

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

JOINT ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEES

**Hilton Wilmington Riverside Hotel
Wilmington, NC**

December 3, 2013

SUMMARY MINUTES

Ecosystem-Based Management Committee Members:

Doug Haymans, Chair
Chris Conklin
Dr. Wilson Laney
Charlie Phillips

Anna Beckwith
Dr. Michelle Duval
Jessica McCawley

Habitat & Environmental Protection Committee

Dr. Wilson Laney, Chair
Chris Conklin
Doug Haymans
Charlie Phillips

Anna Beckwith
Lt. Morgan Fowler
John Jolley

Council Members:

Ben Hartig
Zack Bowen
Dr. Roy Crabtree

Mel Bell
Jack Cox
David Cupka

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood
Roger Pugliese
Kim Iverson
Dr. Mike Errigo
Myra Brouwer
Julie O'Dell
Dr. Brian Chevront

Gregg Waugh
Mike Collins
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Amber Von Harten
John Carmichael
Anna Martin

Observers/Participants:

Monica Smit-Brunello
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Dr. George Sedberry
Phil Steele
Dr. Michael Larkin
Doug Boyd

Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Luiz Barbieri
Dr. Marcel Reichart
Pres Pate
Otha Easley

Additional Attendees Attached

The Joint Habitat and Environmental Protection & Ecosystem-Based Management Committees of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Cape Fear Ballroom of the Hilton Wilmington Riverside Hotel, Wilmington, North Carolina, December 3, 2013, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Doug Haymans.

MR. HAYMANS: I'll call to order this meeting of the Habitat and Environmental Protection & Ecosystem-Based Management Committees. Wilson has taken over as the Chair of the Habitat Committee from Tom. Of course, you'll notice on the back of the agenda there is quite a bit of cross-pollination of the two committees.

The first thing on the agenda is to approve the agenda. Does anybody have anything they need to add to the agenda? Seeing none; the agenda will stand approved. You also received the minutes from the September 16, 2013, meeting. Hopefully, you've had a chance to review those. Are there any changes or additions to the minutes? Is there any objection to the minutes? Seeing none; those minutes will stand approved.

We're going to talk a little bit about Coral Amendment 8 now. We'll walk through that and then Anna is going to give us a report on the Coral Reef Cooperative Agreement and Conservation Program; and then we're going to hear a report from the Habitat AP Meeting that happened just a few weeks ago.

MS. MARTIN: Okay, for the status of Coral Amendment 8, it just went through a number of internal reviews after the council approved this amendment at the September meeting. This was submitted for formal review on November 26th.

MR. HARTIG: I'm not on your committees, but I think most of you saw the e-mail I sent out from Mike Merrifield. I think he sent it out to the council as well. I've put a lot of time in the consideration of their request. They wanted us to hold off on the amendment and bring these new points in.

What happened was they had a large amount of their harvest this year came out of the particular area that we're closing in the northern end of that habitat. They said it was something on the order of a million to two million dollars worth of product that came out of that area. I gave due consideration to their request to bring it back to the council for Amendment 8.

I talked to a number of people, I talked to the lawyers, I talked to Roy, I talked to the chairman of the committee, and I made the decision to go ahead and move that forward. I reviewed it and we moved it forward. My take on it was that we had gone through a lot, two years of public hearings. The habitat committee; I guess there were eight or nine – I can't remember, I wrote it down in the e-mail how many different committees we had; but to me I think we needed to move forward.

But having said that, I think you all got an e-mail this morning from Mike about he had drawn some new points. One thing I didn't mention was Liev Vogelsong sent some points in. I gave them to Roger. We mapped them out and those points, in our opinion, well, they went right across the habitat and were up against it on a number of others. Since that time, Mike sent us an

e-mail this morning with some other points. I am not on your committee so I'd ask Charlie to bring some direction to staff.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would like some direction to staff to map the coordinates submitted by Mike Merrifield that changes the lat/long points. Option 1 would be to look at them through Point 16 through 25. Option 2 would be to look at 20 through 25. Then bring the new options back to be reviewed by the Coral, Habitat and Deepwater Shrimp APs at the next meeting.

MR. HAYMANS: That's the next AP meeting.

MR. HARTIG: Well, if I may, essentially we'd have to come back to the committee and then the committee would have to make a decision on what they wanted to do with those points, whether they wanted to reconvene the APs to look at them or not. That is how I envision that happening.

MR. HAYMANS: So at the March meeting we'll take a look at those new coordinates. Charlie, that's in the form of a motion, correct? Seconded by Michelle. Okay, is there any additional discussion? This is in the form of 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 the new points to be reviewed by the Coral, Habitat and Deepwater Shrimp APs at their next meeting. I think there is a bit of clarification that needs to happen there. It is to bring them back to the council at its March meeting for further discussion.

MS. MARTIN: So this motion assumes that the APs will review this before the March meeting; just so I understand that correctly?

MR. HAYMANS: No; it is going to come before this committee first to decide whether to move them forward to the APs. Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: Just for my edification; if we considered this in March and wanted to move forward with it; do we have to take it back out to the APs because it is still within kind of the originally considered set of points or boxes that the AP discussed? Would we have to take it to the AP?

MR. HAYMANS: Is there someone who knows the answer to that question? Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Monica, help me with this one, but as far as I know there is no explicit requirement anywhere that says that you have to take something to the AP; so it seems to me it is something that would be at your discretion.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, they're advisory to the council; so I think it is up to you as to when you decide what you want them to look at. I'll look at your SOPPs in the meantime to see if they establish any sort of process that you've all set out that you should follow. To my knowledge, Roy is right; it is up to the council.

DR. CRABTREE: Just following up on Anna, if it is true that this was within the range of things they've already reviewed and has advised us on; then I think that would be more reason why you could move more quickly. If you are going to come in and make a change, I think the key thing here is to be able to document what the new information is that you're relying on and why you're changing something that you just put in place.

MR. MAHOOD: Every time we've dealt with these types of closures and MPAs and things, we have included a number of APs or the appropriate APs; and there has been a lot of back and forth and give and take. I think it would be perceived – depending on which way we went, it would be perceived by one group or the other, if we don't pull them in and talk to them, that we're not following our procedures that we've followed in the past.

I think if you remember, one time we got a lot of pushback from I think it was the Deepwater Shrimp AP, Roger, where they felt like they had been left out of the loop as far as having a specific meeting themselves to look at one of the issues. It stirred up quite a bit relative to that. That is one thing.

The other is when we get to the Executive Finance Committee, we're going to talk about planning and what we are doing; so I would ask before you decide what timeframe you want this to move on, we wait until that point where we're looking at everything to where you can decide on what some priorities are and maybe what are lesser priorities. To just say this is going to move ahead quickly, it might change when we get to the Executive Finance Committee.

MR. HAYMANS: Thank you, Bob. Charlie, if you look at the screen there; would you mind if we removed everything after the March meeting? Okay, so we're striking "and the Coral, Habitat and Deepwater Shrimp APs at that their next meeting". **The motion is 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. Is there any additional discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion passes.** We will certainly have a lot more discussion once we see those points from you guys in March. Okay, Anna, I think we have a report on your cooperative agreement.

MS. MARTIN: This is an overview in reference Attachment 1 in the Joint Ecosystem/Habitat Briefing Book materials. We have a cooperative agreement established with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program. This is a council grant that includes not only a staff position to work on deepwater coral management issues; but it also includes projects that relate to management of coral and coral reef fisheries as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000.

What I wanted to do was to provide you with a quick synopsis of a few of the projects that have been included during the past few funding cycles under the coral grant and update you with what we have recently submitted in November for the most recent iteration of the coral grant for Fiscal Year '14 through '16. In Fiscal Year 2009 the council's coral grant included the Southeast Area Deep Sea Coral Project; otherwise known as SEADESC.

The work was undertaken by Steve Ross from the UNC-Wilmington, who also serves on the Coral AP. The goals of this project were to characterize the deep sea corals and other shelf and slope habitats and specifically improve documentation of how these ecosystems are documented after field surveys.

A resourceful output from this project was the data logs to document the ROV dives. This is something that NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program is now utilizing with their deep sea coral surveys throughout the country. On this slide, the figure on the left illustrates the 68 coral dives where submersible ROV data were obtained for the SEADESC logs under this project. This is representative from years 2005 to 2010.

I know that is a little hard to see on the screen back there so I have will have Mike send these few slides around. The numbers on the map on the left refer to the number of dives clustered in a specific area. The figure on the right is an actual SEADESC log entry. This was the format that was developed under this Coral Grant Project that is used now to describe habitats from the coral surveys.

MR. PUGLIESE: Just a quick comment to that; one of the things that is really important about what has happened with SEADESC is that was one of the first times where – remember, our initial discussions about even getting those types of things together is to get cruise reports literally almost immediately after the cruises; so that if you have spatial information, you have focused information on some species, we can actually get it and integrate it directly into our deliberations at the council level.

If we are looking at something, we can quickly get some of that information. That is something that historically has not happened in these long-term efforts. They usually developed, the information is put together and in two, three, four years down the road we get a product. Here it is initially getting initial looks at the habitat species and some of the spatial characterization and GIS. We have to get some of that; but a lot of what you saw yesterday actually has the SEADESC locations and the intention is to have all of those reports and then ultimately have the finer resolution FIS integrated into it.

MR. HARTIG: Roger, is there any hope, maybe, of nudging these people into Points 16 through – in that area that we're talking about that the rock shrimpers would like to trawl in. Is this an ongoing survey this year that is going to take place or no?

MR. PUGLIESE: Actually this funding is for a later funding. One of the things you're talking about here, though, is something that I've been trying to pursue with our collaboration with the Ocean Observing Association, SECOORA, an opportunity to ultimately come up with deployable assets.

If we have something like this very specifically come up that we could tap in on wherever it is housed, with Harbor Branch, with one of the partners, that we need to at least have a baseline survey of this type of thing and do the logistics to do it; because to try to connect it into established programs or to get it into, say, the NOAA cruise schedule, that is almost impossible

nowadays; that would at least provide some mechanism to have more of a direct response capability for this type – and that is exactly what I was hoping in the future.

I think it is coming together, especially with the costs, et cetera, coming down on a lot of the technologies and some of the newer AUVs being deployable for longer periods of time. But with this one specifically, the timeframe I think it is going to be in advance of what we would need that kind of information. I'm literally going to be leaving and going to the board meetings with SECOOR and I'm going to reiterate this opportunity to really provide more immediate use type of capability; so we maybe we could actually see something.

MS. MARTIN: In Fiscal Year 2010 the council's coral grant included a project that was spearheaded by Sandra Brooke. She also serves on the Coral AP. This was a surveillance and enforcement of federal fisheries in the Southeast U.S.; and her focus was primarily on the Coral HAPCs. This was something she presented her project results to the Law Enforcement Committee during the council meeting in December of 2011.

This was a project that conducted a review of federal and state law enforcement assets to see what types of surveillance are being used. She also included a report of emerging technologies. She held a workshop with law enforcement agency representatives and managers from the state and federal levels in July of 2011.

The outputs from this project were production of workshop summary documents, law enforcement training materials and an options paper outlining potential solutions. These are all projects that are not currently under the coral grant; but the final reports are something if any of you are interested in being distributed, we can certainly do that again.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, I would; I would like to see that again. Is this included in our reference materials for snapper grouper?

MS. MARTIN: The SERMA Project?

MR. HARTIG: Sandra Brooke's work with the law enforcement; that is an important part of –

MS. MARTIN: It has been before; I don't know that it is in the briefing book for this meeting, the SERMA Project.

MR. HARTIG: If you can send that around, I think it would be helpful in our discussions later.

MS. MARTIN: Okay, absolutely. Okay, moving on, in Fiscal Year 2011 to 2013, this was the first time the Coral Reef Conservation Program requested proposals for three-year projects. The grant has been operating on this three-year schedule since. Two projects were included under this grant. It is currently ongoing; and the funded period for these two projects wraps up in September of next year.

Project 1 continues work in the Deepwater MPAs. This is the characterization of benthic habitat and fauna in the MPAs and also the Coral HAPCs. This is a unique partnership with folks at the

science center, Andy David and Stacey Harter in particular; and also with John Reed, who is a deepwater coral scientist at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic; and he is also serves on the Coral Advisory Panel. John's participation in the study allows for a characterization of the deepwater coral and sponge habitats; specifically under this project, the Stetson-Miami Terrace and the sites of the Portales Terrace; and sites of northern Florida that were proposed for extension under Coral Amendment 8.

Stacey will be here for the Snapper Grouper Committee later today and tomorrow, I believe, to talk about the results from the MPA work. She will be reviewing with you the details on this particular project. The field work component for the MPA assessment has taken place during the month of July each summer under the coral grant.

The figure on the left indicates the 2012 field work. This was July 6th through the 19th, and it shows you where the 37 ROV dive sites were located. The maps on the right show you the 2013 field work – this was this past summer, July 1st through the 12th – and the 33 ROV dive locations that took place during that field survey.

The second project under the current grant is providing a full description of the octocoral fishery, more information on the biology of harvested gorgonian species and an analysis of data collection programs. They also have included development of research plans under the proposal. As you recall, CE-BA 2 resulted in changes in how this fishery is managed, and now FWC manages octocorals in federal waters off of Florida.

Under this project they are developing an online identification guide. They're currently conducting some field work for marine life collectors; and an octocoral life history is being chronicled. These are project results that the council will receive once this project wraps.

MR. PUGLIESE: One of the aspects of the project that was really important going in and while it is focused on describing the fishery off the state of Florida; I think it was really also intended to get to the idea of the descriptive capability of the octocoral systems and how they served as essential fish habitat in the area.

While managed by the state of Florida, they still serve as essential fish habitat throughout the entire South Atlantic Region; and then even more specifically and more significantly as you move north outside the jurisdiction; so I think getting that more refined information on those and the characteristic of how it connects into the hard-bottom systems is another outcome I think that is going to get used and drawn on as we refine some of that information in, say, Fishery Ecosystem Plan 2.

MR. HARTIG: I'm not on your committee; but in the previous study, the Harter and David work, we talking a little bit I think at the last meeting about the timing and when they try and do that and trying to move into a different time of the year; but now that I look at July as their main time of work, that is probably the worse month to try and sample deepwater complex because of the cold water upwellings that we have.

I think Rusty will verify that; July is the cold water month that we see most of those upwellings. Of course, they occur on almost a biweekly basis during some parts of the summer now, which is a major change in the area where we are. If we can move that back a little bit somehow, that would help. I know those cruises are tough to do; and I know we talked about that.

MR. HAYMANS: Are there any additional questions? Anna.

MS. MARTIN: Just one more here; this slide gives information on the coral grant that we recently submitted in November. This again is for Fiscal Year '14 through '16; so the project work would begin next October. It does include a continuation of the ongoing research in the MPAs and Coral HAPCs with some modification for the next funding cycle.

This will continue annual monitoring of the existing Deepwater MPAs, conducting the ROV dives inside and adjacent to these closed areas. Additionally, the project proposes to complete the multibeam mapping of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area and continue the habitat characterization through ROV dives inside the Oculina Experimental Closed Area.

For each year that this project would be funded, the abundance and distribution of reef fish will be determined inside the Experimental Closed Areas as well as in the MPAs. Multibeam mapping, as with the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, will also continue in the marine protected areas.

As the committee is familiar, as required under Snapper Grouper Amendment 13A, a re-evaluation of the effectiveness of the regulations within the Oculina Experimental Closed Area is due to the council in 2014. The impetus behind having the Oculina Experimental Closed Area as a priority site for this project is timely; and so data from this research will be used in the council's discussions on the Experimental Closed Area next year. Those are in sum a short synopsis of the projects we have in the recent past and just now submitted for future consideration under the coral grant.

MR. HARTIG: Anna, I was interested in reading through the snapper grouper stuff about the coral research that had been done. They put out a number of reef balls, they had attached coral to a number of disks, they had put out the blocks to see if we could get recruitment in different areas of the places that had different kinds of – well, we had real good coral growth in some areas and not in others; and you were trying to characterize recruitment based on maybe something different happening in those habitats.

Is any followup going on to any of that research? Those things have been out there now since 2000, early nineties for some of that. We should have some real information about oculina, resettlement rates and growth, based on what was put out there at that time by now from Koenig's work.

MS. MARTIN: That's a good question, Ben, and certainly something that an update to the evaluation plan would touch on. I know that Myra has reminded me that Chris Koenig has applied for a couple of grant proposals to do exactly what you're talking about, to finish this work, but those were not funded. It is kind of an issue throughout that funding limitations have

precluded a lot of the research projects that were identified under the evaluation plan in 2007. A short answer is not much work as far as followup has been done.

MR. HARTIG: Somehow to get at least the ROVs through that area from Harter and David to do a couple of transects when they do the OECA's approved project. I don't know how hard that is to get exactly on where you need to be with an ROV. I think most of that was done with submersible work when it was done; and that is a lot different than trying to get on an exact spot with an ROV.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes; especially with the current systems they have; they had tried to do – well, they did the lander and lost a lander site within the area for I don't know how long that was, a half a year or something. There are some challenges with trying to run those; but it needs to be done.

You're right; that has been a long period of time and the problem has been that it is not just once that Chris has run into that wall. He submitted those types of proposals a number of years in a row in different places and they just have not had the traction, which makes no sense given the importance of this area.

MR. HAYMANS: Okay, to move us forward, I think we'll turn it over to Wilson to have a discussion about the Habitat AP Meeting.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, the Habitat AP met in St. Petersburg the first week in November; and I believe Roger is going to give us a summary and overview of that meeting. Basically, we will be looking at some updated habitat policies that we've revised. Different committee members or AP members have taken the lead on those; so Roger is going to review those and then we have some recommendations to consider from the Habitat and Environmental Protection AP.

MR. PUGLIESE: As Wilson indicated, we did have the last Habitat AP meeting at FWRI. It was intentional because one of the things we wanted to try to do was to blend not only the meeting but also an opportunity to work with and use their training facilities to walk through some of the material you looked at yesterday in terms of the websites and the online ArcGIS, Atlas Systems and the eco-species.

They had hands-on access and use and training in being able to use those systems. The AP, as indicated, had some specific focus areas; continue development of we drafted essential fish habitat policy statements that we initiated at the last AP; and then looking at priorities into 2014 for completion. We could only get to some of those.

There is a timeline to try to complete the rest as well as looking at new ones; also, some initial beginning to look at some habitat modeling and trying to begin the connection between oceanographic modeling and fisheries model activities, presentations on those. The training sessions on the use of the digital dashboard eco-species; also, it is kicking off – really the latest look in the beginning of the fishery policy statement development was adding in some of the policy revisions that will go into the fishery ecosystem plans; so kicking off a discussion on the

timeline and idea of what will be accomplished in 2014 and beyond with the update to FEP and the development of FEP 2.

Also, looking at where we are in terms of our fishery-independent monitoring systems; the information systems; the access and the availability of those as well as fish habitat characterization; and with specifically the idea that will also help shoring up the research and monitoring sections of the discussion in Fishery Ecosystem Plan 2.

One of the other points was to have an introduction to forage-based Ecopath Model that collaboratively working with Tom Okey and funded through Pew, to begin to look at what some of the implications on forage species change, whether climate or whatever and how that may impact managed species; and then finally some opportunities for regional collaboration on the FEP.

The first session dealt with, as Wilson indicated, the policy statement development. What was brought to and discussed in more detail at this meeting were four key policy statements; the council's aquaculture policy statement, the in-stream flow policy statement, the estuarine invasive species policy statement and the SAV policy statement. Those four were reviewed in detail and revisions had been made.

The advisory panel identified the first three as being in a situation that were fairly close to be refined. Those were added as the follow to this description, as more of an information that this is the fairly refined redrafts, for completion by the March council meeting; so the idea is to have this in the hands of council members.

If there are specific recommendations for additional refinement prior to that final draft that is going to be brought back to you in March, we wanted to get it out and make it clear that there has been a lot of work in the background to get these to the point they are now. I'm not going to go in detail on these right now. It was to get them in queue, that they are revisional refinement.

The fourth one that was reviewed in detail, but then there was discussion to do some additional revisions, had to do with the invasive species policy. In that policy, there was discussion and recommendations specifically in here of the opportunity given the fact that now you're seeing the lionfish actually being found in not only marine but in estuarine systems and the extension of the range, that it made sense to more likely – and also there was significant overlap to merge both the estuarine and marine into one invasive policy and deal with those as subsections.

The recommendation was to do that and to reduce duplication. The followup to that was then taking up, after those policies, some of the outstanding ones and significant ones that still need to be completed into 2014 are going to be the energy, transportation, exploration development policy; and a lot of discussion on that about really integrating the alternative energy, other specific issues that are really timely with the seismic testing and a lot of other things within that energy policy statement; and the beach dredging, filling and large coastal engineering policy.

In addition to those two outstanding policies that in process to be redrafted, there are two new policy statements looking at being developed; one specifically to artificial reef habitat. There

was a real desire to expand a lot of the information that is included into the FEP into FEP 2; but this would also provide a foundation for a council-based artificial reef policy statement and a habitat restoration policy statement.

In follow up to the discussions under the in-stream flow policy, it was also identify the council's position on the freshwater flow issues, with Lake Okeechobee and Indian River, and the concerns over that whole issue of freshwater flow. The AP also provided a recommendation that would direct them to expand the existing in-stream flow policy to be an overall flow policy. Right now the in-stream really looks at just all the natural flows and withdrawals and different things.

That would add in the freshwater flow component where you're looking at addressing excessive freshwater discharge, freshwater withdrawals, diversions, and it would cover the broader scope of it. The recommendation is to expand that policy to address that under the overall policy. Essentially one of the key things is you're looking at trying to maintain the characteristic of the functioning estuarine system and the flows that are going to be necessary to do that.

It made sense from the AP to not try to compartmentalize those, to connect those together so that when you looked at the system you look at whatever is influencing the overall flow system. I mentioned under the energy policy the issue of things such as seismic testing. There was a lot of discussion about sound and fish at the AP.

There was a specific additional recommendation to move forward with a new policy statement to address the impacts of anthropogenic sound on fish; in addition potentially of addressing it in one place, to address it across the board. One thing I had touched on is the fact that BOEM did host a Sound and Fish Workshop about a year and a half ago; and I'm thinking there has been a number of pieces of that I've probably provided to the council in the past.

We had engagement from a number of the councils. It was an eye opener in terms of how much – everybody focuses most of their concern on marine mammals in this context; and it became painfully obvious that the issues are so much more complex with sound in the region, and we really are short-stepping the fish equation and the habitat equation of this.

I would compliment them because they really got into the idea of how it affects even things like the settlement of reef fish. Reef fish actually have been documented to use the sound as a signature to find the reef systems or the bottom systems to settle into. Even things such as low, persistent sounds that are maintained over time can disrupt the capability on settlement; impacts on actual structural impacts on ear and sound capability of fish; so you'd be affecting their ability to hear – the soniferous fish to hear themselves; the impact on spawning.

There was some very specific documentation on I guess it was Norway where they did extensive seismic testing for about two years and really the big push for their exploration; and they had up to, in certain cases, 50 percent reduction in fish catches in their region; some placement; some impact. They didn't document it as far, but there were fairly significant changes with the larger scale.

The whole idea of understanding that it is not just a void when you get into that system; you have natural sound characteristics and then how each one of these, both the impact sounds like from driving pilings for large offshore structures that maybe – you know, people think of the inshore piles and the sounds made there, well, some of these offshore structures may have piles that are 20 feet wide.

Those can actually not only impact the local area; they can provide sound that gets into the bedrock system and can send it like 20 or 30 miles on the reef system – on the ground; so, I mean, those types of real broad views of what is going on I think are things that were of concern that it probably should be looked at in terms of – and that is just on some of the development side; ship traffic; the fact that if you look at – say you go to our site and look at, say, ship traffic relative to some of the offshore areas, you have that going right on top of some of our key habitats with some of the implications maybe for migration or settlement in these areas. The idea was to look at that broader context of sound in relationship to fish and provide some guidance to the council.

DR. LANEY: Okay, so for this particular section for the policy statements, I guess we're looking for two things from the council. One is any comments that you all may have on those revised draft statements that are in front of you; and then the second thing is we have three specific recommendations from the AP that we need to give consideration to. Dr. Duval.

DR. DUVAL: I was really just going to add something to what Roger had mentioned about the impact of sound. I had been contacted by someone from Oceana regarding the impacts of sound and pass that on to Doug and Wilson and Roger. The Mid-Atlantic Council submitted a comment letter to BOEM voicing their concern and lack of support for seismic testing in the Mid-Atlantic Region specifically because of the impacts to fish. I'm happy and grateful to see that the Habitat and Environmental Protection AP is considering this issue broadly and look forward to the results of that.

MS. McCRAWLEY: I was just going to say I would just like some time between now and the next meeting to work with my staff to review those policy statements in more detail and then provide those comments back to council staff.

DR. LANEY: Yes; that's fine. Again, that's one reason that we went ahead and put them before the council at this meeting so you all would have an ample amount time. If you haven't had time to look at them or coordinate with staff at this point, that is understandable. They're certainly not cast in concrete. We are looking for input back from council members or other interested parties. John.

MR. JOLLEY: I'm not on your committee; but just one point. In discussions with Environmental Resources Management of Palm Beach County last week, the Lake Worth Lagoon is now impacted as much by the runoff as it is by the discharges from Lake Okeechobee; maybe even more so.

DR. LANEY: Thank you, John. We do have those three specific recommendations from the advisory panel; and the Chair would entertain any motions or thoughts as to how council would

like us to proceed with regard to those three recommendations. Do we need a motion or just direction to staff to work with the AP to do those? Are there any thoughts on those three?

You see those before you. Just for the record I'll reiterate the first one is to 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. The effort would significantly reduce duplication.

Right now we have two separate statements; one that deals with estuarine invasives and the other marine invasives; so the AP is proposing that we combine those into one statement just for the sake of efficiency. Then the second one is to direct the Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel to expand the existing in-stream flow policy statement.

Roger has explained to you the situation there. The existing policy statement just addresses what are appropriate ecological in-stream flows for stream systems that are delivering fresh water to our important estuarine nursery areas. What we discussed at the AP was the fact that we have some issues such as excessive freshwater discharge, freshwater withdrawals and diversions of flow; and while those are often given consideration during the individual states as they discuss flow needs within individual river systems, we haven't specifically addressed the impacts of those actions within the policy.

What we're talking about is just adding some sections to that policy to address the impacts of those specific activities. Then, finally, there was a recommendation to address the sound issue that we just discussed; so that would entail preparation of a new policy statement to broaden the discussion about the scope of impacts of anthropogenic noise on all these different important communication aspects and not just the marine mammals, which is a lot of times where the focus is, but also on fish and especially settlement of reef fishes into their appropriate nursery habitats. I would look to the council and ask you how you want to proceed on that.

MS. BECKWITH: I would move that we accept these recommendations from the AP and move forward.

DR. LANEY: Seconded by Charlie. We have a motion and we have a second. Again, for the record, those are the three recommendations that they provided to us in the meeting overview to revise a couple of policies and to create a new one. We have a motion and we have a second. **Is there any discussion? Seeing no hands; is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none; the motion is approved by the Joint Habitat and Ecosystem-Based Management Committees.** Roger, do you want to finish the overview?

MR. PUGLIESE: The AP's next action was to elect a new chairman. Pat Geer with the Georgia DNR is now the new Habitat Advisory Panel Chairman. The way the panel works right now is all the sub-panel chairs are actually the state representatives; so it makes it a lot easier for us to coordinate directly on how council actions are working with state actions.

It just continues on with that same effort; and I think we're going to go to that in the future beyond Pat. He is willing to take on the challenge to try to move this forward as well as the

move into the FEP 2 development. Beyond that, as I mentioned before, we had the concurrent sessions where we split the group up and had the ability to actually go into training sessions for the material we had.

The other side of the session was to have open discussions on the development of the FEP into 2014 and the opportunity to look at the EFH updates that would be involved into 2014 and potentially most likely into 2015. The timeframe on EFH revision really is into 2016 as a drop-dead date, but this actually provides that opportunity to, as we did before, connect them together and take enough time that it does it right and syncs in with the five-year review for essential fish habitat.

One of the things that were raised in that session was the opportunity for collaboration with some of the other partners I have mentioned before and the addition of new sections into development. Some of the other things I had mentioned is the opportunity – we had Marcel Reichert with SCDNR do the update on the Comprehensive Fishery-Independent Surveys and covering all three of the component surveys, SEAMAP, MARMAP and SEFIS; as well as Todd Kellison.

Marcel mainly focused on the fishery monitoring component and Todd focused on some of the newer habitat characterization work they're doing; so we really kind of get into scoping. As I mentioned before, it was really to set the stage for kind of giving a perspective so that when we look at the research and monitoring section, really that opportunity to expand and build on what the real needs into the future are going to be, the broader term scope.

There are some real key things that have happened since our original FEP with the development of the five-year plan for SEAMAP, which actually does integrate and project in the future – and not just SEAMAP but the whole fishery independent and talking about even needs for new monitoring programs such as we have essentially no pelagic monitoring in the southeast right now for mackerels, et cetera.

It sets the stage for really doing that; so this was to open that door to look at what we know and then also where we can go with both fish and habitat and recommendations for research into the future. The other session that was held, which is again an opportunity to kind of springboard into this broader discussion of climate and fish habitat, opened up with a presentation I made on a new Ecopath Model.

It is actually a revision to our original Ecopath Model. It worked with Tom Okey, who was with the University of British Columbia and now with the University of Victoria and Columbia kind of combined; but other partners that are funded through Pew to look at the forage fish issue in the southeast region.

We had begun that discussion before and that is some place where we kind of did not go real far in the fishery ecosystem plan in terms that we set a lot of the information of anadromous/catadromous species, all the different species managed from menhaden to herring, et cetera, but really didn't put into context.

This was an opportunity to take the original model – and is by no means is the perfect one, but it was the quickest way to do this – to take the original model and refine it with some of the newer information on the individual species, especially really focused on those forage species and begin to look at “what-if” scenarios on significant reductions from, say, if you had climate reductions due to loss of habitat of 50 percent of various species, what types of responses.

That model is being finalized and an associated paper is being finalized; but it sets the stage for opening discussions of forage fish in our region. One of the hooks in there – and something we had never actually dealt with – is the ability to work on the essential fish habitat designations relative to prey species.

There is a component under the Magnuson that provides that you can’t do it directly; but if you can connect the managed species with the prey species associations – and it gets back to this issue of beginning to identify distributions of not only council-managed species, but the prey associated with some of those connections.

With some of the GIS wizardry that you can do, you can begin to come up with focus areas that might be able to provide a refinement, again, of our essential fish habitat. But it set the stage for the discussion on big-change issues that may affect forage fish but then also the discussion on what some of the implications may be for our region in climate and fisheries.

One of the things that we talked about also and highlighted was the opportunity to be able to understand and document these changes; opportunities to work with our regional association, SECOORA, in terms of understanding these changes. We have talked about some of the modeling and the upwelling events and beginning to do some predictive modeling to see what that may mean or looking back to actually document that those have occurred and then maybe some of the occurrence changes that we have seen.

One of the other sides on the opportunities we have is setting baselines. In the original fishery ecosystem plan we have a section that was originally developed before SECOORA, the SECOOS Program, which were the state-funded components that really set the stage for model capability and information gathering for the entire ocean system that we have.

It gave a state of like the South Atlantic Region the models over time, the temperature change over time, the current change over time. What I’d really like to do is to be able to get a commitment from our partners in SECOORA to take that and to have more of an update of that so it kind of gives us a baseline and gives us a real view of what the capabilities are and what the system exists like now.

We have a board meeting at the end of this week, and I am going to pursue very specifically with getting that, hopefully, commitment to take what was a snapshot before and take it to a new level. The other connection in climate and fisheries here was our partnership with the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

I have mentioned this group before and done some updates on it. It has the ability to really provide some focus on changes on the broad regional level because of its connection all the way

inland to all the way through the end of the EEZ. The scope of its area is through the entire land and sea base systems; but at that high level it provides the ability to fund very specifically tools and information that will give that perspective.

The idea is to maybe be able to tap into get some work done on “what-if” scenarios on changes in habitat for our region. If you’re looking at sea level rise, at what point do we lose 50 percent of our seagrass/oyster/marsh habitats and then begin to have those connections into fish models and species models; being able to predict some of the changes in the current systems and what that may mean for changes in distribution or settlement within our region.

The real connection is both the view of the LCC being that their charge is to get those regional tools and capabilities; but also their primary group that is feeding them is the Southeast Climate Center, which is through USGS, they are supposed to be providing those down-scaled models and capabilities directly to here.

So two things you have, number one is money into that system and two is a regional perspective and a commitment that the marine component, the estuarine component and those are all connected and understanding what we’re going to need to be able to do that are going to be key points.

As we move to this next stage, what I envision is potentially looking at – I talked about the initial Ecopath model – expanding something that is even more comprehensive for our region; also getting very specifically some commitment to do these “what-if” scenarios with habitat for our areas and maybe to even get some of the ability to begin to connect between the model capabilities and fish.

We have already got some inroad on that with our – one of the other presentations that was made at the meeting was done by Barbara Muhling with RSMAS and working directly with Mitch Roffer to connect fisheries oceanography and with Marcel Reichert and the MARMAP and SEAMAP information; and specifically in that case with MARMAP information but the trap survey information; connecting the oceanographic information and the monitoring information, to look at variability and change and how that also may influence stock assessments. It is trying to connect all these, but there are real tangible opportunities to connect and get up to speed on what we may envision for change in the region.

DR. LANEY: Let me just chime in here and say that in addition to all the discussions that we had at the Habitat AP, we did have a follow-up conference call on November 19th. There was a lot of discussion about the fact that the council’s Habitat AP and Committee would be interested in talking to the three east coast councils about what they’re doing with regard to habitat.

We had a conference call, as I said, on November the 19th with representation from each of the three east coast councils in the form of folks who were either members of council committees or council APs. We are tentatively planning a meeting that would basically enable the three east coast councils and the ASMFC to share with each other what they’re doing with regard to habitat, to consider areas of potential collaboration.

One of those is the sound area that Dr. Duval has already noted the Mid-Atlantic Council is dealing with. Then the third topic of potential conversation at this meeting would be climate change and what each group is doing with regard to that and how we might put all that information together to develop a comprehensive picture for the east coast.

That is in the planning stages. We, for the purposes of efficiency, may try and do that at the end of one of the ASMFC meeting weeks because a number of us would be attending those meetings, anyway, and that way we would save cost, because I think we have five or six members who are involved in the various habitat institutions that would be paid for by ASMFC if they come to those meetings, anyway. Just so you know, that is under consideration; and then, Roger, I think we have one minute if you want to say something about the fish habitat summary and refinement of EFH.

MR. PUGLIESE: Let me just wrap it up. What you have in your package and what is projected right now is at least a preliminary layout of meetings and potentially workshops. It is setting the stage for again collaborating with other efforts. One of the things that we're first going to kick off is we have a SEAMAP Bottom Mapping and Species Characterization Workgroup kicking off in conjunction with AFS.

Working directly with Marcel being able to kind of link it directly into the Southern Division AFS Meeting, we're going to be able tap in on people's travel there. But it gets to some of the issues I mentioned before about looking at not only the characterization of these habitats, the fishery-independent survey representation and spatial, but also setting the stage for mapping strategies for the region.

We're also looking at two additional Habitat AP meetings in 2014, in March or maybe even the first week of April. We're pinning those down right now. We have tentatively March and in November. In conjunction with those are going to be hopefully workshops on species or topic-based areas.

It is tracking very similar to how we worked on the FEP, but its attempt is really we're going to have groups engaged into revision and refinement so hopefully there is going to be a lot more of a outside of the workshop effort/interactions. One additional one is looking at a model-type workshop so we can get into ecosystem habitat and potentially climate modeling. That sets the stage for the development through 2014 of the refinement and update to the fishery ecosystem plan.

The last area I want to touch on is as mentioned earlier there has been a collaboration with our partners in the Mid-Atlantic. They have engaged in establishment and creation of an East Coast Climate Change and Fisheries Governance Workshop. A steering committee has been developed to look at and engage the South Atlantic Council, ASMFC and NOAA Fisheries into facilitating.

It is really coming from some of the real issues that are happening immediately in the Mid-Atlantic and New England Areas on some very significant changes and allocation issues. They're a lot more tied directly into state-by-state allocations, so there may be some very specific implications.

The idea is to have this as a focused council member management discussion; so a lot of what is going to go into here is assuming we do have these changes, what are the types of mechanisms are in place now or need to be developed to be able to respond to these changes both at the commission and council levels and how do we in partnership potentially work on those.

It is in process and will be held March 20th and 21st in the Mid-Atlantic Region, probably in Baltimore. That is still under discussion. There is going to be kind of a small focused group from each one – right now it is envisioned to be the chair, vice-chair, executive director, staff and in our case the habitat and ecosystem chairs. Then we can deliberate with the chair and council on the rest of the representation.

But, really, this discussion, this is kind of a kickoff meeting to kind of get right to the issues immediately but then envision that there is going to have to be probably additional followup, specifically technical followup for these types of things and documenting and how you would look at climate change over time and the groups that would be involved and a whole lot beyond here. There is a real desire to get in the weeds almost immediately in this.

This is something that is going to occur and the development of the agenda and the structure I think is going to be within the next – at the end of this week they're going to be talking further about beyond just the date what some of the specifics are. As I mentioned, the idea is that we're looking at exploring the potential impacts of climate change and management in the east coast fisheries, the evaluation for documenting and accounting for these, the key management questions that are going to come up.

I think what we want to be able to do is look at some of the main things; you know, climate; sea level rise; acidification, which is probably going to be a more significant issue in our region and the potential loss of coral or structural habitat areas. It provides both a focus on major areas but then regionally specific discussions. Keep posted on the continued refinement of the timing and timeframe and participation as this develops. With that, that is my report on the AP. It was an excellent meeting; a lot of great participation by members. You have a very dedicated advisory panel that is ready to keep on providing as much as the council needs.

DR. LANEY: I will just note for the record that I now have a better sense of how Roger measures time. When we say one, he goes to five; so we can just consider that ratio for future meetings. I believe we had a question from Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: It was just a comment. Roger, I would urge you when you're going through the FEP Version 2, that you look back at the letter you received or that the council received closing out the first five-year review. I think that was dated February 28, 2011. There were some specific recommendations for the second review in terms of making the FEP more consistent I think with the EFH Guidelines on Contents of Fishery Management Plans and EFH.

The Service raised three points which would focus FEP 2 on more explicitly describing habitat use by life stages for managed species; more explicitly using the EFH information levels framework in describing EFH; and then refining the current spatial descriptions of EFH to reflect

the best available data. It might be worth going back to that letter and looking at their recommendations as you go forward with FEP 2.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes; and, Monica, it is already on the table and that is kind where we were going. One of the things that I think is really important is that some of the tools and capabilities we have been developing, such as eco-species, was to begin to address some of these things in advance and the spatial refinement in advance.

I think we're setting our stage to get further on the real issues that some of that or even refined information may still does not exist, but it will set the stage for that review. Pace raised that at the AP meeting that we needed to make sure that we're able to do that. He had actually looked at possibly contracting a review; but I think we've got such an extensive network and participation, that hands-on participation from our members makes this and will make it even more of a functional document. I think that definitely needs to be done to accomplish what the recommendations are.

DR. LANEY: Thank you, Monica, and it might be beneficial if we could send that letter around to everybody just to remind them, if you would do that.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I'll make sure that gets done.

DR. LANEY: Are there any other questions or comments or other business. Mr. Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: Wilson, I think we had a motion to send a letter to the appropriate agencies concerning the water-flow issues from Lake Okeechobee. I think you were going to figure out who the appropriate agencies were and then send that letter out. Where are we on that?

DR. LANEY: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman, I will ask Roger to address where we are on that point.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes; we had initially started – usually when we get into those, I try to work closely with our NOAA Habitat Conservation; and they didn't have a whole lot in terms of actually documentation of previous recommendations or the ability kind varied in the Everglades.

We're working closely with the AP; and actually I have worked directly with Amber Whittle and Jessica to find who exactly we should be looking at trying to do it. One of the actions I think as I said was to initiate even a broader view connection into our policy. I think it is going to be important to have that so that can be distributed and re-emphasize the council's position. That is where we stand and Jessica may touch very specifically on its development.

MS. McCAWLEY: I'm working with our legislative folks at our agency to figure out who to send that letter to. The Special Legislative Committee that was formed has completed their charge and is no longer in existence. Our letter might not be very timely at this time; and it might be better to just incorporate into policy like Roger is suggesting, but I'm trying to get the final word on that.

DR. LANEY: Okay, any other comments or business. Seeing none; I will turn it back over to Chair Haymans.

MR. HAYMANS: Is there any other business to come before either of the committees? Seeing none, Mr. Chairman, that concludes the business of this joint meeting.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 o'clock a.m., December 3, 2013.)

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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council December 2013 Meeting

Joint Habitat & Ecosystem-Based Management Committee: Tuesday, December 3, 2013

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68	Ballenger, Joseph	ballengerj@dnr.sc.gov	80 min
62	Mehta, Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	59 min
59	Raine, Karen	karen.raine@noaa.gov	152 min
58	Gerhart, Susan	susan.gerhart@noaa.gov	51 min
57	Wynn, Chris	chris.wynn@myfwc.com	16 min
55	holland, jack	jack.holland@ncdenr.gov	28 min
50	meyers, steve	steve.meyers@noaa.gov	152 min
47	burton, michael	michael.burton@noaa.gov	69 min
46	E, A	annemarie.eich@noaa.gov	48 min
42	Moss, David	david@smoss.com	93 min
42	Bademan, Martha	martha.bademan@myfwc.com	109 min
40	Swatzel, Tom	tom@sustainablefishing.or...	120 min
37	Cairns, Kalani	kalani1@bellsouth.net	126 min
36	Miller, Savannah	sgmill3@emory.edu	49 min
36	merrifield, jeanna...	jeannam@wildoceanmarket.c...	152 min
35	DeVictor, Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov	70 min
32	Bresnen, Anthony	anthony.bresnen@myfwc.com...	91 min
31	Takade-Heumacher, ...	htakade@edf.org	152 min
30	Byrd, Julia	julia.byrd@safmc.net	152 min
30	Helies, Frank	fchelies@verizon.net	91 min
29	c, m	mec181@yahoo.com	150 min
29	Newman, David	dnewman@nrdc.org	92 min
28	blough, heather	heather.blough@noaa.gov	58 min
27	Knowlton, Kathy	kathy.knowlton@gadnr.org	77 min
27	Baker, Scott	bakers@uncw.edu	100 min
25	sandorf, scott	scott.sandorf@noaa.gov	66 min
24	Sedberry, George	george.sedberry@noaa.gov	4 min
24	Denit, Kelly	kelly.denit@noaa.gov	27 min

21	Fey, Kasey	info@keykeeper.org	5 min
80	L, I	captaindrifter@bellsouth...	247 min
78	Bademan, Martha	martha.bademan@myfwc.com	209 min
76	Morgan, Jerry	b8ntackle@aol.com	165 min
74	Moss, David	david@smoss.com	108 min
64	Fey, Kasey	info@keykeeper.org	27 min
64	Cairns, Kalani	kalani1@bellsouth.net	1 min
49	Raine, Karen	karen.raine@noaa.gov	102 min
48	holiman, stephen	stephen.holiman@noaa.gov	124 min
46	Mehta, Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	103 min
40	blough, heather	heather.blough@noaa.gov	92 min
39	meyers, steve	steve.meyers@noaa.gov	62 min
37	DeVictor, Rick	rick.devictor@noaa.gov	87 min
34	Knowlton, Kathy	kathy.knowlton@gadnr.org	3 min
34	E, A	annemarie.eich@noaa.gov	124 min
33	malinowski, rich	rich.malinowski@noaa.gov	28 min
31	Gore, Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov	38 min
31	Michie, Kate	kate.michie@noaa.gov	96 min
29	Baker, Scott	bakers@uncw.edu	80 min
29	Dale, David	david.dale@noaa.gov	86 min
29	Denit, Kelly	kelly.denit@noaa.gov	16 min
28	Bresnen, Anthony	anthony.bresnen@myfwc.com...	85 min
28	Lloyd, Vic	vic_lloyd@bellsouth.net	50 min
28	Herndon, Andrew	andrew.herndon@noaa.gov	85 min
27	Helies, Frank	fchelies@verizon.net	77 min
27	Package-Ward, Chri...	christina.package-ward@no...	23 min
27	Tsao, Fan	fan.tsao@noaa.gov	54 min
26	c, m	mec181@yahoo.com	127 min

26	Byrd, Julia	julia.byrd@safmc.net	69 min
24	burton, michael	michael.burton@noaa.gov	75 min
24	merrifield, jeanna...	jeannam@wildoceanmarket.c...	94 min
24	sandorf, scott	scott.sandorf@noaa.gov	38 min
22	Takade-Heumacher, ...	htakade@edf.org	37 min