

**SUMMARY REPORT
FROM THE JOINT HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION &
ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Hilton Wilmington Riverside
Wilmington, NC
December 3rd, 2013**

A joint meeting of the Habitat and Environmental Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management Committees was held December 3rd, 2013 in Wilmington, NC. The Committee received a status report that Coral Amendment 8 was submitted for formal Secretarial Review on November 26th, 2013. The Committee discussed requests that have come forward since the September 2013 meeting from representatives of the rock shrimp industry, to further modify coordinates along the northeastern boundary of a northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC). The Committee provided guidance to map the new coordinates provided by Mike Merrifield, Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel (AP) Chair, and bring the new options back to the March 2014 Council meeting for further discussion.

The Committee received a summary presentation on the Council's Cooperative Agreement with the Coral Reef Conservation Program. The presentation included an overview of past projects included under previous funding cycles of the Cooperative Agreement grant. Council staff also reviewed the proposal recently submitted under the Cooperative Agreement grant that included a project requesting funding for FY 14-16 that continues characterization of benthic habitat and fauna in the Oculina Experimental Closed Area and the Marine Protected Areas.

Council staff provided an overview of recommendations developed during the Habitat and Environmental Protection AP meeting held at FWRI in St. Petersburg, Florida on November 5-6th, 2013. The AP provided input for the Committee's consideration on revised Essential Fish Habitat Policy Statements for Aquaculture, In-stream Flow, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation and Estuarine Invasive Species. Additionally, the AP is reviewing and updating the Energy Policy, Beach Dredge and Fill Policy and will further develop two new policy statements on Artificial Reefs and Restoration and provide those for Council consideration as completed. Further, the Committee received an update on the development process for the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) II. Council staff also provided an update on plans for a Climate and Governance Workshop to be held in March 2014.

The following motions were developed during the joint Committee session.

MOTIONS

- 1. DIRECTION TO STAFF TO MAP THE COORDINATES SUBMITTED BY MIKE MERRIFIELD THAT CHANGE LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE POINTS:
OPTION 1: POINTS 16-25
OPTION 2: POINTS 20-25
BRING NEW OPTIONS TO BE REVIEWED BY THE COUNCIL AT THE MARCH MEETING.
APPROVED BY JOINT COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

**2. ACCEPT THE HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AP
RECOMMENDATIONS AND MOVE FORWARD.
APPROVED BY JOINT COMMITTEE
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

Habitat and Environmental Protection AP Recommendation: Merge the estuarine and marine policy statements to reduce duplication and address species like lionfish which are now being found in both marine and estuarine habitats.

Habitat and Environmental Protection AP Recommendation: Direct the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel to expand the existing in-stream flow policy statement addressing excessive freshwater discharge, freshwater withdrawals, and diversions of flow into/from rivers, estuaries and marine systems and the impacts on fish, fish habitat and fisheries.

Habitat and Environmental Protection AP Recommendation: Direct the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel to explore development of a new EFH policy statement to address the impacts of anthropogenic sound on fish, fish habitat and fisheries.

DRAFT TIMING & TASK

**MOTION: ADOPT THE TIMING AND TASK ITEMS AS PRESENTED
APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

- A. Develop GIS information for the Council's review during the March 2014 Council meeting. New GIS options relate to a northern extension of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern and are based on coordinates provided by Mike Merrifield.
- B. The Committee provided direction to staff to update several Council policy statements. Staff will merge the estuarine and marine policy statements; work with the Habitat AP to expand the in-stream flow policy statement; and explore development of a new EFH policy statement.

**Ecosystem-Based Management
Committee Members**

Doug Haymans, Chair
Anna Beckwith
Chris Conklin
Dr. Michelle Duval
Dr. Wilson Laney
Jessica McCawley
Charlie Phillips
Robert Beal

**Habitat and Environmental Protection
Committee Members**

Dr. Wilson Laney, Chair
Anna Beckwith
Chris Conklin
LT Morgan Fowler
Doug Haymans
John Jolley
Charlie Phillips
Robert Beal