Joint Coral and Deepwater Shrimp AP Meeting Report
October 18th, 2012
Cape Canaveral, FL

A joint meeting of the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels (APs), and representatives from the Law Enforcement and Habitat APs was held to allow the groups an opportunity to discuss recommendations for modifications to the Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (Coral HAPCs). Prior to the joint AP meeting, the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp AP met in April 2012 and the Coral AP met in May 2012 and developed recommendations for the Oculina Bank HAPC, and the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral HAPCs. Following are summaries of the discussions, motions and recommendations from the joint AP meeting.

Oculina Bank HAPC Northern Extension

The APs were presented with the alternatives in the Coral Amendment 7 Options Paper for a northern expansion of the Oculina Bank HAPC boundary. The discussion focused on Action 1, Sub-Alternative 2c which considers extending the northern boundary of the Oculina Bank HAPC along the 70-100 meter depth contour lines. The Coral AP noted that establishing a northern extension along the 70-100 meter boundaries would incorporate most of the known deepwater coral habitat presumed to occur in this area. The Coral AP recommended developing the northern extension around Sub-Alternative 2c with the consideration that obvious hard bottom features based on the scientific data at hand would be annexed. The Deepwater Shrimp AP concurred that establishing a western boundary east of the productive rock shrimp fishing area known as '27 fathom ledge' would minimize considerable impacts to industry. The historical rock shrimp fishing data, presented by industry representatives on the AP, indicates there is highly productive rock shrimp bottom between the 27 fathom ledge eastward to the western edge of the hard bottom where the *Oculina* reef system begins. The APs both agreed on the following motion:

MOTION (BOTH APS): USE THE 70 – 100 M CONTOUR LINE FOR A NORTHERN EXTENSION FOR OCULINA BANK HAPC WITH A CAVEAT THAT ADJUSTMENTS WILL BE MADE TO ANNEX HARD BOTTOM FEATURES. THIS IS A MODIFICATION OF ALTERNATIVE 2C.
APPROVED BY CORAL AP
APPROVED BY DW SHRIMP AP

Oculina Bank HAPC Existing Area Modification

A recommendation for modifying the existing Oculina Bank HAPC has come forward from the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs during their April 2012 meeting. The Council has not yet discussed this recommendation for creation of a Shrimp Fishery Access Area and will discuss this recommendation at the December 2012 Council meeting. The Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp AP provided rationale that a modification to the existing HAPC would connect highly productive rock shrimp bottom south of the Oculina Bank HAPC to that which exists north of the

HAPC and recommended the Access Area follow the 90-100 meter contour to the west and the 140 meter contour to the east.

During the joint AP meeting, the groups discussed a modified recommendation for a Shrimp Fishery Access Area for the Council's consideration. The Coral AP provided guidance to the Deepwater Shrimp AP for specific depths that potential configuration of a Shrimp Fishery Access Area consider in order to maintain integrity of deepwater coral habitat within the existing Oculina Bank HAPC (at depths between 110 -140 meters) while allowing rock shrimp industry access to trawlable mud bottom areas. A member of the Coral AP stated *Oculina* mounds have not been identified in depths greater than 100 meters. Using the 110 meter depth contour would provide a buffer zone for easternmost coral mounds. Concern was expressed by members of the Coral AP over allowing access within the Experimental Closed Area as it has been a protected area for over a decade and contains regions of sensitive benthic habitats. However, the AP recognized that data is limited on benthic communities and structure in the HAPC at depths greater than 100 meters. The Coral AP also noted that while the Council's original delineation of the HAPC was intended to protect *Oculina* coral, other habitats likely occur in this region and also within the Experimental Closed Area, and that a lack of *Oculina* coral alone may not be sufficient rationale for developing a Shrimp Fishery Access Area. The Coral AP discussed that information should be evaluated to determine the benefit and need for continued protection of the Experimental Closed Area. (NOTE: A ten year re-evaluation of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area is required under provisions set forth in Snapper Grouper Amendment 13. An assessment report is due to the Council in 2014.) The APs then agreed to evaluate the recommendation of a Shrimp Fishery Access Area from 110-140 meters within the HAPC.

The LE AP representative noted enforcement issues that may result with a Fishery Access Area within existing HAPC boundaries.

Both the Coral and Deepwater Shrimp APs were in agreement of the following motion that was made by the Coral AP.

MOTION (CORAL AP): AN ALTERNATIVE WILL BE PRESENTED IN RESPONSE TO THE DEEPWATER SHRIMP AP RECOMMENDATION FOR THE EXISTING OCULINA HAPC THAT EVALUATES FEASABILITY OF A SHRIMP ACCESS AREA WITHIN THE EXISTING OCULINA HAPC AND WITHIN EXISTING PORTIONS OF THE OECA AT DEPTHS BETWEEN 110 M AND 140 M
APPROVED BY CORAL AP

Oculina Bank HAPC Western Extension

The APs discussed modification of the western boundary of Oculina Bank HAPC. The Coral AP has previously come forward with a recommendation for the Council to consider expanding the western boundary of the existing HAPC, primarily between the two satellite sites, bounded by the 60 meter depth contour. The recommendation from the Coral AP is a result of obtaining new data within the satellite sites identifying high relief habitat in the area west of the existing boundary.

The Deepwater Shrimp AP did not present an option for the western extension at the joint AP meeting. However, the AP noted an interested in revisiting the Coral AP proposal for a western extension at a later time after further analysis of the complete VMS dataset. The Deepwater Shrimp AP discussed an interest in working with the Coral AP to protect high relief habitat while minimizing impact to industry in this area.

STATEMENT (DW SHRIMP AP): NOT PREPARED TO DEVELOP A SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION; INTEREST IN WORKING WITH CORAL AP TO DEVELOP A REFINED ALTERNATIVE IN THE FUTURE

Transit Through Oculina Bank HAPC

The Deepwater Shrimp and Coral APs discussed the transit provision included in the Coral Amendment 7 Options Paper. The groups discussed that the potential for extension of the Oculina Bank HAPC would require those in the fishery to travel extreme distances (when in possession of rock shrimp on board their vessel), and noted the importance of a transit provision to allow access to areas off the eastern boundary. The Deepwater Shrimp AP led discussion about gear stowage and noted that disconnecting trawl doors from racks would present safety issues for vessels transiting through the Oculina Bank HAPC in rough seas. Members of the Deepwater Shrimp AP discussed that disassembling trawl doors and securing them on deck would require approximately 2 hours before each transit with heavy and cumbersome equipment. They also discussed that significant safety issues may arise concerning stowing heavy gear on deck while at sea. Industry representatives on the Deepwater Shrimp AP suggested that vessels are most stable in high seas with booms and stabilizers down, and the terminal cod end of nets stowed above decks.

Additionally, there was discussion regarding the ability to accurately determine the speed of the vessel (i.e., trawling or transit speed) given the present minimum ping rate (1 per hour), as it may provide misleading speed information depending on how long the vessel was in a given activity during the intervening 'ping' period. The Deepwater Shrimp AP noted that technology currently exists for VMS units already in use within the fishery to increase their ping rate automatically (a standard ping rate is once per hour) based on pre-established geographic boundaries (i.e. close proximity to the Oculina Bank HAPC). As those vessels with VMS units so equipped move closer to the HAPC boundaries, ping rates increase, and the rate could be manipulated to increase at fixed intervals while vessels are transiting through the HAPC. Based on the safety consideration and the available technology, the Deepwater Shrimp AP proposed a combination of gear stowage criteria and an increased ping-rate to be used during periods of transit through the Oculina Bank HAPC. Additionally the Deepwater Shrimp AP requested excluding in the transit recommendation that "no rock shrimp" be on board.

The LE AP representative discussed that with stowage of gear consistency in regulation provisions is preferred, but a special provision for this fishery may be acceptable. Regarding automatic ping rates, rates automatically increase in most units (to once every 15 minutes) if one of the hourly reporting units falls inside of the HAPC boundary. The LE AP representative discussed that increasing the ping rate is a good enforceable aspect of a transit provision. The Coral AP had no objections to the motion presented by the Deepwater Shrimp AP.

MOTION (DW SHRIMP AP): A TRANSIT PROVISION WOULD ALLOW VESSELS TO CROSS THROUGH THE OCULINA BANK HAPC WITH ROCK SHRIMP ON BOARD, AT A SPEED OF NOT LESS THAN 6 KNOTS, DETERMINED BY PING RATE THAT IS ACCEPTABLE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT (i.e. 5 MINUTES), WITH GEAR (DEFINED AS DOORS AND NETS OUT OF WATER), WITH A CALL-IN PROVISION IN CASE OF MECHANICAL FAILURE OR EMERGENCY. THIS PERTAINS TO THE ENTIRE OCULINA BANK HAPC
APPROVED BY DW SHRIMP AP

MOTION (CORAL AP): THE AP HAS NO OBJECTION TO THE TRANSIT ALTERNATIVE PROVISION DEVELOPED BY THE DW SHRIMP AP
APPROVED BY CORAL AP

Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC Western Extension

The APs discussed the Coral AP recommendation for extending the western boundary of the Stetson-Miami Terrace Coral HAPC. The Deepwater Shrimp AP noted that a portion of the proposed southern extension is productive sand bottom for royal red shrimp. The Coral AP recommended modifying their preferred option for this area to minimize this portion of the southern boundary within their recommended extension. The APs agreed on the following motion developed by the Coral AP:

MOTION (CORAL AP): MODIFY THE SOUTHERN SE BOUNDARY OF THE STETSON MIAMI TERRACE CHAPC EXTENSION IN A MANNER TO RELEASE THE FLATBOTTOM REGION TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE WHILE MAINTAINING PROTECTION OF CORAL HABITAT.
REFER TO CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM AND WORKING WITH DR. ROSS TO DEVELOP LINES FOR THIS AREA.
APPROVED BY CORAL AP

Cape Lookout Coral HAPC northern extension

The Coral AP reaffirmed their recommendation for modifications to the northern boundary of the Cape Lookout Coral HAPC to incorporate an area of *Lophelia* habitat recently discovered. The APs discussed this proposed area briefly and did not develop specific motions.

Other Business

MOTION (DW SHRIMP AP): APPOINT MIKE MERRIFIELD AS THE DEEPWATER SHRIMP AP CHAIR
APPROVED BY DW SHRIMP AP