SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE
ECOSYSTEM BASED-MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
New Bern, NC
December 7, 2010

The Ecosystem-Based Management Committee met on December 7th, 2010 in New Bern, NC. The Committee discussed changes to the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2, provided guidance to staff on actions and further development of the document prior to Public Hearings. The Committee received a report of the Habitat Advisory Panel's recommendations on Comprehensive Based-Amendment 2. The Committee discussed considering withdrawing the *Sargassum* FMP, however withdrew the consideration. An update was received from the SSC Chair, Dr. Carolyn Belcher, and an update on SAFMC activities pertaining to ecosystem-based management in the region was provided.

The Committee made the following motions:

MOTION #1: ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 1 AS OUR PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 1: Alternative 1. No action. Do not remove octocorals from the FMU under the South Atlantic Coral FMP.

MOTION #2. DELETE THE FOLLOWING LANGAUGE FROM ACTION 1, ALTERNATIVE 3: "REMOVE OCTOCORALS FROM THE FMU"
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 1: Alternative 3. Remove octocorals from the FMU and delegate management of the octocoral fishery to the State of Florida.

MOTION #3. MOVE ACTION 1, ALTERNATIVE 3 TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 1: Alternative 3. Remove octocorals from the FMU and delegate management of the octocoral fishery to the State of Florida.

MOTION #4. ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 2 IN ACTION 2 AS OUR PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 2: Alternative 2. Extend the management boundaries for all octocorals species in the coral FMP to include the GMFMC jurisdiction.

MOTION #5. ACCEPT THE IPT RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO WORDING FOR ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2 AND ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 2 AS OUR PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Action 3: Alternative 1. No action. Do not modify the existing ACL for octocorals in the South Atlantic (ACL = current 50,000 colony quota for South Atlantic and Gulf of MexicoEEZ.)

Action 3: Alternative 2. Modify the existing ACL in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico (ACL = current 50,000 colony quota for South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico EEZ) to include State waters.)

MOTION #6. NOT ACCEPT THE IPT RECOMMENDATION AND KEEP ALTERNATIVE 4 AS A SEPARATE ALTERNATIVE AND CHOOSE ALTERNATIVES 2 AND 3 AS OUR PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES. APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Action 4: Alternative 2. Limit harvest and possession of snapper grouper species (with the use of all non-prohibited fishing gear) in South Carolina's Special Management Zones to the recreational bag limit.

Action 4: Alternative 3. Limit harvest and possession of CMP species (with the use of all nonprohibited fishing gear) in South Carolina's Special Management Zones to the recreational bag limit.

Action 4: Alternative 4. Prohibit use of hand spear and spear guns in South Carolina SMZs.

MOTION #7: REPLACE ALTERNATIVES 2 AND 3 WITH NEW ALTERNATIVE 7 APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

Action 5: Alternative 7. Modify the design specifications of the current sea turtle release gear requirements for all federally permitted snapper grouper vessels with hook and line gear on board to match the specifications described in the NOAA Fisheries Service document entitled "Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release with Minimal Injury." Specific modifications to the existing requirements include (see Alt.7 reference above in 'Unresolved Issues').

Unresolved issue regarding Action 5:

The Committee requested that Protected Resources staff on the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 IPT provide feedback on current alternatives within Action 5 (Modify Sea Turtle Release Gear Requirements for the Snapper Grouper Fishery) to ensure that an appropriate alternative is considered. PR staff recommends Alternative 7 as a preferred option for this Action.

Biological Opinion Requirement:

"NMFS, in cooperation with the SAFMC, must implement sea turtle bycatch release equipment requirements and sea turtle and smalltooth sawfish handling protocols and/or guidelines in the commercial and for-hire permitted South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery. Use of the sea turtle release equipment requirements and sea turtle handling and

release protocols listed in the proposed rule for Atlantic HMS bottom longline fishery (71 FR 15680, March 29, 2006) must be considered. At a minimum, regulations similar to those currently in the proposed rule for the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish fishery must be implemented. Implementation of these requirements and guidelines must occur as soon as operationally feasible and no later than December 31, 2007."

- Alternative 1. No Action. Maintain current sea turtle release gear requirements for the Snapper Grouper fishery in federal waters of the South Atlantic.

PR: From a species standpoint, requiring the full suite of gear (as is currently the case) is best for sea turtles.

- Alternative 4. Require all federally-permitted hook and line vessels with no longline gear onboard to have and use a tool capable of cutting the fishing line and a tool capable of removing a hook from a sea turtle. Require fishermen to follow the sea turtle handling and release guidelines. Fishermen would still be required to comply with all current sea turtle release guidelines.

PR: This alternative is appropriate to include from a NEPA standpoint, but it would not meet the requirements of the Biological Opinion.

- Alternative 5. Require all sea turtle release gear listed under Alternative 1 (No Action) for federally permitted snapper grouper vessels using longline gear, and require [insert specific sea turtle release gear] for federally permitted vessels fishing with hook and line gear.

PR: To remain in compliance with the Biological Opinion, the Council could essentially select whatever gears they wish from the list in the No Action Alternative (and also the new Alt. 7), so long as they are similar to what is in use in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish fishery. From a biological standpoint, the full suite of gears is the most protective of species.

- Alternative 6. Track the same turtle release gear requirements for the Gulf of Mexico, which are dependent upon freeboard heights of 4 feet or less:

  Sub-Alternative 6a. Modify the gear specifications for line cutters, dehookers, and bolt cutters for vessels with freeboard height of 4 feet or less.

  Sub-Alternative 6b. Modify the gear specifications for line cutters, dehookers, and bolt cutters for all federally permitted snapper-grouper vessels.

PR: The Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery generally uses the same sea turtle release gears as are currently in use in the SA, with specific requirements for vessels less than 4 ft freeboard height. Tracking the Gulf's requirements is a reasonable alternative and would also be in compliance with the Biological Opinion.

- New Alternative 7. Modify the design specifications of the current sea turtle release gear requirements for all federally permitted snapper grouper vessels with hook and line gear on board to match the specifications described in the NOAA Fisheries Service document entitled "Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release with Minimal Injury." Specific modifications to the existing requirements include:
  - a long-handled line clipper or cutter,
    - no proposed change
  - a long-handled dehooker for ingested hooks,
    - Hook removal device. The hook removal device should be constructed of ~ 3/16" - 5/16" marine grade stainless steel (316L) or similar and have a dehooking end no larger than 1 7/8" outside diameter. This device must securely control the leader while shielding the barb to prevent the hook from re-engaging during removal. It cannot have any unprotected sharp terminal points, as these could cause injury to the mouth and esophagus during hook removal. <u>The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles in the applicable fishery</u> (e.g., 16/0 - 20/0 circle hooks in the Atlantic pelagic longline swordfish and tuna fisheries would require use of 5/16" wire and an outside diameter of 1 7/8").
  - a long-handled dehooker for external hooks,
    - Hook removal device. The dehooker should be constructed of ~ 3/16" – 5/16" marine grade stainless steel (316L) rod if constructing a wire style dehooker (e.g., the ARC and J-style dehookers). When constructing other styles (e.g., NOAA/Bergmann and Roby dehookers), marine grade stainless steel (316L) should be used for all components. The design should be such that the hook can be rotated out without pulling it out at an angle. The dehooking end should be blunt with all edges rounded (it is critical that there are no sharp edges) and the outside diameter should be no greater than 1 7/8"; a smaller diameter end may be more appropriate in fisheries which often encounter small turtles or use small hooks. <u>The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles observed to date in the applicable fishery</u> (e.g., 16/0 – 20/0 circle hooks in the Atlantic pelagic longline swordfish and tuna fisheries would require use of 5/16" wire and an outside diameter of 1 7/8").
  - a long-handled device to pull an "inverted V",
    - Hook end. The device, such as a boat hook, gaff, or long-handled J-Style dehooker should be constructed of stainless steel or aluminum. The semicircular or "J" shaped end must be securely attached to a handle. A sharp point, such as a gaff hook, is only to be used in holding the monofilament line and should never contact the sea turtle.
  - a dipnet,
    - no proposed change
  - cushion/support device

  - A standard automobile tire. A standard (not from a truck or heavy equipment) passenger vehicle tire not mounted on a rim, free of exposed steel belts, is effective for supporting the turtle while it is onboard. If the turtle is too large for the tire, it must be contained and supported on an alternative cushioned surface. An assortment of sizes is recommended to accommodate a range of turtle sizes.
  - Boat cushion. A standard boat cushion will effectively support smaller turtles.
- a short-handled dehooker for ingested hooks,
  - Hook removal device. The dehooker should be constructed of ~ 3/16" – 5/16" marine grade stainless steel (316L) rod if constructing a wire style dehooker (e.g., ARC dehooker). When constructing other styles (e.g., NOAA/Bergmann dehooker), marine grade stainless steel (316L) should be used for all components. The end must allow the hook to be secured and the barb to be shielded without re-engaging during the removal process. It must be no larger than 1 7/8" total width; a smaller diameter end may be more appropriate in fisheries which often encounter small turtles or use small hooks. It cannot have any unprotected terminal points as this could cause injury to the esophagus during hook removal (it is critical that there are no sharp edges). A sliding PVC bite block should be used to protect the beak and facilitate hook removal if the turtle bites down on the dehooking device. The bite block should be constructed of a 3/4" or smaller inside diameter high impact plastic cylinder (e.g., Schedule 80 PVC) that is 4 - 6" long to allow for at least 5" of slide along the shaft. <u>The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles observed to date in the applicable fishery</u> (e.g., 16/0 - 20/0 circle hooks in the Atlantic pelagic longline swordfish and tuna fisheries would require use of 5/16" wire and an outside diameter no greater than 1 7/8").
- a short-handled dehooker for external hooks,
  - Hook removal device. The dehooker should be constructed of ~ 3/16" – 5/16" marine grade stainless steel (316L) rod if constructing a wire style dehooker (e.g., the ARC, Scotty's and J-Style dehookers). When constructing other styles (e.g., NOAA/Bergmann and Roby dehookers), marine grade stainless steel (316L) should be used for all components. The design should be such that the hook can be rotated out without pulling it out at an angle, and the dehooking end should be blunt and all edges rounded (it is critical that there are no sharp edges). <u>The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles observed to date in the applicable fishery</u> (e.g., 16/0 - 20/0 circle hooks in the Atlantic pelagic longline swordfish and tuna fisheries would require use of 5/16" wire and an outside diameter of 1 7/8").
- long-nose or needle-nose pliers,
  - no proposed change
- bolt cutters,

    - General. They should be ~ 14 – 17” in total length, ~ 4” long blades that are ~ 2 1/4” wide (closed) with ~ 10 – 13” long handles. They must be able to cut hard metals such as stainless or carbon steel hooks up to 1/4” diameter.
- monofilament line cutters, and
    - General. These should be ~ 7 1/2” in length with ~1 3/4” long, 5/8" wide (closed) blades.
- at least two types of mouth openers/mouth gags.
    - no proposed change.)

As with the current sea turtle release gear requirements, only one NMFS-approved long-handled dehooker and one NMFS-approved short-handled dehooker are required.

MOTION #8. REMOVE ACTION 6 ADDRESSING THE SHRIMP FMP AND MOVE TO REJECTED APPENDIX
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 6. Amend the Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to designate new Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

MOTION #9. ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 3 AS OUR PREFERRED
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 6 (SG FMP). Alternative 3. Designate EFH-HAPCs for the snapper grouper complex to include the deepwater marine protected areas (MPAs).

MOTION #10. MOVE OLD ACTION 7 (CMP FMP) TO THE CONSIDERED BUT REJECTED APPENDIX
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE
Action 7. Amend the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to designate new Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

MOTION #11. APPROVE CE BA-2 FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS
APPROVED BY COMMITTEE