblage composition, diversity, and grouper densities inside and outside managed areas. Even though the composition of fish assemblages was not different, fish diversity and grouper densities were higher inside the protected area compared to outside.

Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV)

Also, a higher percentage of live coral was found in the Experimental Closed Area suggesting the restriction of fishing activity may have aided in conserving the remaining Oculina coral reefs. Other notable visuals from the ROV transects include the first observations of black sea bass and juvenile speckled hind in the area since the 1980s. Black sea bass once dominated these reefs and most were large, mature individuals. Recently observed fish have been small juveniles, ranging in length from 4 to 8 inches, suggesting that initial stages of recovery for this species may be underway.

Even though the composition of fish assemblages was not different, fish diversity and grouper densities were higher inside the protected area compared to outside.

While an ecosystem approach to management has become widely accepted and MPAs have become a primary tool to manage deep-sea coral ecosystems, evidence demonstrating MPA effectiveness takes a long time to acquire and develop. The studies of the Oculina protected area, however, reveal several positive effects of the closure, including higher grouper densities observed on the more structurally complex habitats, and an increase in biodiversity and the percentage of intact coral. Furthermore, Oculina coral within the protected area provides spawning habitat for gag and scamp and serves as shelter for juvenile speckled hind and a host of invertebrate species. These factors suggest the initial effectiveness of the MPA for restoring reef fish and their habitat.

(Continued next page)

Biologists See Spawning Fish in Marine Protected Area

Biologists recently witnessed an extraordinary sight while conducting an underwater study of mutton snapper in the Florida Keys.

For the first time in Florida waters, scientists with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of South Florida observed this species spawning in a Marine Protected Area in the Florida Keys. The site was established, in part, to protect spawning schools of snapper and grouper in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve.

Mutton snapper is an important species to both recreational and commercial fisheries. When fish group together in large numbers to spawn, they are more vulnerable to fishing pressure. Allowing the fish to spawn without angler pressure will help sustain the fishery. The data collected from this study will help biologists understand the effectiveness of creating no-take Marine Protected Areas to protect a variety of sea life, including fish and coral reefs.

Biologists spotted the large school of spawning snapper while working on an acoustic tagging project. The purpose of this research is to obtain information regarding the movement, spawning and migratory habits of snappers and groupers. They conducted surgeries underwater at depths of up to 120 feet to implant acoustic tags inside the fish. Conducting the tagging at this ground-breaking depth causes less stress to the fish than bringing them to the surface by conventional hook-and-line methods to complete the surgeries.

"It is clear to everyone involved in research at Riley's Hump that the mutton snapper spawning aggregation has been steadily increasing in numbers each year," said Don DeMaria, Chairman of the Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel and participant in the survey. "Riley's Hump is a success story that may be applied to other snapper grouper species."

Biologists will continue to receive data from the tagged fish for the next few years. This information will help them learn more about the movement, spawning and migratory habits of these fish.

For more information on FWRI's marine fisheries research, visit http://research.MyFWC.com.


photo: Don DeMaria

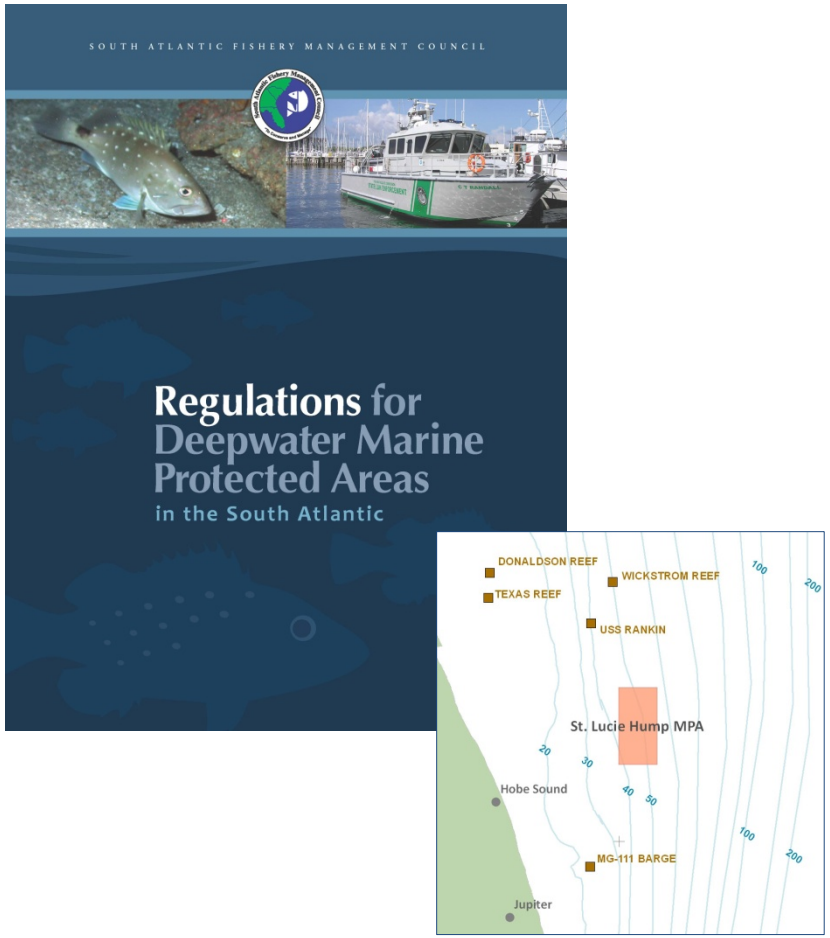
Scientists recently observed schools of spawning mutton snapper during a tagging project in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. This is the first time such behavior has been documented in Florida waters. The site was established, in part, to protect spawning schools of snapper and grouper.

Protection for deep-sea corals remains crucial, however, conservation efforts should take into account the intrinsic value of corals including their slow growth rate, high sensitivity to disturbance, and the potentially long time horizon needed before these unique and fragile ecosystems show signs of recovery.

Projects 4 and 5: Powerpoint Presentation and Poster/Rack Cards

- Powerpoint presentation has not been developed – identified as a “low priority” outreach item

- Deepwater MPA Regulations brochures distributed similarly to rack cards used for OECA

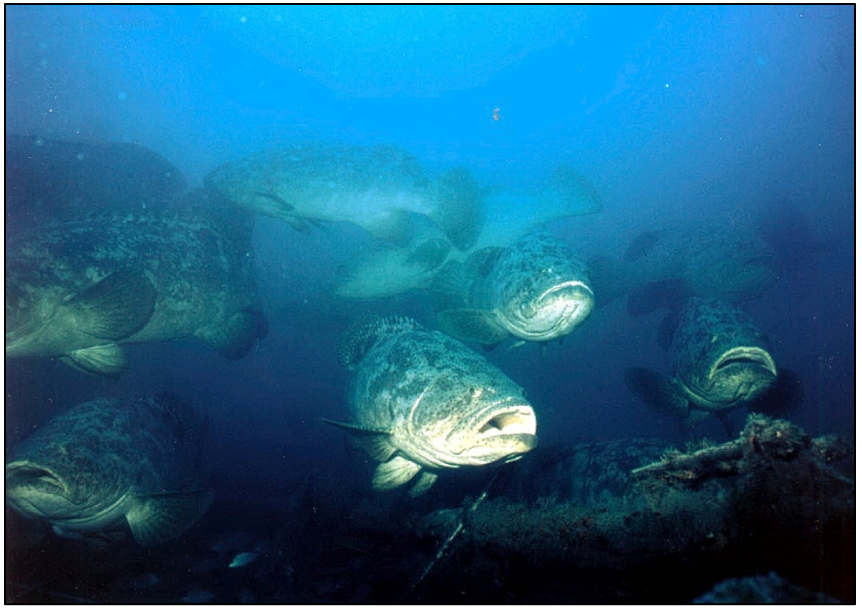


Project 6: Expand Website

- MPAs featured on new SAFMC website:
  - Regulations and Fish ID
  - Managed Areas
  - Includes Regulations brochure (PDF)
  - Latest information on MPA Expert Workgroup and current considerations

Project 6: TV Documentaries

- “Revealing the Deep” film features protected areas and deepwater habitat but not MPA specific
- Film cost prohibitive and TV distribution difficult
- Explore partnerships and other options, e.g., YouTube



Outreach Summary

- Amendment 17 Outreach Projects primarily targeting fishermen have been addressed
- Needs:
  - Follow up with electronic chart mfg. to assess current information and improvements if necessary
  - Coordinate with research and monitoring and law enforcement activities to increase public awareness
  - Explore options for using YouTube and other social media outlets to increase awareness
  - Evaluation??


Questions?