

OVERVIEW

Joint Habitat and Environmental Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management Committees

Hilton Wilmington Riverside
301 North Water Street
Wilmington, NC

The Committees will: (A) receive an update on the status of Coral Amendment 8; (B) receive an overview of the Council's Cooperative Agreement with NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program; (C) review the report from the November 2013 Habitat Advisory Panel (AP) meeting; and (D) receive an update on ecosystem activities in the South Atlantic.

A. Status of Coral Amendment 8

The Council approved Coral Amendment 8 during the September 2013 meeting. The Committee will receive a status report from Council staff on Coral Amendment 8.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

B. Cooperative Agreement with Coral Reef Conservation Program (Attachment 1)

The Fishery Management Councils Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements provides funding to the Regional Management Councils for projects to conserve and manage coral reef fisheries, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. The FY 2014-2016 Funding Opportunity was announced for activities that 1) provide better scientific information on the status of coral reef fisheries resources, critical habitats of importance to coral reef fishes, and the impacts of fishing on these species and habitats; 2) identify new management approaches that protect coral reef biodiversity and ecosystem function through regulation of fishing and other extractive uses; and 3) incorporate conservation and sustainable management measures into existing or new Federal fishery management plans for coral reef species. Council staff will provide an overview of the FY 2014-2016 grant application submitted to CRCP on November 4th, 2013. Included in the proposal is a project that would continue characterization of benthic habitat and fauna in the Oculina Experimental Closed Area and the Deep Water Marine Protected Areas.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

C. Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel Report (Attachment 2)

Council staff will provide an overview of and recommendations developed during the November 5th -6th, 2013 Habitat and Environmental Protection AP meeting held at FWRI in St. Petersburg, Florida. The AP reviewed redrafted Essential Fish Habitat Policy Statements for Aquaculture, In-stream Flow, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, and Estuarine Invasive Species. Included in the

AP report are three redrafted statements deemed essentially complete. The intent of the AP is to provide final drafts for Committee consideration and Council approval at the March 2014 Council meeting. In addition, the AP is reviewing and updating the Energy Policy and the Beach Dredge and Fill Policy and will further develop two new policy statements on Artificial Reefs and Restoration and provide those for Council consideration as completed. Other general recommendations will be provided in the report.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

D. Ecosystem Activities

The Committee will receive an update on the development process for the Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) II. This process will again engage the Habitat and Environmental AP in the effort, and the development of redrafted habitat policy statements is a first task that is already underway. An update on the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association, South Atlantic Alliance, Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership, South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, SEAMAP, and Council Ecosystem Tools will emphasize how they will be engaged in the FEP II development process. Council staff will also provide an update on plans for a Climate and Governance Workshop to be held in March 2014.

REQUIRED COMMITTEE ACTION: The Committee will provide guidance to staff as appropriate.