Summary of Comments
Coral Amendment 8
August 2013 Public Hearings

7 comments were made during the public hearings and 4 comment letters were received during the open comment period.

A. Testimony during public hearings

a. Richmond Hill, GA - August 5, 2013 *1 comment*
Deepwater Shrimp AP member: Agreement was made during Oculina Bank HAPC designation, when VMS became a requirement in the rock shrimp fishery that fishery managers wouldn't return to close additional area. Rock shrimp industry should be left alone, the same bottom areas have been fished for over 30 years.

b. Jacksonville, FL – August 6, 2013 *2 comments*
A modification of Action 1, Sub-Alternative 2b should be considered to open up several active fishing areas along the southeastern proposed boundary. Ability to transit is essential. Support Preferred Alternative 3 under Action 2. Vessel owners should be eligible for VMS reimbursement funds.

Against any type of closure to protect coral. Action 1, Preferred Alternative 3 needs to be moved further east. This area represents the only area rock shrimp were caught last year, and our entire production for the fishing year.

c. Cocoa Beach, FL – August 7, 2013 *2 comments*
Deepwater Shrimp AP member: In support of Action 1, Preferred Sub-Alternative 2B and Preferred Alternative 3; Action 2, Preferred Alternative 3; Action 3, Preferred Alternative 4, and no comment on Action 4. Concern about economic impacts, fishery impact numbers are too low. Some VMS points are more significant fishing points than others, this is misrepresented in the VMS analysis. Reimbursement funds for upgrading units should be available to vessel owners.

Not in support of a northern extension of Oculina Bank HAPC.

d. Key Largo, FL – August 8, 2013 *0 comments*

e. Charleston, SC – August 13, 2013 *1 comment*
In support of certain types of MPAs. Closed areas should be marked with buoys with video camera and monitoring capabilities. Closed areas should be offset with areas of artificial reef habitat.

f. New Bern, NC – August 15, 2013 *1 comment*
*Same as previous comment during Charleston, SC hearing

B. Summary of written comments received – *4 comment letters*

1. Commenter reiterated statements made during the New Bern, NC and Charleston, SC meeting: in support of MPAs in some cases. Any type of closure area should be marked with a buoy with a video camera and monitoring capabilities. Closed areas should be offset with areas of artificial reef habitat.

2. Deepwater Shrimp AP Chair: Action 1, Preferred Alternative 2b represents the best compromise between the original Coral AP recommendation and the original Deepwater Shrimp recommendation. Under Action 1, Preferred Alternative 3 includes a fishing area south of the southern satellite site that is productive when cold water upwelling events push rock shrimp to the inshore side of the HAPC. In support of Action 2, Preferred Alternative 3. Reimbursement funding should be available for those that will need to upgrade their VMS unit. In support of Action 3, Preferred Alternative 4.

   In document analysis, the extent of the impact that fishing activities have had on this habitat is not fully captured. VMS was implemented as a law enforcement tool, the points do not provide value (effort, productivity data) any given area has to the rock shrimp fishery. Ex-vessel value represents a fraction of economic impact.

3. South Florida Golden Crab fishermen: Interest in expanding the Fishery Access Areas designated for golden crab (Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC), currently the areas are crowded. Fishermen are opposed to actions in Coral Amendment 8.

4. Southeastern Fisheries Association–East Coast Fisheries Section: Amendment should be delayed to allow time for further review of social and economic analysis. The economic impact will be much greater for rock shrimp and snapper grouper fisheries than what is identified in the amendment. SFA ECFS supports part of Action 1, Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b, does not support the northern boundary of 29 degrees 43.5 minutes North, or the annexing of hard bottom features inshore of 70 meters. Questions regarding the economic impacts on the snapper grouper fleet associated with Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 (Action 1). Action 1, Alternative 3 should be a separate action. Support Action 2, Preferred Alternative 3, however severe weather conditions should be taken into consideration by law enforcement prior to any enforcement action. Support Action 3, Preferred Alternative 4 and Action 4, Preferred Alternative 2.