

OVERVIEW

Ecosystem-Based Management Committee Meeting

December 8, 2009
Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel
2717 W Fort Macon Road
Atlantic Beach, NC

The Ecosystem-Based Management Committee will: (A) receive an update on actions included in Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CE-BA 2); (B) review SSC recommendations on MSY, ABC and OFL for octocorals, etc.; (C) provide guidance to staff on actions and alternatives for analysis; (D) receive a briefing on the Surveillance and Enforcement in Remote Marine Protected Areas (SERMA) workshop; (E) receive an update on the Coral Reef Conservation Program FY2010 proposal and (F) receive an update on ecosystem coordination activities.

Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2

The South Atlantic octocoral fishery takes place almost exclusively in Florida state waters but it is managed under the Coral FMP. The quota for federal waters, established jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, is 50,000 colonies. Florida places no commercial trip limits on the harvest of octocorals in state waters until the federal quota is met. Therefore, the commercial harvest of octocorals in state waters is essentially unlimited since the federal quota has never been met and Florida has not adopted consistent regulations. The Coral Advisory Panel met in September 2009 and discussed recommendations for MSY, ABC, OFL and ACL based on harvest data for 2000-2008. Those recommendations were included in the Options Paper for Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Management 2 (CE-BA 2) and reviewed at the September Council meeting. The SSC will review those recommendations at the December 2009 meeting and provide feedback to the Council. An MSY value was requested from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center but has not yet been provided. The Council's considerations for this fishery also include setting ACL=0 for octocorals and only allowing harvest in federal waters via the existing Live Rock Aquaculture program and transferring management authority to the state.

The CE-BA 2 options paper includes an action to allow harvest of the exotic stony coral *Tubastrea coccinea* (orange cup coral). Consideration for this action was requested by the Coral AP. Marine life harvesters in Florida have already approached the state to ask for permission to harvest this species. However, even though this species is non-native, its scientific classification places it under regulation by the FWC in 68B-42. The state does not want to treat this species any different than the native ones because (1) it is a stony coral and harvest of stony corals is prohibited under state regulations and there are

no exceptions in rule for non-native species, and (2) because it would require law enforcement officers to know the difference between all of the native species and this exotic species.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION:

- Consider SSC recommendations for actions in CE-BA 2
- Provide guidance to staff on octocoral actions and alternatives for analysis
- Provide guidance to staff on orange cup coral action

Updates

- A. Surveillance and Enforcement in Remote Maritime Areas (SERMA) Workshop
The Committee will receive a short summary of the workshop that took place in Silver Spring, MD on November 2 – 4, 2009. The workshop was convened by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute in partnership with NOAA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Discussions focused around information contained in a draft Technical Paper. The document reviews and evaluates a range of existing technological options for the surveillance of remote marine managed areas. Some of these technologies are currently in use by fisheries management agencies; some are currently the purview of groups like the military or security agencies; and others have yet to be explored for such purposes. The main focus was on monitoring of commercial fishing activities (regulated or otherwise) and vessel-based pollution.
- B. Deepwater Coral Teacher Workshop
A one-day workshop was held at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh on Saturday, November 7. The workshop, funded by NOAA in partnership with the museum, was intended to inform teachers of issues pertaining to the biology and ecology of deepwater coral ecosystems as well as management and conservation efforts in the region. Teachers received presentations, participated in hands-on activities and received lesson plans and materials to be used in the classroom.
- C. Research cruise to Cape Lookout deepwater CHAPC
A research cruise aboard the R/V *Cape Hatteras* will take place December 1-9, 2009 off the North Carolina coast. Led by Dr. Steve Ross of the University of NC at Wilmington and partly funded by NOAA, the mission will focus on deployment of two benthic landers and one mooring within the Cape Lookout CHAPC. The landers, on loan from Dutch researchers, were deployed in the Gulf of Mexico in 2008 and were recovered earlier this year. These landers collect long-term measurements of temperature, salinity, productivity, currents and other oceanographic parameters that will result in a better understanding of the environmental conditions in which deepwater corals thrive. The landers will also record time-lapse video, documenting the behavior of reef-associates and visitors during the time between researchers' visits.

The cruise will also incorporate an education and outreach component, including at-sea education and real-time communication with the public through USGS' DISCOVERE website:

http://fl.biology.usgs.gov/DISCOVERE/cruise_plan_2009.html .

D. SAFMC Coral Proposal for FY2010 funding cycle

Two proposals were received in response to the SAFMC's Request for Proposals distributed in August 2009. One proposal, titled *Assimilation and Mapping of Existing Data Towards Development of a Comprehensive Fishery-Independent Monitoring Program for Reef Fish Populations in the Southeast Florida Region (Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin Counties)*, was submitted by Jerry Ault and colleagues at the University of Miami. They proposed to inventory relevant biological and physical data, assimilate the data and build a geographical information system that will be the basis for the critical analyses necessary to design accurate and precise fishery-independent monitoring in the region.

The second proposal, titled *Optimization of Surveillance and Enforcement in Remote Marine Protected Areas in the South Atlantic Region*, was submitted by the Marine Conservation Biology Institute. This project would review surveillance and enforcement needs for the offshore Marine Protected Areas within the Council's jurisdiction, including: (1) scale of the problem, (2) current monitoring and enforcement strategies, (3) potential for improvement of current methods and (4) description of new and emerging technologies and alternative methods. The proposals were distributed to SAFMC technical staff and the chairs and vice chairs of the Ecosystem-Based Management and Habitat Committees for their review. Based on this input the MCBI proposal was chosen for inclusion in the Council's FY2010 proposal to the Coral Reef Conservation Program. The proposal was submitted on November 2 and a response is anticipated for late winter or early spring.

E. Ecosystem Coordination

Roger Pugliese will provide a summary of recent habitat and ecosystem coordination activities including the South Atlantic Governors' Alliance, the National Habitat Plan and regional Habitat Partnerships, a September TNC Marine Spatial Planning Workshop and IOOS and SECOORA.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: None