

Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel (HEAP)

Annual Report on Habitat Activities

Draft Outline

November 2023

In September 2023, the Council approved its Habitat Blueprint, which included a new provision for the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel (HEAP) to develop an annual report on habitat activities during their spring meeting and present this report at the next scheduled Habitat Committee meeting.

The Blueprint specified that the report should:

- address habitat and ecosystem conservation activities, including consultations, comment letters, future threats, research needs, and use of habitat policies during the prior calendar year.
- highlight the use of habitat policies.
- provide advance notice of developing issues.
- rely heavily on tables, texts and bulleted lists to convey the relevant information efficiently.

Council staff developed this draft outline to clarify the Council's requests and provide the HEAP with a guideline. The HEAP reviewed this outline at the November 2023 meeting and added the items in red as some specific topics that should be included in the 2024 annual report.

Draft HEAP Annual Report Contents:

1. Status of EFH-related comments submitted by the Council, South Atlantic States, and HCD.
2. Update of major regional activities/projects in the South Atlantic.
 - a. Renewable Energy/Wind
 - b. Port Development
 - c. Renourishment, etc.
3. Status of Council Habitat Policy Statements.
 - a. Usage in submitted comments.
 - b. Adequacy of existing statements to current activities.
 - c. Suggestions for revisions of existing policies or creation of new policies.
4. Potential future or developing habitat threats:
 - a. **A living shoreline is a protected, stabilized coastal edge made of natural materials such as plants, sand, or rock meant to stabilize estuary coasts, bays, and tributaries. These are made of natural materials and will grow over time. Tide gates control water flow between a tidewater area and a diked-off, drained upland area. The number of these projects in development is increasing with sea level rise. What are the short and long-term impacts?**
 - b. **What are the space program impacts with increasing launches and historical launches i.e. debris and waste?**
 - c. **What are the impacts of sound/pressure from construction projects?**

5. Regional projects of interest to the Council
 - a. **SASMI and SECAS**
6. Coordination between regions. (Mid Atlantic, Gulf, and Caribbean partnerships or nationwide coordination)
 - a. **Offshore wind projects beginning in Puerto Rico**
7. Funding projects/opportunities.
8. Highlight regional research and monitoring activities supporting EFH and review recommended priorities included in the SAFMC Research and Monitoring Plan (completed every odd year).
9. Outreach and communication activities: Habitat and ecosystem focused.
10. Anticipated future habitat activities of interest