

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**  
**JOINT HABITAT & ECOSYSTEM AND SHRIMP COMMITTEES**

**Villas by the Sea**  
**Jekyll Island, Georgia**  
**March 4, 2025**

**Joint Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committees**

Trish Murphey, Chair	Kerry Marhefka
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair	Charlie Phillips
Dr. Carolyn Belcher	Tom Roller
Amy W. Dukes	Robert Spottswood, Jr.
Gary Borland	Andy Strelcheck
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**Council Staff**

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Julia Byrd	Rachael Silvas
Dr. Judd Curtis	Nicholas Smillie
Kathleen Howington	Suzanna Thomas
Allie Iberle	Christina Wiegand

**Attendees and Invited Participants**

Monica Smit-Brunello	Rick DeVactor
Nikhil Mehta	Kathy Knowlton
Sonny Gwin	Greyson Webb
Dr. John Walter	Shepherd Grimes
Kristen Foss	Bob Zales II
Joe Spraggins	

**Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Joint Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committees of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess we'll go ahead and call to order the joint meeting of the Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committees, and I think pretty much the Habitat Committee is the whole council, and the Shrimp Committee is a few less people, and so a few of you guys will be wearing double hats, I guess, for Habitat and Shrimp, and so I'll go ahead, and is everybody good with the agenda? Any comments or changes for the agenda? Any objections to the agenda? The agenda is approved.

Shall I do that, or do you want to do Shrimp? Okay. On behalf of Chairman Carolyn for Shrimp, we will go ahead and approve the June 2024 shrimp minutes. Does anybody have any substantial changes to those minutes, and, as stated before, if you've got some typos, just get with staff. Any objections to these minutes? All right. The minutes are approved, and so now we're going to talk about Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12, and I'm going to turn it over to Kathleen, and Allie is also sitting up here to help, as needed, and so go ahead, you guys.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so a little bit of background, just to review. In 2021, the council submitted Coral Amendment 10. The amendment proposed establishing a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the Northern Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern. In 2022, the council received a letter of disapproval. Among the reasons why, which there were a few, they stated that it did not include adequate analysis to ensure that the proposed action would minimize effects on EFH and minimize bycatch.

In 2023, the council made a motion to resubmit, with updated information, and directed the staff to execute a joint amendment. That was as of September 2024, last year, and so this is now the joint amendment to try and establish a shrimp fishery access area in the Oculina HAPC, Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12.

Our objectives for this meeting, we are going to review the range of alternatives and then discuss AP involvement for the Coral and the Deepwater Shrimp APs. This is our tentative amendment timing. March 2025, that's right now, you know, and approve the range of alternatives. Hopefully, by June, we're going to bring a draft amendment with preliminary analyses, as long as all that data that is required is available, and then, in the summer or fall, conduct public hearings, review the public hearing comments in September, and then review the final draft in December and submit early 2026.

This purpose and needs statement, you have already reviewed last September, but we'll go ahead and do it again just, in case. The purpose of the amendment is to establish a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the Northern Oculina HAPC, at an area where the rock shrimp fishery has historically operated, while minimizing impacts on deepwater coral. We need this to allow the rock shrimp fishery to attain OY, while minimizing negative impacts on coral in the council's jurisdiction. The first action, please review and provide any modifications.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any edits to the purpose and need statements? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it's just a question. I guess I'm wondering if we need to add something about reinstating commercial access to this historically important fishing ground.

MS. MURPHEY: You're talking about putting in the purpose?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it should go in the purpose.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts to that, or agreement? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm supportive of it. I think it particularly makes sense to add it now that we've done this merger of -- I don't know, and what do you call it?

MS. HOWINGTON: Can you tell me exactly where you think it would be good to add the commercial? So like, for example, at an area where the commercial rock shrimp fishery operated, or allowing commercial shrimpers access? Where exactly would we go?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to say the language again, and then maybe you guys can figure out where it goes. I don't want to sit there and wordsmith the purpose, but reinstating commercial access to this historically important fishing ground.

MS. HOWINGTON: One moment, and let me -- I had to pull up the Word document, so I can actually edit it. All right. Perfect.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: No, and I was just going to say I agree with Jessica. I was here, along with Jessica, when this was done, many moons ago, and so I totally support it. Thank you, ma'am, and so I totally support that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Any other comments, before we move on? All right. Jessica, does this look okay? They're going to highlight what they're adding.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's a little bit different than what I said. I would say "reinstate commercial access to this historically important fishing ground". I'm just trying to indicate that this area was previously open, and it's not like a new thing.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, for checking on that. I think that looks right, what you were wanting there.

MS. HOWINGTON: Okay, and so I see no other modifications, and so then we have -- Here's the proposed suite of actions and alternatives. We only have one action, that is, again, to establish the shrimp fishery access area, but we have four alternatives, three of which you will recognize.

The first one, of course, is Alternative 1, no action, and then we have Alternative 2. This was the original preferred alternative from Coral Amendment 10. This established the shrimp fishery access area to be fifty-miles miles long and twenty-two square miles of area, and then there was Alternative 3, which is retained. It's the non-preferred from Coral 10, which establishes a shrimp

fishery access area that is also fifty-five miles long, but is thirty-two square miles of area. Then, finally the proposed new alternative, Alternative 4.

This establishes the shrimp fishery access area, but it's only seventeen miles in length, and it's 6.55 square miles, and so I am going to -- I would -- In this decision document, I'll review Alternatives 1 through 3, because, like I said, you've already seen them, and then I would like you to walk you through the rationale that the IPT has for this new proposed alternative.

Here's Alternative 1, 2, and 3. Alternative 1, no action, keeps the Oculina HAPC as it is. Alternative 2, as you can see here, is your twenty-two square miles. This follows the seventy to 100-meter contour line. This was the preferred alternative for Coral 10, and then Alternative 3, on the far right, this is the one that's thirty-two square miles, and it doesn't follow the seventy to 100-meter contour line exactly. It's a little bit wider in some areas.

Then there's the proposed Alternative 4. Now, before I show you exactly what it is, I want to, again, walk you through the logic. In June 2024, the council discussed an adding alternative that would make the shrimp fishery access area skinnier. Shrimp fishermen noted that they already conduct trawls with the self-imposed quarter-mile buffer zone.

When the IPT looked into making the shrimp fishery access area skinnier, therefore increasing the distance between known coral pinnacles and that boundary, they realized that that was going to then make it not really feasible for shrimp fishermen to even get into the shrimp fishery access area, as long as they maintain that buffer zone that they like to maintain, and so the IPT then thought, well, let's get together with a lot of deep-sea coral researchers and try and figure out another alternative that we could provide to the council.

We did have a meeting with a subgroup, with Heather Coleman, Matthew Poti, Deep-Sea Coral Research, the National -- Or NCCOS, Habitat Conservation Division, and we looked at two main data sources, one of which was a heatmap of predicted coral locations that the council has already seen, the SSC has already reviewed, we think that this modeling is BSIA, and then the other was we looked at coral locations that have been mapped in the Deep-Sea Coral Data Portal.

When we looked at these two things, which I'm going to scroll down here, here are those two data sources, and so the heatmap is the predictive algorithm that Matthew Poti developed that -- Along with his team, and it was a big team of people, and sorry, but he's just my main contact. Blue means least likely for coral to be there. Reds and yellows are higher percentage, and so that's that color scheme that you're seeing there, and then the circles are actually known coral locations that have been mapped in the Deep-Sea Coral Portal.

For instance, this little cluster up top, right up here, this actually was reported by the HBOI. It is oculina. It was identified with an ROV, and it was identified in 2011, and so this is visually known. We've seen this coral. We know it's there.

When the IPT looked at this and saw, you know, these little coral clusters, they realized that there's this one area in the dead middle that didn't have -- That had low predicted coral and no visually indicated we believe coral is in here from the Deep Sea Coral Portal, and so then we started talking about, well, is this feasible for shrimpers? Can they pull a trawl in this area at all, and we were able to contact the magnificent Chip Collier, who of course knew that the average trawl, or pull,

for a shrimp fisherman was around eight miles, just off the top of his head, or based on observer work. Sorry.

Because of that, then the IPT then reviewed a potential Alternative 4, right here, and that's this 17.4 miles of length that is in that square that avoids known coral locations and that is in areas with low predicted coral locations. They reviewed it and approved it for submission to you guys, for just discussion as a potential alternative, if you want to try and add this in, or if you want to add this in, and not try.

Then if you see here on page 8, we also went ahead and mapped, with the heatmap and the Deep-Sea Coral Portal all four alternatives, and so, again, Alternative 1, no action, and Alternative 2, and this was the Coral 10 preferred with the twenty-two square miles. Alternative 3 is the non-preferred from Coral 10 with the thirty-two square miles, and then Alternative 4 is the new proposed shrimp fishery access area from the IPT.

Then the next step for us would be to open it up for discussion. Do you guys want to incorporate this proposed Alternative 4? It will require the IPT to look into, again, identifying shrimp pulls, how long they are, making certain that we're, you know, doing a little bit more analysis, making certain we're getting the exact lat and long right, but, if you want us to add this into the IPT's analysis, we can.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate all the work that's been done on Alternative 4 thus far, but I don't think that it's needed. I'm good with the Alternative 2 and 3. I'm not necessarily in favor of adding 4 to the document. It just doesn't really seem feasible for them to pull a shrimp trawl, and it's like a buffer to a buffer to a buffer, and so I just -- I'm not in favor of adding Alternative 4.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Charlie, and then Tim.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I was a shrimper in another life, and I actually caught rock shrimp. I didn't fish this particular area, but I did fish down St. Augustine, and south along the ledge, and what a lot of people don't understand is, just because you can drag it, it does not mean there's product there, and so, you know, shrimp, rock shrimp, and it doesn't matter.

They get in places, and they're not always there. They're moving with the currents and everything else, and so to give these guys back their historic area is going to be what we need to do, because they know, historically, that's where they could catch shrimp, and not all the time, but it gave them the options that they needed to go to work. Like Jessica, I appreciate them, you know, doing the work, but I've been there, and so I understand, and so, no, I would not be inclined to add Alternative 4. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and I would echo what you just heard there, you know, especially given that we just changed the wording of the purpose, right, and so we want to give back this historical. We don't want to add a buffer to a buffer to a buffer to a historical, and

so we've changed the purpose, and I think, to me, Alternative 2 is right in line with the purpose, and so I really would not be in favor of adding Alternative 4. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: It's part of the purpose of need, but keep in mind also, obviously, that you're balancing shrimp access with the potential for impacts to corals, and so I do have a question for Kathleen, and I'm looking at Figure 2 in the document. If I'm looking at this correctly, it's showing that there is at least known corals at the southern portion of that dashed box that are in the shrimp access area. Is that correct?

MS. HOWINGTON: Yes, and that coral was identified in 1960 by the Smithsonian. They did not have a gear for how it was identified, but they have a specimen number, if you're interested, but it is stony coral and *Paracyathus*.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, with that said, I think we would be challenged to eliminate this as a reasonable alternative, given that we at least have, you know, reports of coral that are within the known shrimp fishing access area.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Other comments? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that, Andy, but did we not have more recent data that showed that, even though there may have been coral there at one time, there is no longer coral there? I thought we had some.

MS. HOWINGTON: So we do have a visual survey that was conducted by the Science Center that was able to have two successful trawls of where they tried to identify if there was coral in this area. They tried for ten, and eight of them they couldn't do, because the current was so bad, but, in those two trawls, yes, they did not visually identify any coral, and that is one of the studies will also be integrated into our Coral 11/Shrimp 12.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. HOWINGTON: No, that is not the entire area, and that's just two pulls.

MR. GRINER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I had Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I was thinking, from a record perspective, why this potential Alternative 4 wouldn't be a reasonable alternative for you to consider in the document, and so, given the, I guess, information Kathleen gave you on the lack of coral in that area, I would want to hear more rationale as to why you wouldn't want to put it in the document, other than it's a buffer upon a buffer. I mean, why isn't it a reasonable alternative for you to consider? I'm not saying you have to choose it as a preferred, but why isn't it reasonable to retain in the document?

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica, would you like to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I just think about our original intent and purpose of the document, and I just didn't think that we would choose it in the end, and so then why are we spending time analyzing it, but, if Monica thinks that it's a reasonable alternative, then okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie, would you like to add --

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, like I say, I didn't drag this particular piece of bottom, but, just because you've got a piece of bottom open, it does not mean it's productive, and, often, when I was shrimping, rock shrimping, I might set out off of St. Augustine, off the shore of the ledge, and I drug all night one way, and, if I found some -- You know, if they looked better at any particular place offshore the ledge, then I turned around and worked back and to, but, oftentimes, I would drag all night.

It wasn't just the length of a tow, and so, to shorten the area of where they could work, to me, is counterproductive, which is why I would not want it as an alternative. It does not give them the total historical area they had to keep looking and find out where those shrimp are best, or thickest, you know, from one end of that box to the other, and so that's why.

It just limits you, pretty extensively, and so the length of the tow has, to me, very little to do with it, because we often either -- We might drag all one way for a whole tow, or we might work back and to in a short area. There's a lot of ways to work, but just having a place open does not tell you that there's going to be product there. You need to go look and find the product and then work and still be outside of the coral areas.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyone else have anything else to say about whether to remove this? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just thought it was interesting that the IPT noted that shortening the width would not be feasible, but they didn't shorten the width, and they shortened the length, and so, to me, it's almost contradictory, and it's the same width in Alternative 4 that is in Alternative 2, but it's just that Alternative 2 is much longer, and so, to me, it kind of -- I'm kind of back with Jessica, and it doesn't -- It doesn't make a lot of sense, and it just doesn't seem like something that we should be adding as a preferred alternative, based on the fact that they thought the width couldn't be feasible, but they didn't change the width, and they only changed the length of that. Does that make sense?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so, in June, when we were -- I think it was Laurilee, and she handed out a packet of information, and, in that, she talked about that self-imposed VMS buffer, and we were kind of -- I think there was some -- Not really formal discussion of, well, maybe that's a compromise in shortening --

MS. HOWINGTON: In making it skinnier.

MS. IBERLE: Making it skinnier, and, when the IPT was looking at this, because it's all already such a narrow area, and that, if you chopped it in half again, and then the shrimpers were imposing a VMS buffer on top of that, you would have essentially nothing, and so what we were thinking, lengthwise, was, if there was length where, you know, the heatmap is saying that there's a low probability of coral, but that length was enough of -- It had enough length for a tow, that that could be a compromise.

So it -- Again, this is something where it's proposed, because we were in the very beginning stages, thinking maybe this is something that could kind of keep that discussion from June going, that would be more feasible and another thing to consider is that, if you're wanting to really dig into the feasibility on it, you could take this alternative to your AP, have your AP provide you feedback on the feasibility of this alternative, and then come back and, you know, really dig in and have that rationale for saying keep it or don't keep it.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I had Jessica, and then Andy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I still don't understand why it's so short. If I look at the area there, and I look at the circles and all that, it seems like the area could be longer. I'm just not sure why that particular box was shortened that much, I guess.

MS. HOWINGTON: It was shortened that much to try and avoid those circles, and so, if you look at page 8, you'll see these circles right here. They're getting really close, and, over here, they're in -- In the Alternative 3, they're in the shrimp fishery access area, and so we were trying to avoid any of these known coral locations, and that's the reason why that box was kind of drawn between this pile of coral that we've identified and this pile of coral down here.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, this is where Charlie might need to help me. So the Alternative 4, we can move the -- So shrimping, right now, is occurring all along that eastern edge, right, and so, even though this box is six-and-a-half miles, and a normal trawl might be longer than that, or you might trawl all night, you could run north or south along that edge and then move into that new shrimp access area, whatever it is. You don't have to, obviously, keep on a plain line, correct?

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, a lot of times, and not always, but, a lot of times, shrimp lay in kind of a certain depth, and, as you move in and out -- If you move a quarter of a mile offshore, your catch may drop by half, but, if you move back in, that's kind of where they're laying, and, you know, some of the rock shrimpers are in the back of the room, so, if I err, they can correct me, but how far away you are, you know, from where you've been historically working, and you know that that's where the shrimp were, and I think if you probably go back and look at those tracks, those tracks are pretty tight.

They're not a lot further offshore, and the reason they're not further offshore is because they weren't catching anything out there, and so it's important to get back to that historical area and be able to work north and south in those -- In that -- Sometimes it's a pretty narrow depth range. Sometimes the shrimp will spread out, but a lot of times not. Does that kind of make sense?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, as a follow-up to that, thank you, and I think, with Coral 10, that was clear with regard to the VMS data, and that kind of narrow line that you're talking about on that eastern edge. I guess my question then, for the IPT members here, is the -- Obviously, you have the coral that is kind of in the middle of the box. Was there consideration of, obviously, allowing access below those points, and was that not considered because of the close proximity to the coral pinnacles on the -- I guess it would be the western edge of the shrimp access area, and is that correct?



MS. HOWINGTON: I think we are trying to avoid this cluster right here, this cluster here, and then this one down here that is 1962 Gorgonia, and so I think the IPT, when we're looking at it -- Opening up two separate boxes could potentially be an option, but we wanted to open -- Or we discussed only opening this one, because it would -- It seems awkward to open up a box and then have a break in between, and then open up another box, but, if that's something the council wants us to --

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I have Robert, then Tim, then Carolyn.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I was going to ask a similar question that Andy asked, but also reiterate Jessica's comments. I just don't think Alternative 4 is getting to the core of the purpose, which is opening the historical fishing grounds.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and, you know, it's a little bit irritating that we're sitting here even having this discussion. We had this amendment ready to go, teed-up, ready to submit, and now we've punted back to turn it into two different amendments, which was the right thing to do. I'm not saying that wasn't the right thing to do, and now here we are going back again and re-guessing what this box should look like.

We know what the box should look like. It's we're trying to redo this historical fishing grounds that we had already promised -- From what we, or the council, had already intended for them to have in the very beginning, and so I just don't understand why we're even looking -- Why this box even came up for us to look at. We've looked at it now. Okay? Now we can just -- Now we can, in good faith, say that we've considered it, but rejected it, and go back and move this thing forward, like we should be doing, and stay with our Preferred Alternative 2.

At the end of the day, this is rock shrimping, and it's not like there's a lot of people doing it. The guys that are doing it are very good at it. They're not going to be dragging over top of coral, and we don't even know if there's coral there, and so I say we consider Alternative 4 considered but rejected and move on. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Tim. I have Carolyn, and then Andy.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I'm kind of piggybacking on everybody else with that. The difficulty I have too is that we look at models like this, and we have predictive models, and you tell us that the blue is okay, low likely of interception, but there's this dot over the top of a blue section. Well, how am I supposed to reconcile conflicting data at that point? It's not on a red section, and it's not on a purple section.

It's pretty much on a blue-green section, and you're telling me it's from 1962, and so I'm kind of leaning towards a predictive model that -- To me, I'm still in the same vein as Tim and Jessica, that I don't understand why we're rehashing what we already said was okay, because clearly this data existed the first go-round, did it not, as far as the actual dots that are on here, and this existed the first go-round, and so why was the shorter one not suggested back then? I mean, I'm with everyone else. I think 4 is one of those considered but rejected, if other folks are in agreement on that.

MS. HOWINGTON: It was probably that the Deep Sea Coral Portal was not -- I would need to look and see exactly when it went live, but all this data probably existed, but that portal that makes it easy to download and visualize -- I'm assuming when this coral amendment started, Coral Amendment 10, and that was ten years ago, when it first got, you know, started, and you all first started trying to reopen this up, after Coral 8, and so my assumption, completely based on technology, and mapping, and the knowledge I have on that, is that this portal didn't exist. The data might have, but the portal didn't.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so, to that point, we felt comfortable with Alternative 2 the last go-round, and we're still seeing blue underneath that strip. It's not overlaying with the purples and the reds and the yellows, and so do I have higher concern to say I need to change that area? I'm not leaning towards that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I'm going to respectfully disagree with some of the comments, but I think my main point here is I feel like we're getting into a decision-making space about the preferred alternative at this stage. We were asked, obviously, whether or not this is a reasonable alternative, and people are throwing it out, saying it should be considered but rejected, and we don't even have an underlying analysis or any information before us to actually -- You know, other than what's been explained in terms of how they created the box.

I think you have a record that you need to build, based on disapproval by the Fisheries Service of Coral 10, to ensure that, obviously, you're addressing those comments with this new amendment, and so I will continue to encourage the council to consider this. I don't think it's something we -- We may or may not select as preferred, ultimately, but it still, to me, appears to be a very reasonable alternative for consideration.

Then my other point was in asking about that kind of southern area, and I agree, obviously, it's messy, and sloppy, to potentially create two slivers of access, but our rationale should be the same, right, and so, if it's okay to open it up in the northern portion, then we should also be looking at is there ways, or areas, that we could open up in the southern portion, recognizing that it's challenging to not necessarily have a continuous area up and down the shrimp fishing access area.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy, and so I'm hearing mostly, around the table here, that everyone is leaning towards dropping Alternative 4. Are there other folks here that are interested in keeping Alternative 4 in at this point, just since this will go to the APs, and they'll get some input. Anyone else? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I don't see a harm in keeping it there.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, I guess maybe I'm a little bit confused then on where we stand with the amendment. I mean, I thought we had already gotten to a preferred, and now we're throwing in maybe a possible another alternative, but, if we already have a preferred -- We don't have a preferred?

MS. MURPHEY: We don't have a preferred, and so this is kind of starting over again.

MR. GRINER: So now we're starting back over, after ten years, right? Okay. Thank you.

MS. HOWINGTON: So, to remind everyone about the conversations that happened I think two years ago, when the Coral 10 was disapproved, the council moved then forward of, okay, address the letter, address the issues, and I actually then brought, hey, can you help me with the rationale for how opening up this area is helpful for coral.

Then I looked into, historically, how we had opened up shrimp fishery access areas in other HAPCs, which we have done before, but, every time we did it, we did it as a joint amendment, because it was joint Shrimp and joint Coral, and so you were able to make the argument that we are opening up this area so that way it helps economically with the shrimpers, and we're opening up this area while trying to minimizing disaster effects for coral, versus if you just keep it as just a plain old Coral amendment, making that argument without adding in that we're helping the shrimpers, and we're opening up historical areas -- You know, bringing in the Coral 8 and Coral 10 record, you can't do that if you're not doing a joint amendment.

That was then the reason why the council decided to move forward with the joint amendment. When that happened, then the council gave direction to staff to look into potential other alternatives, which is why this Alternative 4 is here, but it's just a potential proposed IPT -- It's very early on, and we don't need to add it into the considered but rejected. We can just say we don't want to move forward with that alternative, and we're going to pick these suites of alternatives, 1 through 3, to move forward with the amendment, and please bring us some, you know, draft analyses in June.

MS. MURPHEY: I apologize, and probably saying we're starting over again was probably not exactly right, and so I apologize for that. Anyway, Kathleen explained that.

MS. IBERLE: A little bit more to the timing on this. We scoped Coral 10. That precedent already still exists, and so, if we, you know, moved forward with an additional alternative, or we didn't, and essentially where you are at now is the IPT adding more to that original document, making it applicable to both of those FMPs, public hearings, and then you guys picking a preferred, public hearings, and then submitting and so I feel like we're not at square one, but we're just, at this point, making sure that this amendment is tailoring both of those FMPs, you're nailing a preferred, and then -- Selecting a preferred, and then going from there, but, at this point, what we need is just which alternatives that you would like to kind of move forward on.

MS. MURPHEY: So I'm getting -- Well, okay, Charlie, go ahead.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, would it be proper to make a motion at this time, so we can put this to bed?

MS. MURPHEY: If you feel like it, yes.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think we've probably discussed it enough. **I would make the motion that we move ahead with Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. I don't see an appetite for voting for 4, and so I really don't want the staff to be doing a lot of work for something that I don't see an appetite**

**for, and 2 and 3 go back to the purpose of need of the historical working area. 4 does not, and so I would make the motion that we move ahead with Alternatives 1, 2, and 3.**

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie, and I've got a second from Tim. Any discussion? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I think what's happening is just some frustration around the table that we've had this entire time, and so I'm going to say again, and I have all of the historic information, and I say it every time we talk about it, that this area was inadvertently closed. Roy Crabtree promised that, if you close this area, we're going to turn right back around, and we're going to start an amendment, and we're going to get this little sliver back open. It was an accident, and we now started what we probably should have done the first time, was call this a shrimp fishery access area.

Maybe part of the reason why it wasn't approved the first time is because we didn't go through the process correctly. I get that there was bycatch, and other things, but, when we looked at this before, the May through June 2022 visual surveys that NOAA did found that no live standing dead or oculina rubble was observed in or immediately adjacent to this shrimp fishery access area, and that study concluded, based on the results of the visual survey and existing multibeam bathymetry of the entire SFAA, that the likelihood of live oculina in this area was very low.

We're now bringing up data, just like Carolyn is saying, of these circles that are on top of a blue area that doesn't even -- I can't confirm, based on a more recent study, that that's even true, and so it's like we have to rehash this every time, because it's coral, and it's sensitive habitat, and I get it, but it was a mistake the first time. They were trawling there before. Like that's why all of us are frustrated, and that's why we're all looking at each other around the table. It's just very frustrating for us.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Any more discussion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, and I appreciate the frustration, and I wasn't at this table when whatever decisions were made, right? What I can say though is you're obligated to consider the information before you, and build the record, right, and that's what Monica or Shep will tell you at this table, and there's been new information and things that have evolved over time. There's the decision, obviously, for the Fisheries Service to originally disapprove this, right, and so all that has to be taken into consideration.

The other thing I'll mention, right, and, you know, I don't disagree with what you just read, Jessica, but we worked very hard to try to survey this area. We got maybe 1 percent coverage of the area that we were able to map, right, and that was because of the currents and all the challenges that were involved with this, and so at the end of the day, right, we're not saying we're selecting Alternative 4 as a preferred or not at this point. I'm just recommending that it still be here for consideration, get AP input, discuss it further, and we build the record going forward at this point.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Any other discussion? **Any objections to this motion?**

MR. STRELCHECK: I abstain.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. We have one abstention. **Motion approved. The motion passes.** Thank you. Did you want to say something, Kathleen?

MS. HOWINGTON: I was just going to make -- To Andy's point, there is actually a plan, this summer, to remap this area as well, and hopefully update these predictive maps. If anything comes out of that, I will bring it to the council, of course, because it will be new information. I just wanted to let you all know that that is on the schedule.

MS. MURPHEY: Do we need to discuss taking these to APs or --

MS. HOWINGTON: That is the next question, and so thank you to the committee for discussing Alternative 4, and ultimately rejecting integrating that into Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp 12, and so then the next step is part of the timing. Do the committees recommend convening the Coral or the Deepwater Shrimp APs, or both, to obtain additional feedback on Alternatives 1 through 3, or on whatever feedback you would want it on, and then, if you so move to convene these APs, do you want to do it in-person or via webinar?

MS. MURPHEY: What is the pleasure of the committees to send this to APs? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, since we took out Alternative 4, there isn't any new information. These are the same alternatives that we had before, and we've already received input from our Shrimp AP and the -- Actually, the Habitat AP, and so I just don't know why we need to, but I'm willing to hear what others think, but it's the same.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: (Ms. Marhefka's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and Kerry agrees. Any other comments? Anybody that would support going to an AP? I'm seeing silence, and so I am taking, around the table, that we will not send this forward to any APs. Is everybody in agreement of that? I see heads shaking over there. I see over there. All right, and so we will not be sending this out to any of the APs.

MS. HOWINGTON: That's all I had, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you. Does anybody have anything else to discuss for other business? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: On that timeline, so is this coming back in June, or does it come back in September? Can you show us the timeline one more time?

MS. HOWINGTON: Yes. One moment, and let me scroll. The plan would be to bring it to you guys in June of this year, with preliminary analyses, as long as the data required is available, and so that timeline may change, depending on what else is going on with the data that we need, but, for right now, the plan would be to bring it to you guys in June, where you can select your preferreds and approve for public hearings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. With that, I guess we will adjourn the Habitat and Ecosystem and Shrimp Committees. We're actually done a little early. Is there any need to move -- Is there any, or do you all want to just -- All right, everyone. I will call this the council adjourned for the day, and we'll meet back at 8:30 tomorrow.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 4, 2025.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
April 14, 2025

Joint HE & Shr: md  
Tue 3/4

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# SAFMC March 2025 Council Meeting

## Attendee Report: (03/3/25 - 03/7/25)

Report Generated:

03/10/2025 09:04 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

564-916-027

**Actual Start Date/Time**

03/06/2025 07:54 AM EST

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Alnes	Alex
Adam	Bailey
Alger	Brett
Amick	Scott
Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Batsavage	Chris
Beal	Bob
Beckwith	Anna
Blough	Heather
Bogdan	Jennifer
Borland	Gary
Brogan (Oceana)	Gib
Brouwer	Myra
Bublely	Walter
Buntin	Jesse
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Cass-Calay	Shannon
Cathey	Andrew
Cermak	Bridget
Charydczak	Jenna
Cheshire	Rob
Conklin	Christopher
Curtis	Judd
DD	D
Dancy	Kiley
Darrow	Jamie
Davis	Christopher
DeVictor	Rick

Downes	Athena
Dyar	Ben
Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Jared
Fluech	Bryan
Foor	Brandon
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Crystal
Franke	Emilie
Gahm	Meghan
Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Gatchell	Courtney
Gentner	BRAD
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Green	Matt
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
Grist	Joseph
Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
Hart	Hannah
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hendon	Read
Hiers	Homer
Hildreth	Delaine
Hill	Kaleigh
Horn	Calusa
Horton	Chris
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keppler	Blaik
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
Levy	Mara
MCCLAIR	GENINE

Marhefka	00Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Markwith	Anne
Masi	Michelle
McGill	Maria
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Meyer-Gutbrod	Erin
Murphey	Trish
Murphy	Allison
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Pehl	Nicole
Pierce	Brett
Poholek	Ariel
Poland	Stephen
Potter	Caroline
Ramsay	Chloe
Ramsey	J
Records	David
Reding	Brandon
Reese	Dylan
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Seward	McLean
Shaffer	Charles
Shultz	Chris
Silvas	Rachael
Sinkus	Wiley
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Snyder	Dave
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spottswood	00Robert
Spurgin	Kali
Sramek	Mark
Stam	Geoff

Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Webb	Greyson
Wiegand	Christina
Wilhelm	Catherine
Williams	Erik
Withers	Meg
Woodstock	Matt
Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
curtis	Joe
everett	Nathan
gwin	earlgwin
hallett	fletcher
I	I
leonard	edward
moss	david
sandorf	Scott
shervanick	kara
thomas	suz
vecchio	Julie
vincent	matthew
zales	bob
Aukeman	Trip
Baker	Scott
Balderson	John
Barbieri	Luiz
Beaty	Julia
Bell	Mel
Bianchi	Alan
Binion-Rock	Samantha
Bristle	William
Carrigan	Abby
Carvalho	Avelino

Cody	Richard
Coffill-Rivera	Manuel
Coleman	Heather
Corey	Morgan
Cox	Jack
Davis	Conor
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
DeJohn	Frank
Delrosario	Leeanne
Denson	LaTreese
Dieveney	Beth
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Forrestal	Francesca
Franco	Dawn
Garber	Chip
Gentry	Lauren
Gloeckner	David
Gomez	Josalyn
Guyas	Martha
Haddad	Nick
Harrison	Alana
Hemilright	Dewey
Hollensead	Lisa
Howard	Lawton
Howell	Mary
Huber	Jeanette
Kalinowsky	Chris
Ketn	Russell
Kimrey	Captain Chris
Klibansky	Nikolai
Kolmos	Kevin
Lam	Sarah
Lewis	Savannah
Lloyd	Victor
Loeffler	Michael
Lorenzen	Kai
Malinowski	Richard
Markwith	Anne
Mason	Gina
Matter	Vivian
McGovern	Jack
McWaters	Mark
McWhorter	Will
Mendez-Ferrer	Natasha

Merrifield	Mike
Mitchell	Kathy
Moore	Jeff
Muffley	Brandon
Nietert	Dessie Anne
Norelli	Alex
Nuttall	Matthew
Ostroff	Jenny
Paul	Eric
Petersen	Andrew
Peterson	Cassidy
Porch	Clay
Ralston	Kellie
Reichert	Marcel
Rios	Adyan
Robbins	Megan
Rutherford	John
Sagarese	Skyler
Salmon	Brandi
Shertzer	Kyle
Shirley	Jody
Siegfried	Kate
Smith	Matthew
Somereve	Jake
Stein	Sarah
Stemle	Adam
Stevens	Molly
Stewart	Jimmy
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Thompson	Laurilee
Vaughan	Nathan
Wheatley	Thomas
White	Geoff
Williams	John
Williams	Travis
Wilms	Olivia
burgess	Erika
lavine	craig
oden	jeff
scott	sean
zales	robert