

## **Mangrove/Buttonwood Clarification to User's Guide to EFH Designations by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council**

Silver buttonwood (*Conocarpus erectus*) shares several similarities with mangroves in terms of ecosystem services and their value as habitat, particularly in coastal ecosystems. While silver buttonwood is not a true mangrove species and differs taxonomically, it often coexists with mangroves and plays an equally crucial role in supporting coastal environments. Silver buttonwood and mangroves both serve as nurseries for many ecologically and commercially important fisheries while also acting as natural buffers against coastal erosion and storm surges. Other similarities in ecosystem services include their contributions to nutrient cycling, water quality enhancement, and carbon sequestration. Preserving and restoring these habitats is crucial for maintaining the health of coastal environments and supporting the communities and wildlife that depend on them.

### *Key similarities (continued):*

#### Coastal Protection

- Their dense root systems stabilize shorelines, reducing the impact of waves and protecting coastal communities from erosion and flooding.

#### Habitat for Wildlife / Biodiversity Enhancement

- The tangled root systems of buttonwood, like mangroves, provide important habitat to support a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic organisms, including many commercially valuable fish species.

#### Nutrient Cycling / Water Quality

- Both vegetation types can improve water quality by filtering and trapping sediments, pollutants, and excess nutrients from runoff before they enter coastal waters.

#### Carbon Sequestration

- Silver buttonwood and mangroves are both effective carbon sinks. They store substantial amounts of carbon in their biomass and in the organic matter that accumulates in their submerged root systems.

#### Fisheries Support

- These habitats provide safe and nutrient-rich environments for juvenile fish to grow and develop before moving into open waters.

#### Recreation and Tourism

- Coastal areas featuring silver buttonwood and mangrove ecosystems are often attractive to tourists and recreational enthusiasts (e.g., ecotourism, bird watching, fishing).

## Literature

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