

**FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
HABITAT AND ECOSYSTEM COMMITTEE
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Charleston, SC
September 18, 2024**

The Committee approved the minutes from the June 2024 meeting and the agenda for this meeting.

Coral Management

During the June 2024 Council meeting, staff were directed to bring four potential approaches to the IPT for establishing a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the northern extension of the Oculina Coral Habitat Area of Particular Concern to allow access to the rock shrimp fishery.

The four potential approaches for moving forward with the amendment were:

1. Address the shortcomings listed in the disapproval letter and resubmit Coral 10 in its current form.
2. Add an alternative to Coral Amendment 10 that would increase the buffer between known coral pinnacles and the western boundary of the proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA).
3. Modify the CHAPC boundary through a Coral FMP framework amendment.
4. Develop a Joint Shrimp/Coral FMP amendment to establish a SFAA.

The IPT recommended Approach Number 4 recognizing that the opening of this area to the rock shrimp fishery is important and acknowledging the need to choose a path that will not only address the resubmission needs but that has the highest chance of getting approved.

The Committee discussed the approaches and what the benefit would be to move forward with approach 4 versus approach 1. It was stated that the Council may have taken the wrong path initially with Coral Amendment 10 and the greatest chance of success at this point is approach number 4. The proposed SFAA is small but historically important. There has allegedly been no coral in the area for a long time and the Council intended to establish the SFAA immediately after the Coral amendment 8 submission in 2013. The proposed joint amendment will need to address the goals and objectives for the Shrimp FMP and the Coral FMP.

MOTION 1:

MOVE FORWARD WITH AN AMENDMENT TO BOTH THE CORAL AND SHRIMP FMPs TO ESTABLISH A SFAA.

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE

APPROVED BY COUNCIL

The Council also reviewed the Draft Purpose and Need for approach number 4 and determined that the second sentence in the Purpose was unnecessary.

DIRECTION TO STAFF:

MOVE FORWARD WITH THE DRAFT PURPOSE AND NEED AS MODIFIED:

Purpose: The *purpose* of this amendment is to create a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the eastern edge of the Northern Oculina CHAPC boundary in an area where the rock shrimp fishery operated historically while minimizing impacts to deepwater coral. ~~The action does not change EFH specifications from previous amendments but provides recent information and spatial presentation of EFH as required by the EFH Final Rule (67 FR 2343, January 17, 2002).~~

Need: The *need* for this amendment is to allow the rock shrimp fishery to attain OY while minimizing negative impacts to deepwater coral in the Council’s jurisdiction.

Note: Council staff drafts the timing and task motion based on Committee action. If points require clarification, they will be added to the draft motion. The Committee should review this wording carefully to be sure it accurately reflects their intent prior to making the motion.

Timing and Task(s)

MOTION 2: ADOPT THE FOLLOWING TIMING AND TASKS.

- Add the Shrimp 12/Coral 11 Joint amendment to the Council work plan and prepare for review for scoping at the December meeting

APPROVED BY COUNCIL