



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Coral Amendment 11

Shrimp Amendment 12

Establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area within the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern

Virtual Public Hearing Session Date and Time

Tuesday, August 5th at 6:00pm

In Person Public Hearing Session Date and Time

Thursday, August 7th at 6:00pm

Registration Link and More Details

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8580840979530019934>

Visit Our Website

<https://safmc.net/>

Check Out Our Socials





South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Why is the South Atlantic Council taking action?

During the development of Coral Amendment 8 (2013), which, among other actions, expanded the Oculina Bank Habitat area of particular concern (OHAPC), the Council received information from the rock shrimp industry that a discrete area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the OHAPC was an important fishing ground for rock shrimp. However, Coral Amendment 8 was far along in its development when this information came to the Council. The amendment was approved in November 2013 and implemented on July 17, 2015, with the OHAPC encompassing the historic rock shrimp fishing ground.

To reopen this historically important commercial fishing ground the Council developed Coral Amendment 10 in September 2020. This amendment aimed to establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Areas (SFAA) to allow rock shrimp fishing in the area that had been mistakenly included within the OHAPC through implementation of Coral Amendment 8. However, Coral Amendment 10 was disapproved by the Secretary for the following reasons:

- The amendment did not include an adequate analysis to guarantee the action would minimize adverse effects on the Oculina coral and habitat and
- The amendment did not adequately demonstrate how bycatch would be minimized.

The **PURPOSE** of this action is to reinstate access for vessels with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to a historically important fishing area where the commercial rock shrimp fishery operated by creating a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, while also minimizing impacts to deepwater coral.

The **NEED** action is to achieve optimum yield in the rock shrimp fishery while minimizing negative impacts to deepwater coral.

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Resubmission through the current amendment

In December 2023, the Council reinitiated action to establish the same SFAA as proposed in Coral Amendment 10 and address the reasons for its disapproval. Thus, the development of a joint amendment modifying both the Coral Fishery Management Plan and the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan began.

Under this joint amendment, the Council aims to allow access to the rock shrimp industry to an area that was previously fished to help that fishery achieve optimum yield while minimizing impacts to coral and coral habitat within the OHAPC.

Amendment Development Timeline

December 2014	While finalizing Coral Amendment 8, the Council receives public comments that a discrete area of the proposed northern extension of the OHAPC is economically important for the rock shrimp fishery.
March 2014	Updated VMS information and proposed SFAA coordinates, developed with feedback from the Deepwater Shrimp advisory panel (AP), are presented to the Council
June 2015	Coral Amendment 10 development begins
July 2015	Coral Amendment 8, expanding the northern boundary of the OHAPC, is implemented
June 2018	Council receives feedback from Coral and Shrimp APs on Coral Amendment 10, whose goal is to establish an SFAA in the OHAPC
March 2019	Development of Coral Amendment 10 is paused
September 2020	Council moves forward with the development of Coral Amendment 10
December 2021	Coral Amendment 10 is submitted to the Department of Commerce
July 2022	Coral Amendment 10 is disapproved
December 2023	Council moves to start the resubmission process
June 2024	Council moves to develop a joint Shrimp 12 and Coral 11 amendment to accomplish the goal of establishing an SFAA
June 2025	Council selects a preferred alternative and approves the draft amendment for public hearings.

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

For a detailed history of Coral 8 and 10 please refer to this document:
https://safmc.net/documents/he_a3a_coral10update_202406-pdf/

Tentative Amendment Timing

Summer 2025	Conduct public hearings.
September 2025	Review public hearing comments.
December 2025	Review the final draft amendment and consider approval for formal review.
Early 2026	Amendment submitted.

Actions and Alternatives

Amendment 11 to the Coral FMP and Amendment 12 to the Shrimp FMP proposes the following:

Action 1. Establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern.

Purpose of Action: The purpose of this action is to reinstate access for vessels with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to a historically important fishing area where the commercial rock shrimp fishery operated by creating a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, while minimizing impacts to deepwater coral.

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Alternative 1 (No Action)	There are no shrimp fishery access areas within the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern.
Preferred Alternative 2	<p>Establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the OHAPC that is approximately 16.61 NM².</p> <p>Allow a shrimp vessel with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to bottom trawl for rock shrimp within the established area bounded by the coordinates in Table 1 and depicted in Figure 1</p>
Alternative 3	<p>Establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the northern extension of the OHAPC that is approximately 24.16 NM².</p> <p>Allow a shrimp vessel with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to bottom trawl for rock shrimp within the established area bounded by the coordinates in Table 2 and depicted in Figure 1</p>

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Table 1: Coordinates of proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area under Preferred Alternative 2. Refer to Figure 1 for a map of the area.

Point	Latitude	Longitude
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"
1	29°10'58.98"	80°08'39.00"
2	29°03'34.98"	80°07'28.98"
3	28°54'25.02"	80°05'22.98"
4	28°48'36.00"	80°04'22.02"
5	28°30'00.00"	80°01'01.02"
6	28°30'00.00"	80°00'46.02"
7	28°46'00.84"	80°03'28.50"
8	28°48'37.14"	80°03'56.76"
9	28°53'18.36"	80°04'48.84"
10	29°11'19.62"	80°08'36.90"
11	29°17'33.96"	80°10'06.90"
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Table 2: Coordinates of proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area under Alternative 3. Refer to Figure 1 for a map of the area.

Point	Latitude	Longitude
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"
1	29°11'19.98"	80°8'54.00"
2	28°53'15.00"	80°5'27.00"
3	28°48'36.00"	80°4'33.00"
4	28°45'57.00"	80°4'4.98"
5	28°30'00.00"	80°01'01.02"
6	28°30'00.00"	80°00'46.02"
7	28°46'00.84"	80°03'28.50"
8	28°48'37.14"	80°03'56.76"
9	28°53'18.36"	80°04'48.84"
10	29°11'19.62"	80°08'36.90"
11	29°17'33.96"	80°10'06.90"
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

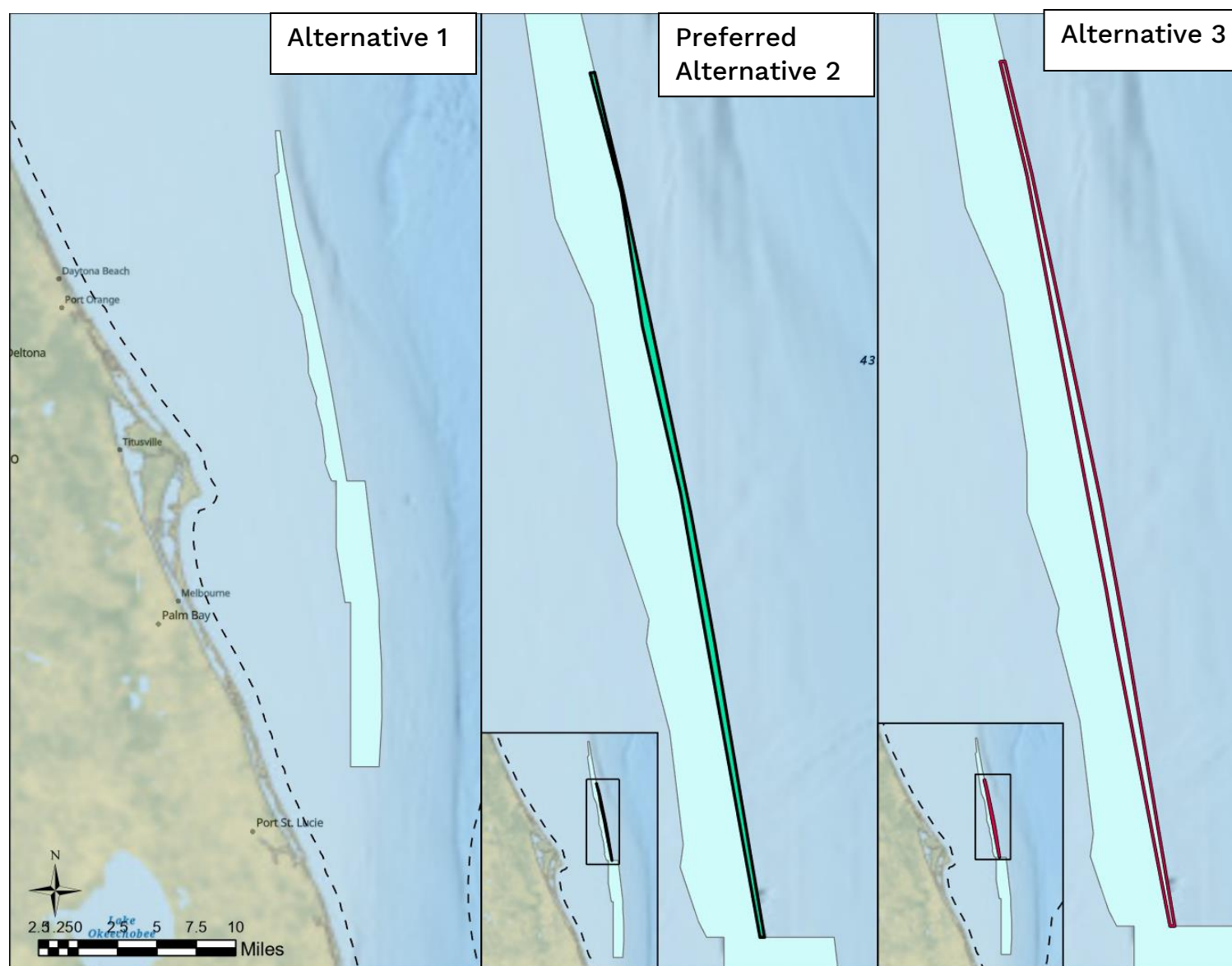


Figure 1: A visualization of Alternative 1 (No action), Preferred Alternative 2, and Alternative 3.



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Discussion

During the June 2025 Council meeting, the Council reviewed results of a mapping study using the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* in April 2025. The results of this mapping expedition supported those from previous studies in the area which noted that there was no standing live coral, dead coral (coral rubble) or suitable habitat for coral within the area of the proposed SFAA (See Draft Amendment Appendix F for more details).

Rock shrimp vessels are required to carry a vessel monitoring system (VMS) that alerts law enforcement to their location to ensure they are not trawling within the OHAPC. Rock shrimp fishermen have also noted during public comment and AP meetings that they follow a self-imposed buffer of 0.25 miles to ensure they remain outside the closed area.

The Council may retain the transit requirements for vessels transiting through the OHAPC, which requires vessels to stow gear, increase the VMS transmission rate, and maintain a speed of 5 knots. In addition to requesting the public's feedback on creation of the SFAA, the Council is also soliciting comments regarding the VMS transmission rate within the SFAA where, if established, rock shrimp vessels would be shrimping and not transiting.

Transit Provisions within the OHAPC

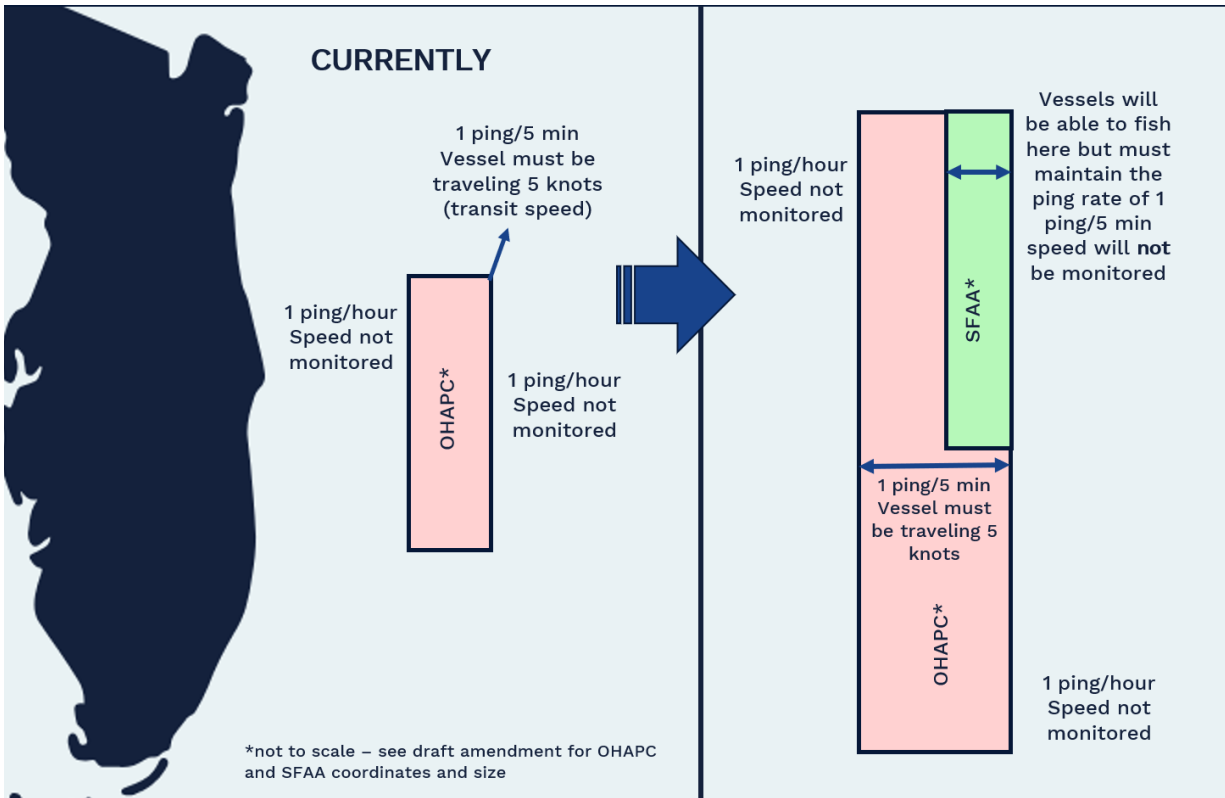
- Because rock shrimp fishermen transit through the OHAPC to reach fishing grounds, Coral Amendment 8 implemented a transit provision whereby vessels must **increase the VMS transmission rate** from 1 ping per hour (standard VMS requirement for rock shrimp vessels) **to 1 ping per 5 minutes** when a vessel enters the OHAPC.
- The increased ping rate ensures that the vessel is moving at the **required speed of 5 knots or more** through the OHAPC. Such a speed ensures the vessel is transiting and not trawling. A vessel must also have **gear stowed** when transiting across the OHAPC.
- Maintaining this ping rate while shrimping in the SFAA would incur a higher cost.
- There is no requirement for a higher ping rate in any other existing SFAA.
- Maintaining the higher ping rate would provide more resolution for vessels using the area, which would aid enforcement.

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council



Discussion Questions Regarding Ping Rate

- For **rock shrimp** fishermen: The Council would like to know how maintaining the current ping rate would affect your use of the SFAA.
- For **Others**: Do you feel maintaining the current ping rate is a positive trade-off of establishing the SFAA?

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Summary of Effects

Biological Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** would allow rock shrimp harvest within the SFAA; however, use of the area is expected to be limited due to the shrimp fishery's sporadic usage of the area. The strength of the currents only allows skilled shrimpers to utilize the area, so a substantial biological effect on the rock shrimp stock is not expected. Overfishing is tracked by comparing landings to the maximum sustainable yield defined for the rock shrimp fishery, ensuring harvest remains within sustainable levels.
- There could be negative biological impacts to *Oculina* coral under **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)** due to sediment plumes resulting from trawling activity, and gear damage to existing coral if vessels do not abide by the coordinates of the SFAA. However, these effects are unlikely to be realized as water currents tend to move in a direction that would carry sediment away from known coral and the VMS requirement ensures that vessels remain outside of the protected area.
- There is a slight possibility for by-catch of snapper grouper species; however, rock shrimp gear must contain both TED¹ and BRD² devices on each net.

Economic Effects

- There is expected to be a positive economic effect for **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, as these alternatives would allow for rock shrimp fishermen to harvest rock shrimp in an area they otherwise would not be allowed to.

¹ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/bycatch/turtle-excluder-devices>

² <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/southeast/bycatch/bycatch-reduction-devices-gulf-america-and-south-atlantic>



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** would contribute to the rock shrimp fishery reaching its optimum yield (OY), which the fishery has not been achieving in recent years.
- **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** would align with the recent Executive Order (EO) 14276³ “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness” by unburdening commercial fishing operations.

Social Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** would provide social benefit for the rock shrimp industry as they would maximize profit by providing access to historic fishing grounds.
- **Preferred Alternative 2** has a slightly higher social benefit as it aligns with the coordinates that the rock shrimp fishermen have been recommending since March 2014.
- There could be negative social impacts if *Oculina* coral is negatively impacted by the use of the SFAA.

Administrative Effects

- **Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3** would increase the administrative burden as there would need to be enforcement within the SFAA; however, this burden is expected to be minimal because:
 - Rock shrimp vessels are already required to be equipped with VMS,
 - Vessels must already abide by strict transit provisions that are monitored by enforcement, and
 - The Council has proposed maintaining the current VMS communication rate within the SFAA, if established, which would give enforcement more resolution on vessel position.

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/restoring-american-seafood-competitiveness/>



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Keep Up with Amendment 11 and Amendment 12

Visit the Amendment 11 and Amendment 12 [WEBPAGE](#) to keep up with the amendment's progress, find the most up to date documents, and submit public comments

The screenshot shows the website interface for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with a navigation menu including Home, Regulations, Meetings, Fishery Management, News & Updates, About the Council, Habitat and Ecosystem, Best Fishing Practices, Citizen Science Program, Science & SEDAR, Resilient Fisheries, Public Comment, and a Search bar. The main content area has a blue header with the council's name and a 'GET INVOLVED' button with social media icons. Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home / Comprehensive Amendment Coral 11 & Shrimp 12'. The main heading is 'Comprehensive Amendment Coral 11 & Shrimp 12'. Underneath is an 'Amendment Summary' section. The summary text states that Coral Amendment 11/ Shrimp Amendment 12 aims to establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA) along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC). It details the 'Purpose of the Amendment' and the 'Action Summary'. To the right of the text is a vertical timeline graphic showing the process from Implementation to Pre-Scoping, with 'PUBLIC HEARING' highlighted. Below the timeline is a 'Staff Contact' section for Kathleen Howington, Habitat & Ecosystem Scientist, with her email and website link. At the bottom of the page, there is a light blue banner with staff contact information.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

GET INVOLVED

Home / Comprehensive Amendment Coral 11 & Shrimp 12

Comprehensive Amendment Coral 11 & Shrimp 12

Amendment Summary

Coral Amendment 11/ Shrimp Amendment 12 aims to establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA) along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC).

Purpose of the Amendment: To establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA) along the western boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC) where fishing for rock shrimp would be allowed. The area under consideration was once utilized by the fishery but access to it was restricted with implementation of Coral Amendment 8 in 2014.

Action Summary: to establish an area within the existing OHAPC where rock shrimp fishing would be allowed to restore access to historic grounds to the fishery while maintaining protection for Oculina coral.

Key Events:

- September 2024: Council directed staff to begin preparing Coral Amendment 11/ Shrimp Amendment 12 to establish a SFAA.
- June 2025: Council approved the Purpose & Need, selected a preferred alternative, and approved the amendment for public hearings.

Staff Contact

Kathleen Howington
Habitat & Ecosystem Scientist
kathleen.howington@safmc.net

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580



South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

How Do I Comment?

Comments must be received by 5:00 PM on Friday, August 8, 2025. There are several ways that you can submit your comment to the Council including:

Comments taken during webinars

Tuesday, August 5th at 6:00pm

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8580840979530019934>

Comments taken during in-person meetings

Thursday, August 7th at 6:00pm

Willie Galimore Community Center; 399 Riberia Street; St. Augustine, FL 32084

Written comments

Written comments may be submitted using the comment form at the following link:

<https://safmc.net/events/august-2025-public-hearings-comprehensive-amendment-coral-11-shrimp-12/>

Comments by mail

Send comments to: John Carmichael, Executive Director, SAFMC; 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201; N. Charleston, SC 29405

Comments by fax

843-769-4520

Staff Contacts: Allie Iberle | allie.iberle@safmc.net | (843) 225-8135

Kathleen Howington | Kathleen.howington@safmc.net | 843-725-7580