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Sent: Thursday, September 2, 2021 7:35 PM

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Subject: Coral Amendment 10 Preferred Alternative 2

Dear All,

In the 1960s, my husband Rodney Thompson became obsessed with finding a way to make Rock Shrimp a marketable item. Following Rodney's shrimping trips, our family spent many afternoons sitting around the kitchen table dreaming up ways to prepare Rock Shrimp. The idea of splitting rock shrimp to broil them like a lobster was born at my kitchen table and the value of rock shrimp took off. The fishery increased from a half dozen boats to more than 150 vessels.

Recognizing that the Oculina coral was important to the life cycle of rock shrimp as well as many other valuable fishes, Rodney began working with the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) on a plan to establish protected areas for the Oculina coral, as well as create a limited access fishery for Rock Shrimp. I went to every Council meeting with Rodney. He worked very hard to convince others in the rock shrimp industry to cooperate.

And cooperate they did. Their collaboration led to the designation of one of the first deep-water protected areas in the U.S. to help protect the coral from fishing gear impacts and establishment of one of the first limited access fishery programs in the South Atlantic.

The area known as the Oculina Bank was expanded in 1994, and now includes an Experimental Closed Area where managers study long-term impacts of area closures. Rock shrimpers lost access to a tremendous amount of mud bottom that had no coral where they had fished for decades. In fact, the first HAPC expansion almost entirely missed the coral. Rock shrimpers never got that bottom back.

There were additional expansions that rock shrimpers supported as they included coral and not bottom where they had historically fished. In 2003 rock shrimpers were asked to put VMS on their boats. They were told that the VMS would help with law enforcement to keep track of boats to see if they were fishing within the closed areas. They were assured that VMS would show where they fished and would prevent a repeat of bottom where they had historically fished being taken from them.

When the northern expansion of the Oculina Coral HAPC went into effect in 2014, it included a productive piece of bottom that rock shrimpers had periodically fished for decades. Rushed to

get the amendment in place, the SAFMC approved the northern expansion with assurance to the rock shrimp industry that the boundary in question would be addressed at a later date. Seven years later that discussion is finally taking place.

My husband is not with us today to speak for the rock shrimp industry, which he encouraged so long ago to cooperate in order to save the coral. But I know that when Rodney asked the industry to embrace the first deepwater coral HAPCs, he believed the promise that was made that no additional bottom where rock shrimpers had been trawling and coral didn't exist would be sacrificed. It was never his intent that the industry would see further harm from honest attempts to protect the coral from the impacts of their trawling activities.

The rock shrimp industry has waited long enough for this error to be corrected. It's time to do the right thing and create a shrimp fishery access area on the southeast side of the northern expansion of the Oculina HAPC. Please approve Preferred Alternative 2 in Coral Amendment 10.

Sincerely,
Mary Jean Thompson