DECISION DOCUMENT

for

Coral Amendment 8

to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reef, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats in the South Atlantic Region

September 2013

This document is intended to serve as a SUMMARY for the actions and alternatives in Coral Amendment 8. It also provides background information and includes a summary of the expected biological and socio-economic effects from these proposed management measures.

NOTE: Items the Committee/Council needs to address are highlighted in yellow

Why is the South Atlantic Council taking Action?

Discoveries of previously uncharacterized areas of deepwater coral resources have been brought forward by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (South Atlantic Council) Coral Advisory Panel. Recent deepwater scientific exploration and research have identified areas of high relief features and hardbottom habitat outside the boundaries of existing Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (CHAPCs). During their 2011 October meeting, the Coral Advisory Panel recommended the Council revisit the boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC, Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout CHAPCs to incorporate areas of additional deepwater coral habitat that were previously uncharacterized. The South Atlantic Council reviewed the recommendations and associated Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) analyses of rock shrimp fishing activity for expansion of these areas, and approved the measures for public scoping through Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3. The Coral, Habitat, Deepwater Shrimp and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels have been working to refine recommendations since the public scoping process and provide input to the South Atlantic Council on these proposed management measures. During their June 2012 meeting, the South Atlantic Council split these actions from Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 3 and provided guidance to further develop the measures through Coral Amendment 8. The South Atlantic Council took the APs' recommendations into consideration when selecting preferred alternatives during their June 2013 meeting.

Coral Amendment 8 consists of regulatory actions that focus on deepwater coral ecosystem conservation in the South Atlantic.

Purpose for Action

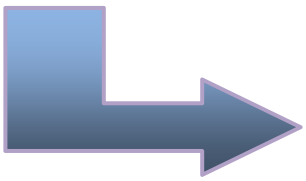
The ***purpose*** of Coral Amendment 8 is to increase protections for deepwater coral based on new information of deepwater coral resources in the South Atlantic.

Need for Action

The ***need*** for action in Coral Amendment 8 is to address recent discoveries of deepwater coral resources and protect deepwater coral ecosystems in the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction from future activities that could compromise their condition.

What Are the Proposed Actions?

There are 4 actions being proposed in Coral Amendment 8. Each action has a range of alternatives, including a 'no action alternative' and a 'preferred alternative'.



Proposed Actions in Coral Amendment 8

1. Expand Boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC
2. Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC
3. Expand Boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC
4. Expand Boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

What Are the Alternatives?

Proposed Actions in Coral Amendment 8

1. **Expand Boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC**
2. Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC
3. Expand Boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC
4. Expand Boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

Action 1. Expand boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the 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 close to the 70 meter and 100 meter depth contour lines, respectively, while annexing hard bottom features, as represented in the simplified polygon (**Figures S-1** and **S-2**). Sub-alternative 2a = 329 square miles.

Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b. Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendation for northern extension. The Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendation is to adjust the southern portion of the eastern boundary line of the proposed Oculina Bank HAPC northern extension identified in Alternative 2a. The adjustments are to move the boundary west to further reduce fishing tracks impacted. The revised polygon would reduce the rock shrimp VMS points (2-4 knots) for the available time series (2003-2013) to 4.2% from 5.5% in Alternative 2a. The replacement of two coordinates would further modify the western boundary and result in a slight reduction (0.09%) in the number of rock shrimp VMS points (2003-2013) (2-4 knots) (**Figures S-3** and **S-4**). Sub-alternative 2b = 267 square miles.

IPT recommendation for language revisions to **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b**: *Modify the Oculina Bank HAPC to move the northern boundary to 29° 43.5'N. The western boundary would follow close to the 70 meter contour while annexing hard bottom features with two coordinates replaced in the southern portion of the boundary to reduce rock shrimp fishing tracks impacted. The eastern boundary line of the proposed Oculina Bank HAPC northern extension identified in Alternative 2a would be shifted west to further reduce rock shrimp fishing tracks impacted. The alternative is represented in the simplified polygons **Figures S-3** and **S-4**. Sub-alternative 2b = 267 square miles.*

Note: A comparison of Sub-Alternative 2a and Sub-Alternative 2b is shown in **Figure S-5**.

Note: The Interdisciplinary Plan Team (IPT) is comprised of a team of analysts that develops the Biological, Economic, Social and Administrative analyses for the document.

Preferred 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 (**Figures S-6** and **S-7**). Alternative 3 = 76 square miles.

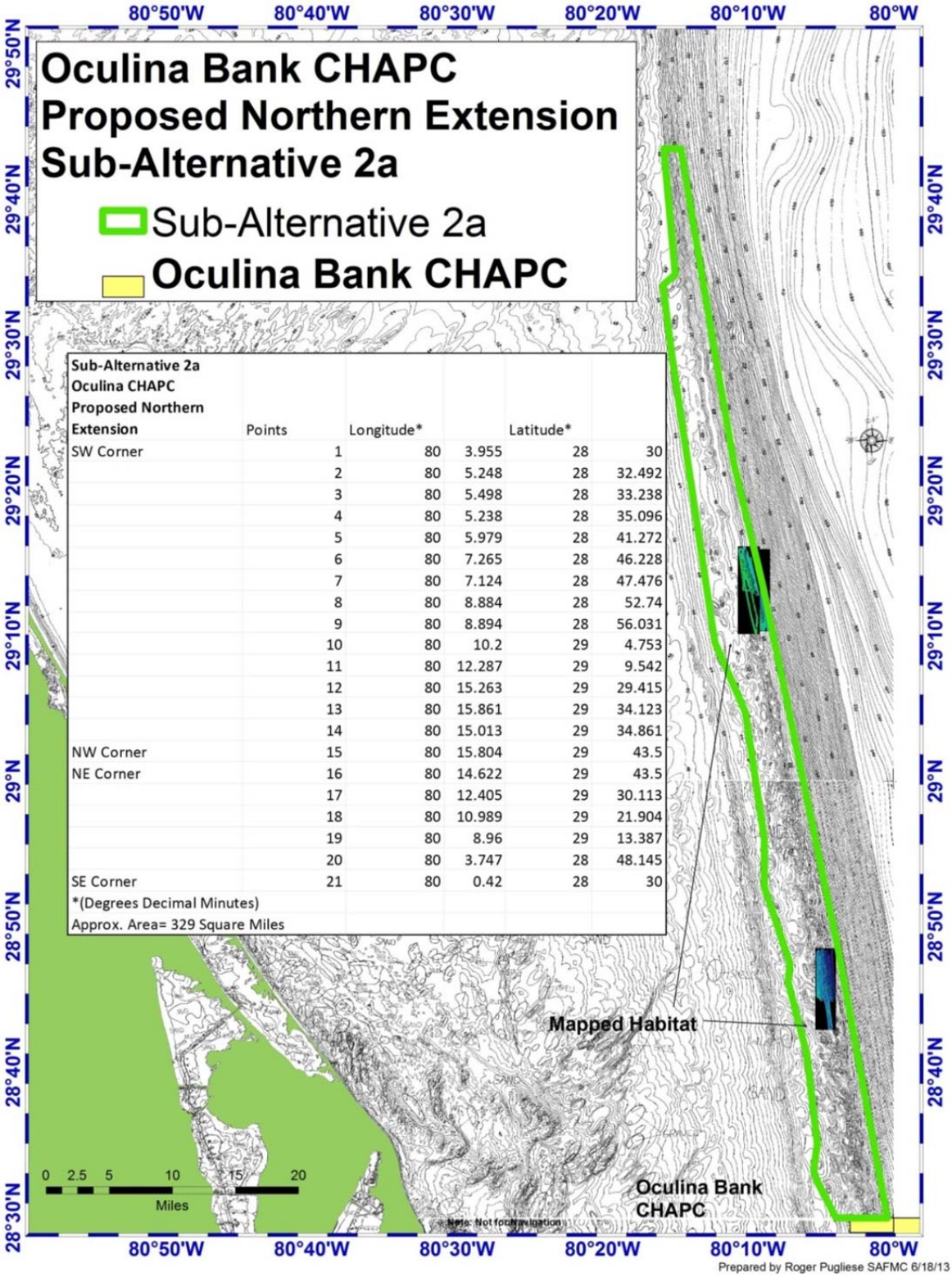
Note: Coordinates for the CHAPC extension alternatives are found in **Appendix M**.

Action 1 DECISIONS:

1. Do you want to accept the IPT recommendation for a wording change to Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b?

IPT Recommendation:
Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b. *Modify the Oculina Bank HAPC to move the northern boundary to 29° 43.5'N. The western boundary would follow close to the 70 meter contour while annexing hard bottom features with two coordinates replaced in the southern portion of the boundary to reduce rock shrimp fishing tracks impacted. The eastern boundary line of the proposed Oculina Bank HAPC northern extension identified in Alternative 2a would be shifted west to further reduce rock shrimp fishing tracks impacted. The alternative is represented in the simplified polygons **Figures S-3** and **S-4**. Sub-alternative 2b = 267 square miles.*

Note: The Committee Chairman reviewed the IPT recommended language revision prior to the public hearings. With his approval, the IPT recommendation was presented during the public hearings as a possible revision to Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b.



Sub-Alternative 2a Oculina CHAPC Proposed Northern Extension	Points	Longitude*		Latitude*	
SW Corner	1	80	3.955	28	30
	2	80	5.248	28	32.492
	3	80	5.498	28	33.238
	4	80	5.238	28	35.096
	5	80	5.979	28	41.272
	6	80	7.265	28	46.228
	7	80	7.124	28	47.476
	8	80	8.884	28	52.74
	9	80	8.894	28	56.031
	10	80	10.2	29	4.753
	11	80	12.287	29	9.542
	12	80	15.263	29	29.415
	13	80	15.861	29	34.123
	14	80	15.013	29	34.861
NW Corner	15	80	15.804	29	43.5
NE Corner	16	80	14.622	29	43.5
	17	80	12.405	29	30.113
	18	80	10.989	29	21.904
	19	80	8.96	29	13.387
	20	80	3.747	28	48.145
SE Corner	21	80	0.42	28	30

*(Degrees Decimal Minutes)
Approx. Area= 329 Square Miles

Figure S-1. Action 1, Sub-Alternative 2a. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Northern Extension and Associated Habitat Mapping and Bathymetry.

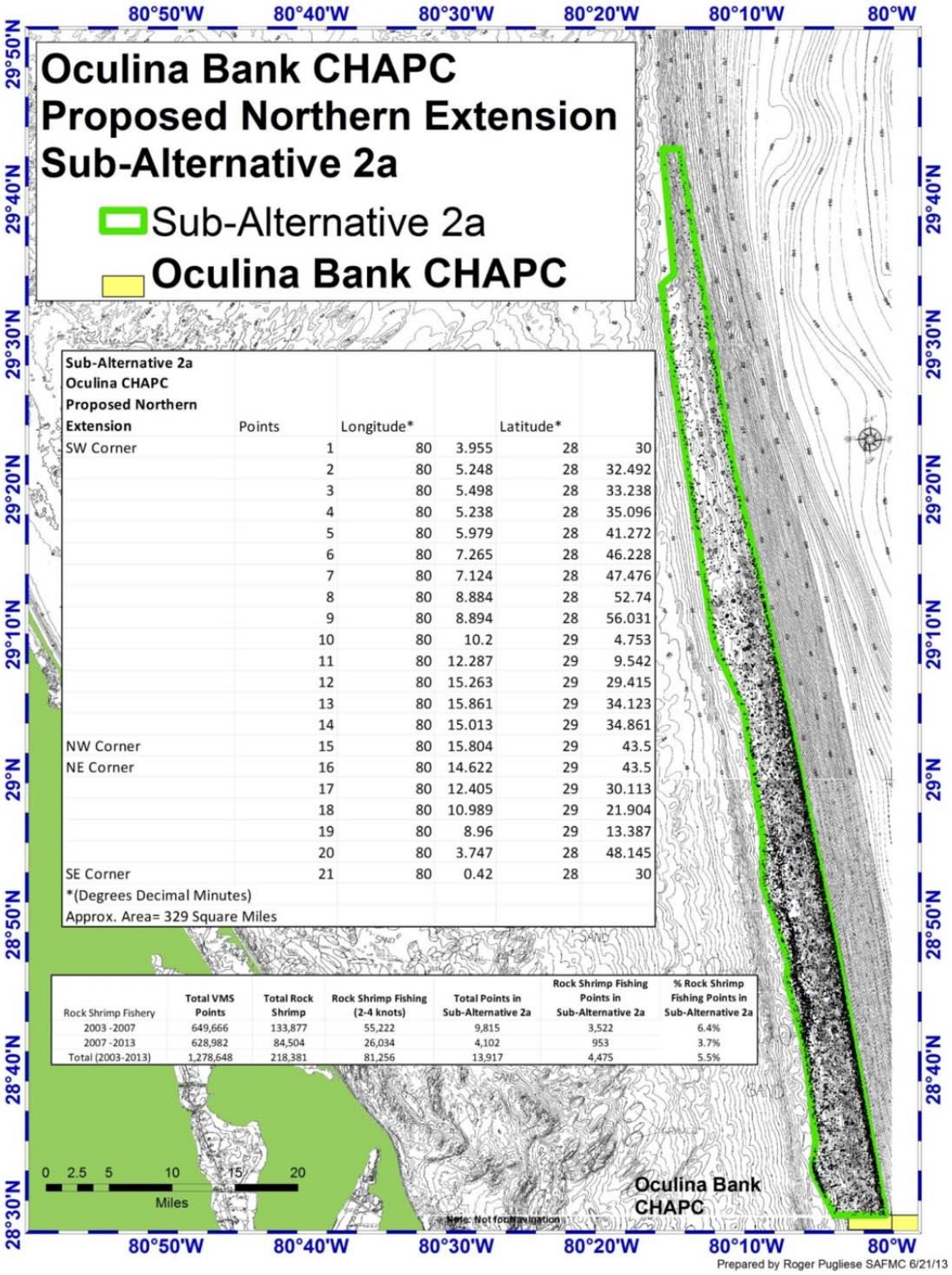
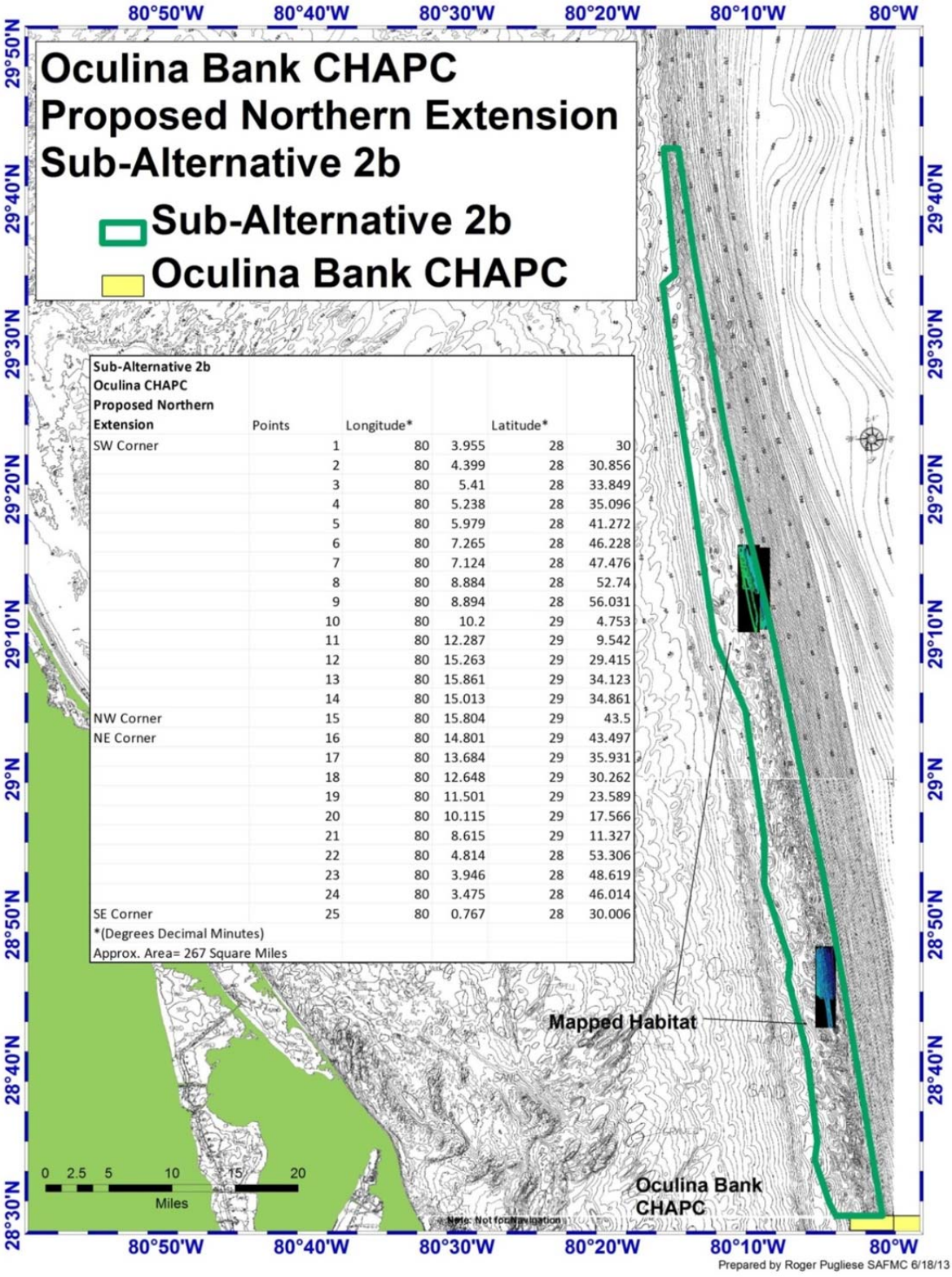


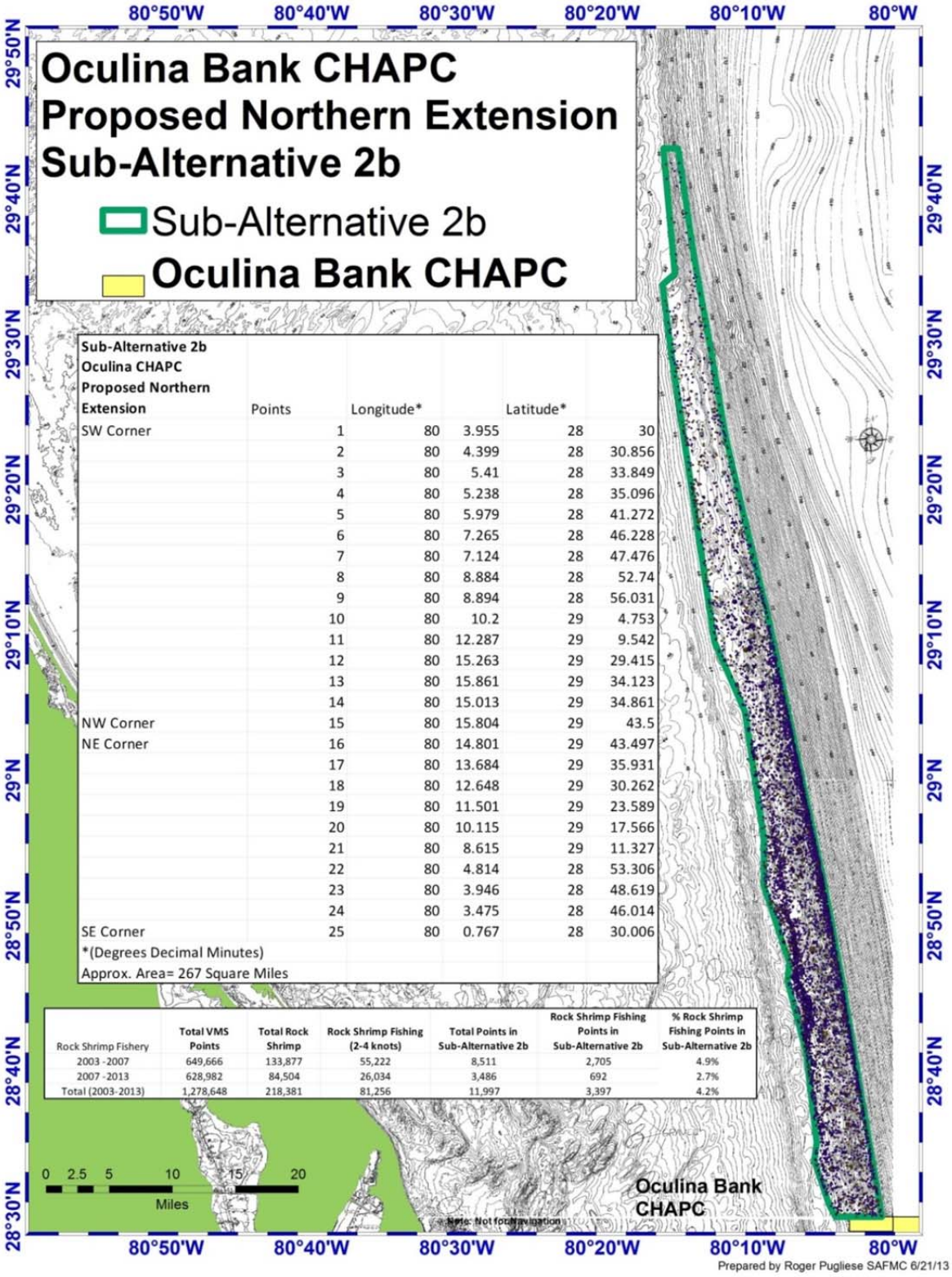
Figure S-2. Action 1, Sub-Alternative 2a. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Northern Extension and VMS (2003-2013).



Sub-Alternative 2b Oculina CHAPC Proposed Northern Extension	Points	Longitude*		Latitude*	
SW Corner	1	80	3.955	28	30
	2	80	4.399	28	30.856
	3	80	5.41	28	33.849
	4	80	5.238	28	35.096
	5	80	5.979	28	41.272
	6	80	7.265	28	46.228
	7	80	7.124	28	47.476
	8	80	8.884	28	52.74
	9	80	8.894	28	56.031
	10	80	10.2	29	4.753
	11	80	12.287	29	9.542
	12	80	15.263	29	29.415
	13	80	15.861	29	34.123
	14	80	15.013	29	34.861
NW Corner	15	80	15.804	29	43.5
NE Corner	16	80	14.801	29	43.497
	17	80	13.684	29	35.931
	18	80	12.648	29	30.262
	19	80	11.501	29	23.589
	20	80	10.115	29	17.566
	21	80	8.615	29	11.327
	22	80	4.814	28	53.306
	23	80	3.946	28	48.619
	24	80	3.475	28	46.014
SE Corner	25	80	0.767	28	30.006

*(Degrees Decimal Minutes)
Approx. Area= 267 Square Miles

Figure S-3. Action 1, Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Northern Extension and Associated Habitat Mapping and Bathymetry.



Sub-Alternative 2b Oculina CHAPC Proposed Northern Extension	Points	Longitude*		Latitude*	
SW Corner	1	80	3.955	28	30
	2	80	4.399	28	30.856
	3	80	5.41	28	33.849
	4	80	5.238	28	35.096
	5	80	5.979	28	41.272
	6	80	7.265	28	46.228
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	23	80	3.946	28	48.619
	24	80	3.475	28	46.014
SE Corner	25	80	0.767	28	30.006

*(Degrees Decimal Minutes)
Approx. Area= 267 Square Miles

Rock Shrimp Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Rock Shrimp	Rock Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Sub-Alternative 2b	Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2b	% Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2b
2003 -2007	649,666	133,877	55,222	8,511	2,705	4.9%
2007 -2013	628,982	84,504	26,034	3,486	692	2.7%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	218,381	81,256	11,997	3,397	4.2%

Figure S-4. Action 1, Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Northern Extension and VMS (2003-2013).

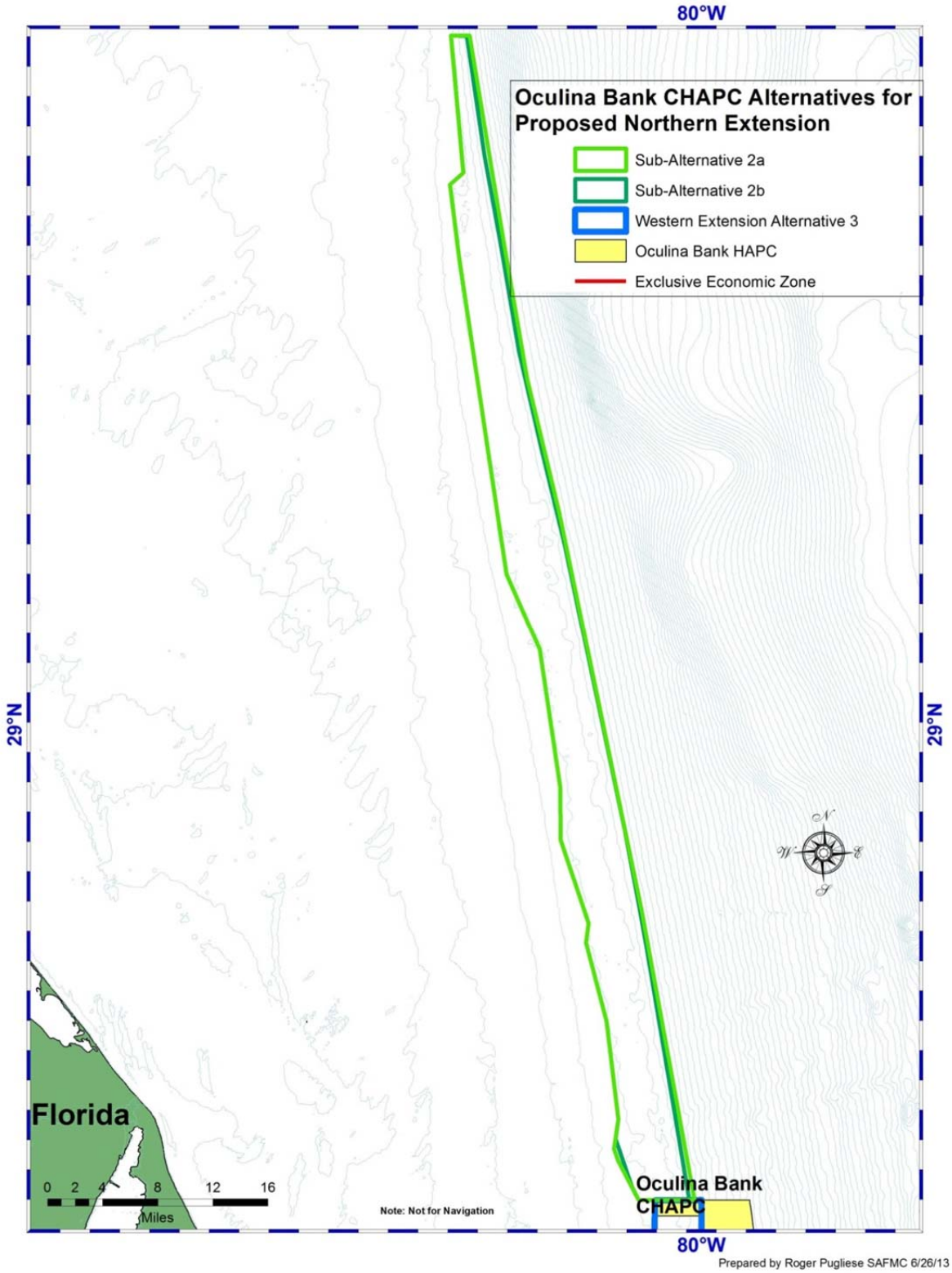

Figure S-5. Comparison of Sub-Alternative 2a and Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b under Action 1.

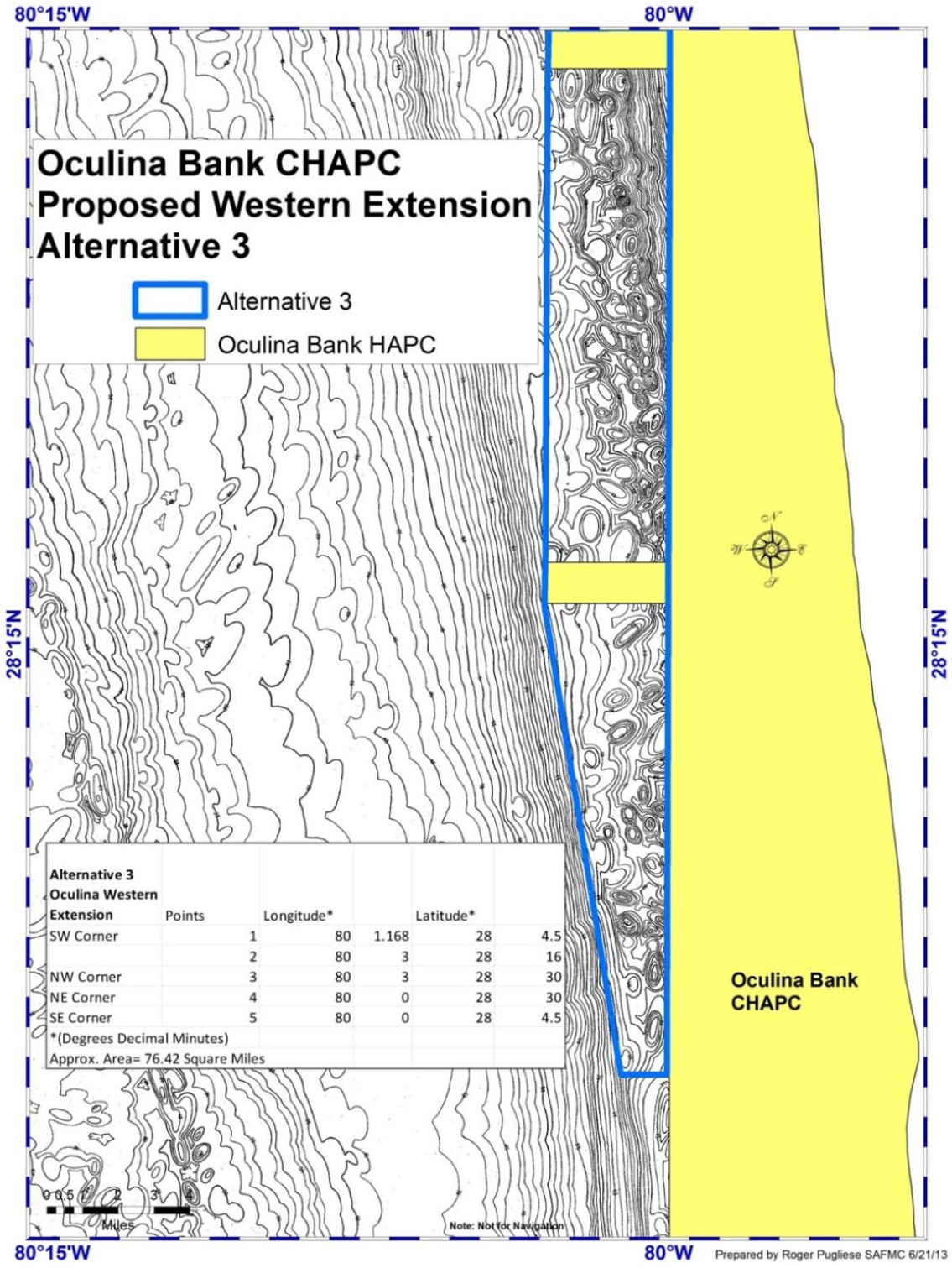

Figure S-6. Action 1, Preferred Alternative 3. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Western Extension and Associated Habitat and Bathymetry.

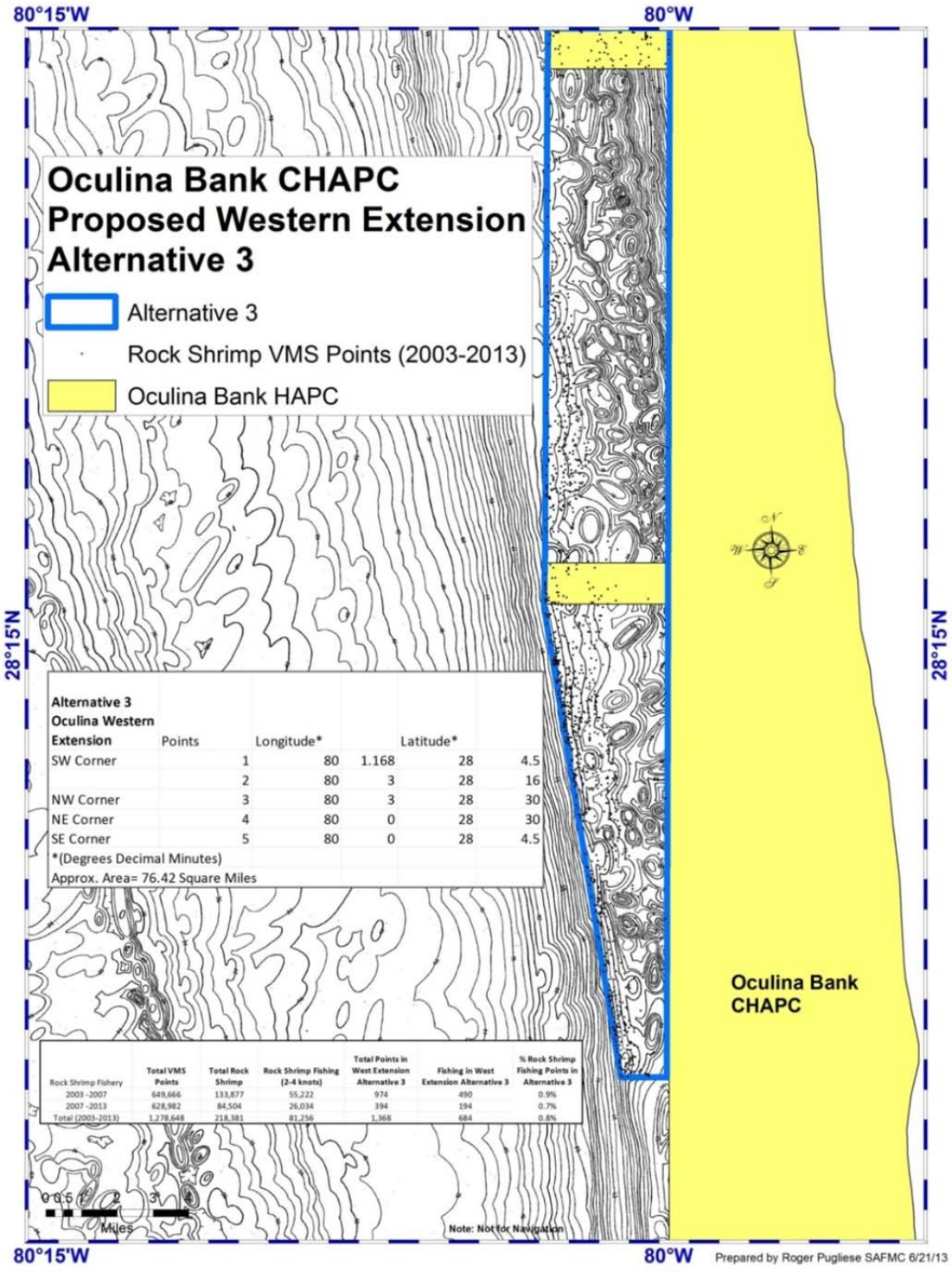

Figure S-7. Action 1, Preferred Alternative 3. Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Western Extension and Rock Shrimp VMS (2003-2013).

Summary of Effects

Biological: Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)** gears that are currently prohibited in the existing Oculina Bank HAPC would continue to be prohibited. Prohibited gear within the Oculina HAPC includes bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap as well as the use of an anchor, anchor and chain, or grapple and chain. Within the Oculina Bank HAPC, fishing for or possessing rock shrimp or *Oculina* coral is also prohibited. **Alternative 2** and associated **sub-alternatives** and **Preferred Alternative 3** propose increasing the size of the Oculina Bank HAPC and extending the prohibitions to a larger area. Therefore, as the size of the Oculina Bank HAPC is increased, the biological benefits would increase for coral resources in the area, including *Oculina* coral; the species that use the bottom substrate as habitat; and the rock shrimp populations in the HAPC. Further, biological benefits would be expected for snapper grouper species in the proposed areas since fishing for snapper grouper species while at anchor or with bottom longline would be prohibited. These activities would not have a direct biological impact on dolphin wahoo or coastal migratory pelagic species as gear used to target these species does not impact bottom habitat and fishing for those species would be allowed in the expanded area. The golden crab fishery operates within allowable gear areas, which are not located in the proposed Oculina Bank HAPC.

Economic: Alternative 1 (No Action) would not expand the boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC and therefore, would not be expected to have any direct or indirect positive economic effects associated with expansion of this HAPC. Within the expanded areas of the Oculina Bank HAPC proposed in **Alternatives 2** and **3 (Preferred)**, certain gears (identified above) would be prohibited by all fishing vessels. As a result, various commercial fisheries could experience long-term direct negative effects from potential loss of habitat. The tradeoff for protecting additional habitat under the various sub-alternatives under **Alternative 2** (including **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b**) and **Preferred Alternative 3** is that expansion of the Oculina Bank HAPC may result in short-term direct negative economic effects on the rock shrimp and snapper-grouper fisheries.

For the rock shrimp fishery, **Sub-Alternative 2a** would be expected to result in the greatest short-term reduction in ex-vessel revenue, $208,410 (2012 dollars), followed by **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b** ($159,149), and **Preferred Alternative 3** ($30,314). **Sub-Alternative 2a** would have a greater direct negative economic effect than would **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b** or **Preferred Alternative 3**. The combined direct short-term negative economic effect of **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b** and **Preferred Alternative 3** would be an expected reduction in revenue of $189,463 (2012 dollars). Over time, the habitat protected because of **Sub-Alternative 2a**, **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b**, and **Preferred Alternative 3** would be expected to yield higher biomass of rock shrimp and other species.

Reliable estimates of the amount of effort or harvest by the recreational sector for the areas affected by **Sub-Alternative 2a**, **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b**, or **Preferred Alternative 3** are not available. However, any potential reduction in fishing opportunities and harvest are likely to be small because the proposed closed areas are quite small and there is very little fishing activity in the areas based on for-hire estimates. Any inconvenience recreational fishermen may

experience from any of the proposed expansions of the Oculina Bank HAPC could likely be mitigated by fishing in other areas.

Social: Alternative 1 (No Action) would have minimal social effects because the fleet is already harvesting in open areas and prohibited from working in the closed areas. **Alternative 2** (and **sub-alternatives**) and **Preferred Alternative 3** would impact the rock shrimp fleet, royal red shrimp fleet, and possibly the snapper grouper fishery by closing some historic, present and potential future fishing grounds. Additionally, if a transit provision is not established, travel costs could negatively affect some operations. If the cost to travel to or from the fishing grounds is too high due to expanded closed areas under **Alternative 2** (and **sub-alternatives**) and **Preferred Alternative 3**, a business may choose to no longer participate in the rock shrimp fishery. The size and the location of the closed areas are the two most significant factors that would be expected to negatively impact fishermen. Larger areas (such as **Sub-Alternative 2a**) could have more impact than smaller proposed areas (such as **Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b**) if the location is in an area where harvest is occurring.

Administrative: Administrative impacts would be incurred through the rule making process, outreach and enforcement. The impacts associated with enforcement would differ between the alternatives based on the size of the closed area. It is expected the larger the expansion of the HAPC, the more enforcement will be needed. Most of the administrative impacts associated with these alternatives relate to at-sea enforcement.

Fishing impacts using the percentage of rock shrimp fishing points included in the proposed alternatives are summarized below in **Tables S-1** and **S-2**.

Table S-1. Fishing Associated with Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Northern Extension Alternative 2a and Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b (Rock Shrimp VMS: 2003-2013).

Rock Shrimp Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Rock Shrimp	Rock Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Sub-Alternative 2a	Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2a	% Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2a
2003 -2007	649,666	133,877	55,222	9,815	3,522	6.4%
2007 -2013	628,982	84,504	26,034	4,102	953	3.7%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	218,381	81,256	13,917	4,475	5.5%
Rock Shrimp Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Rock Shrimp	Rock Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Sub-Alternative 2b	Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2b	% Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Sub-Alternative 2b
2003 -2007	649,666	133,877	55,222	8,511	2,705	4.9%
2007 -2013	628,982	84,504	26,034	3,486	692	2.7%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	218,381	81,256	11,997	3,397	4.2%

Table S-2. Fishing Associated with Oculina Bank HAPC Proposed Western Extension Preferred Alternative 3 (Rock Shrimp VMS: 2003-2013).

Rock Shrimp Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Rock Shrimp	Rock Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in West Extension Alternative 3	Fishing in West Extension Alternative 3	% Rock Shrimp Fishing Points in Alternative 3
2003 -2007	649,666	133,877	55,222	974	490	0.9%
2007 -2013	628,982	84,504	26,034	394	194	0.7%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	218,381	81,256	1,368	684	0.8%

AP Recommendations for Action 1

Coral and Habitat Advisory Panels (APs):
The Coral and Habitat APs reaffirmed their recommendations for preferred alternatives during their joint AP session in May 2013. The Coral and Habitat APs recommend Alternative 2a as preferred for Action 1. The Coral AP noted that establishing a northern extension along the 70-100 meter boundaries would incorporate most of the known deepwater coral habitat presumed to occur in the region. This alternative was developed during the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting in October 2012.

The APs also reaffirmed their original recommendation for a preferred alternative for a western extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC during their May 2013 meeting. The APs recommend Alternative 3 as a preferred under Action 1. The recommendation was based on recent discoveries that indicate *Oculina* coral mounds and hard-bottom habitat exist to the west of the current boundary, primarily between the two satellite areas.

Deepwater Shrimp AP:
The Deepwater Shrimp AP developed new recommendations for Action 1 during their May 2013 meeting that tweak the northern extension identified in Sub-Alternative 2a and also the western extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC identified in Alternative 3. The recent Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendations revise recommendations developed during their joint AP meeting (with the Coral AP) in October 2012. The revised recommendation for a northern extension was developed to further reduce fishery impacts along the southeast and southwest boundaries in a proposed northern extension where traditional fishing activity occurs. Sub-alternative 2b follows more closely the rock shrimp trawl track data and not a specific depth contour. The Council selected the Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendations as an alternative (Sub-Alternative 2b) under Action 1 at the June 2013 Council meeting, and chose this as their preferred alternative for a northern expansion of the Oculina Bank HAPC.

Snapper Grouper AP:
The Snapper Grouper AP discussed the measures in Coral Amendment 8 during their April and November 2012 meetings. Members of the AP expressed concern that a northern extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC may compromise historical snapper grouper fishing ground. The AP discussed the common practice of hook and line fishermen anchoring and drifting in waters surrounding the Steeples region in waters north of Ponce Inlet, Florida. The AP expressed concern that Action 1 alternatives that consider a northern expansion of the Oculina Bank HAPC's western boundary inshore of 60 meters would impact snapper grouper vessels anchoring in the area.

Scientific and Statistical Committee:
At their April 2013 meeting, the SSC reviewed Coral Amendment 8. The SSC has offered to be of any assistance in reviewing additional analyses (such as the Socio-Economic analysis) via e-mail or other practical means prior to the Council's final approval. By consensus, the SSC agreed that the proposed actions that modify the CHAPCs succeed in addressing the purpose and need of Coral Amendment 8 and, therefore, actions in Coral Amendment 8 are warranted to protect coral in these areas.

Public Hearing comments for Action 1

Modification of Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b should be considered.
2 support Preferred Sub-Alternative 2b.
1 does not support Alternative 2 (and sub-alternatives).
1 comment against the northern boundary delineation for Preferred Sub-Alternative 2 and annexing hard bottom features inshore of 70 meters.
Preferred Alternative 3 should be moved further east to eliminate a productive area from 2012 and should be considered as a separate action.
1 comment supports Preferred Alternative 3.
1 comment noted the Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendation for this area should be considered (shifts western boundary further east to eliminate trawl tracks).

Action 2. Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not implement a transit provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC. Currently, possession of rock shrimp in or from the area on board a fishing vessel is prohibited.

Alternative 2. Allow for transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC. When transiting the Oculina Bank, gear must be stowed in accordance with CFR Section 622.183(a)(1)(ii). Vessels must maintain a minimum speed of 5 knots while in transit through the Oculina HAPC. In the event minimal speed is not sustainable, vessel must communicate to appropriate contact.

Preferred Alternative 3. Allow for transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC with possession of rock shrimp on board. When transiting through the HAPC, vessels must maintain a minimum speed of not less than 5 knots, determined by a ping rage acceptable by law enforcement (i.e. 5 minutes), with gear appropriately stowed (stowed is defined as doors and nets out of water).

Proposed Actions in Coral Amendment 8

1. Expand Boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC
2. **Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC**
3. Expand Boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC
4. Expand Boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

Summary of Effects

Biological: The establishment of a transit provision would not result in biological effects within the Oculina Bank HAPC. A transit provision has been established in the South Atlantic for other fisheries through closed areas to allow for easier access to traditional fishing grounds. Establishing a transit provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC may have negative biological benefits for the shrimp stocks that are on the eastern side of Oculina Bank HAPC as fishing vessels would have easier access to them. Without a transit provision, the trip to those fishing grounds would be long and cost prohibitive to fishermen, providing an indirect protection to those shrimp populations. A transit provision for the dolphin and wahoo, coastal migratory pelagics, snapper grouper and golden crab fisheries is not needed as the regulations do not currently prevent them from transiting the area.

Economic: The intent of **Action 2** is to lessen the economic effects on rock shrimp fishermen by allowing transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC. By not allowing shortest route of access, **Alternative 1 (No Action)** would be expected to result in increased fuel and other trip costs on vessels as they travel to and from the rock shrimp fishing grounds.

Alternative 2 and **Preferred Alternative 3** would allow fishermen to transit the Oculina Bank HAPC, thereby eliminating the costs that would occur under **Alternative 1**. Therefore, both **Alternative 2** and **Preferred Alternative 3** would provide positive, direct economic benefits to fishermen because fishermen will be able to use less fuel and take less time to get to their fishing grounds, assuming that stowing their gear is feasible and complying with VMS regulations are

not prohibitive. **Preferred Alternative 3** would require that doors and nets be out of the water (not disconnected and secured as is the case in **Alternative 2**), which would be less onerous than the stowing requirements of **Alternative 2**. **Preferred Alternative 3** would also require a higher VMS ping rate, which may result in increased costs to purchase a new VMS unit for vessels whose current VMS unit cannot ping at the higher rate.

Currently, 79 vessels in the rock shrimp fleet have a VMS unit. Of those vessels, 22 have older units purchased when the fishery was required to use VMS units in 2003. Those units would need to be upgraded under **Preferred Alternative 3**. None of these replacement units would be eligible for reimbursement by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Office of Law Enforcement VMS fund. The 22 vessels needing to upgrade their units would have to pay for the installation, maintenance and increased communications charges associated with having a VMS. Assuming all 22 vessels needing to upgrade their units choose the lowest priced Thrane unit at $2,495 each, the cost of the units is expected to be $54,890. The additional cost of installation would be approximately $6,600, for a total minimum cost of $61,490 to upgrade to the least expensive necessary hardware. The total cost of hardware and software upgrades required to allow transit under **Preferred Alternative 3** for all vessels in the fleet is estimated to be $72,890.

Some, if not all, of the increased cost of upgrading hardware and software, plus increased communications charges to transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC would be offset by not being required to transit around the HAPC to get to fishing grounds. Allowing transit should increase the amount of time on a trip spent fishing, as well as provide savings on fuel and other vessel maintenance costs.

Social: If additional closed areas are established under **Action 1,** some negative impacts on the fishing vessels and crew may be reduced with a transit provision. The transit provision in **Alternative 2** and **Preferred Alternative 3** would be beneficial to rock shrimp vessels by reducing the risk of negative impacts due to increased travel time and costs when traveling around a closed area to access outer fishing grounds. **Preferred Alternative 3** would be expected to help reduce negative impacts from **Action 1** on individual fishermen, fishing businesses and the communities of Mayport and Titusville, FL, two communities with the highest regional landings of deepwater shrimp where the local economies are more engaged and reliant on commercial fishing, including participation in the royal red and rock shrimp fisheries.

Administrative: There would be minor administrative impacts associated with a transit provision through Oculina Bank HAPC. Administrative impacts associated with enforcement would be greatest for the action alternatives. If modifications are made to the transit regulations, administrative impacts would increase on the agency during the development and implementation phase. **Preferred Alternative 3** would require the vessel to maintain a speed of 5 knots as indicated by an increased ping rate of the VMS. Depending on the frequency of transit, this might lead to a slight increase in the impacts associated with monitoring of VMS by law enforcement.

AP Recommendations for Action 2

Coral and Habitat APs:
During the joint meeting with the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs in October 2012, the Coral AP did not have objections to the transit provision recommendation developed by the Deepwater Shrimp AP. At their November 2012 meeting, the Habitat AP followed suit with no objections to such a provision. The APs noted in their discussion that it was outside of the purview of their charge to the Council to discuss specifications identified in a transit provision.

Deepwater Shrimp AP:
The Deepwater Shrimp AP developed a revised recommendation during their May 2013 meeting for a transit provision through Oculina Bank HAPC. Revisions to Alternative 3 were made during the meeting to reduce the minimum speed requirement from 6 to 5 knots and eliminate the call-in specification in the event of mechanical failure or emergency because the practice of vessels communicating to the appropriate contact when necessary currently exists in the regulations and an additional requirement stipulating this provision is not necessary. The AP noted the turbulent conditions that can be present around and within the Oculina Bank HAPC and cited potential safety at sea concerns when transiting at knots greater than 5 as a minimum speed. The Council revised Alternative 3 accordingly and chose this as their preferred in June 2013.

Public Hearing comments for Action 2
4 comments said vessel owners required to upgrade VMS units should be eligible for reimbursement funds.
3 support Preferred Alternative 3.
2 comments said VMS points do not reflect true value of that particular fishing area.

Action 3. Expand boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not expand the boundaries of the Stetson-Miami CHAPC.

The existing Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC is delineated by the coordinates identified in CFR §622.224(c)(1)(iii).

Alternative 2. Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC western extension in a manner that releases the flatbottom region to the extent possible while maintaining protection of coral habitat (**Figure S-8**). Alternative 2 = 490 square miles.

Proposed Actions in Coral Amendment 8

1. Expand Boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC
2. Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC
3. **Expand Boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC**
4. Expand Boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

Alternative 3. Modify the Coral AP recommendation for expanding the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC to include area of mapped habitat within the expansion, and exclude areas of royal red fishery activity based on VMS data (**Figure S-9**). Alternative 3 = 653 square miles.

IPT member recommendation to re-word **Alternative 2**:
Alternative 2. *Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC western extension in a manner that maintains protection for the coral habitat but allows for bottom tending gear to be used in the flatbottom region. (**Figure S-7**). Alternative 2 = 490 square miles.*

Preferred Alternative 4. The recommendation is a back-up preferred Alternative for the proposed extension of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC. The back-up recommendation includes Alternative 2 as proposed with inclusion of a new Shrimp Fishery Access Area for drift-haul back as represented in **Figure S-10**. With the inclusion of a new Shrimp Fishery Access Area in Alternative 2, royal red shrimp fishing, or VMS points (2-4 knots) (2003-2013) would be further reduced to 0.1% from 0.7% for Alternative 2 alone **(Figure S-10)**. Alternative 4 = 490 square miles.

IPT recommendation for language revisions to **Preferred Alternative 4**:
Preferred Alternative 4. *Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC western extension in a manner that releases the flatbottom region to the extent possible while maintaining protection of coral habitat. Allow for a Shrimp Fishery Access Area to be used as a gear haul back/drift zone as shown in **Figure S-10**. Alternative 4 = 490 square miles.*

Note: A comparison of the alternatives is shown in **Figure S-11**.

Note: Coordinates for the CHAPC extension alternatives are found in **Appendix M.**

Action 3 DECISIONS:

1. Do you want to accept the IPT recommendation for wording change to Preferred Alternative 4?

IPT Recommendation:
Preferred Alternative 4. *Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC western extension in a manner that releases the flatbottom region to the extent possible while maintaining protection of coral habitat. Allow for a Shrimp Fishery Access Area to be used as a gear haul back/drift zone as shown in* ***Figure S-10****. Alternative 4 = 490 square miles.*

Note: The Committee Chairman reviewed the IPT recommended language revision prior to the public hearings. With his approval, the IPT recommendation was presented during the public hearings as a possible revision to Alternative 4.

2. Following the public hearings, an IPT member recommended a rewording of Alternative 2. Do you want to accept the wording change to Alternative 2?

IPT member recommendation:
Alternative 2. *Modify the southern southeast boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC western extension in a manner that maintains protection for the coral habitat but allows for bottom tending gear to be used in the flatbottom region. (****Figure S-7****). Alternative 2 = 490 square miles.*

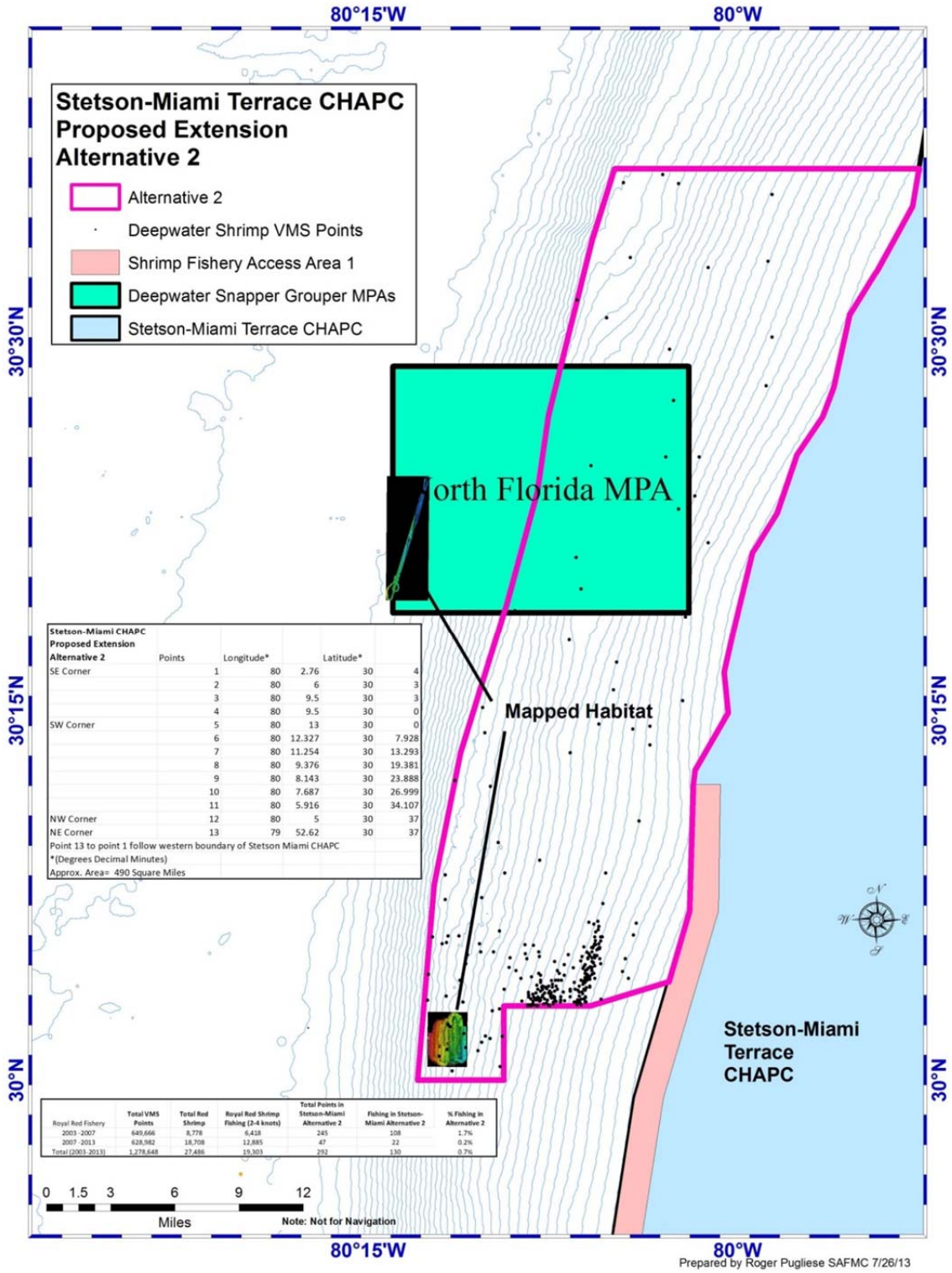

Figure S-8. Action 3, Alternative 2. Proposed Western Extension of Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC Mapped Habitat and Rock Shrimp VMS (2003-2013).

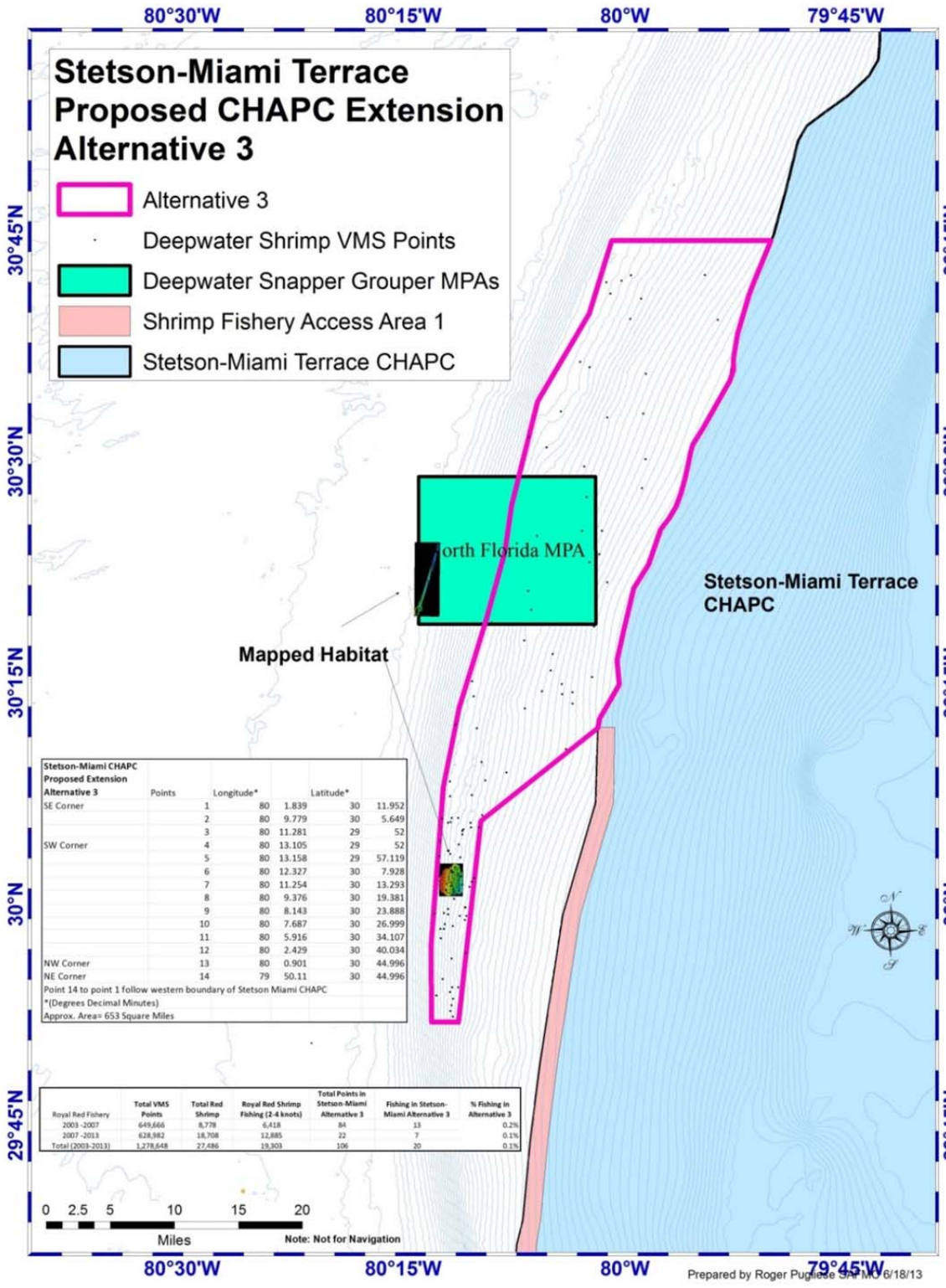

Figure S-9. Action 3, Alternative 3. Proposed Western Extension of Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC Mapped Habitat and Rock Shrimp VMS (2003-2013).

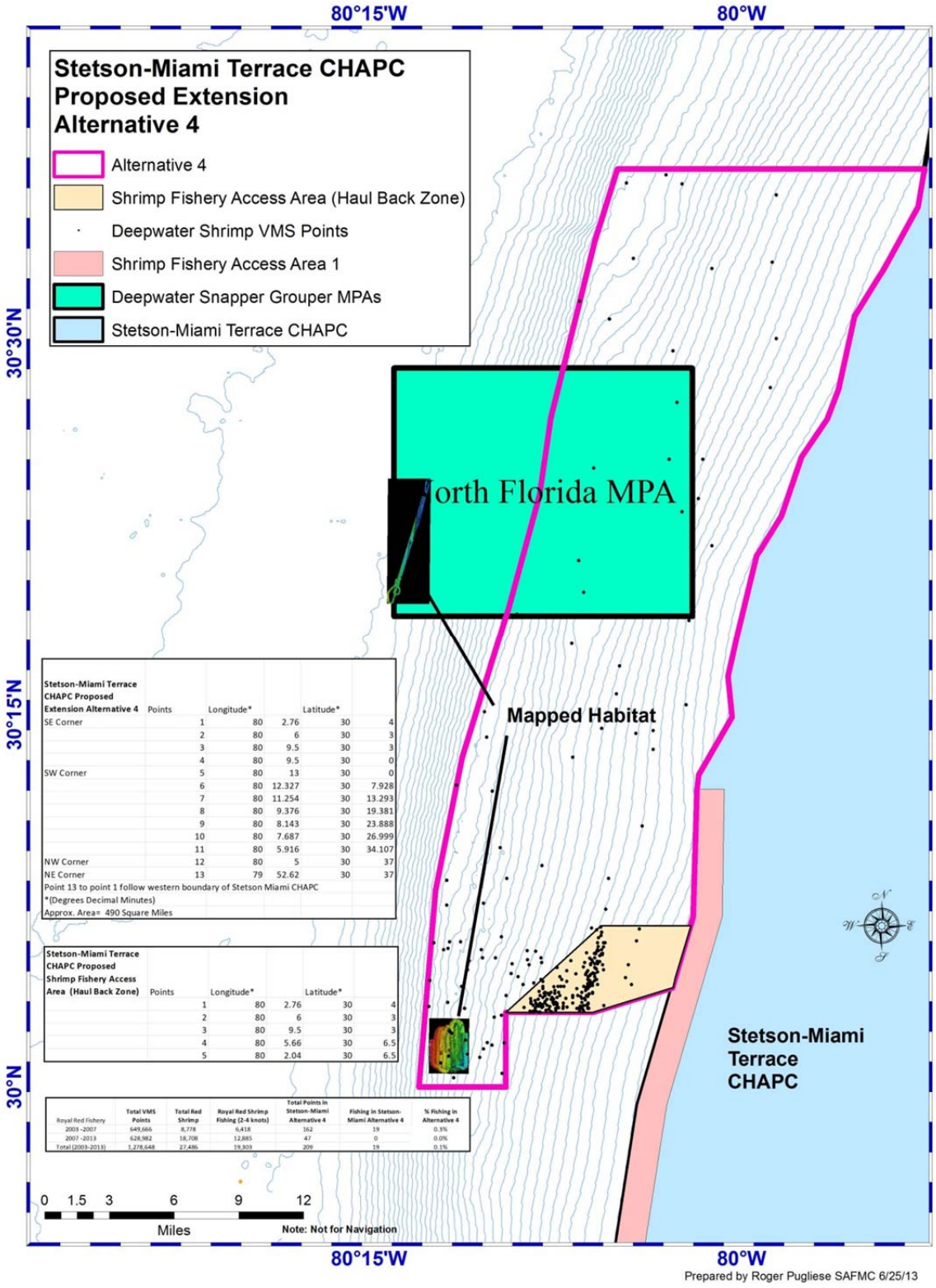

Figure S-10. Action 3, Preferred Alternative 4. Proposed Extension of Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC Mapped Habitat and Rock Shrimp VMS (2003-2013).

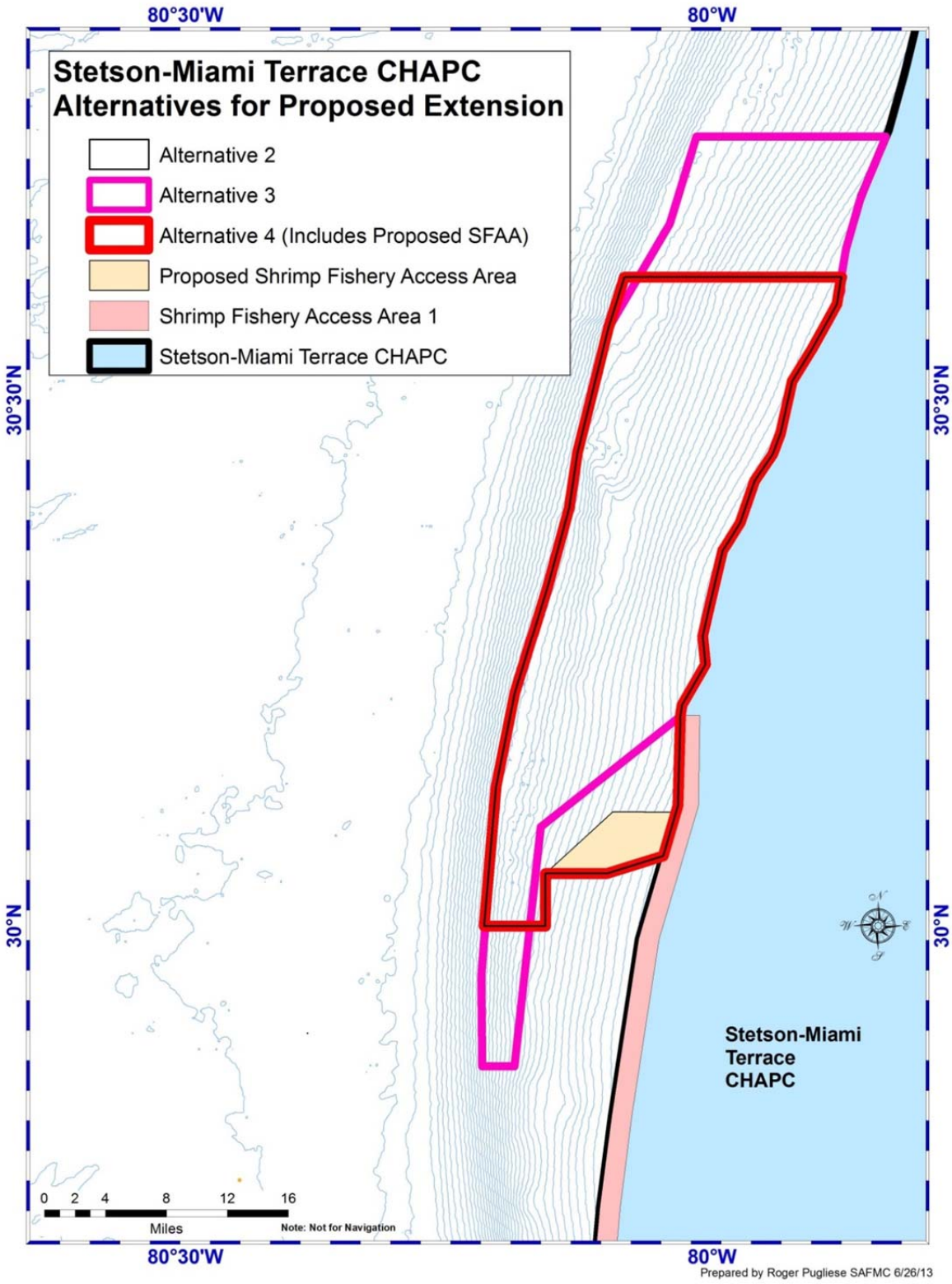

Figure S-11. Comparison of Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 (including Proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area) for the Proposed Western Extension of the Stetson-Miami-Terrace CHAPC.

Summary of Effects

Biological: Alternative 2 and **Alternative 3** would be expected to result in positive biological impacts to the deepwater coral habitat in these areas as it would extend the prohibitions on bottom damaging gear. Under these alternatives, habitats within the Stetson-Miami Terrace proposed CHAPC expansion would be protected from damaging fishing gear such as bottom longline, anchoring, trawling (bottom and mid-water) which would have positive biological impacts on the species in the area. None of the alternatives would have a biological impact on dolphin wahoo or coastal migratory pelagic species as the typical gear used for these species does not impact bottom habitat. Fishing for snapper grouper species would be allowed as long as there was no use of anchoring or bottom longline gear. **Preferred Alternative 4** is similar to **Alternative 2**, however, **Preferred Alternative 4** would also provide the royal red shrimp fishermen a zone within which they can haul back gear without drifting into an area where their gear is prohibited. This haul back zone may encourage fishermen to fish in the area which could result in a slightly negative impact on the royal red populations. However, fishing effort in the area is historically low and the impact is not expected to be great.

Economic: The royal red shrimp fishery is known to operate in the proposed Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC expansion. Based on the VMS points as a percent of fishing that occurred in the alternative areas, Action 3 will result in some minor loss of ex-vessel revenue to royal red shrimp fishermen. **Alternative 2** is expected to result in average annual losses of $1,752. **Alternative 3** would result in expected average annual losses of $557. Like **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, **Preferred Alternative 4**, which would allow for a gear haul back and drift zone, would not be expected to have any direct short-term economic effects.

Social: Alternative 1 (No Action) would likely have minimal social effects (negative and positive) because this would maintain access to shrimp and snapper grouper harvest areas that would be reduced under **Alternative 2** or **Alternative 3**. Because **Preferred Alternative 4** would also establish a Shrimp Fishery Access Area, based on information of fishing grounds for royal red shrimp vessels, negative impacts on the deepwater shrimp fleets and associated businesses and communities would be reduced or removed. The expected economic impacts under **Alternatives 2** and **3** would likely be avoided with the establishment of the Shrimp Fishery Access Area in **Preferred Alternative 4**, which would also contribute to minimized impacts on the fishermen, businesses and associated communities.

Administrative: The expansion of the Stetson Miami Terrace CHAPC (**Alternative 2-Preferred Alternative 4**) would have minimal administrative impacts. Administrative impacts would be incurred through the rule making process, outreach and enforcement. The administrative impacts would differ between the alternatives in the amount of area they cover. It is expected the larger the expansion of the CHAPC the more enforcement would be needed. Most of the administrative impacts associated with these alternatives relate to at-sea enforcement.

Fishing impacts using the percentage of royal red shrimp fishing points included in the proposed alternatives are summarized below in **Table S-3**.

Table S-3. Fishing Associated with Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 (Preferred) (Deepwater Shrimp VMS: 2003-2013).

Royal Red Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Red Shrimp	Royal Red Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Stetson-Miami Alternative 2	Fishing in Stetson-Miami Alternative 2	% Fishing in Alternative 2
2003 -2007	649,666	8,778	6,418	245	108	1.7%
2007 -2013	628,982	18,708	12,885	47	22	0.2%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	27,486	19,303	292	130	0.7%
Royal Red Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Red Shrimp	Royal Red Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Stetson-Miami Alternative 3	Fishing in Stetson-Miami Alternative 3	% Fishing in Alternative 3
2003 -2007	649,666	8,778	6,418	84	13	0.2%
2007 -2013	628,982	18,708	12,885	22	7	0.1%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	27,486	19,303	106	20	0.1%
Royal Red Fishery	Total VMS Points	Total Red Shrimp	Royal Red Shrimp Fishing (2-4 knots)	Total Points in Stetson-Miami Alternative 4	Fishing in Stetson-Miami Alternative 4	% Fishing in Alternative 4
2003 -2007	649,666	8,778	6,418	162	19	0.3%
2007 -2013	628,982	18,708	12,885	47	0	0.0%
Total (2003-2013)	1,278,648	27,486	19,303	209	19	0.1%

AP Recommendations for Action 3

Coral and Habitat APs:
During their May 2013 joint AP session, the Coral and Habitat APs reaffirmed their recommendation for Alternative 2 under Action 3 as preferred. This alternative was developed after discussions during the joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting in October 2012. During their joint meeting, the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs discussed the Coral AP's original recommendation for extending the western boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC. The Deepwater Shrimp AP noted that a portion of the proposed southern extension is productive sand bottom for royal red shrimp. As a result of this discussion, the Coral AP recommended modifying their preferred option for this area to minimize this portion of the southern boundary that is productive royal red sandy bottom within their previously recommended extension. The Habitat AP reviewed the revised Alternative 2 during their November 2012 AP meeting and also endorsed this as a preferred alternative at that time.

Deepwater Shrimp AP:
During their May 2013 meeting, the Deepwater Shrimp AP revised their recommendation for a preferred alternative to Alternative 3 under Action 3. Previously, the AP recommended Alternative 2 as a preferred alternative for the Council's consideration. As a result of discussions during their May 2013 meeting, the AP endorsed an additional alternative should the Council not consider Alternative 3 as a preferred. The AP's secondary preferred recommendation is to modify Alternative 2 to include a Shrimp Fishery Access Area where the VMS points are concentrated in the proposed southern extension (the access area would allow vessels the capability to drift into the CHAPC, haul-back their gear and turn around). The Council accepted the AP's recommendation for a modification of Alternative 2, which is reflective in Alternative 4, and has chosen this as their preferred alternative.

Public Hearing comments for Action 3
3 support Preferred Alternative 4.
1 comment letter indicated an interest in expanding the Fishery Access Areas for golden crab in the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC.

Action 4. Expand boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC

Alternative 1 (No Action). Do not modify the boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC.

The existing Cape Lookout CHAPC 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"

Proposed Actions in Coral Amendment 8

1. Expand Boundaries of the Oculina Bank HAPC
2. Implement a Transit Provision through the Oculina Bank HAPC
3. Expand Boundaries of the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC
4. **Expand Boundaries of the Cape Lookout CHAPC**

Preferred Alternative 2. Extend the northern boundary to encompass the area identified by the following coordinates (**Figure S-12**) (Alternative 2 = 10 square miles):

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'

Note: Coordinates for the CHAPC extension alternatives are found in **Appendix M**.

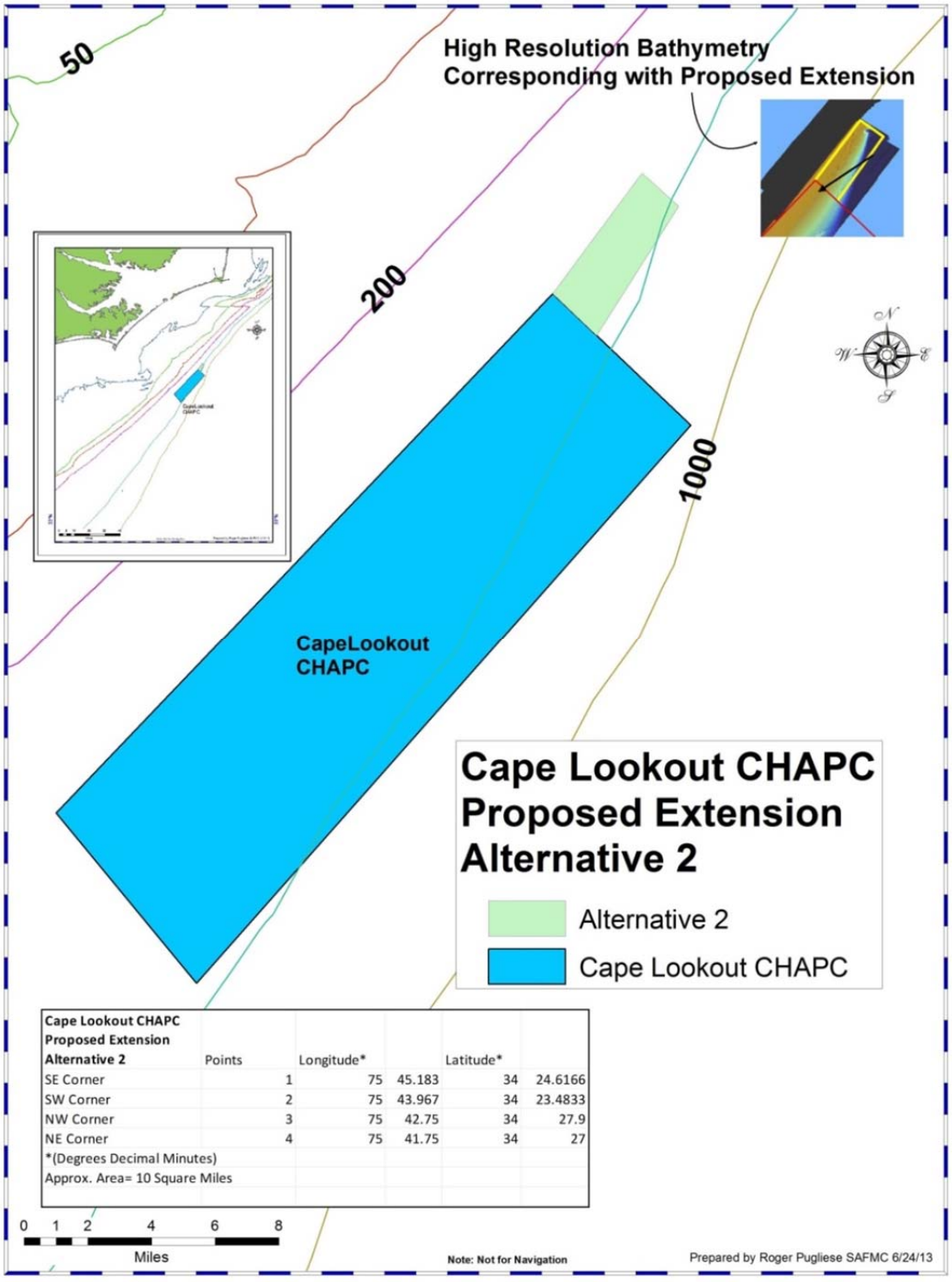

Figure S-12. Action 4, Preferred Alternative 2. Cape Lookout CHAPC Proposed Extension and Mapped Habitat.

Summary of Effects

Biological: Under **Alternative 1 (No Action)**, the same gear prohibitions within the CHAPC would apply in the expanded area. **Preferred Alternative 2** proposes to expand the original Cape Lookout CHAPC along the northern boundary by approximately 10 square miles. This expansion would benefit important deepwater coral ecosystems that have been identified in the area. The specific coordinates have been proposed based on new information of occurrence of deepwater *Lophelia* corals in the area. **Preferred Alternative 2** would not have biological impacts on dolphin wahoo or coastal migratory pelagic species as the typical gear used for these species does not impact bottom habitat. Fishing for snapper grouper species would be allowed under **Preferred Alternative 2** as long as there was no anchoring or use of bottom longline gear. However, fishing for snapper grouper species in the proposed expansion area is uncommon and little biological impact on those species is expected. Fishing for deepwater shrimp species does not occur within the proposed area. The golden crab fishery operates within allowable gear areas, which are not affected by the proposed expansion of the Cape Lookout CHAPC.

Economic: Alternative 1 (No Action) would likely have minimal economic effects because this would maintain access to current harvest areas. Because the proposed extension of the Cape Lookout CHAPC under **Preferred Alternative 2** is a relatively small area, the proposed expansion would be expected to have minimal direct negative economic effects particularly on the snapper grouper fleet or other fleets. No information is available on fishing activity specifically in this area. Species that tend to prefer this habitat and nearby environments include the deep-water complexes. However, because the affected area is so small and there are other areas nearby where similar fishing activity will be allowed, the direct negative economic effects of **Preferred Alternative 2** are expected to be minimal.

Social: Alternative 1 (No Action) would likely have minimal negative social effects because no current or potential fishing grounds would be closed. The proposed extension of the Cape Lookout CHAPC under **Preferred Alternative 2** could have negative social effects on the royal red and rock shrimp fleet if historic fishing grounds are no longer available, or if the closed area affected travel to and from harvest areas. The small size of the expansion proposed under **Preferred Alternative 2** would also be expected to result in less social impact than a larger area.

Administrative: The expansion of the Cape Lookout CHAPC (**Preferred Alternative 2**) would have a minimal administrative impact. Administrative impacts would be felt through the rule making process, outreach and enforcement. It is expected the larger the expansion of the Cape Lookout CHAPC the more enforcement would be needed.

AP Recommendations for Action 4

Coral and Habitat APs:
The Coral and Habitat APs have recommended Alternative 2 as preferred. During their May 2013 joint AP meeting, they reaffirmed their recommendation for this alternative as preferred. This recommendation was developed during the Coral AP meeting in October 2011 as a result of recent multibeam data and observations of *Lophelia* habitat in an area north of the existing CHAPC.

Deepwater Shrimp AP:
The AP does not have a recommendation for the region identified in Action 4.

Public Hearing comments for Action 4
Few comments on Action 4.
1 comment supports Preferred Alternative 2.

Other Items to Address:

1. Does the Committee want to recommend the Council approve Coral Amendment 8 for Secretarial Review and provide editorial license to Council staff and the Council Chairman?

   Option for Motions:

   Option 1. APPROVE CORAL AMENDMENT 8 FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND GIVE STAFF/CHAIRMAN EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES.

   Option 2. DO NOT APPROVE CORAL AMENDMENT 8 FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW.

2. Does the Committee want to recommend the Council approve the codified text for Coral Amendment 8?

   Option for Motions:

   Option 1. APPROVE THE CODIFED TEXT FOR CORAL AMENDMENT 8 AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE AND GIVE STAFF/CHAIRMAN EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES TO THE CODIFED TEXT AND THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORITY TO DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE.

   Option 2. DO NOT APPROVE THE CODIFIED TEXT FOR CORAL AMENDMENT 8.