

OVERVIEW

Joint Habitat and Environmental Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management Committees

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The Committees will: (A) receive an update on the status of Coral Amendment 8; (B) receive an update on the status of the Council's Cooperative Agreement with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program; (C) review the spatial representation of new options for the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC); (D) review revised SAFMC policy statements; and (E) receive an update on ecosystem activities in the South Atlantic.

A. Status of Coral Amendment 8

The Council approved Coral Amendment 8 during their September 2013 meeting and the amendment was sent for formal review on November 26, 2013. The Committee will receive a status report from Southeast Regional Office staff on Coral Amendment 8.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

B. Cooperative Agreement with Coral Reef Conservation Program

At the December 2013 meeting, Council staff provided an overview of the FY 2014-2016 cooperative agreement proposal application submitted to the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) on November 4, 2013. Included in the cooperative agreement is a project that would continue characterization of benthic habitat and fauna in the Oculina Experimental Closed Area and the Deep Water Marine Protected Areas. The proposal is currently under review by CRCP. Council staff will provide a status update of the cooperative agreement.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

C. Spatial Representation of Oculina Bank HAPC Options (Attachment 1)

Council staff will review the spatial representation of new options for a northern extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC. Following the September 2013 Council meeting, industry representatives came forward with a request to further modify the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the HAPC as identified in Coral Amendment 8 (under Secretarial Review) to allow the rock shrimp industry access to additional fishing grounds. Industry representatives submitted a request to further modify the coordinates for points 16-25 off the eastern boundary of the northern extension. The Council approved a motion during the December 2013 meeting providing guidance to Council staff to map the new coordinates provided by Mike Merrifield, Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, and bring the new options back to the March

2014 Council meeting for further discussion. Following the December 2013 meeting, on December 18, 2013 Council staff sent a request via email to Mike Merrifield to provide, voluntarily, landings information from FL trip tickets from the rock shrimp fishermen operating in the region identified by points 16-25 in September 2013 in order to provide an analysis of impacts associated with the industry's requested options.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

D. Revised SAFMC Policy Statements (Attachment 2)

Redrafted EFH Policy Statements addressing (1) Alterations to Riverine, Estuarine and Nearshore Flows (page 2), (2) Marine Aquaculture (page 14), and (3) Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (page 42) have been finalized by the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel for Committee and Council consideration and approval.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will review, modify, and approve these three EFH Policy Statements.

E. Ecosystem Activities

The Committee will receive updates on the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association, South Atlantic Alliance, Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, SEAMAP, Council Ecosystem Tools, and other ecosystem activities.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.