

**SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANGEMENT
COMMITTEES MEETING
Jekyll Island, Georgia
March 5, 2008**

The Habitat and Ecosystem-Based Management Committees met jointly on March 5, 2008 in Jekyll Island, Georgia. The committees received presentations by:

1. Dr. Doug Rader, Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel Chair reaffirmed the recommendations brought forth at the joint meeting of the Habitat AP and Coral AP on November 7-8, 2007 in Charleston. These recommendations are included in the present Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Ecosystem Amendment and include boundaries and applicable management measures to establish Deepwater Coral-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. Dr. Rader emphasized a commitment of the panels to working with the deepwater shrimp and golden crab industries to facilitate a reasonable solution between all those involved.
2. Bill Whipple provided recommendations from the Golden Crab AP and reiterated that although the golden crab fishery is prosecuted in such a way as to avoid any coral habitat, it is primarily within the area defined by the present proposed boundaries of the Deepwater Coral HAPCs. Bill clarified that after careful consideration the AP is endorsing creation of allowable areas for Golden Crab Fishing within the proposed CHAPC versus moving the boundaries and that they would voluntarily use VMS. The Committee was provided a copy of updated AP recommendations. These recommendations, including associated GIS position information, were provided in the Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Ecosystem Amendment.
3. Marilyn Solorzano presented the Deepwater Shrimp AP recommendations to the committee. She indicated the proposals to modify the western boundary of the Deepwater Coral HAPCs were developed primarily focusing on enforcement concerns. These recommendations, including associated GIS positions, were provided in the Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Ecosystem Amendment.
4. Gregg Waugh presented a review of the Public Hearing Draft of the Comprehensive Ecosystem Amendment. Roger Pugliese presented charts of the proposed Deepwater Coral HAPCs and proposals from the Deepwater Shrimp and Golden Crab Advisory Panels. He provided additional charts overlaying the proposals and detailed deepwater habitat information including recent updated information provided by Coral Advisory Panel member John Reed. Finally, Roger provided the VMS associated with potential Royal Red fishing operations provided by NMFS SEFSC overlaid to detailed bathymetric charts. The staff overlay of VMS and detailed bathymetry indicates very limited number of potential royal red shrimp interactions east of the 400 meter contour.
5. Roger Pugliese and Myra Brouwer provided an overview of the public hearing draft of the SAFMC's Comprehensive Fishery Ecosystem Plan and acknowledged the array of documents and the level of input and commitment of the regional Habitat and Ecosystem partners that have resulted in the present comprehensive document.

6. Myra Brouwer provided information on TRACES, the Trans-Atlantic Coral Ecosystem Study initiative. This initiative aims to bring together researchers from Canada, the US and the European Union to collaborate on studies of deepwater coral ecosystems in the North Atlantic. The Council's Deepwater Coral Research and Monitoring Plan will be incorporated, as appropriate, in the TRACES science plan to ensure that Council needs are addressed through this international initiative.

7. Roger Pugliese reviewed a revised draft of the Council's energy policy to address alternative energy development in the South Atlantic region. Revision to the current policy is being coordinated through the Habitat Advisory Panel and NMFS Habitat Conservation Division.

8. Roger indicated the Navy Sonar Testing DEIS was just released and is out for review. He will be providing it to the Council and Habitat Advisory Panel considering a comment based on existing Council Habitat Policies.

The Committees approved the following motions:

Motion #1. **ADD VMS REQUIREMENT FOR THE GOLDEN CRAB FISHERY.**

Motion #2. **ESTABLISH THE PROPOSED DEEPWATER CORAL HABITAT AREAS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO INCLUDE ALL THE ALTERNATIVE BOUNDARIES PROPOSED BY THE DEEPWATER SHRIMP AP AND FISHING AREAS PROPOSED BY THE GOLDEN CRAB AP TO TAKE TO PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Motion #3. **APPROVE THE COMPREHENSIVE FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Another motion to **INCLUDE AN ENFORCEMENT BUFFER ZONE WITHIN THE PROPOSED CORAL HAPCS FOR THE ROYAL RED AND GOLDEN CRAB FISHERIES** was not approved by the committee

In addition, the committee provided the following guidance and/or made the following requests:

1. Provide the Committees with a map showing MPAs as well as the proposed Deepwater CHAPCs.
2. Provide more information on issues that may arise with other fisheries to identify potential habitat impacts or lack of impacts (e.g., wreckfish, recreational swordfish and snapper grouper deep-dropping).
3. Make sure that information in the FEP is consistent with existing habitat policies.
4. Update fishery data throughout volume III. The FEP document needs to be as up-to-date as possible before it is finalized.
5. Include a discussion on freshwater flows need into estuaries in the FEP. Dr. Wilson Laney committed to help staff update that section.
6. Add section to Energy Policy dealing with offshore wind power - there would be similar effects of construction and operation as there would be in Ocean Current technology and other activities.

7. Clarification of Joint Habitat Coral Recommendations “...*if damage occurs with the use of planers and cannonball weights*.” This is highly unlikely under present circumstances “...*and emerging deepwater fisheries*...” Clarification on what fisheries?