

Snapper Grouper Committee Meeting: Oculina Outreach Update

This overview provides highlights of recent outreach activities associated with the Oculina Bank Experimental Closed Area as well as the HAPC and deepwater corals.

Portable Educational Display for Oculina Coral

Work has begun to develop a portable display to help increase public awareness of the Oculina Bank Experimental Closed Area and associated Habitat Area of Particular Concern. Funding for the display is being supported through a grant by NOAA Fisheries Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP). The portable display will focus on raising public awareness of the unique coral habitat area, management efforts to protect Oculina and other deepwater corals, and research efforts to assess the effectiveness of the Closed Area.

The use of a portable display as an educational tool was one of several outlined in the Outreach component of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area Evaluation Plan. The Outreach components were the result of input from area constituents that participated in focus group meetings as well as input from the Council's advisory panels. The display offers flexibility as an outreach tool and would be shared between agencies and utilized at various trade (i.e., fishing/boating) shows, conferences, teacher workshops, etc.

The display will serve as a platform for the dissemination of printed materials currently available regarding the Experimental Closed Area. The display is also being designed with video capability in order to highlight the DVD *Fragile Forests of the Deep*, a recent film about the Oculina Bank produced by Gale Force Films and independent film maker George Sibley, and supported in part by CRCP funding. The Council's deepwater coral DVD *Revealing the Deep* may also be highlighted as part of the display.

The display will also serve to emphasize the various partner agencies involved in the conservation and management of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, including NOAA Fisheries Service, the Coral Reef Conservation Program, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, and UNC-W National Undersea Research Center.

Coordination of the production of the display is being led by Council staff working in conjunction with Karen Swanson from GH Services to design the display and coordinate with Skyline Portable Displays. The display will include a 6' portable table top paneled unit (similar to the Council's current display), two table throws, and a DVD player and monitor. The display is being designed to work as either a stand-alone unit (unmanned) or with the addition of a separate table, to accommodate staff or others using the display. It is anticipated the display will be completed by June 1, 2009.

Continued Distribution of the Oculina Bank Brochures and *Revealing the Deep* DVD

Copies of the Oculina Bank Regulation Brochures and the *Revealing the Deep* DVDs were distributed during the 2009 Public Hearing/Scoping Meeting series in late January/early February. The DVDs proved to be a helpful outreach tool for increasing public awareness of deepwater corals for those attending the meetings and interested in the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 1 to protect deepwater corals. Staff continues to receive requests for both the brochures and DVD copies.