



## SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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September 30, 2008

Dr. Shirley Pomponi  
Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute  
Florida Atlantic University  
5600 U.S. 1 North  
Fort Pierce, FL 34946

Dear Dr. Pomponi:

The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (Council) is pleased to provide this letter of support and intent to collaborate in the ocean exploration, research, technology, and education activities of Florida Atlantic University's proposal for a new NOAA Cooperative Institute (CI), in response to NOAA Federal Funding Opportunity # OAR-CIPO-2008-2001403.

The Council has worked with the CI partners for many years and benefited from their products and services. For instance, research conducted in deepwater coral ecosystems by UNCW and HBOI/FAU is highlighted in the following reports to the Council: 1) Habitat and Fauna of Deep Water Coral Reefs off the Southeastern USA - Addendum to 2004 Report - East Florida Reefs (Reed 2006); 2) Review of Distribution, Habitats, and Associated Fauna of Deep Water Coral Reefs on the Southeastern United States Continental Slope (North Carolina to Cape Canaveral, FL) (Ross 2006); 3) Deep Water Coral Reefs of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina - A Summary of the Distribution, Habitat, and Associated Fauna (Reed 2004) and 4) State of the Deep Coral Ecosystems in the U.S. Southeast Region: Cape Hatteras to Southeastern Florida (Ross, S. and M. Nizinski 2007).

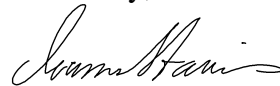
Earlier work with HBOI provided the Council with additional characterization and habitat distribution to expand the *Oculina* Coral HAPC. More recent collaborations have utilized the *Eagle Ray* AUV to map unique deep water habitats on the Miami Terrace. In fact, the foundation for much of the proposed Deep water Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern--highlighted in the award winning film *Revealing the Deep* -- is based on past research by UNCW and HBOI/FAU.

Based on this strong and continuing collaboration with CI partners, the Council looks forward to future endeavors. Currently, mapping and characterization of high priority near-shore, shelf and deep water habitats of the South Atlantic Region are needed for future management actions as the Council moves towards ecosystem-based management of fishery resources and associated

habitats. This information is critical to the Council to address both fishing and non-fishing impacts through place-based management actions including establishing Marine Protected Areas, creating Special Management Zones for snapper grouper, designating Essential Fish Habitat and Essential Fish Habitat Areas of Particular Concern, establishing restricted gear areas and allowable fishing areas. Available information to date is already included in the Council's draft Fishery Ecosystem Plan with spatial representation readily available through the Council's Internet Map Server.

To foster communication and cooperation with NOAA CI and Office of Exploration and Research (OER) activities, the Council and its staff will continue to serve in an advisory capacity. If you require any additional information or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Bob Mahood, Executive Director or Roger Pugliese, Senior Fishery Biologist.

Sincerely,



Duane Harris  
Chairman

cc: (via email)  
Council Members & Staff  
Bonnie Ponwith & Tom Jamir, NMFS SEFSC  
Monica Smit-Brunello, NOAA GC  
Phil Steele & Jack McGovern, NMFS SERO