

Final Report

Protected Resources Committee

Doubletree Grand Key Resort
3990 S. Roosevelt Boulevard
Key West, FL

June 2015

The Protected Resources Committee met June 8, 2015 in Key West, FL. The agenda was adopted, and the minutes of the March 2015 meeting were approved.

South Atlantic Protected Resource-Related Updates

Jenny Lee, SERO Protected Resources Division, updated the Committee on protected resources activities in the South Atlantic region. Updates were given on the Nassau Grouper listing, Atlantic Sturgeon critical habitat, North Atlantic Right Whale critical habitat, Coral recovery plan, Green Sea Turtles, Coastal Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plan Biological Opinion, and Marine Mammal Protection Act actions.

Acropora Recovery Plan

Jenny Lee presented information on the recovery plan for *Acropora* (Elkhorn and Staghorn corals) Recovery Plan. The presentation included information on the goal of the recovery plan, recovery plan criteria, threats to the corals, the recovery approach, threat reductions, and the cost and timing to achieve recovery. The committee discussed the timing of recovery, species range, cost of the recovery, and maintaining genetic diversity in the enhancement projects.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Biological Opinion

The Biological Opinion has not been released. It will be presented to the Council in September.

ESA/MSA Integration Agreement

Dr. Kari MacLauchlin, Council staff, went through the draft ESA/MSA Integration Agreement. The integration agreement outlines a tiered approach for Council involvement in each step of the formal consultation process, the role of SERO Protected Resources staff in the IPT process, expectations of SERO Protected Resources staff in communicating and informing the Council during Protected Resources Committee meetings, and communication standards between Council staff and SERO Protected Resources staff. The committee recommended some editorial changes and specific topics. The committee recommended adding the cost of involvement for each tier and to consider either removing informal consultation language or specifying criteria for which informal consultations should be reviewed by Council staff and/or the Council .

Updates on American Eel Status Review and Red Knot Listing

Dr. Wilson Laney, US Fish and Wildlife Service, updated the committee regarding the American Eel Status Review and Red Knot listing conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. American Eel is still under review and the Red Knot Critical Habitat designation is in progress.

Other Business

The committee recommended Council Staff provide comments on the ESA petition proposed revisions. The committee recommended that Species Status Reports prepared in response to ESA petitions for species under NMFS authority have a similar step requesting input from state agencies prior to submission to NMFS, as is proposed for the USFWS process.

The Committee did not make any motions:

MOTION.

MOTION APPROVE TIMING AND TASK. APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Timing and Tasks

The committee recommended staff revise the integration agreement per their discussion and work with SERO Protected Resources staff to further develop the document, and provide comments on the ESA proposed petition revisions.