

OVERVIEW

Joint Habitat and Environmental Protection Committee and Ecosystem-Based Management Committee Meeting

The King and Prince
201 Arnold Road
St. Simons Island, GA

The Committees will: (A) Receive a status report on Coral Amendment 8; (B) receive a briefing on a redrafted EFH Policy Statement on Beach Re-nourishment and Large Scale Coastal Engineering; and (C) participate in a South Atlantic Ecosystem Session on the move to Ecosystem-Based Management.

A. Status of Coral Amendment 8

Coral Amendment 8 actions include expansion of the northern and western boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC); expansion of the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs; and establishment of a transit provision through Oculina Bank HAPC for vessels with rock shrimp onboard. Within the expanded HAPCs, the use of bottom longlines, bottom trawls, dredges, pots or traps are prohibited, and if aboard a fishing vessel, anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited. Mid-water trawl gear is also prohibited in the Coral HAPCs, including Stetson-Miami Terrace and the Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved the amendment during their September 2013 meeting, and the amendment was sent to the Secretary for formal review on November 26, 2013. The notice of availability for Coral Amendment 8 published in the Federal Register on May 20, 2014, and the comment period ended on July 21, 2014. The proposed rule for Coral Amendment 8 published on June 3, 2014, and the comment period ended on July 3, 2014. Coral Amendment was approved on August 20, 2014. A final rule, which gives effect to the actions and regulations, will be published in the Federal Register shortly after the March 2015 Council meeting.

(B) Review of Redrafted EFH Policy Statement on Beach Dredging and Filling and Large Scale Coastal Engineering

As part of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan II process, the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel is redrafting standing Council EFH policy statements. The Committee will review, revise as necessary, and approve the redrafted EFH Policy Statement on Beach Dredging and Filling and Large Scale Coastal Engineering.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will approve for Council consideration.

(C) South Atlantic Ecosystem Session

The Committees will participate in a session of presentations and discussion focused on setting the stage for the ongoing move to ecosystem-based management in the South Atlantic Region.

- A. What is Needed to Support Ecosystem-Based Management by Dr. Carl Hershner, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
- B. Vision and Activities Supporting EBM in NOAA Fisheries and the Draft NOAA Climate Science Strategy by Dr. Jason Link, Senior Scientist for Ecosystem Management, NOAA Fisheries
- C. SALCC Conservation Blueprint Development – Supporting Regional EBM by Hilary Morris, Blueprint User and Communications, SALCC
- D. Alternative Energy Mapping and Planning Activities in the South Atlantic by Brian Krevor, BOEM, Alternative Energy Program
- E. Geologic and Geophysical Mapping and Planning Activities in the South Atlantic by Dr. Arie Roth Kaller, BOEM, Supervisor, Biological Sciences Unit

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