

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Jekyll Island Club Hotel
Jekyll Island, GA

March 2, 2010

DRAFT MINUTES

Ecosystem-Based Management Committee:

Dr. Brian Chevront, Chairman	Spud Woodward, Vice Chair
Dr. Wilson Laney	Dr. Roy Crabtree
David Cupka	Mac Currin
George Geiger	Charlie Phillips
Ben Hartig	Rita Merritt
Mark Robson	

Council Members:

Duane Harris	Robert Boyles
Vince O'Shea	Tom Swatzel

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood	Gregg Waugh
Mike Collins	Kari Fenske
Rick DeVictor	Myra Brouwer
Kate Quigley	Roger Pugliese

Observers/Participants:

Nik Mehta	Dr. Nick Farmer
Dr. Mike Travis	Andy Strelchek
Otha Easley	Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Monica Smit-Brunello	Phil Steele
Dr. Jack McGovern	Hal Robbins
Bob Gill	Ron Lukens

Additional Observers and Participants Attached

The Ecosystem-Based Management Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Club Ballroom of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel, Jekyll Island, Georgia, March 2, 2010, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Brian Chevront.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I would like to call to order the Ecosystem-Based Management Committee. The first order of business is approval of the agenda. Does anybody have any additions, changes or corrections to the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda stands approved. The next order of business is the approval of the December 2009 Ecosystem-Based Management Committee minutes. Does anybody have any additions, corrections or changes to the minutes?

DR. LANEY: Just some minor typos, Mr. Chairman; I'll get them to Joe.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, at this point, since we've got some changes, I'd entertain a motion to accept the minutes as amended.

DR. LANEY: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Seconded by Spud. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, the motion stands approved. The next item of business is the Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2, and I'm going to turn it over to Myra and Roger to review the changes to CE-BA 2 since our December meeting.

MS. BROUWER: CE-BA 2 is now a draft amendment document. We decided there was no need to present you with yet another options paper, and so you will see that the format of the document has changed. What I would like to do is just project the actions and walk through those to get a little bit more guidance from the committee on how to proceed.

Action 1, even though this will not be dealt with until after the SSC provides ABC recommendations, there is a note. Basically, it's just for the committee to be aware that if the ACL is set at zero for octocorals, this could potentially put a lot of pressure on Florida to issue concurrent regulations. This is something that was brought to the team's attention, and I just felt it warranted a note so that the committee will be aware of that.

The rest of the actions pertaining to octocoral, as I mentioned, will have to wait until after the April meeting of the SSC when they will have recommendations for the council on the ABC level for octocorals. I'll skip over those. Okay, I found another note on Action 5 for the AM measure for octocorals. We had discussed this at the December meeting. There had been a suggestion to include Option 3 as an alternative, and there was some discussion that this might not be prudent, and so I needed some guidance as to whether the committee would entertain moving this to the appendix or whether it should remain as an option.

MR. CURRIN: I think I raised this issue, and my concern was that the combined harvest of federal waters and state waters would exceed 50,000 colonies and we wouldn't know about that, perhaps, until too late. We can move this but that doesn't address my concern. What I'm trying to get at is constraining the total harvest as best we can to 50,000 colonies a year in both state and federal waters, the sum total of that.

I'll have to give it some thought as to an appropriate option to try to accomplish that, but off the top of my head it would be something similar to this except it would say the total harvest of both state and federal waters reaches 50,000 colonies, then all waters are closed or federal waters are closed as per our authority.

DR. CHEUVRONT: So at this point you're still just thinking about this; you don't have a suggested alternative?

MR. CURRIN: No, not really. Off the top of my head if it could be modified as per the language that I think Myra is trying to capture there, when the total harvest of both state and federal waters reaches 50,000 colonies, then the harvest would be closed in the EEZ, federal waters. I think that addresses it.

DR. CRABTREE: So it's the total 50,000 colonies, state and federal waters – Mark, do you have anything on the books that you close when this number is reached? I know you guys monitor it and we find out from you when it has been hit.

MR. ROBSON: And we track both state and federal landings. Myra, I think our rule is we close when the federal season closes, but most of the harvest is in state waters.

DR. CRABTREE: But if you closed when we close and we close when 50,000 colonies are taken, then everyone would be closed; correct?

MS. BROUWER: That is the case but the federal quota has never been reached so essentially the harvest in state waters has remained open.

DR. CRABTREE: But why don't we just have a single quota that is state and federal waters combined, and then everyone closes when it's hit, and it would seem that would solve the problem.

MR. ROBSON: I think that's something we should look at and we may want to also discuss that seems inherently a better way to go even from an enforcement point of view or just the tracking of landings of state versus federal waters. We may want to talk to folks about that. I think that may be the way to go.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, I think what we probably need then is some kind of a motion that is going to get this on there. Mac.

MR. CURRIN: I would move that we replace current Option 3 with the following option, and that is that when the sum of harvest in state and federal waters reaches 50,000 colonies, that both state and federal waters close.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, seconded by Wilson. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any objection to the motion? David.

MR. CUPKA: The only question I have would be would we request the state to do this? We can't close state waters, right? We don't have any authority in state waters, but we would ask that they follow this procedure. I don't think the way this is worded we can do that. We could close federal waters and ask the state to close state waters, but I don't think we can close state waters.

MR. ROBSON: We would have to have in our rule that when state and federal landings combined reaches 50,000 colonies, then state waters would close. We would have to take our action. We would have to have a similar rule for federal waters, I would presume, but both actions would happen once the combined landings reach 50,000 colonies. Correct me if I'm wrong, Myra, but I think that's how it works.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, Mark, how is your language right now? I don't remember but I know we've seen it. Is it when federal waters close, state waters close or is it when harvest in federal waters reaches 50,000 colonies the state waters will close?

MR. ROBSON: I think it's the 50,000 colony threshold.

DR. CHEUVRONT: So then that would require some changing by the state of Florida.

MR. ROBSON: Yes, I think we've been looking at that and we're going to have to make some adjustments in the rule.

MR. CURRIN: I think David makes a good point, and it occurred to me earlier. It certainly exceeds our authority, so it would be okay with me if we removed the "in state and", and the motion would just simply read "harvest closed in federal waters", and then we could provide a note that we would ask the state of Florida complement the regulations would also close when that total has reached 50,000. That's the intent, anyway. We can't force them to do that, but we can certainly ask that they do it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, is the change okay with the seconder? Okay, Wilson is nodding his head yes. David.

MR. CUPKA: Yes, that's what I was going to suggest. This really gets at the intent; and if we want to put a note to that effect there, that's fine, but it really shouldn't be part of the motion.

MR. CURRIN: Just for good bookkeeping and as a reminder just add a note that we would ask the state of Florida to complement that. I would also note that the 50,000 colonies, that may change, too, based upon recommendations from the SSC on what a proper ACL for these species or group of species is.

DR. LANEY: Well, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that if we're taking out the provision that the harvest would close in state waters, then the motion is the same as what we already have in here as Option 3; is it not?

MR. CURRIN: Yes, I think you're right, Wilson, so I'll withdraw my motion and just ask that we add a note to suggest to Florida that they complement this action if it were to become our preferred and part of the amendment.

DR. CRABTREE: This Option 3 says if the harvest in state waters reaches 50,000 colonies. It doesn't include federal waters harvest.

MR. CURRIN: That's right.

DR. CRABTREE: So there is a difference.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, thank you, Roy.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Right, so there is this difference.

MR. CURRIN: All right, now we've thoroughly confused Joe, and I suspect he will want me to reread that motion. All right, my motion is to replace the current Option 3 under Action 5 as follows; when the total harvest of both state and federal waters reaches 50,000 colonies, then harvest would be closed in federal waters; with a note that the council would request that Florida issue concurrent regulations.

DR. CHEUVRONT: And Wilson is seconding again. Is there any further discussion? Is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Okay, the next thing, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, the next item is Action 6, which is to modify the existing live rock aquaculture program to allow harvest of octocorals. This in fact would be redundant and so we would need guidance from the committee to put this action in the considered but rejected appendix.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, so what Myra is telling is this is redundant and we don't really need to have this in there. We'd like to have some discussion on this? Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, right now the Army Corps permit – they have a five-year permit from us for live rock harvest – is up for renewal. We're reviewing the permit and the regulations on it, and we think there may be some modifications to some of that that we may want to make. I would ask that we not take that out at this time, and, Myra, you contact Jess Beck at my office and see if there is anything we need to do with respect to that permit, because this seems to be a good place to do that. We haven't updated or changed those regulations in an awfully long time, and we think there probably are some things that need to be tweaked on it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, Myra, you've got some direction and maybe what we could do is bring this up again in June if we need to consider it again. Is the rest of the committee okay with that? We'll just table this idea for right now. Okay, next.

MS. BROUWER: The next action is to transfer management authority of the octocoral fishery to the state of Florida. We have three alternatives, and the way it's worded resulted from

discussions at the December meeting. Under Alternative 2, to delegate all management to Florida, but still set an ACL, Florida expressed that this really essentially would not change much from the way things are right now. Florida already has managed most of the fishery since most of the harvest is in state waters, anyway. I bring that to the committee's attention if there is any discussion that needs to take place.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, the one thing that would be smoother if we did this and, Mark, if Florida agreed that you would close state waters when that 50,000 was caught, you could just close the whole shebang down through one closure rather you closing, we closing, and we potentially don't get it exactly the same. It would be administratively, I think, more efficient if we could do it that way.

MR. ROBSON: Yes, that's a good point. I need to go back and take a look at it with staff.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Are there any other alternatives for this issue that we'd like to consider? I think we pretty much have it covered here, all the options. Okay, do you need anything else from us on this, Myra? Okay, let's move on.

MS. BROUWER: Alternative 4 under that same action resulted from discussions again at the December meeting, and that was to remove octocorals from the FMU. There is a note there that after discussions with Florida this may open the door to vessels registered outside of Florida to harvest corals and land them elsewhere. Again, this alternative needs a little more discussion, perhaps.

DR. CHEUVRONT: So how do we feel about the potential of other vessels harvesting and landing in other places? Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I'm assuming that most of the vessels doing this work are relatively small vessels that are located in the Florida Keys, and I doubt the profit margin and all is such that anybody could competitively run from Alabama or Georgia all the way down to the Florida Keys, harvest this stuff and then run back. It just would seem to me the operating costs make that extremely unlikely. I guess we could look at the types of vessels and types of operations we're talking about, but it seems like an unlikely situation to develop to me based on my understanding of this fishery.

MR. ROBSON: We can look at that, too, because the number of harvesters is capped. We know who they are so we can take a look at where they're all coming from. I agree, I'm not sure how much of a problem this really would be.

DR. CRABTREE: Of the total take, what proportion do we think comes from federal waters or we just have no idea?

MR. ROBSON: It's very small. I can't remember the number but it's –

DR. CHEUVRONT: It's close to 5 percent or not much more than that.

DR. CRABTREE: I wouldn't want to remove this one, then. It seems to me this may make a lot of sense to do this. I would want to leave this in as an option at this point, and I would like to see some analysis that looks at what proportion of the fishery we think is in federal waters and what the overall size of the vessels are.

I don't know if we have any economic data that would get at the issue of is there enough economic incentive that you think anybody else would come in. If it's really 95 percent of the take is in state waters, it really doesn't seem to me like we have much ability or much of a role to play here.

MR. PUGLIESE: Roy, just a question. The intent is to try to address this issue, but the removal of the species actually from the unit potentially could have other implications with habitat values outside the bounds of that area off of Florida only.

DR. CRABTREE: And that's part of the analysis that you'll write up of this alternative so we'll be aware of that, and then the council can make a decision based on all of that. I just don't want to dismiss offhand right now. I think it is worth looking at.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, right now Roy is suggesting that we leave it in. Does anybody have any feelings one way or the other about leaving it in and taking it out? My feeling is let's leave it in and go ahead and do the analysis and see what it looks like and we'll re-evaluate it later.

MR. CURRIN: I guess another way that could get at the concern associated with Alternative 4 now is a federal permit being required for harvest in the EEZ. Currently I think there is a state permit that is required. That's where most of it occurs, but there is not a permit required for harvest in the EEZ, I don't think now. If you had a permit, then at least you'd be able track those people from out of state or pop them if they were harvesting illegally. I don't know; that may be more trouble than it's worth.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Mac, I believe there is a federal permit for this.

MR. CURRIN: There is?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: There is a federal permit to harvest octocoral.

DR. CHEUVRONT: And actually the octocoral landings come out on our quota-monitored sheet that we get periodically from the science center.

MR. CURRIN: They might be instructed to look at the distribution of those permits. I would imagine that all of them are in the state of Florida, but if there are some from outside, it might indicate that somebody is going down there on occasion and trying to make a buck. I don't put it past anybody if there are some dollars to be made, somebody is going to figure out a way to do it and figure out a good way to get around the system if they can, as well.

DR. CHEUVRONT: But one of the things, though, to consider is that if somebody is from out of state and has a permit, they could still be landing them in Florida and carrying them by land, and we don't know that. Okay, I think the general consensus I'm getting right now is let's leave this alternative in and we'll come back and re-evaluate it later once we've got some analysis. Okay, the next action, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: The next action is Action 8, which is to allow harvest of orange cup coral. There was a lot of discussion at the December meeting regarding the council's position on harvest of invasives and where they stood in the management unit. We have drafted a policy on invasive species that we will go over after we conclude with the discussion on CE-BA 2. What I needed was for the committee to clarify their intent to keep this action. I realize that you may want to have discussions about this further before you make that decision.

DR. CRABTREE: Can you just briefly explain to us Florida's rationale for not allowing harvest in state waters again?

MS. BROUWER: Florida was approached before the marine life harvesters came to the council with this request. Florida had discussions about it and they decided that it would necessitate a change to the marine life rule to include invasives, and that it would potentially present an enforcement problem. They decided to not go that route and disallow harvest. It is a stony coral and the harvest of stony corals is prohibited.

MR. ROBSON: When we talked to our Division of Law Enforcement, there was concern of a very strong difficulty in sorting out when somebody is harvesting hard coral and saying that's an exotic orange cup and that we would allow that, but they would most likely be harvesting other stony corals that would be prohibited and officers on the water would have a hard time telling the difference. It would open the door to potential harvest of other stony coral species that we certainly don't want to allow.

MS. BROUWER: I would point out, though, that this particular stony coral is quite distinct in its morphology. Perhaps it would necessitate some training of law enforcement officers, but it's really not very easily confused. There are other species of cup corals in the Keys, but this one is bright orange.

MR. ROBSON: Well, it's still an issue with the mechanism of harvesting could result in the incidental take of other stony coral and I think that's the main concern. It would be hard to keep a lid on that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, does anybody want to suggest any changes or anything? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I guess perhaps if we could table the discussion on this until after we go over the invasive species policy, that would give the committee a little bit more information to make their decision on whether to keep this action or not. There has been some recent research done on orange cup, the distribution of orange cup, and it is colonizing artificial structures in South Florida with a vengeance.

It does occur on natural substrates in the Bahamas and on artificial structures very close to natural substrates in Florida. Some say it's a matter of time before this species colonizes natural habitat. It has the qualities that would make it a good candidate for an invasive species. It is not yet considered invasive. I believe it's considered an exotic at this point, but research is ongoing on whether this could potentially become an invasive. It does not have any natural predators in this area as well.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, Myra, then I'll relay on you to bring this action back up when we get to the invasive species part.

DR. LANEY: And just as a reminder to all of us, at the December meeting Dr. Sedberry was here and he did confirm the fact that it's already in Grays Reef as well off Georgia.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Maybe Grays Reef is becoming an invasive species habitat center. All right, any further discussion on this? All right, let's move right along.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, onto Action 10, this is to require that all harvest with the use of all non-prohibited fishing gear in SMZs in South Carolina be limited to the recreational bag limit. We have three alternatives; no action; and Alternative 2 is to limit harvest in South Carolina's SMZs to the recreational bag limit; and then transfer management of South Carolina's SMZs to the state; and Alternative 4, to transfer management of SMZs to the respective state. We were looking for some guidance from NOAA GC on whether Alternatives 3 and 4 could actually be feasible.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I guess I have a couple of question. What does transfer management mean? Does it mean that you're going to delegate management to the states of the SMZs?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, I believe that was the intent.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, there are a number of things to consider, I guess, and I think that you could definitely keep that in and analyze it and let us look at the various ramifications. When I did some research and just looking at SMZs in the South Atlantic, going back I guess that is to Alternative 2, there are a number of things that are prohibited in the SMZs.

In some SMZs you can only catch bag limits. In some SMZs you can only catch the bag limit if you are using a powerhead. Other kinds of gears you can harvest your commercial allotment. It kind of runs the gamut, so I see no reason why you couldn't include this for analysis purposes in the amendment and we'll see where it goes. Of course, if it's delegation it has to follow all the Magnuson Act restrictions on that, and so you would be reviewing it from time to time, but I think we could analyze it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Robert, do you want to comment on this issue?

MR. BOYLES: I'd be happy to. I think the state's position has been – the state's interest in this has been we have invested significant resources in our 40-some-odd artificial reefs off our coast. These resources are coming primarily from recreational sources. The folks back home have

asked the question if these reefs which were developed by and for and with recreational resources are available to be commercially exploited.

I think there is not a lot of interest in – it raises the question is it the appropriate use to have commercial exploitation of these areas? I think based on the comments that we've made both in September and December the state is very interested in limiting the take to the recreational bag limit, which would not prohibit commercial exploitation by commercial permit holders but would simply limit them to the bag. We think that would certainly meet our interest. Personally I like Alternative 2, which is what our staff had come up with.

I think it was at the December meeting that we talked about transfer management authority to us. Actually, we've had some folks in our state senate who have suggested that to us as an alternative as well, but that has legal ramifications, the likes of which I'm not really qualified to comment on nor understand, really.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, thank you, Robert. I guess what I'm hearing, based on Monica's suggestion and Robert's justification for why they're asking for this, it probably makes a lot of sense to leave it in and analyze it and come back and review it at a later date. There are a couple of issues that are related to that. Roger, did you want to speak to some of that?

MR. PUGLIESE: A quick question for Robert; to make the entire list complete, do you think it would it be good to have one of the alternatives to limit all snapper grouper harvest just because the original SMZ was tied to that and the mechanisms were built on that, some of the justification capabilities just to have a complete list of alternatives that could be analyzed, because that's some of the most primary activity on artificial reefs. A lot of the justification and documentation and information has been built to lay out SMZs for the snapper grouper fishery. Just a question so we make sure we analyze the entire suite as we're developing it.

MR. BOYLES: Roger, to that point, I believe we talked about this in December. Yes, snapper grouper is the primary concern. We do have other species that inhabit these reefs; I think the coastal pelagics, mackerel, for instance. And, again, the state's interest is the policy question of the investments that have been made using federal aid and sportfish restoration; you know, the D-J funds as well as our saltwater license funds. I believe we talked about it, and that's why we ended up in CE-BA as opposed to a snapper grouper amendment.

MR. GEIGER: Robert, if it's your intent to keep the commercial harvest to a recreational bag limit, it's going to be difficult to enforce – and I don't want to speak for enforcement, but it just strikes me that if somebody is coming back from offshore with a trip limit or a load of snapper grouper complex and they stop and fish on one of your SMZs, how do you know whether they're catching a recreational bag limit there or they're taking more than the bag limit? Do we need to include a provision in there about possession limits while fishing in the SMZ?

MR. BOYLES: George, I think possession is prima facie evidence – let me put it this way. We talked about it with our law enforcement folks. The way we enforce it is that harvest and possession would be limited to the recreational bag limit. There is nothing to say that a commercial boat couldn't go out there and use those reefs, but if they were in possession of more

than the recreational bag limit they would be in jeopardy of being found in violation were they checked while they were in that SMZ.

DR. CRABTREE: Maybe I missed it, but, Robert, generally how far offshore are we talking about with these SMZs?

MR. BOYLES: As close as three miles or just beyond the territorial sea to I believe the furthest out is probably about 32 miles.

DR. CRABTREE: What sort of at-sea enforcement capabilities do your folks have because it is going to require at-sea enforcement to look at this?

MR. BOYLES: That's a good question, Roy. As you all know, we are one of the original signers of the Joint Enforcement Agreement with law enforcements. We've got both aircraft and vessel capacity to make those enforcement cases. We do now.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay, is this just snapper grouper or is this going to include king mackerel or other things? I could see a commercial guy having 400 pounds of kings and then wanting to, you know – I'm just trying to get the details.

MR. BOYLES: That's a good question. Again, the state's interest is in the investment that has been made with the resources as provided by the recreational community. We think it's a good policy not to prohibit commercial use but to simply limit the commercial use to the bag limit. Again, our interest in this was primarily driven by snapper grouper but not to say that species like mackerel – the policy question remains with species like mackerel, so I think it's important to get this in CE-BA 2.

MR. CURRIN: Robert, in view of some of the discussion that we've just had, would it benefit you, then, to modify this alternative to read "limit harvest and possession with the use of non-prohibited fishing gear in South Carolina SMZs to the bag limit" or are you comfortable with that? I guess what I'm asking is I want to pass a federal regulation that speaks specifically to harvest but then that's going go confound your ability to enforce possession limits there.

MR. BOYLES: Mac, I think the way that we word things in state law and state regulation is harvest and possession. Again, that certainly aids in the enforcement aspects of it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, it sounds to me, Mac, like you're making a motion.

MR. CURRIN: I was going to offer Robert the opportunity to do that, but with his consent I will offer the motion to modify Alternative 2 "to limit harvest and possession with the use of non-prohibited fishing gear in South Carolina's special management zones to the recreational bag limit," if that is in fact proper English.

MR. GEIGER: Second.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Seconded by George. Robert couldn't make the motion, Mac, because he's not on the committee, so that's fine. Is there any discussion on the motion? Otha.

MR. EASLEY: I'm not on the committee but the inclusion of the possession wording helps a great deal. But with that said, you're right and I heard earlier mentioning that this is at-sea enforcement. Yes, we have JEA with South Carolina, but getting out there, whether it's three miles or further, all I can say is don't expect a tremendous amount of at-sea enforcement. I'll just leave it at that.

MR. BOYLES: If I could, Mr. Chairman, again, I'm not on the committee, but I will tell you that a lot of the pressure that we've gotten back home and the concerns that we've had back home to prohibit all commercial use of these areas, and I think we've heard extensively some comments from Roy and Monica earlier that there are issues with that that would be very, very difficult under the authority of Magnuson, so this was our effort to solve the problem and address our interests. We recognize that, but, Otha, there are folks who have said if there any boats – we've had constituents say, well, if there are any commercial boats in the SMZ, then they're automatically violating and should be ticketed, and I think we recognize that would present a host of issues.

MR. EASLEY: Yes, I recognize you're between a rock and a hard place and I sympathize with that. I understand.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Monica, did you want to say something?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, either before or after you vote; I guess it doesn't matter. I have a question. Just so I'm clear, there has been some discussion that these SMZs were put into place under the Snapper Grouper FMP, but it's your idea that this motion would encompass all fishing; so if there is a bag limit for mackerel it would be imposed in these special management zones as well, right?

MR. BOYLES: Yes, that's the state's intent.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So for any bag limit harvested species; all right, thank you.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, we have a motion on the table. Is there any further discussion? All right, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Do you need anything else on that, Myra, or are you clear now?

MS. BROUWER: I guess I would need some guidance on how to proceed in Alternative 4. Do the other states want to see an analysis of potential delegation of management to their respective states?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, just seeing heads nod, yes, they would like to consider that.

MS. BROUWER: Well, in that case, Mr. Chairman, that is all I have on CE-BA 2. Roger does have discussion on EFH-HAPC actions coming up.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Before we get to Roger, Mac.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, just a question on the action itself, and I realize that the action is just descriptive and doesn't have any authority, but it refers to all harvest. I just ask Myra to think about whether with the changes in Alternative 2 to include possession whether we need to modify the title of that action. It's not a big deal to me.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Do we need to make a motion for that? We can just take that as direction? Okay. Anything else for Myra before we turn it over to Roger? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Maybe this is better said after we hear the invasive species discussion and then go back to that alternative, but when I was looking at the framework for the Coral FMP, there are really two things that are in it. It's to establish to EFH and I think Coral EFH-HAPCs, those sorts of things, and I'm wondering, when you listen to this discussion on invasive species and others, whether you might want to think about adding an action that would expand the framework under the Coral FMP for certain things, whether it's invasive species or other things that come up. Then you could do that – instead of a full-blown plan amendment, you would be doing that via a regulatory amendment, which is supposed to be, anyway, a more streamlined process. It's just something to keep in mind while you're thinking about this presentation.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Myra, can you bring that back up again. I think that was Action 8 that we were discussing before regarding orange cup coral. That sounds like that might be an easier way for us to deal with some of these issues. Mac.

MR. CURRIN: Back to the previous comment that I made, perhaps we ought to think about a change in the title of Action 10 because it's not strictly limited to changes in harvest and possession regarding SMZs in South Carolina. It's really an action to look at changes in management of special management zones because it's much broader than that, and that may be a better descriptor of that action. If you need a motion to do that, I would offer that as a motion.

DR. CHEUVRONT: All right, can you sort of word that motion?

MR. CURRIN: Motion to change Action 10 to read "changes in the management of special management zones".

DR. CHEUVRONT: We have a motion; do we have second for that motion? Spud seconded. Any discussion of the motion? Seeing no discussion, is there any objection to the motion? No objection, the motion carries. Thank you, Mac, I think that was a good change. Anything else now before we leave Myra and move on to Roger? Okay, Roger, EFH.

MR. PUGLIESE: Under what was originally Section 4.1, you've been provided two additional attachments. One is a short list which I'll be using right here of the refined information on actions relative to essential fish habitat in the CE-BA 2 and what has occurred in the more complete actions. Section 4.9 is a consolidation of previous information.

A lot of what we had originally there were just identifying the existing EFH and HAPCs for a number of plans where we actually don't have some proposals. Those were pulled out of the document. What has happened now is the consolidation of some of the specific actions and alternatives to address some of the issues that came up at both the advisory panel and to a great degree in working with our partners at the Habitat Conservation Division that identified some significant overlap and duplication from existing EFH and HAPC designations.

What you have in Attachment 1A is the consolidated list of actions and alternatives. The way the document is laid out the no action alternative essentially just lays out the existing EFH designations and the HAPC designations as they occur for the amendments that are under proposals for new action. Alternative 2 then amends the individual plan to designate the new EFH-HAPCs.

What we have is a reduced number of specific actions, and I'll just walk through and what we want to do is to get any additional committee input if this list needs to be expanded, refined or adjusted in any manner at this point for further analysis. In the document itself we do have some of the spatial presentations such as the present deep water MPAs and the deep water Coral HAPCs where they're proposed as new EFH-HAPCs. A lot of that work will all be done and added in as this document gets refined.

The first one that comes up is the amendment to the shrimp plan to designate new HAPCs – Alternative 1, no action, essentially maintain the existing designations. Those are listed. I'm not going to go through those as they stand right now but those are listed in the present Section 4.9, Attachment 1B.

Alternative 2 is the proposals that are laid on the table to amend the shrimp plan to designate new EFH-HAPCs; 2A would propose Cape Canaveral, Florida, scallop grounds for rock shrimp; Bulls Bay, South Carolina, for penaeid shrimp; and the ACE Basin, the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto, South Carolina, for penaeid shrimp, and those were the lists that were included.

A number of the spatial areas are already being developed. We have information on scallops in the fishery ecosystem plan provided in the past from some of our calico scallop fishermen and the more recent research that has been done identifying concentrations of scallops, so we're already building some of the spatial – the footprints of the existing Bulls Bay area is in hand and we're compiling that. Then the ACE Basin has its designated boundary that we are already looking at.

That is the suite of alternatives under the shrimp plan for amendment for addition for EFH-HAPCs. Are there other ones that are proposed? A lot of our areas are fairly extensive right now in the existing designations so this is more of a refinement, addition and fine tuning of our existing designations.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Roger, let's go through the alternatives and then we'll open it up for questions or if people want to consider other areas or something.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay, moving forward, that brings us to the snapper grouper fishery management plan; and no action, the same way, existing actions, and this is some of the most extensive EFH and HAPC designations. However, we do have a list that includes the identification of golden tilefish habitat, between 100 and 300 meters, the mouth of the Altamaha River, including the oyster reefs and marsh; all live hard bottom from the shore out to ten miles for black sea bass; all waters classified as outstanding resource waters in the individual states; North Carolina's strategic habitat areas; Bulls Bay, South Carolina, and again the Ashepoo, Combahee, Edisto ACE Basin; and the deep water marine protected areas.

Moving on, we'll move to the coastal migratory pelagic plan; the no action and Alternative 2 is to amend the plan to designate new EFH-HAPCs including the Altamaha River; all waters classified as outstanding resource waters; Lake Worth Lagoon in Florida; the Indian River Lagoon in Florida; North Carolina strategic habitat areas; and Bulls Bay, South Carolina; and the ACE Basin. As you will see, there are a number of these that are essentially overlapping between individual fishery management plans.

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess I need you to catch me up so I'll know what page I'm on. Back to shrimp, it's like the whole Georgia coast and all the estuaries are already shrimp habitat EFH?

MR. PUGLIESE: The existing designation has a lot of the estuarine habitats identified specifically as either EFH or HAPCs. In the body of the document itself, it identifies in detail the – for example, that's what I'm showing right now. You're looking at penaeid shrimp essential fish habitat and it includes all the estuarine nursery areas, offshore marine habitats, spawning areas, so it is a very extensive designation. When you get into the HAPCs you get into things such as coastal inlets as a nursery habitat.

Yes, we either had a fairly comprehensive development of our EFH tying it either at the habitat, the species used or some very refined specific locations when we first did our designations, so, yes, the most important estuarine habitats are included in really pretty much our original designations. This is refinement with an acknowledgment of maybe even more emphasis because this has a lot of implications.

When there is permitting activities going on, the ability to have EFH consultations, the National Marine Fisheries Service can highlight these. Some of these are tweaking because when we did pull red drum out, we did have pretty much overlap, but there are some areas that are still important for some of these other species that may have been kind of somewhat lost when we did that. This is refinement to make sure that we're covering all those important inshore habitats also. It's a long answer to a short question.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, okay, I'll narrow it down a little bit because I thought behind shrimp and you got over to snapper grouper you have like the mouth of the Altamaha. Are you talking about the basin, the Altamaha Basin, or do you have a boundary of – you know, obviously, I'm in Sapelo Sound, and that's where we grow clams.

I'm concerned about development of 15, the water quality which affects everything. If it had that designation and that mouth of the Altamaha Basin extended up north to Sapelo and however

south it would go, then it may be a tool for protecting the water quality, which basically is eco-based and not necessarily snapper grouper and not necessarily shrimp, but it covers a lot of stuff, everything. I'm trying to figure out what it does and how the tool is used.

MR. PUGLIESE: I think it's getting to exactly the type of things you're talking about. It's used relative to water development, et cetera, a lot of the non-fishing impacts that potentially could happen, I think our essential fish habitat designations are intended to provide the ability to refine activities and give NMFS the authority to be able to use those as they are dealing with larger permitted activities or a larger policy development or things such as water quality issues, et cetera. That's the intent.

The footprint then can be – right now I think it really was tied to the mouth of the Altamaha, but it did identify that it was intended to extend all the way into the oyster and marsh systems, so it was a larger footprint; more similar to what you're talking about I think. I think we can refine that and make sure that is what the council wants as it gets identified in the GIS spatial footprint.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, you definitely need some boundaries because say if Spud's department gets a bunch of requests for docks right in shellfish beds; then if this is essential fish habitat, EFH or something, then it gives you some – we can or can't do so and so because of this, and we definitely need the boundaries.

MR. HARRIS: Just to bring up another side of that, as someone that on occasion represents people that are requesting permits from both state and federal agencies, there are occasions where this can make it very troublesome to get permits for something that would otherwise be simple to get the permit for.

I agree with Charlie there are certain areas where you shouldn't build docks and certainly marinas, but there are other laws that govern those things, too. You can't build a marina, for example, in an approved shellfish harvesting area in Georgia, and I'm sure that's the case in the other states as well.

I think you have to be somewhat careful because if you make this too broad it's going to cover almost everything and it gives certainly the federal government, through the Corps of Engineers, a reason to deny a permit for something that they probably shouldn't otherwise deny a permit for. I think we just have to move down this road carefully. I'm certainly not opposed to it but I think we need to make sure we know what we're doing and what the implications are of that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: All right, would you like to continue, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Coastal migratory pelagics; the alternatives included again the Altamaha; the outstanding resource waters; Lake Worth; Indian River; North Carolina strategic habitat areas; Bulls Bay and the Ashepoo, Combahee ACE Basin in South Carolina. Under the coral amendment, it would include again no action, but then Alternative 2 would include the staghorn corals in Broward County as well the deep water coral habitat areas of particular concern.

The last action area is to amend the fishery management plan for pelagic sargassum to designate – in this case it's designating EFH and EFH-HAPCs. The original Sargassum FMP was approved, but the designation of EFH and HAPCs for that plan were not approved at that time. What we've got now is we've got Alternative 2, to amend the FMP to designate EFH-HAPCs and EFH. The EFH proposal would encompass the top ten meters of the water column in the South Atlantic EEZ; and Alternative 3 is amend the Sargassum FMP to designate the EFH-HAPCs to include the Charleston Bump Complex and The Point off North Carolina.

What I'll note is that Subalternative 2A is intended to track what the National Marine Fisheries Service had actually proposed when we proposed the entire South Atlantic as an alternative, so as we refine this we can pick up the FEIS that was originally developed for the Sargassum Plan. Some of the information in terms of its impact, et cetera, are already included in the draft of this subsection for the alternative for sargassum.

That includes what we've got identified as actions and alternatives relative to essential fish habitat in the document now. The idea now is then to really build a lot of the connections of the information to the fishery ecosystem plan or the significant documents like the habitat plan for the state of North Carolina and make sure we highlight what is documented and how those are connected as well as identifying the spatial footprints to get at some of these issues and make sure everybody is on board of how we've laid those out.

Some of them are challenging such as say the outstanding waters. Some of them are very straightforward. The state of North Carolina has some GIS that we've already pulled in and be able to easily grab some of those areas and lay those out as proposals. Some of the other ones are in terminology so we need to see what that translates to spatial footprints as we're developing this and refining these alternatives.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thank you, Roger. I think this is very nicely laid out now, and I think it's pretty clear. One of the things I do want to find out is whether people think that this is comprehensive enough? Is there something in here that shouldn't be in here? Do we need to add anything? David.

MR. CUPKA: Just for Charlie's benefit because I don't know how much of a background he knows, but obviously some of these areas are areas that have strict boundaries like the ACE Basin and those areas there. When you say the mouth of the Altamaha, well, what is that area, well, originally when we started designating these areas it was done just verbally.

Then the law was amended to require a spatial representation, too, so that it would show those distinct boundaries. You wouldn't just name a general area like a mouth, but you could go to a map and it would show specific boundaries. I think the way the law was originally passed, there were some problems there because of that, but later it was amended and now we have to not only name these areas but we have to have spatial representation showing exactly where these areas are and where their boundaries are.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thanks for the clarification, David. Getting back now to my comment, are we happy with this listing and all that Roger has here for the EFH? Do we have any guidance or anything we want to offer? Duane.

MR. HARRIS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on the committee but I do have some concerns. When you list the mouth of the Altamaha River for coastal migratory pelagics, I wonder what that means. Does that mean you can't catch coastal migratory pelagics within that area because it's EFH-HAPC?

What does it mean and what is the significance of the mouth of the Altamaha River to coastal migratory pelagics? Certainly, we catch right around the mouth of the Altamaha River Spanish mackerel and king mackerel and on occasion probably a cobia. I'm not sure I understand what the significance of that designation is when you get that specific with respect to these. Maybe some discussion about that would be helpful to me.

MR. PUGLIESE: Duane, you have to remember that these lists were built over recommendations of our advisors going back to the subpanels. I think what you have is the identification of a value of a specific area within a specific state as an important habitat. Designation of EFH or HAPCs does not put any regulatory action in place in and of itself – well, in place.

MR. HARRIS: It may not, Roger; however, when there is a lawsuit filed over a project that requires a permit, the people that file the lawsuit will bring this up, and it may carry some weight with an administrative law judge or some other judge. That's why I say it's a slippery slope here.

The other question I would have, you list the mouth of the Altamaha River; why not the mouth of the Satilla River, why not the mouth of the St. Mary's River, why not the mouth of the Ogeechee River? You're getting very specific about a particular area that I don't understand what the significance is of that very specific area in the overall scheme of things. I will defer to Spud if he has got any words of wisdom on that issue.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I've got some of the same concerns. I'm kind of sitting here trying to figure out why – I mean I think I know why the Altamaha River is listed because that has been a focal point for the Nature Conservancy and other areas for habitat preservation. I think we all recognize that it is a very important ecosystem within coastal Georgia.

Like Duane, I'm kind of concerned that we sort of kick it out for this designation, but what are the unintended consequences of this when there is not a clear – a lot of people don't understand when you say – you know, they understand Oculina, what it's going on there. I'm not sure they understand how this would be applied in a situation like this.

I'm not saying it's the wrong thing to do. I just think we need to be very clear about what we want HAPC designation to mean in the context of the South Atlantic Council's activities so that it's clear if I go and try to explain this to somebody they understand why Altamaha and why not Satilla, why not the Savannah River?

MR. PUGLIESE: Actually, as this was the last iteration that's being compiled, there was that opportunity to sit and see if it fell under the case of – one of the other proposals originally in here was the North Inlet, and essentially we already have inlets identified as HAPCs throughout the area. It was on that balancing point where it could have essentially been pulled out and say it is already part of these inlet designations and just acknowledge the value of – I mean, all the justification before, and that's what you have the latitude to do now.

If you feel that is one that is covered under that designation of inlets, which do cover all the individual inlets with those values, et cetera, we can pull that out and it doesn't necessarily have to be the focal, but it would probably be already covered under that inlet designation, especially when you start looking at the spatial designation of it. That's the latitude of the committee at this stage, what you want that analysis end line.

MR. WOODWARD: Not to belabor the point, but I think this is also going to have some bearing as we move into this whole marine special planning environment in terms of now we're talking about subsetting broader habitat designations as EFH and then how is that going to interface with marine special planning and that sort of things.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, we need to get moving along here. We've got these alternatives for consideration and analysis. I would like to suggest that maybe Roger go ahead and do those analyses and then I think some of these questions may be answered through some of this analysis that's going to be done.

Once we have that, then we come back to this if we still have further questions. I think that's probably a good way to go at this point. Roger, do you need any kind of a motion or something at this point? You've got these alternatives. I guess my concern is do we have specific alternatives that we either want to delete or do we need to add additional alternatives. I think that's the real question at this point. To that point, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would like to make sure that the Sapelo Sound and rivers feeding into it are part of that mouth of the Altamaha River Basin. I would like to make sure that is –

DR. CHEUVRONT: Right, I think that is what you've to see is you'll see the spatial identification and so hold that thought because it's going to be coming back to you at another meeting. Okay, Roger, one last thing.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, just one last point; as we're refining this information, we have been working with the National Marine Fisheries Service at the implementation side and there may be some specific wording clarification such as when we talk about have tidal – is really tidally influenced, some of those specific points we're going to be shoring up as this gets finalized, so there may be some adjustments to ensure that it translates to implementable materials in the field as these are used.

I think it's just been that we've had a number of years of the areas – for example, when we had the inlets, the inlets are designated now and intended to include the ebb and flood and tidal shoal complexes, so that is your spatial footprint of the areas. We just want to make sure that as we do

this, any of those types of potential inconsistencies are addressed, and we're working closely with the regional office staff; mainly, Pace Wilbur in the group and David Dale at the region in St. Pete and in Charleston to shore up anything if it will make implementation even more effective in the future.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, thank you, Roger, I think we're ready to move on with the agenda. Mac, did you have something quickly?

MR. CURRIN: Just a question about the snapper grouper section on this and Alternative 2C, which designates all live bottom from the shoreline out to ten miles for black sea bass, I presume that all live bottom and hard bottom is already designated. I'm not sure that's necessary, and certainly is not necessary as defined for ten miles out.

I mean, if there is some need to capture something that's not covered by current designations for live bottom and hard bottom, then this certainly needs to be modified because ten miles may be adequate off of the state of Florida but it's certainly not adequate off of the state of North Carolina to capture black sea bass essential fish habitat.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and to that, Mac, again, that was one with regard to any of the bottom designations. All the other ones had been pulled up because they essentially are – I think mainly we wanted to make sure we brought this to the committee because if there was a desire to have something very specific to black sea bass, this was the opportunity as laid out to the AP. This was trying to acknowledge this.

It is technically covered under virtually all the other designations. It is one that is on a kind of bubble that if you do not want to specifically highlight this at this point, we don't need to necessarily include this as an option. This is something that the committee can say it is one of the other ones – just like the other ones that is already covered as EFH and in most cases as EFH-HAPCs. The way we have it designated in most cases – designate and say snapper grouper for the complex so it covers all the groups combined together so it covers a lot of the habitat distribution into a combination.

Here was one that was brought up as a species-specific discussion. If they wanted to eliminate it, the committee had the opportunity to say, well, we acknowledge that this is already encompassed in our previous designations. The bottom line is this one also could technically drop out because it is covered; you are right.

MR. CURRIN: Okay, and if you need a motion to indicate that, I would move that we move Alternative 2C under the snapper grouper section to the considered but rejected or eliminate it from the document.

MR. CUPKA: Second.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Seconded by David. Any discussion on the motion? Mac, can you read that motion, please.

MR. CURRIN: The motion is to move Alternative 2C under the Snapper Grouper EFH Section to the considered but rejected appendix.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, any discussion on the motion? Any objection to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Let's move on to the next agenda item. We're going to reverse a couple of things on Item Number 4 under invasive species. We're going to overview the draft policy first. We've got Ron Lukens here with us, and he was instrumental in working on this. Myra, would you like to start us through that.

MS. BROUWER: This draft policy, as Brian mentioned, was put together with the help of Ron Lukens and James Morris, who came to give a presentation to you at the December meeting on invasive lionfish. We got together and formatted it similar to how the other council policies are set up. I don't want to go through the whole thing line by line. It's going to take too long so I would call your attention to the section where the policies are stated.

Number one is something that was brought up as a potential option. We were awaiting some guidance from NOAA GC on whether this could in fact be considered. I am going to read it for the record: "In instances where an invasive species belongs to a group of organisms included in the fishery management unit" – which is stony corals – "the council does not consider the invasive species to be included in the FMU since such an organism threatens the conservation and management of the FMU." I would like to discuss this for a little bit and perhaps ask Monica for her feedback.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I have a question. Instead of doing an action in an amendment, it would be your question as to whether you could achieve the same thing in essence via just restating an objective.

MS. BROUWER: That is correct, and this was brought up during the December meeting as perhaps clarifying the intent of the Magnuson Act and the council's intent to conserve and manage, and certainly invasive species should not be included in an FMU.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, along that line, then, I have had discussions with other of my colleagues back in the office. We think that since in this case – we'll get specific – the harvest of stony corals is prohibited, this coral falls within a stony coral; therefore, to allow the harvest of it and any other species that potentially would fall in there, you're going to have to do an action, which would be in an plan amendment because your framework doesn't cover it, to exempt out that species from prohibition so you could harvest it.

In other words, if you wanted to allow the harvest of orange cup coral – it's a stony coral – you're going have to have an alternative in an FMP that specifically allows you to harvest it because right now it's prohibited.

DR. CHEUVRONT: So then it sounds like Policy Statement Number One is not going to fly.

MS. BROUWER: That's correct. Do we want to have anymore discussion or should we move on to Number Two?

DR. LANEY: Okay, so I'm understanding, Monica, that it won't fly for stony corals, but what about for lionfish, for example?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, right now I don't know that you have any prohibitions on harvesting lionfish.

DR. CRABTREE: No, we don't.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So it's a different issue and I don't see the same problems.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, because right now we do have a prohibition on harvesting stony corals, but we don't have anything for lionfish at all, so it's just like any of the other species that we don't have any regulations on. You can catch all you want. Ron.

MR. LUKENS: Mr. Chairman, is it worth leaving in as a policy statement but not toward any specific management unit or species simply to give guidance in the future for if you're listing species within the FMU you make a point not to list something that exists there but is a non-native or invasive species. Can you do it in a generic way as opposed to aiming it at a species that already exists in an FMP is the question? I think it's a very important policy to have so that you don't somewhere down the line do this again and sort of accidentally include a species that you didn't intend to include?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thanks, Ron, for the comment. I kind of think what we would need to do would be to change Policy One. I think up to the first comma you're probably okay in the policy as it is, but I think according to what Monica just said we would need to specifically exclude an invasive species. I don't believe what we have here is exactly the same things, so we might want to change the wording here. Okay, Myra is modifying this policy I think to kind of fit more in accordance with what Monica was saying.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I was thinking along the lines – yes, that will accomplish it. I think we have enough wiggle room and where this amendment is in the process, that if we wanted to propose different language we could. One thing that is interesting, Myra, I don't know if you've looked at the regulations that implement the amendments are in Code of Federal Regulations, Part 622. Appendix A of that part is a listing of the Caribbean Coral Reef Resources, and they are very specific on all the species that they list in their FMU.

I don't know that you would want to do this, but one way to cover this perhaps for future invasive coral species that may move in is if you had a specific list of what was included in the FMU as opposed to the broader way we manage in the South Atlantic Coral FMP, maybe that's a way to get at some of these problems in the future.

For example, you would not have listed whatever the scientific name for orange cup coral is; you wouldn't have listed it in your management unit because it wouldn't be in the appendix that lists all the species in the management unit. Therefore, it would be excluded and you could not have to be going through this exercise now because it wouldn't be prohibited in terms of harvest. That's another way to get at the problem.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think that might work certainly for some types of species, but I think part of the issue with the corals here is that there are so many species, and it would probably be simpler to list the ones that you don't want included rather than list the ones you do want included. I think what you're telling us is we have the latitude to go either way; either list them all or list the ones you want to exclude.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes, and to that your point is well taken. The listing of Caribbean corals is very lengthy in the Code of Federal Regulations, so, sure, you can go about it the other way as well. That's why I was wondering if you wanted to think about some type of framework process as well to get at some of these issues for in the future.

DR. LANEY: Well, Monica, I guess still have a question about – let me give you another example. I'm coming from where Ron is with regard to trying to see if we can't have this language be useful in other circumstances where we didn't basically list an entire genus as opposed to individual species.

For example, would this language be useful for tiger prawns, for example. I'm trying to understand whether that would work or not because it seems to me that's an invasive species that belongs to a group of organisms, which I guess you could say it belongs to penaeid shrimp which are included in the fishery management unit, but we haven't specifically listed tiger prawns, so then could we say the council doesn't consider – are you saying we'd still have to take an action to say that we don't consider tiger prawns to be part of that FMU and we would have to specifically name them?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That's what I think you would have to do, because if they fall within the definition of penaeids, penaeids are in your FMP and they're in your fishery management unit, so you'd need to approach that the same way you would here in that you would need a specific action to allow the harvest of it or whatever actions you wanted to take with regards to that tiger prawn.

DR. CHEUVRONT: But while tiger prawns might be a penaeid shrimp, in the FMP we do list the species specifically that are covered, so we're covered on the flip side of this. By listing the species, tiger prawns are not included.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think in most of your FMPs, Brian, like you've just pointed out, it's very specific on the fish that are included and therefore not included, so I think the biggest problem is with the Coral FMP in this particular example of orange cup coral.

DR. CHEUVRONT: You're exactly right. Myra was just telling me that corals are the only ones that we don't specifically list all the species. All the other FMPs are very specific. If we want the Coral FMP not to cover something, we're going to have to specifically name that, and it's not an issue in the other FMPs. Wilson, the last point and then we're moving on.

DR. LANEY: So my question then becomes so does that mean this language would still be useful for all the other FMPs as a policy statement?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Probably not; it's for the Coral FMP is where the statement is really going to fit, but who is to say what we're going to do in the future, so if we have this as a policy statement it doesn't hurt the other FMPs to have this in there. I just assume we leave it the way we have it right now. Okay, Myra, are we ready to go to number two? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, one quick other thing while I'm looking at this, it says up here the species would need to be excluded from the FMU via a plan amendment. You either exclude it from the FMU or you keep it in the FMU, but you allow its harvest. You could leave it in the fishery management unit but simply allow the harvest. That would be one prohibited coral you would allow the harvest. If you give the planning team latitude to look at that to see what the best way would be phrase it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think through this discussion we've made our intent pretty clear, and Myra understands what we're talking about. I think they'll work on the language. This is our first draft, and I think they've done a great job for a first draft, and we look forward to seeing further refinements of this. Okay, number two, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: To that point, Monica, before I forget, the intent is for the committee to have a first look at this draft. Then we would like to get the input from the Habitat Advisory Panel and the Coral Advisory Panel and bring this back to you all in June with those revisions. There will be plenty of opportunity to tweak the language.

Moving on to number two, the council encourages NOAA Fisheries Habitat Conservation Division to consider recommending removal of invasive species as a compensatory mitigation measure. When removal of an invasive species occurs in designated EFH, EFH-HAPCs or CHAPCs, the council will defer to the Habitat Conservation Division to recommend an appropriate removal method that will avoid or minimize environmental damage. This certainly would only apply to certain invasives, perhaps orange cup coral. Any discussion on that statement?

MR. CURRIN: I don't know anything about HCD, how they operate. I have some experience with some other federal agencies where getting something done in a timely manner can be very, very difficult. I guess I just would defer to anyone else with experience with HCD to see whether that's a real concern or whether requests from the council would be acted upon in a timely manner to accomplish what the council would like to see accomplished regarding invasive species.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, any further discussion on this? Okay, Myra, number three.

MS. BROUWER: To Mac's point before I move on to number three, this was a statement that came out of conversations with staff from the Habitat Conservation Division. They felt it would be worthwhile to include it in the policy. It would make it clearer and easier for them to be able to recommend removal of the species as mitigation.

Moving on to number three, the council supports the availability of grant funding to promote research targeting invasive species, including prevention of introductions, evaluation of impacts,

expansion of control and removal, through existing partnerships such as SARP, and in cooperation with state and federal agencies including NOAA's Invasive Program, the National Invasive Species Council and the Gulf and South Atlantic Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel. Any discussion on number three?

Number four reads, "The council recommend to the National Aquatic Species Task Force, as appropriate, that management plans be developed for potentially invasive species in South Atlantic waters."

DR. CRABTREE: Now, you're talking about management plans put together by the National Aquatic Species Task Force; you're not talking about the South Atlantic Council fishery management plans?

MS. BROUWER: That is correct.

DR. CRABTREE: We need to be clear about that.

MR. LUKENS: Just one addition to that is those plans that are developed by the task force typically have no regulatory implications associated with them. In fact, in the case of lionfish the integrated assessment that James Morris did would probably make up most of a management plan that the task force would – it's sort of just a vehicle to get people motivated to do something, so it carries no regulatory impact.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thanks, Ron, for that clarification. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I have a question for Ron. Do these plans discuss the best way to eradicate, if you will, the invasive species, the gears, all that sort of stuff and how to harvest them?

MR. LUKENS: Oftentimes they do. That's in the event that someone has had to deal with it in the past. If they don't have any experience and don't have suggestions for a specific removal methodologies, then part of the process is to encourage someone to develop some, and so that's included in the plan is that encouragement that we need some techniques or methodological approaches to getting rid of something, including chemicals as a matter of fact.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So in areas where the council in their various FMPs or whatever, the council has made restrictions on the use of certain types of gear or they've prohibited chemicals or you've done a number of things in terms of the allowed types of harvest that you're allowing actually in the water, so you're going to have to pay attention to that and see whether any changes would need to be made for certain species, I guess.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, that's a good point, but I think to some degree we kind of have to do that anyway where we have managing one species that is co-located with other species that are contained in a different FMP, but that's a good point. That's a good reminder of something that we need to consider. Wilson.

DR. WILSON: In number four there, it should read “National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force”.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thank you for that very important clarification. Okay, we’re going to make it clear that it’s the National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force is the one who would be developing the management plan and not the council. Okay, any further comments? Let’s move on to number five.

MS. BROUWER: Number five reads, “The council encourages the development of novel gears to effectively remove invasive species that do not compromise the integrity of South Atlantic ecosystems.”

MR. CURRIN: I know habitats are implicit in the broad category of ecosystems, but I want to make sure that we all keep that at least in the back of our minds as we start encouraging the development of gears, because some of those that I could readily envision being worked on could have the potential for habitat damage very similar to some of the gears that we have in the water right now. We need to be at least mindful of that.

MR. GEIGER: How about others than those already prohibited by use of the council, which would preclude the development of traps and things such as that.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I want to make sure I understand what you’re saying, George. It basically is that you can develop new gear, but you can’t use something that’s already prohibited by the council from use, right?

MR. GEIGER: Yes, we’ve prohibited fish traps. I mean you don’t want to encourage somebody to develop a piece of new fish trap gear to catch lionfish when we’ve already got traps prohibited. You would encourage people to develop other types of gear other than gear that’s already prohibited for use in South Atlantic waters.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, I understood your intention; I just wanted to make sure that we can get that into this. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, that worries me, Brian. What if somebody developed a fish trap that was very selective for lionfish; we might decide that the benefits of that far outweigh any downside and we’d be kind of ruling that out. Do we really want to do that?

MR. GEIGER: To that point, I guess the argument there would be that part of the argument for banning fish traps was habitat destruction. Even if they are selective to lionfish, perhaps the destruction to habitat affected by traps would outweigh the benefit of lionfish removal, especially if you have other types of gear that are being developed for that removal.

DR. CRABTREE: Perhaps but wouldn’t we want to evaluate that on a case-by-case basis when we had an actual idea of a gear in front of us?

MR. PUGLIESE: Just a quick comment and kind of a way to turn it around, I think the focus would be that it would not be impacting significant habitats and would not be increasing bycatch. It would be addressing all those intents of the gear regulations that go in looking at gear development but with those caveats that you do not cross that line in terms of damaging habitat and increasing bycatch of non-targeted species and those types of very specific intents of the gear prohibitions to protect habitat and the regulations in place now and not compromise the enforceability of the existing regulations. I think that's something else that also needs to be inserted in that because you do have gear prohibitions that –

MR. GEIGER: This is a draft; we'll see it again.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Exactly and that's what I was going to say, thanks, George. I would like to give Myra the latitude to take what we've given in this discussion to modify it because I'm sure we'll be seeing this again in June, I believe, and we'll get another whack at it. I think Myra understands kind of where we're headed. All right, the next one.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, moving on to number six, "The council strongly supports integrating monitoring of invasive species into existing fishery-independent and dependent programs." This is something that is already being done, but we felt that it was important that we state it in the policy.

Okay, moving on to number seven, "The council supports programs to control invasive species populations such as lionfish in areas of high ecological/economic importance. The council supports local harvest strategies that do not impact populations of managed species or their habitats." This is rather vague and we're open for any suggestions you may have to make this more targeted.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, there is so much that we don't know and this is pretty wide open at this point. Maybe we just don't want to discuss this issue yet and maybe come back to it later and see if it develops into something else; you know, as the document develops and we get anymore ideas. I'm certainly not against having it in here right now, but I think we just need to reserve the right to discuss it again later and maybe figure out whether we need to modify it or strike or whatever. Is there anything else from this policy?

MS. BROUWER: No, that's basically all I wanted to cover with the committee, but I would strongly appreciate you submitting comments or edits that you deem appropriate and sending them to me via e-mail so that I may work on those hopefully prior to sending this on to the Habitat and the Coral APs.

MR. CUPKA: If I may, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask Myra very quickly on this last one here; I think there are some real positive things there and it kind of covers some of the things that Mac was getting at earlier. In fact, we want to support harvest strategies that don't impact species or habitats, which I think it is important. I don't know what it means by local harvest strategies. I think we could strike "local" and just say we support harvest strategies that don't impact populations of managed species or habitats. That's just a minor point but I didn't know what she had in mind when she said "local harvest strategies".

DR. CHEUVRONT: Myra, do you want to respond to that and then Wilson.

MS. BROUWER: This was wording that was actually suggested by James Morris, so I'm sorry I can't elaborate on that. Perhaps Ron has better ideas.

MR. LUKENS: I believe James included that because he is, indeed, working on a local strategy in the North Carolina area to deal with this. I agree "local" is irrelevant in this. It could be local or not local, regional, it just doesn't matter. It doesn't hurt anything to take the word "local" out. I, too, think this has some positives. I'm going to think about some additional things that we might include in there, but I think for now it's a really positive thing to leave in there to get comment.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, I was going to suggest that we add "supports" – local or not – "harvest eradication and/or removal strategies", just to encompass some additional things because you may not want to harvest it for some market. You may just want to kill it or otherwise eradicate it.

I think probably James had the word "local" in there maybe in consideration of the fact that frequently, if you're dealing with an aquatic nuisance species infestation, if you catch it when it's localized and has a very narrow range, you can frequently accomplish eradication; whereas, once it gets beyond the local area, it becomes more and more difficult and then you're not talking about eradication anymore. All you can do is hope to control it somehow.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Now, Myra, isn't this where we wanted to come back and do the other alternatives from what we were discussing before from CE-BA? Mac.

MR. CURRIN: I can give this to Myra later I guess, but while it's fresh on my mind consider combining under number three of the council finds – combine A and B. They seem kind of redundant to me. If there is some need to keep them separate, then that's fine. This is in the policy, the second page under number three, the heading starts out "The SAFMC finds that", one, two, three; under three, A and B seem redundant to me. They both deal with snapper grouper species, and then B set aside black sea bass for some reason, and it wasn't real clear to me why.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, we'll take that into consideration. Okay, are we ready to go back to the other issue.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, I don't know how much time we have to discuss this. Monica had suggested perhaps considering an expansion of the existing framework to deal with invasive species. Now that you have seen what the statements in the draft policy are, I don't know if you would to spend more time thinking about orange cup coral and whether the action as it's worded is what you intend.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I think what our intent would really like to be is to allow people to harvest this coral, but we're all sympathetic to the issue that Florida is facing dealing with this, and I'm

not sure that we can come up with that solution at this point. I kind of feel like we're between a rock and a hard place or a stony place here. Mac, did you want to say something?

MR. CURRIN: That's basically what I was going to say, Brian. Florida is responsible for the management, they track the harvest of these things. Most of it occurs in state waters, and they've got some problems with this. I'm at a loss as to exactly how to deal with it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Florida is going to really be impacted by this invasion of these orange cup coral. Mark, does Florida have a plan for dealing with this invasion and what they plan to do with it in the future and maybe we can sort of take our lead from what Florida wants to do since they seem to be the ones who are going to the most impacted.

MR. ROBSON: I don't know that we have a plan laid out at this point for this one, so I can't really answer that.

MS. BROUWER: I was going to suggest that perhaps the committee might just table this discussion again until June in light of, as I mentioned earlier, recent research that is being conducted on the distribution of orange cup coral. There are a couple of cruises scheduled for the spring to look at the distribution in other areas. Perhaps having that information in June will make it easier, and by then perhaps Florida will have had more discussions on the issue.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I was going to actually say a little less artfully perhaps than what Myra just said. I would suggest you leave it in but have maybe some expanded discussion on what Florida is doing and then you could make more of a decision. You might even want a picture of it, Myra, compared to some other corals so people get an idea of whether it's an easily distinguishable coral or not. I know there are a lot of stony corals out there, but maybe that would help people's frame of reference.

MS. MERRITT: Myra, when you do the picture would you do one in gray scale so we can see if it's easily identified if people can't distinguish color.

MR. LUKENS: Just for the council's information, the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel will be meeting in late April. We have on the agenda to discuss the broader issue of non-native and invasive species within council jurisdictions. There are regional panels that cover the continental U.S..

We're hoping that this might spur discussion among the other panels to have interactions with the councils, because there will increasingly be marine organisms that are non-native and potentially invasive in most of the council jurisdictions. We will be having that discussion, and I'm sure we'll discuss this policy statement and there may be some thoughts that come out of that discussion as well.

MR. CURRIN: I think Monica has got a good suggestion to look at the framework. Regardless of what we do in this amendment, we ought to modify the framework so if there is something that comes up in the future and we can agree with Florida on an approach to either allow the

harvest or destruction of these critters, that we can do that quickly and easily. I would suggest that we develop some alternatives to modify the framework.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thank you, Mac. Myra, you got the last part about developing some alternatives to modify the framework. Okay, any further discussion on this issue? Let's back up now on the agenda, going back to the lionfish discussion.

MS. BROUWER: I wanted to give you a very quick update of some efforts underway in our region to control the lionfish invasion. James Morris, as I mentioned earlier, came to the December council meeting and gave the Ecosystem-Based Management Committee a presentation on basically the ecology of lionfish and what NCCOS, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, under the National Ocean Service has been doing in the way of research.

I've put this presentation together basically just for me to keep me on track with what I needed to share with you. There is a synopsis of what NCCOS is proposing to do in your briefing book. As I said, they've been conducting research to monitor the invasion for a number of years, and they have found that densities have reached over a thousand individuals per hectare in some location.

The research increasingly points to their negative impact on other fishes, including those in the snapper grouper complex. The lionfish campaign basically was born out of an experience that took place in Chicago and New York where Discovery Diving, which is a company out of North Carolina, conducted a lionfish roundup and then sent the fish to chefs in New York and Chicago. It was very well received. There were very positive results.

NCCOS is trying to duplicate this on a larger scale and that way promote consumption of lionfish not just in the southeast but actually on a national level. What they're planning to do is to hold tasting events throughout the country. Initially it was going to take place in March. It has now been moved to June to coincide with the lionfish derby that is taking place in Bermuda.

Last year this particular event turned up 1,400 fish in one day, and so this will definitely ensure supply for the tasting events to follow. They will also work with the press to bring attention to the threat of lionfish and couch it in a way as consumption of lionfish is a good way to conserve and protect coral reef ecosystems.

They've had apparently a lot of interest from chefs and restaurants throughout the country to participate in this event. As a result of their efforts the FDA, in January of this year, added lionfish to the list of species approved for commercial sale. NCCOS is also putting together a website that is going to have information on the species, the biology, the ecology, proper handling of the fish, regulations if there any, and whatever other research is current.

NOAA has been working with many partners to promote this to commercial fishermen, wholesalers, diving organizations – apparently spearfishing is the best way to harvest lionfish – conservation organizations and other federal agencies so I'm sure you'll be hearing a lot more as this develops throughout the year.

What they suggested that the SAFMC do to help is, of course, identify sources of funding, perhaps, for local control strategies and developing markets in our region, develop a position statement on the harvesting of lionfish for human consumption. The draft policy that you just reviewed would address that point. Then help conduct outreach to fishermen, particularly spear fishermen on the benefits of harvesting lionfish and point them hopefully to the website when that is complete. This in a nutshell is what they're up to and I just wanted to bring this to the attention of the committee just so you're aware that this is going on. Are there any questions?

DR. CHEUVRONT: I don't have any questions, but I was a little neglectful in my duties here just a few minutes ago when we were discussing the draft policy on invasive species. I really wanted to take a moment to thank Ron Lukens and James Morris for working so hard after our request from the December to put this policy together, get it into us in time that we were able to get into this briefing book and for discussion. It was a great policy for us to work with, and I just want to personally say thank you, Ron, for your help on this. We do appreciate it we need to pass that on to James as well.

DR. CRABTREE: Just a thought; maybe what the chairman ought to do would be arrange for a lionfish fry one evening at the next council meeting so that we could have some direct hands-on experience and knowledge that would enable us to better promote this eatery.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I would love to do that. Actually at the December meeting I had made a suggestion, when we were talking about the lionfish were available off of Grays Reef, was there some way you might be able to get some for our March meeting.

MR. HARRIS: And it's an excellent suggestion and I did try to arrange it for this meeting so I wouldn't have to do a Low Country Boil. Unfortunately, the fish that I was looking for were not available. However, I will keep pressing ahead and hopefully in June you will have some lionfish dinner.

DR. CRABTREE: And more seriously, every year in New Orleans in August they do the Great American Seafood Cook-Off, which NOAA is a sponsor of, but that would be an opportunity. I don't know if it's possible to pull it off, but if there was some way to promote and have some lionfish samples at that, there are thousands of people. There are a lot of restaurant people that go through that convention and it's a huge deal. That would be a good way to draw attention to it to the restaurant crowds.

DR. CHEUVRONT: That's a great idea. Okay, I had Wilson and then Bonnie.

DR. LANEY: You all can feel free to throw things at me for asking this question, but I have to ask it. Should we not be saying "Eat U.S. and Caribbean Lionfish", just in case. I know how these things go, so all of a sudden, going back to what someone mentioned earlier, there are unintended consequences. I can see lionfish in the South Pacific getting listed because all of a sudden there is a huge market for lionfish in the U.S. and all those people are over there collecting lionfish on South Pacific reefs – just a thought.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Bonnie, did you want to say something?

DR. PONWITH: I just had a meeting with some scientists with the University of the West Indies and they actually have been out working on their reef and detected this species. They've also detected another species of lionfish that is established, so they've got two of them down there. I wish I could remember what the species' name is, the second one, but I will look that up and get back to you on it.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, I have seen that as well. I have it on the Gulf and Caribbean Institute's List Serve, and there are two species there. I think in some places the lionfish aren't as invasive yet in many of the Caribbean Islands as they are, say, off of North Carolina and a few other places, but it's clearly heading that way. David.

MR. CUPKA: I was going to suggest that maybe we can get Kim to develop some bumper stickers saying, "Eat More Lionfish", but based on what Wilson said maybe it needs to read, "Eat more U.S. lionfish".

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, I think we're good on that issue now. Let's move on to Agenda Number 5, and Roger is going to give us an update on ecosystem coordination activities.

MR. PUGLIESE: I'm going to blast through. Everybody can reference the presentation actually on line or the hard copy, but I'm going to at least touch on some of the highlights of what we're going through right now with the coordination. There are a lot of activities and a lot of opportunities for council participation and council involvement directly in these broader activities.

I just wanted to touch on the most recent work on the IOOS and SECOORA Ocean Observing Regional Association; developments with SARP; the habitat conservation, the National Habitat Plan component for a partnership in the southeast, one of them; the South Atlantic Governors' Alliance that is continually developing; the most recent activities on the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative; developments under SEAMAP and MARMAP, some of the activities we have there; our evolving Habitat Ecosystem Internet Map Service; and really emphasis on some of the GIS services that we have really been able to get online and are going to integrate even some of the previously mentioned activities under these new services with efforts on both the Alliance as well as some of the alternative energy discussion; and last some of the alternative energy.

First of all, quickly, the Integrated Ocean Observing System activities with the legislation passing the beginning of this year; there has been a directive to provide guidance and long-term establishment of both the observing systems as well as the partnerships and the functional regional partnerships that are in place, so what has come out right now is some specific guidance documents that lay out this whole governance and management structure and really laying out how ultimately Ocean Observing is going to provide what the country needs for broader uses from everything from homeland security to potentially fisheries information needs.

The response in the southeast, SECOORA has adopted fisheries and ecosystem components as a priority in our region and is tailoring a lot of their information, such as this two-page summary, to highlight things such as the connections into collecting information, biological and physical

information, in and into longer-term needs, of connecting oceanographic information with fisheries and potential impacts on things such as harmful alga blooms or impacts on coral and other managed components in the southeast region.

The effort is also going on with an additional product that will be developed specific to fisheries. One of the most recent activities in terms of an on-the-ground activity is the development of an additional HF Radar. You have seen this in the past. The coverage in the southeast has HF Radar as one of the components.

There is one that has just been established, a weather system, in Jekyll Island, which now, if you look to this left image, that was the original coverage offshore of the southeast, and you can see the focus on South Carolina and Northern Georgia. With the new component, it is actually covering the entire shelf of Georgia and does move into North Florida.

Now you're having wave coverage, defined wave coverage through there which will make some of the model capabilities and some of the other information a lot more comprehensive. This continues to expand and ultimately the intent is to try to cover that really refined radar coverage throughout the southeast.

The other thing, the document that we're going to make sure is available – I've highlighted the connection here – is that we held a workshop specifically focused on fisheries. FWRI, the University of South Florida, SECOORA, USC, a number of participants really provided the opportunity to have input on how more effectively some of the fisheries and oceanographic information can be looked at, integrated, et cetera, so what has happened is we've come out with a workshop report that is available.

It's identified in this slide and through SECOORA directly we'll see about linking it directly on our ecosystem page, but the idea is to focus some of the specific efforts on some of the really key things such as the second one, developing a searchable GIS data base of biological, habitat and physical oceanographic information products that can identify and provide this information for fisheries and researchers in the future. I think this is providing a first stepping-off point for use of oceanographic information in fisheries.

Moving quickly onward, our collaboration with the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, they have developed a new online webpage. It highlights the SARP activities in the southeast. You can actually see where they are doing habitat restoration activities, where the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program is being on-the-ground process in providing information specifically on the local areas, where the efforts are and then how to go online and actually apply for some of the granting and capabilities information and resource. They've even connected into, as we're doing, abilities to go into Google and be able to tap in on what has been done and where they're going with some of the funding and resources.

Moving on quickly to the South Atlantic Alliance, the Governors' Alliance is moving forward. We have been a participant on the executive planning team and many of the members here have members or are on the actual alliance group. The focus of the group again was to look at four

major areas, healthy ecosystem, working waterfronts, clean coastal and ocean waters and disaster resilient communities.

The most recent activities include the development of a primer in development of technical teams to take this to the next stage. What is happening now is to transfer all this discussion and intent and ideas into an action plan. The technical teams have been developed. There is a process of building specific information to highlight those major areas and defining what those major areas will really be and to look at a draft of a action plan coming together April, potentially May, and then ultimately by the end of September having a draft that can be brought forward to the governors, essentially what is called the executive group here. That process is moving forward rapidly. Many of the states have specifically designated their key players in this process.

The next area is the South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. That continues to move forward and it's picking up steam now. There has been some documentation specifically brought out. The Information Bulletin 1 really provides a layout of the intent and form and function. It provides guiding principles for these developing components.

It does also look at governance structure functions. With the South Atlantic Group, which is one of the first focal areas, the Southeast Landscape Cooperative is making recommendations on specific staffing in the structuring of the conservation cooperative as the core area and then figuring out how all the partners are going to participate in this effort. This is a real quick short snapshot of a very comprehensive effort that is moving forward right now.

One of the other things I wanted to highlight was working with the SEAMAP Program, the Southeast Area Monitoring Assessment program, the funded areas that are still ongoing are the coastal surveys, the bottom mapping characterization and assessment, the Pamlico Sound survey and more recently the Southeast Regional Taxonomic Center at South Carolina is fully funded now under the South Atlantic SEAMAP.

The real one that has had a lot of activity is the data management group. Under data management what is occurring is a combination of all access to fishery-independent data. The SEAMAP Program has been folded in together and through the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources will be able to access all the fishery independent from SEAMAP but then connected into and potentially have access to the MARMAP and then ultimately to the Pamlico Sound Survey.

On our end we're going to have accessibility and spatial from our IMS and actually more specifically a fisheries section researchers' ability to be able to access all three of those major fishery-independent systems in spatial form with links to the detailed fishery-independent data where it's housed.

The most recent report, which I'll make sure everybody gets, really does highlight how the SEAMAP Program now is addressing significant activities and completing the MARMAP Survey, everything from early life history to supplementing offshore and extending and creating the nearshore component of sampling in the southeast.

As I mentioned before, one of the things that we're involved in is expanding our internet and capabilities online, both in the page as well as the internet map server. What we have been developing are components that provide researcher access to provide information on species and begin to highlight information on ecosystem partners.

One of the first areas, this is a snapshot of what would be the researcher access area. This has access to all the information from MARMAP, ultimately MARMAP and SEAMAP, and as I mentioned, Pamlico Sound Surveys, which are being formatted. It is not theoretically. Right now it's being combined and developed and the structure is literally online and created. It is not just a thought. It is going to be functional by – hopefully, a number of these are going to be fully functional by our August SEAMAP and South Atlantic joint meeting.

One of the other areas that is highlighted – and this is connected to some of our other activities – is the development of a South Atlantic Regulation Service. You can access all the existing South Atlantic Council regulations as well as all the proposed regulations; for example, all the Snapper Grouper Amendment 17 alternatives – all 14 alternatives that are laid in the document now are available through this service.

You can look at and turn on and off everything from special management zones to any of the existing designations such as Oculina, logbook grids to see where these fall. It is functional, online and accessible. In Appendix G of the 17A Snapper Grouper Document, at the beginning of the first page it gives you the links to this regulation service. That's something that is being refined and evolving quickly.

And Essential Fish Habitat Service, what we're doing is we're evolving to the next generation of availability. An internet map server has limitations. GIS services can really provide not only what we're doing now – we're doing just the beginning because what you can do next is have some tools developed in there that look at intersections of information, combining information.

You can literally go in here and look at any of these pieces and it will give you pull-downs. It will show you area, show you multiple information components. It is a very powerful tool as these services are developed. We also have the EcoRsearch and EcoSpecies data bases. Eco-species, really we haven't funded significant movement.

However, the state of Florida who had developed a lot of their – it was originally called the Floumer Data Base is still moving forward with combining this, so we may see some population of this EcoSpecies component and hopefully we can get the funding then to fully support and expand this.

The intent here was to be able to give you a snapshot of individual species, spatial distribution, the most recent life history information, doing lot full literature search information, and ultimately the idea was that this potentially could feed directly into SEDAR or have some ability to go back and forth, the status of the resource, the most recent, and even get to the point where maybe gray literature, people working on this could access and provide historical or existing research activities that they're doing for an individual species.

That moves us to the last area and I have identified is alternative energies. There is a lot of activity in the southeast on movement toward alternative energy review, to the degree of even looking at building tools for sighting possibilities. Some of the more recent MMS funding mechanisms actually stimulated that and we may have some opportunity for direct participation with some of the efforts that are going on in the southeast.

I wanted to highlight some of the activities in South Carolina that are going on. There are two workshops that are going to be held March 24th and 25th; one to look at the opportunity offshore and the capabilities and really just to try to bring together as many players to understand what the potential is for the state of South Carolina.

The second is really looking forward, to look at any of the implications on shore. You know, you start developing these and you're going to look at transmission issues, you're going to look at any of the impacts on fisheries and on other things trying to kind of get ahead of the whole thing, so if there is opportunity to really review the entire thing, so South Carolina is moving forward with these workshops.

In the state of North Carolina we had an opportunity to provide a lot of the information that the council has to legislative task force. We provided all the information on our site that connects to the IMS, to the services, but then also to the fisheries management plans, to regulatory, to policy statements, to virtually everything we have at least online and accessible, which is a lot, the entire fishery, the ecosystem plan by subarea.

We have inserted a lot of that into at least their deliberations for the record and I anticipate we'll probably have some additional future deliberations as that legislative task force continues to move forward. I wanted to at least highlight some of the more activities on it. What this is ultimately is just links to our home page, the server, the regulations service as well as the EFH service.

What I anticipate is potentially an Ocean Observing Service being developing as well as an energy service so that we could be coming to coalesce and be able to be kind of the front end of some of these efforts to bring together, because we brought a pretty significant amount of information systems together in what we have and what has been developed with our partners at FWRI to really be way ahead of the stage in terms of understanding what some of the implications for some of these non-fishing activities may be, but in a nutshell and as short as I could try to do.

Hopefully, that at least alludes to some of the very significant converging activities. That is the most interesting and I think exciting point is that a lot of these are kind of coming together and I think all of them are going to benefit of that. Mr. Chairman, that's my quick ecosystem report.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Thank you, Roger. I'm always amazed by the amount of activities that are going on through all these different organizations and your ability to keep it all straight and coordinate it all together. I would like to entertain a couple of questions. Wilson.

DR. LANEY: One comment and that is that the coordinator position for that South Atlantic LCC has been advertised and has closed, and I presume there is a short list and we hope to have

somebody on board in that position by April I think is the target date. And then a question for Roger; is the essential fish habitat for the other councils up online in any comparable fashion to what you've done here for the South Atlantic because it would be really useful, for example, to know where the EFH is for those Mid-Atlantic and New England species that range down into the South Atlantic.

MR. PUGLIESE: Actually, the National Marine Fisheries Service has a habitat mapper that you can go to and look at other councils' designations. Essentially they defer back to ours in the way that's structured and use our designations for the other councils. But in ours, what we have included – and we haven't included all the highly migratory species information, so all those designations are also included, and really what we need to do is shore up where there any overlaps in the Mid-Atlantic to get all those designations into that area to make sure that we have – when you look at that EFH service that you have all of them in hand. I think that would get to – but right now the habitat mapper does provide at least some of the other areas designation.

MR. CURRIN: Roger, who is or will be responsible for overseeing and updating the EcoResearch and EcoSpecies data bases?

MR. PUGLIESE: Well, right now it's still our partnership with FWRI. We're looking at extending – before we had a lot of the structure and this funded through Coral and it has evolved to it's really an ecosystem activity, so what we're going to be doing is funding at least right now the base collaboration with them. FWRI is providing the updates; and working with Tina Dodge and the staff, Kathleen O'Keefe and others, to ensure that this gets maintained and updated.

The EcoSpecies right now, actually with our pie-in-the-sky proposal for funding we had before, we were supposed to potentially have an opportunity to work to get like 10 or 12 significant species done this year with FWRI, and that kind of – when we didn't get the \$4.2 million, that kind of slipped on us, but if there is an opportunity that resources are available toward the end of the year, then we can go a further distance on it. That's our main collaborators on that and the opportunity there to expand that to ensure that it's even better is there. It's based on funds.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay, thank you. Is there any other business to come before this committee? Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Just real short; I'd like to thank whoever was involved in getting Ken Nedimyer's presentation in the South Atlantic Update. I know Kim and Anna were. Roger and Myra I'm sure were involved also. That was a really, really interesting coral reconstruction paper. It actually opened up more questions in my mind than it answered.

Certainly, with the committee's blessing, I'd like to see Ken at the appropriate time come to the council and give a presentation on his work. The stimulus money, the partnerships involved with the universities and the state, it's a really interesting coral endeavor, so I certainly thing this committee would like to see that presentation. I know I certainly would.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, Ken made a presentation to the council about six months ago or so, right before you came on. Is there any other business? Seeing none, do we need to do a timing

and task motion? You're okay, Myra? Okay, she is shaking her head yes. Okay, that taken care of, all we have left to do is to adjourn.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 10:37 o'clock a.m., March 2, 2010.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

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April 1, 2010

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Jekyll Island, GA
Tuesday, March 2, 2010**

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