

OVERVIEW

Protected Resources Committee Meeting

June 9, 2014

Sawgrass Marriot
1000 PGA Tour Boulevard
PonteVedra Beach, FL

The Protected Resources Committee will meet to discuss South Atlantic protected species, and receive updates on associated regulatory/management actions that the Council should be knowledgeable of when managing South Atlantic fisheries. The Committee will be briefed by SERO Protected Resources Division staff on (A) the formal consultation in process for Coastal Migratory Pelagics and (B) the final biological opinion recently completed for the Southeast Shrimp fisheries. Protected Resource Division staff will also present an overview of the final determination for Endangered Species Act (ESA) listings for coral, which will be available by June 6, 2014. Staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) North Florida Office will brief the Committee on the USFWS proposed critical habitat for loggerhead sea turtles. The Committee will discuss potential action for each item, provide guidance to staff, and address issues under Other Business as needed.

A. Ongoing Formal Consultations

In June 2013, the Council approved a motion that stated: The Council will receive status updates from Protected Resources Division staff at each Council meeting while there are ongoing formal consultations. The intent of the motion was to allow Council members the opportunity to stay updated and provide input during the consultation process.

Currently a formal consultation is underway for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics (CMP) fishery, triggered by the listing in 2012 of the Carolina and South Atlantic distinct population segments (DPSs) of Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) as endangered under the ESA. Staff from the SERO Protected Resources Division will provide the Committee with an update on the consultation and record input from Committee members for consideration during the consultation.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Provide input on the consultation, discuss, and take action as necessary.

B. Biological Opinion for the Southeastern Shrimp Fisheries (Attachments 1a/1b)

In April 2014, NOAA Fisheries issued a biological opinion on the continued implementation of the sea turtle conservation regulations under the ESA and the continued authorization of federal Southeastern shrimp fisheries. Protected Resources Division staff will present an overview of the biological opinion to the Committee.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

C. ESA Listings for Corals (Attachments 2a-2d)

In December 2012, NMFS issued a proposal to list 82 coral species as threatened or endangered, including seven species found in the South Atlantic region. Additionally NMFS proposed to relist two *Acropora* species (elkhorn and staghorn coral) as endangered. A six-month extension In September 2013, NMFS extended the deadline for making final determinations for the purpose of soliciting additional data to assist in resolving significant scientific disagreement. NMFS will incorporate this data, as appropriate, into the final determination, which is due on June 7, 2014. A report with the additional data is available at the SERO website:
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/coral/documents/veron_report_2-14_final.pdf

A reinitiation of a formal consultation for the spiny lobster fishery may follow the final determination of the listings and status changes. The formal consultation for the CMP fishery may also be affected by any new listings for coral or changes in status for *Acropora*. Protected Resources Division staff will present an overview to the Committee of the final determination and possible future actions for South Atlantic fisheries. The final determination (**Attachment 2d**) will be added to the committee briefing materials when it becomes available.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.

D. Critical Habitat for Loggerhead Sea Turtles (Attachment 3)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has begun the process of identifying coastal beach habitat important for the recovery of the threatened Northwest Atlantic Ocean population of loggerhead sea turtles, as directed by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The agency has preliminarily identified portions of island and mainland coastal beaches in six states to propose as critical habitat. Staff from the USFWS North Florida office will brief the Committee on the proposed critical habitat in the South Atlantic region. Detailed information on the proposed critical habitat areas is available at
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/criticalhabitat_loggerhead.htm.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: Discuss and take action as necessary.