



## THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12

Establish a SFAA within the Oculina HAPC

Decision Document, December 2025



## Background

In September 2024, staff were directed to develop a joint amendment to the Coral and Shrimp Fishery Management Plans (FMP) to propose establishing a Shrimp Fishery Access Area (SFAA) within the northern extension of the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern (OHAPC). A previously submitted amendment (Coral Amendment 10) proposing the same action was not approved. Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12, which incorporates updated information including recent mapping studies, was presented at the [June 2025](#) Council meeting, where the Council selected a preferred alternative and approved the amendment for public hearings. Public hearings were conducted in [August 2025](#).

During the September 2025 meeting, the Council reviewed public comments and provided rationale for how the amendment meets both the Coral and Shrimp Fishery Management Plans' goals and objectives.

## Objectives for this Meeting (December 2025)

- Review proposed edits to the Purpose and Need.
- Review rationale.
- Consider the draft amendment for submission.

## Amendment Development Timeline

June 2024	Council moves to develop a joint Shrimp 12 and Coral 11 amendment to accomplish the goal of establishing an SFAA
June 2025	Council selects a preferred alternative and approves the draft amendment for public hearings.
August 2025	Public hearings.
September 2025	Review public hearing comments and the draft amendment.
December 2025	Review the final draft amendment and consider approval for formal review.
Early 2026	Amendment submitted.

## Draft Amendment Highlights (since September 2025)

- Vessel monitoring system (VMS) information has been integrated into Chapter 3 (Affected Environment). This includes vessel location points from 2014-2024 that have been split into two groups: before and after the implementation of Coral Amendment 8, which expanded the OHAPC.
- The data are limited to boats that were actively trawling (moving at a speed between 0 and 5 knots) and aggregated to ensure confidentiality.
- Chapter 3's social and economic information has been integrated up to 2021. The information currently included is from Coral Amendment 10.
  - Revised sections describing the economic and social environment will be completed ahead of the amendment submission.
- The Fishery Impact Statement (Appendix H) has been completed.
- Chapter 5, highlighting the Council's rationale and summarizing public comments, was completed.
- During the September 2025 council meeting, staff outlined an analysis identifying the number of times the National Weather Service or Surf reports mentioned upwellings in the Cape Canaveral area. Council members and the public thought the analysis may have underestimated the number of upwellings that occur in the area. To ensure that the Council had the most accurate information possible, staff analyzed information from the National Buoy Data Center for Cape Canaveral buoy number 41009. The buoy data showed that the sea surface temperature (SST) only dropped under 75 degrees F (indicating an upwelling) on average 1.5 days per year during May – September from 2015 – 2024.

# Purpose and Need

## Purpose for Action

The purpose of this amendment is to reinstate commercial access to this historically important fishing ground for the rock shrimp fishery by creating a Shrimp Fishery Access Area along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern in an area where the rock shrimp fishery operated historically while minimizing impacts to deepwater coral.

## Need for Action

The need for this amendment is to ~~allow the rock shrimp fishery to attain optimum yield~~ **optimize yield in the rock shrimp fishery by expanding access to fishing grounds** while minimizing negative impacts to deepwater coral in the Council's jurisdiction.

## Committee Action:

- Consider suggested edit to the need of this amendment.

**DRAFT MOTION:** APPROVE MODIFICATIONS TO THE NEED STATEMENT.

## Alternatives

**Alternative 1 (No Action).** No person may use a bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot, or trap in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern. If aboard a fishing vessel, no person may anchor, use an anchor and chain, or use a grapple and chain. There are no shrimp fishery access areas within the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern.

**Preferred Alternative 2.** Establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, that is 14.10 square nautical miles ( NM<sup>2</sup>) if the latitude and longitude are projected using a geodesic measurement and a WGS-1984 projection. Allow a shrimp vessel with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to bottom trawl for rock shrimp within the established area bounded by the following coordinates.

**Table 1.** Coordinates for the proposed Shrimp Fishery Access Area under **Preferred Alternative 2.**

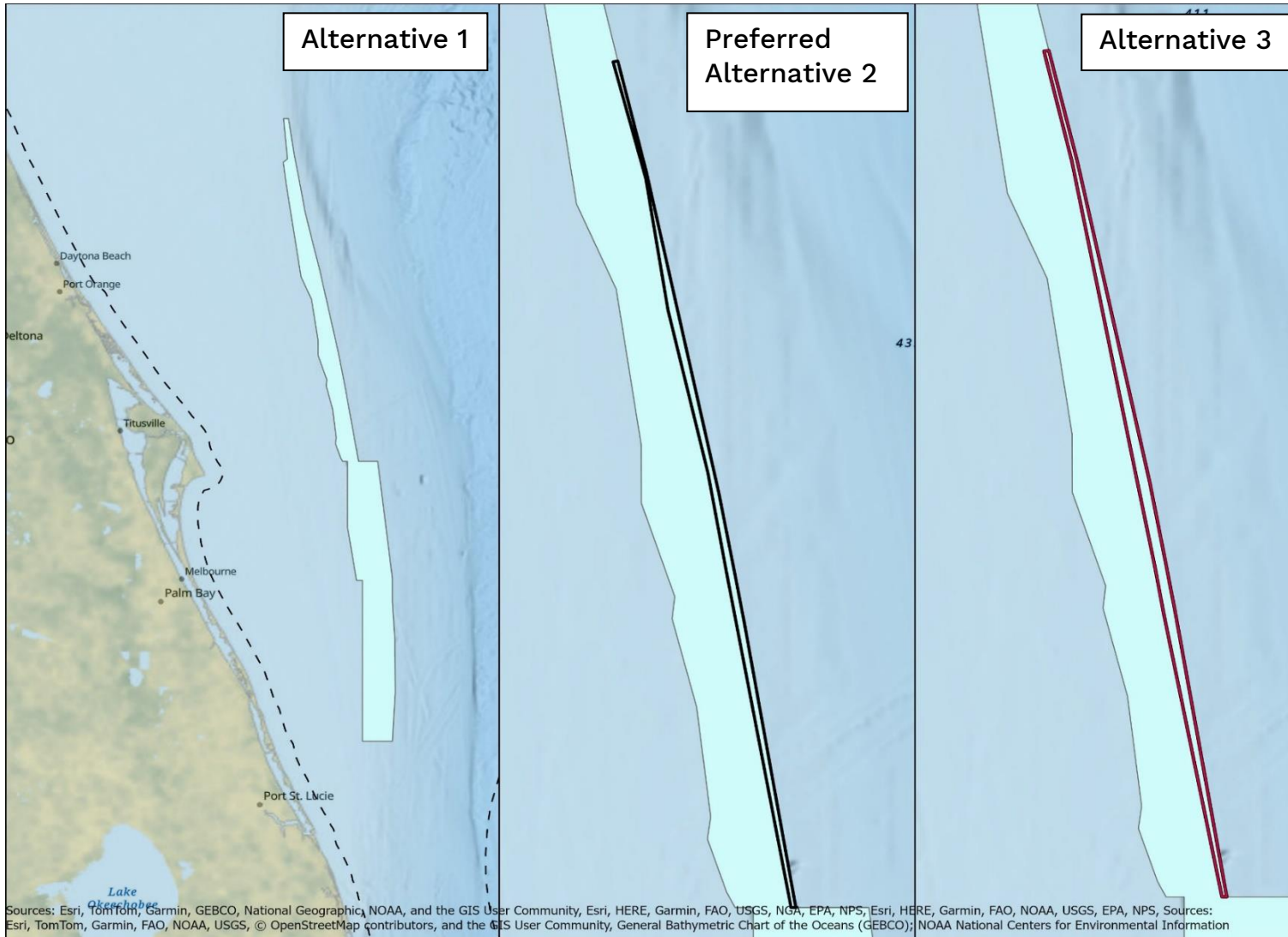
<b>Point</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"
1	29°10'58.98"	80°08'39.00"
2	29°03'34.98"	80°07'28.98"
3	28°54'25.02"	80°05'22.98"
4	28°48'36.00"	80°04'22.02"
5	28°30'00.00"	80°01'01.02"
6	28°30'00.00"	80°00'46.02"
7	28°46'00.84"	80°03'28.50"
8	28°48'37.14"	80°03'56.76"
9	28°53'18.36"	80°04'48.84"
10	29°11'19.62"	80°08'36.90"
11	29°17'33.96"	80°10'06.90"
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"

**Alternative 3.** Establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern that is 18.87 NM<sup>2</sup> if the latitude and longitude are projected using a geodesic measurement and a WGS-1984 projection. Allow a shrimp vessel with a valid Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp South Atlantic EEZ (Limited Access) to bottom trawl for rock shrimp within the established area bounded by the following coordinates.

**Table 2.** Coordinates for the proposed Shrimp fishery Access Area under Alternative 3.

Point	Latitude	Longitude
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"
1	29°11'19.98"	80°8'54.00"
2	28°53'15.00"	80°5'27.00"
3	28°48'36.00"	80°4'33.00"
4	28°45'57.00"	80°4'4.98"
5	28°30'00.00"	80°01'01.02"
6	28°30'00.00"	80°00'46.02"
7	28°46'00.84"	80°03'28.50"
8	28°48'37.14"	80°03'56.76"
9	28°53'18.36"	80°04'48.84"
10	29°11'19.62"	80°08'36.90"
11	29°17'33.96"	80°10'06.90"
Origin	29°17'31.98"	80°10'22.02"

## Comparison of the Three Alternatives



**Figure 1:** A visualization of Alternatives 1-3: Alternative 1: No Action, **Preferred Alternative 2**, and Alternative 3

## Council Rationale

- **Preferred Alternative 2** best meets the amendment's stated purpose and need because it optimizes yield and balances the goal of allowing shrimpers access to commercially important historical shrimping grounds while protecting *Oculina* coral from negative effects with a 360 – 1,580 m protective buffer between known pinnacles and the SFAA boundary.
- **Preferred Alternative 2** would minimize damage to EFH while increasing access for the rock shrimp fishery.
  - In selecting **Preferred Alternative 2**, the Council considered that future trawling activity would occur in areas where rock shrimp have been previously harvested, where there is no evidence of coral, or in the immediately adjacent areas.
  - **Preferred Alternative 2** provides a larger buffer between the proposed SFAA and the known coral pinnacles than **Alternative 3** (Section 4.1.1).
  - Existing research suggests that the current within the area moves primarily northward, where sediment from trawling would move parallel to known coral.
  - Upwellings that may occasionally push water shoreward toward the coral pinnacles are infrequent in the area.
  - The low frequency of upwellings in addition to the 360-1,580 m buffer are expected to decrease the chances of sediment plumes causing damage to the coral pinnacles while balancing the rock shrimp fishery's need for access to its historical shrimping area.
- The Council acknowledges the rock shrimp industry's efforts to avoid damage to coral, as they rely on healthy coral reef habitat to support the shrimp population.
- Rock shrimp fishermen maintain that they would use the proposed SFAA sporadically, as rock shrimp aren't present in the area consistently, and that only experienced fishermen have the skill to utilize the area. All rock shrimp vessels are required to have a limited access permit and a VMS programmed with a more frequent transmission rate when shrimping or transiting in the proposed SFAA.
- The Council expects **Preferred Alternative 2** to increase economic and social benefits to rock shrimp fishermen by increasing access to a very specific and historic rock shrimp fishing area along the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the OHAPC where no known coral pinnacles exist, while maintaining protection of the *Oculina* deep-water coral ecosystem.
- Reopening the area demonstrates science-based management by balancing conservation and historical fishing access while also strengthening trust between shrimpers, scientists and managers.
- **Preferred Alternative 2** is viewed by some Council members as a technical correction to the eastern boundary of the northern extension of the OHAPC established by the Council in Coral Amendment 8 in 2014.
- By selecting **Preferred Alternative 2** the Council is optimizing the benefits generated from the coral resources, while minimizing the impacts of humans (specifically the shrimp industry) on coral, and balancing conservation with adaptive science-based management.

- Lastly, **Preferred Alternative 2** meets the directives of the Executive Orders 13921 and 14276 while also complying with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

## Committee Action:

- REVISE OR ADD TO RATIONALE ABOVE AS NEEDED.
- **DRAFT MOTION:** APPROVE CORAL AMENDMENT 11 SHRIMP AMENDMENT 12 TO THE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CORAL AND LIVE BOTTOM HABITAT OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION AND FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SHRIMP FISHERY OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC REGION RESPECTIVELY FOR FORMAL SECRETARIAL REVIEW AND DEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT AS NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE. GIVE STAFF EDITORIAL LICENSE TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY EDITORIAL CHANGES TO THE DOCUMENT/CODIFIED TEXT AND GIVE THE COUNCIL CHAIR AUTHORITY TO APPROVE THE REVISIONS AND REDEEM THE CODIFIED TEXT.

## Next Steps

- Staff will submit the final amendment in 2026, once all sections have been updated with recent information.