



# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Carolyn N. Belcher, Ph.D., Chair | Trish Murphey, Vice Chair  
John Carmichael, Executive Director

## AGENDA

### **Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel Meeting**

Marriott

170 Lockwood Blvd.

Charleston, SC 29403

Other than the starting and ending times of the meeting, times indicated on the agenda are approximate, and the order of business may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the completion of agenda items. Interested parties should be aware that discussions may start earlier or later than indicated.

Public comment will be solicited at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will then recognize individuals to provide comment.

### **Wednesday, November 1, 2023 – 1:00 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.**

Welcome and Introductions

Approval of Agenda – Stacie Crowe, SCDNR

Approval of May 2023 AP Minutes – Stacie Crowe

Public Comment

Habitat and Ecosystem Committee Chair Remarks – Trish Murphey

Confirmation of Chair and Election of Vice Chair

- 1. NOAA Fisheries HCD EFH Consultation- Annual Summary (*Attachment 1*)**
  - a. SE Consultation Year End Summary – Pace Wilber, NOAA Fisheries HCD
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
- 2. NOAA Fisheries EFH 5 Year Review (*Attachments 2a-2f*)**
  - a. Buttonwood Clarification Subcommittee Report – Simen Kaalstad, ASMFC
  - b. Limited FEP II Update (Prey and References) Subcommittee Report - Wilson Laney
  - c. Tidal Freshwater Boundary Subcommittee Report – Casey Knight, NCDMF
  - d. Climate Vulnerability Assessment Overlap with EFH – John Quinlan, NMFS SEFSC
  - e. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
- 3. SECAS and the Conservation Blueprint (*Attachment 3*)**
  - a. Overview of SECAS and the Conservation Blueprint – Rua Mordecai, USFWS, SECAS
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe

**Thursday, November 2, 2023 – 8:30 A.M.to 4:30 P.M.**

**Day 2 Overview – Stacie Crowe, SCDNR**

- 4. Offshore Wind Activities in South Atlantic Region (*Attachment 4*)**
  - a. Update on BOEM Research and Energy Development Activities – Brian Hooker, BOEM
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
  
- 5. EFH Policy Statement on Energy**
  - a. Update on Development Timeline and Process – Paula Keener, WG Chair
  - b. Review Draft Update Outline and Policy – Paula Keener, WG Chair
  - c. Member Review of Policy Updates, Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
  
- 6. US Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing EIS (*Attachment 6*)**
  - a. Overview of the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing EIS – Laura Busch
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe

**Friday, November 3, 2023 – 8:30 A.M.to 1:00 P.M.**

**Day 3 Overview – Stacie Crowe**

- 7. SAFMC Habitat Blueprint (*Attachments 7a-7d*)**
  - a. Overview of Habitat Blueprint and Habitat Ecosystem AP Job Description – Roger Pugliese
  - b. Review Workplan and Develop Outline for AP Annual Report – Kathleen Howington
  - c. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
  
- 8. Update on the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (*Attachments 8a-8c*)**
  - a. Update on the SA Marsh Initiative - Simen Kaalstad, ASMFC
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe
  
- 9. Space Operations off East Florida (*Attachment 9*)**
  - a. Presentation on Space Operations off East Florida – Dale Ketcham, Space Florida
  - b. Panel Member Discussion and Recommendations – Stacie Crowe

**Other Business**

**Adjourn**

**Attachments:**

1. NMFS Habitat Consultation Annual Summary
  - 2a. Buttonwood Clarification Subcommittee Report
  - 2b. Limited FEP II Update (Prey and References) Subcommittee Report\*
  - 2c. Tidal Freshwater Boundary Subcommittee Report
  - 2d. Presentation- Climate Vulnerability Assessment\*
  - 2e. Climate Vulnerability Assessment for the SA Region Oct 2023
  - 2f. SAFMC EFH User Guide
  3. Presentation- SECAS and Conservation Blueprint
  4. BOEM Presentation on Renewable Energy Research and Development in the SA region
  5. Update- SAFMC EFH Policy Statement on Energy Exploration and Development (Note: Verbal Presentation only)
  6. Presentation- US Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing EIS\*
  - 7a. SAFMC Habitat Blueprint
  - 7b. Habitat Ecosystem AP Job Description
  - 7c. Habitat Workplan
  - 7d. Draft Outline for AP Annual Report
  - 8a. Presentation- Update on the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative
  - 8b. Executive Summary: South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative
  - 8c. South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative: Plan
  9. Presentation on Space Operations off East Florida
- \*Note: Will be posted when available.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Advisory Panel will approve the minutes of November 2022 and agenda for the current meeting. Trish Murphey, NCDMF Chair of the Council Habitat and Ecosystem Committee will make opening remarks (Final September 2023 Committee Report included in briefing material).

**1. NOAA Fisheries HCD EFH Consultation Update (*Attachment 1*)**

**Description:** Pace Wilber, NOAA Fisheries HCD, will provide an annual review of Southeast EFH Consultation activities. This will provide AP members and the Council with a view of HCD activities as specified in the recently approved Habitat Blueprint and a view of significant developing issues in the region of interest to the Council.

**AP Action:** Comment on which areas may be a priority requiring additional engagement or possible input or guidance from the Council with input from the Panel.

**2. NOAA Fisheries EFH 5 Year Review (*Attachments 2a-2f*)**

**Description:** Stacie Crowe will provide the Panel members with an overview of the EFH 5-year review process. The Subcommittees named at the May 2023 meeting to support the EFH Review including the Buttonwood Clarification Subcommittee, the Limited FEP II update (Prey and References) Subcommittee, and the Tidal Freshwater Boundary Subcommittee will report out. In addition, John Quinlan, NMFS SEFSC will provide a brief summary on the recently published SA [Climate Vulnerability Assessment](#) while making the link to concerns over changing species distributions and essential habitats which support them

**AP Action:** Provide input on the Subcommittee reports supporting the EFH review.

**3. SECAS and the Conservation Blueprint (*Attachment 3*)**

**Description:** Rua Mordecai, USFWS/SECAS, will provide an overview of the [Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy](#) (SECAS) and the [Conservation Blueprint](#) State Blueprint Reports: [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Georgia](#), [Florida](#)

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide input.

**4. Offshore Wind Activities in South Atlantic Region (*Attachment 4*)**

**Description:** Brian Hooker, BOEM [Renewable Energy Program](#), will provide an overview of recent research and energy development activities in the South Atlantic Region.

**AP Action:** Discuss and provide recommendations.

**5. EFH Policy Statement on Energy**

**Description:** Paula Keener, Energy Policy Workgroup Chair, will highlight the activities of the Workgroup and review the draft Energy Policy update, which refines the core policy addressing primarily oil and gas exploration and develops a new section highlighting renewable energy and offshore wind development.

**AP Action:** Provide recommendations to further update the policy to prepare for Council approval in 2024.

**6. US Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing EIS (Attachment 6)**

**Description:** Laura Busch, US Navy, will provide members with an overview of the status of the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing EIS and impacts on EFH.

**AP Action:** Discuss the EIS and provide input on potential impacts on EFH.

**7. Updates: SAFMC Habitat Blueprint (Attachments 7a-7d)**

**Description:** Roger Pugliese, Council staff, will provide an overview of the Habitat Blueprint and Habitat Ecosystem AP Job Description which were approved by the Council at the September 2023 meeting. In addition, a draft workplan for the Habitat program will be reviewed. Members will also discuss policy considerations and priorities and integration of the consideration of the exiting Flow Policy as it pertains to the impacts of Lake Okeechobee water flow and the considerations of the importance of and impacts of loss of artificial reef as part of the workplan.

**AP Action:** Provide input on the draft workplan supporting the Habitat program and review a draft outline for a HEAP annual report.

**8. Update on the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (Attachments 8a-8c)**

**Description:** Simen Kaalstad, ASMFC, will provide members with an update on the [South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative](#). The regional plan, a culmination of two years of intensive study, dialogue, and deliberations, is intended to achieve landscape-scale success by providing a pathway to the protection, restoration and migration of the great expanse of salt marsh. The strategies included in the plan are intended to be a road map for elected officials, state and federal agencies, communities, NGOs, academic partners and others to work together to ensure the long-term abundance, health and resilience of essential salt marsh habitat.

**AP Action:** Discuss the initiative and the value of the initiative to conservation of EFH in the region and highlight any projects which may have been initiated at the state or local level under this initiative.

**9. Space Operations off East Florida (Attachment 9)**

**Description:** Dale Ketcham, vice-president of government and community relations for [Space Florida](#), a state agency whose goal is to help Florida grow in the new space economy, will deliver a presentation on space-related activities off the east coast of Florida.

Mr. Ketcham proved the same presentation to the Council at their June 2023 meeting and clarified the roles of the various entities and responsibilities related to space debris that may impact fishing as well as temporary closures of coastal waters related to launches and recovery. The Council requested engaging the HEAP, to make them aware of ongoing and anticipated activities.

**AP Action:** Discuss ongoing space operations and efforts to identify potential habitat impacts.