

**REPORT OF THE
ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANGEMENT COMMITTEE
Wilmington, North Carolina
December 2, 2008**

The Ecosystem-Based Management Committees met on December 2, 2008 in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Roger Pugliese presented an overview of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan and indicated the document is ready for approval to go to public hearings. The Committee approved the FEP for public hearings (see motion below).

The SSC did not provide any review comments on the FEP or the CE-BA due to the large number of assessments and snapper grouper issues on their agenda. They will have the opportunity to review these documents during the public hearing phase.

Gregg Waugh reviewed the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment. He also reviewed the Coral and Habitat AP recommendations:

1. The Habitat and Coral APs recommended that all of the proposed Coral HAPCs be chosen as the preferred alternative.
2. The APs supported establishment of the Shrimp and Golden Crab allowable fishing areas. The APs did provide some additional recommendations on monitoring the golden crab fishery.
3. The APs recommended no action on the VMS requirement but supported opportunities to develop technologies to ensure compliance and adopt these through the Golden Crab FMP.

Bob Mahood reviewed the Law Enforcement AP comments:

1. Concerns were expressed about the ability to enforce the proposed large closed harvest area with the limited resources available.
2. Closed areas are more enforceable if they are rectangular in shape (as opposed to irregular shapes).
3. The AP supported the use of lat/long boundary lines to delineate the closed area (as opposed to bottom contour lines).
4. It is expected there will be a shift in fishing effort north and south of the closed area that will create other problems.

The Committee took action on the CE-BA and approved the amendment for public hearing (see motion below).

Roger provided a status report on ecosystem coordination in the region through his involvement and participation in the following activities and programs: the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA), the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership (SARP), the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP), the South Atlantic Habitat and Ecosystem Internet Map Server and the South Atlantic Governors Alliance.

Gregg Waugh reviewed the draft list of items for scoping and the timeline. The Committee approved the list and timing (see motion below).

The Committee approved the following motions:

MOTION #1: APPROVE THE FEP FOR PUBLIC HEARING
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION #2: RECOMMEND APPROVING ALTERNATIVE 2 AND ALL
SUBALTERNATIVES AS OUR PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
[NOTE: ALTERNATIVE 2 WOULD ESTABLISH FIVE C-HAPCs]

MOTION #3: AMEND OUR PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR ACTION 3 TO CREATE
ALLOWABLE GOLDEN CRAB FISHING AREAS IN SUB-ALTERNATIVES 2A-2C.
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION #4: ADOPT NO ACTION AT THIS TIME FOR ACTION 4 (VMS) BUT CLEARLY
INDICATE THE COUNCIL'S INTENT TO REVISIT TECHNOLOGY FOR TRACKING
PLACEMENT OF THE GEAR
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION #5: APPROVE THE CE-BA FOR PUBLIC HEARING
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

MOTION #6: TAKE THE ITEMS IDENTIFIED BY CORAL AND HABITAT APS OUT TO
SCOPING
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

In addition, the committee provided the following direction to staff:

A. The GMFMC will have to approve the spiny lobster and coastal migratory pelagics (mackerel) portions of the CE-BA given that the EFH items amend those two joint fishery management plans. The Committee directed staff to work with the Gulf Council and get this on the agenda for their next meeting.

B. The following items are being considered for the next Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment. Scoping meetings will be held during the public hearings for the FEP, CE-BA, and Snapper Grouper Amendment 17 scheduled for January/February 2009 (see list above).

1. Update EFH and EFH-HAPC designations as required by the final rule.
2. Potential modifications to the limited take of octocorals.
3. Potential modifications to the limited take of *Sargassum*.
4. Potential modifications to octocoral reporting.
5. Potential for a lease program for octocoral culture.
6. Potential for allowing the take of the erect forms of *Briareum sp.* and *Erythropodium sp.*

7. Potential for a permit system to harvest the invasive scleractinian coral species *Tubestrea coccinea*.

C. Public hearings are scheduled as follows:

- (1) January 26, 2009 in Charleston, SC
- (2) January 27, 2009 in New Bern, NC
- (3) February 3, 2009 in Key Largo, FL
- (5) February 4, 2009 in Cape Canaveral, FL
- (5) February 5, 2009 in Pooler, GA