

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 Historical Overview of SAFMC Activities to Conserve Essential Fish Habitat

Through the years, the Council has taken a leading role in the protection of habitat essential to managed species. This is accomplished through two avenues as directed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the first being through direct regulation of fisheries to protect habitat from the direct or indirect impacts of fishing. With the implementation of the Coral Fishery Management Plan and subsequent amendments to that plan, the Council has protected coral, coral reefs, and live/hard bottom habitat in the south Atlantic region by establishing an optimum yield of zero and prohibiting all harvest or possession of these resources which serve as essential fish habitat to many managed species. Another measure adopted by the Council and implemented through the coral plan was the designation of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, a unique and fragile deepwater coral habitat off southeast Florida that is protected from all bottom tending fishing gear damage. The Council has also prohibited the use of the following gears in the snapper grouper fishery management plan to protect habitat: bottom longlines in the EEZ inside of 50 fathoms or anywhere south of St. Lucie Inlet Florida, fish traps, bottom tending (roller-rig) trawls on live bottom habitat, and entanglement gear. Also established under the snapper grouper plan is an Experimental Closed Area (experimental marine reserve) where the harvest or possession of all species in the snapper grouper complex is prohibited. Other actions taken by the Council that directly or indirectly protect habitat or ecosystem integrity include: the prohibition of rock shrimp trawling in a designated area around the Oculina Bank, mandatory use of bycatch reduction devices in the penaeid shrimp fishery, a prohibition of the use of drift gill nets in the coastal migratory pelagic fishery; and a mechanism that provides for the concurrent closure of the EEZ to penaeid shrimping if environmental conditions in state waters are such that the overwintering spawning stock is severely depleted. In addition to implementing regulations to protect habitat from fishing related degradation, the Council actively comments on non-fishing projects or policies that may impact fish habitat. In response to an earlier amendment to the Magnuson Act, the Council adopted a habitat policy and procedure document that established a four state Habitat Advisory Panel and adopted a comment and policy development process. Members of the Habitat Advisory Panel serve as the Council's habitat contacts and professionals in the field. The Advisory Panel is structured and functions differently than other panels. The Panel is made up of four state sub-panels each having representatives from the state marine fisheries agency, the U S Fish and Wildlife Service, state coastal zone management agency, conservationist, commercial fishermen, and recreational fishermen. In addition to the state representatives, at large members on the overall panel include representatives from EPA Region IV, NMFS Southeast Fisheries Center, NMFS SERO, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and NMFS Habitat Conservation Division Headquarters. This body functions as a whole or as sub-panel depending on the scope of the issue. The Panel serves to provide the Council with both expert recommendations on activities being considered for permitting as well as guidance in development of Habitat policy statements. With guidance from the Panel, the Council, has developed and approved policies on; oil and gas exploration, development and transportation; dredging and dredge material disposal; submerged aquatic vegetation, and ocean dumping. These are included in Section 5 of this document under recommendations to protect EFH.

1.2 Habitat Responsibilities as Defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The following wording is taken directly from the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Public Law 104-208 and reflects the new Secretary of Commerce and Fishery Management Council authority and responsibilities for the protection of essential fishery habitat:

Section 305 (b) Fish Habitat.—(1)(A) The Secretary shall, within 6 months of the date of enactment of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, establish by regulation guidelines to assist the Councils in the description and identification of essential fish habitat in fishery management plans (including adverse impacts on such habitat) and in the consideration of actions to ensure the conservation and enhancement of such habitat. The Secretary shall set forth a schedule for the amendment of fishery management plans to include the identification of essential fish habitat and for the review and updating of such identifications based on new scientific evidence or other relevant information.

(B) The Secretary, in consultation with participants in the fishery, shall provide each Council with recommendations and information regarding each fishery under that Council's authority to assist it in the identification of essential fish habitat, the adverse impacts on that habitat, and the actions that should be considered to ensure the conservation and enhancement of that habitat.

(C) The Secretary shall review programs administered by the Department of Commerce and ensure that any relevant programs further the conservation and enhancement of essential fish habitat.

(D) The Secretary shall coordinate with and provide information to other Federal agencies to further the conservation and enhancement of essential fish habitat.

(2) Each Federal agency shall consult with the Secretary with respect to any action authorized, funded, or undertaken, or proposed to be authorized, funded, or undertaken, by such agency that may adversely affect any essential fish habitat identified under this Act.

(3) Each Council—

(A) may comment on and make recommendations to the Secretary and any Federal or State agency concerning any activity authorized, funded, or undertaken, or proposed to be authorized, funded, or undertaken, by any Federal or State agency that, in the view of the Council, may affect the habitat, including essential fish habitat, of a fishery resource under its authority; and

(B) shall comment on and make recommendations to the Secretary and any Federal or State agency concerning any such activity that, in the view of the Council, is likely to substantially affect the habitat, including essential fish habitat, of an anadromous fishery resource under its authority.

(4) (A) If the Secretary receives information from a Council or Federal or State agency or determines from other sources that an action authorized, funded, or undertaken, or proposed to be authorized, funded, or undertaken, by any State or Federal agency would adversely affect any essential fish habitat identified under this Act, the Secretary shall recommend to such agency measures that can be taken by such agency to conserve such habitat.

(B) Within 30 days after receiving a recommendation under subparagraph (A), a Federal agency shall provide a detailed response in writing to any Council commenting under paragraph (3) and the Secretary regarding the matter. The response shall include a description of measures proposed by the agency for avoiding, mitigating, or offsetting the impact of the activity on such

habitat. In the case of a response that is inconsistent with the recommendations of the Secretary, the Federal agency shall explain its reasons for not following the recommendations.'

1.3 Affected Fishery Management Plans and Fish Stocks

South Atlantic Snapper-Grouper

Balistidae--Triggerfishes

- Gray triggerfish, *Balistes capriscus*
- Queen triggerfish, *Balistes vetula*
- Ocean triggerfish, *Canthidermis sufflamen*

Carangidae--Jacks

- Yellow jack, *Caranx bartholomaei*
- Blue runner, *Caranx crysos*
- Crevalle jack, *Caranx hippos*
- Bar jack, *Caranx ruber*
- Greater amberjack, *Seriola dumerili*
- Lesser amberjack, *Seriola fasciata*
- Almaco jack, *Seriola rivoliana*
- Banded rudderfish, *Seriola zonata*

Ephippidae--Spadefishes

- Spadefish, *Chaetodipterus faber*

Haemulidae--Grunts

- Black margate, *Anisotremus surinamensis*
- Porkfish, *Anisotremus virginicus*
- Margate, *Haemulon album*
- Tomtate, *Haemulon aurolineatum*
- Smallmouth grunt, *Haemulon chrysargyreum*
- French grunt, *Haemulon flavolineatum*
- Spanish grunt, *Haemulon macrostomum*
- Cottonwick, *Haemulon melanurum*
- Sailors choice, *Haemulon parrai*
- White grunt, *Haemulon plumieri*
- Blue stripe grunt, *Haemulon sciurus*

Lutjanidae--Snappers

- Black snapper, *Apsilus dentatus*
- Queen snapper, *Etelis oculatus*
- Mutton snapper, *Lutjanus analis*
- Schoolmaster, *Lutjanus apodus*
- Blackfin snapper, *Lutjanus buccanella*
- Red snapper, *Lutjanus campechanus*
- Cubera snapper, *Lutjanus cyanopterus*
- Gray snapper, *Lutjanus griseus*
- Mahogany snapper, *Lutjanus mahogoni*
- Dog snapper, *Lutjanus jocu*
- Lane snapper, *Lutjanus synagris*
- Silk snapper, *Lutjanus vivanus*
- Yellowtail snapper, *Ocyurus chrysurus*
- Vermilion snapper, *Rhomboplites aurorubens*

Malacanthidae--Tilefishes

- Blueline tilefish, *Caulolatilus microps*
- Golden tilefish, *Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*
- Sand tilefish, *Malacanthus plumieri*

Percichthyidae--Temperate basses

- Wreckfish, *Polyprion americanus*

Serranidae--Sea Basses and Groupers

- Bank sea bass, *Centropristis ocyurus*
- Rock sea bass, *Centropristis philadelphica*
- Black sea bass, *Centropristis striata*
- Rock hind, *Epinephelus adscensionis*
- Graysby, *Epinephelus cruentatus*
- Speckled hind, *Epinephelus drummondhayi*
- Yellowedge grouper, *Epinephelus flavolimbatus*
- Coney, *Epinephelus fulvus*
- Red hind, *Epinephelus guttatus*
- Jewfish, *Epinephelus itajara*
- Red grouper, *Epinephelus morio*
- Misty grouper, *Epinephelus mystacinus*
- Warsaw grouper, *Epinephelus nigritus*
- Snowy grouper, *Epinephelus niveatus*
- Nassau grouper, *Epinephelus striatus*
- Black grouper, *Mycteroperca bonaci*
- Yellowmouth grouper, *Mycteroperca interstitialis*
- Gag, *Mycteroperca microlepis*
- Scamp, *Mycteroperca phenax*
- Tiger grouper, *Mycteroperca tigris*
- Yellowfin grouper, *Mycteroperca venenosa*

Sparidae--Porgies

- Sheepshead, *Archosargus probatocephalus*
- Grass pogy, *Calamus arctifrons*
- Jolthead pogy, *Calamus bajonado*
- Saucereye pogy, *Calamus*
- Whitebone pogy, *Calamus leucosteus*
- Knobbed pogy, *Calamus nodosus*
- Red pogy, *Pagrus pagrus*
- Longspine pogy, *Stenotomus caprinus*
- Scup, *Stenotomus chrysops*

Labridae--Wrasses

- Hogfish, *Lachnolaimus maximus*
- Puddingwife, *Halichoeres radiatus*

1.0 Purpose and Need

Coastal Migratory Pelagics

Cero, *Scomberomorus regalis*
Cobia, *Rachycentron canadum*
Dolphin, *Coryphaena hippurus*
King mackerel, *Scomberomorus cavalla*
Little tunny, *Euthynnus alletteratus*
Spanish mackerel, *Scomberomorus maculatus*

Shrimp Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

Brown shrimp, *Penaeus aztecus*
Pink shrimp, *Penaeus duorarum*
Rock shrimp, *Sicyonia brevirostris*
Royal red shrimp, *Pleoticus robustus*
Seabob shrimp, *Xiphopenaeus kroyeri*
White shrimp, *Penaeus setiferus*

Spiny Lobster

Spiny Lobster, *Panulirus argus*

Golden Crab

Golden Crab, *Chaceon fenneri*

Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitat

Coral belonging to the Class Hydrozoa (fire corals and hydrocorals).

Coral belonging to the Class Anthozoa, Subclass Hexacorallia, Orders Scleractinia (stony corals) and Antipatharia (black corals).

A seafan, *Gorgonia flabellum* or *G. ventalina*

Coral in a coral reef, except for allowable octocoral

Coral in an HAPC, including allowable octocoral (HAPC means habitat area of particular concern)

Live rock means living marine organisms, or an assemblage thereof, attached to a hard substrate, including dead coral or rock (excluding individual mollusk shells).

Red Drum

Red drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus*

1.4 SAFMC Habitat Plan and Comprehensive Habitat Amendment Development Process

A proposed rule was published by NMFS on April 23, 1997 specifying regional fishery management Council guidelines for the description and identification of essential fishery habitat (EFH) in fishery management plans, adverse impacts on EFH, and actions to conserve and enhance EFH. In order to address the new essential fish habitat mandates in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the South Atlantic Council has begun development of: (1) a habitat plan which will serve as a source document describing EFH; (2) a comprehensive amendment which will amend each of the existing fishery management plans, identifying and describing EFH and addressing impacts of fishing gear and/or fishing practices on EFH; and (3) a monitoring program for each fishery management plan to determine new impacts from fishing gear and/or fishing practices in an effort to minimize, to the extent practicable, the adverse impacts on EFH.

1.5 Issues, Problems, and Management Objectives for Comprehensive Amendment

The Magnuson Act was amended in October 1996 to become the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (also called the Sustainable Fisheries Act).

Requirements addressing habitat are as follows:

“Section 305 (b) FISH HABITAT.--

(1)(A) The Secretary shall, within 6 months of the date of enactment of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, establish by regulation guidelines to assist the Councils in the description and identification of essential fish habitat in fishery management plans (including adverse impacts on such habitat) and in the consideration of actions to ensure the conservation and enhancement of such habitat. The Secretary shall set forth a schedule for the amendment of fishery management plans to include the identification of essential fish habitat and for the review and updating of such identifications based on new scientific evidence or other relevant information.

(B) The Secretary, in consultation with participants in the fishery, shall provide each Council with recommendations and information regarding each fishery under that Council's authority to assist it in the identification of essential fish habitat, the adverse impacts on that habitat, and the actions that should be considered to ensure the conservation and enhancement of that habitat.

(C) The Secretary shall review programs administered by the Department of Commerce and ensure that any relevant programs further the conservation and enhancement of essential fish habitat.

(D) The Secretary shall coordinate with and provide information to other Federal agencies to further the conservation and enhancement of essential fish habitat.”

Section 1.2 of the Habitat Plan contains a detailed discussion of the interim final guidelines. The Comprehensive Amendment addressing Essential Fish Habitat in fishery management plans of the South Atlantic Region represents the South Atlantic Council's work to meet the new Sustainable Fisheries Act requirements.

1.6 Summary of Existing Management Measures which Directly or Indirectly Protect Essential Fish Habitat

See Section 1.1 above.

1.7 Proposed Measures

The following measures are proposed:

Amendment 3 to the FMP for the Shrimp Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Penaeid and Rock Shrimp.

ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Penaeid Shrimp.

ACTION 3. Implement a Voluntary Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) as soon as possible in the Rock Shrimp Fishery.

Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Red Drum Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Red Drum.

ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Red Drum.

Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Species in the Snapper Grouper Management Unit.

ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Species in the Snapper Grouper Management Unit.

ACTION 3. No Action to Prohibit All Fishing Within the Experimental Closed Area.

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Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

- ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Coastal Migratory Pelagics.
- ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Coastal Migratory Pelagics.
- ACTION 3. No Action to Prohibit Fishing for Coastal Migratory Pelagics in the Experimental Closed Area.

Amendment 1 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Golden Crab Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

- ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Golden Crab.
- ACTION 2. No Action to Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Golden Crab.

Amendment 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Spiny Lobster Fishery of the South Atlantic Region

- ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Spiny Lobster.
- ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Spiny Lobster.
- ACTION 3. No Action to Prohibit Fishing for Spiny Lobster in the Experimental Closed Area.

Amendment 4 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region

- ACTION 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region.
- ACTION 2. Establish Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs) for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats.
- ACTION 3A. Expand the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) to an area bounded to the west by 80°W. longitude, to the north by 28°30' N. latitude, to the south by 27°30' N. latitude, and to the east by the 100 fathom (600 feet) depth contour.
- ACTION 3B. Establish the following two Satellite Oculina HAPCs: (1) Satellite Oculina HAPC #1 is bounded on the north by 28°30'N. Latitude, on the south by 28°29'N. Latitude, on the east by 80°W. Longitude, and on the west by 80°3'W. Longitude, and (2) Satellite Oculina HAPC #2 is bounded on the north by 28°17'N. Latitude, on the south by 28°16'N. Latitude, on the east by 80°W. Longitude, and on the west by 80°3'W. Longitude.
- ACTION 4. No Action to Prohibit All Fishing Within the Experimental Closed Area.

FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE & ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED BY SECRETARY

Mechanism for Determination of Framework Adjustments/Framework Procedure and Activities Authorized by the Secretary of Commerce.

Establish a procedure to allow for rapid modification to definitions of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), and establishment of new, or modification of existing, Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).

2.0 ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations indicate that Section 2.0 should present the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public. The Council’s documents must also conform to Magnuson-Stevens Act and “Other Applicable Law” requirements. National Environmental Policy Act regulations are one of the “other applicable laws” referenced. The Council decided to blend Magnuson-Stevens Act and “other applicable law” (including NEPA) requirements in one consolidated, non-duplicative, and non-repetitive document. The bulk of the evaluation of alternatives and discussion about the effects on the environment is in Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences. Section 2.0 Alternatives presents a summary of Section 4.0. The Council concluded this meets NEPA regulatory requirements.

Management measures (proposed actions) address the management objectives and issues discussed in Section 1. Each management measure has a number of alternatives that have been considered by the Council.

The following problems/issues identified in the Comprehensive Amendment Addressing Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) are addressed for calico scallops and *Sargassum* through the proposed management actions in the Calico Scallop and *Sargassum* Fishery Management Plans. The summary title is used in the impact table (Table 3) to identify which problems are addressed by which proposed management measure.

Biological

- Mandate to identify and describe EFH. Habitat Identification
- Mandate to identify EFH-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. Habitat Identification
- Habitat degradation / loss of Essential Fish Habitat. Habitat Protection
- Mandate to reduce impact of fishing in EEZ on Essential Fish. Habitat Protection
- Habitat and recommend measures to reduce impact from non-fishing activities. Habitat Protection
- Limited information on production, distribution, and ecology of EFH and species or species complex use of EFH. Data

Socio-Economic

- Limited statistical, social, and economic information. Data & Habitat Protection

The following table (Table 3) summarizes how the alternatives address the problems and issues identified by the Council. Management alternatives are in the rows and issues and problems are in the columns. The Council’s preferred options are shown in **bold**.

**SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES
(Effects of Alternatives on the Issues/Problems)**

Table 3. Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Penaeid and Rock Shrimp		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Penaeid and Rock Shrimp.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Penaeid Shrimp.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 3. Implement a Voluntary Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) as soon as possible in the Rock Shrimp Fishery.	Demonstrate the effectiveness of a vessel monitoring system. Acts as safety insurance for vessels.	Positive through protection of essential fish habitat.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Option 2. Require Use of Transponders by Rock Shrimp Vessels in the South Atlantic EEZ.	Improved effectiveness of monitoring system. Act as safety insurance for vessels.	Positive through protection of essential fish habitat.
Option 3. Require Use of Transponders by Rock Shrimp Vessels Fishing in the EEZ South of 28° 30' N. Latitude.	Improved effectiveness of monitoring system. Act as safety insurance for vessels.	Positive through protection of essential fish habitat.

Table 3(Continued). Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Red Drum		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Red Drum.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Red Drum.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Snapper Grouper		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Species in the Snapper Grouper Management Unit.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Species in the Snapper Grouper Management Unit.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 3. No Action to Prohibit All Fishing in the Experimental Closed Area.	Positive in light of public testimony outlining the negative social and economic impacts of the prohibition.	Use of a vessel monitoring system will increase enforcement of closed areas and result in increased habitat protection.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. Prohibit All Fishing in the Experimental Closed Area.	Possible increase in net benefits in the long-term but negative in the short-term.	Likely positive.

2.0 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

Table 3(Continued). Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Coastal Migratory Pelagics		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Coastal Migratory Pelagics.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Coastal Pelagics.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 3. No Action to Prohibit Fishing for Coastal Migratory Pelagics in the Experimental Closed Area.	Positive in light of public testimony outlining the negative social and economic impacts of the prohibition.	Use of a vessel monitoring system will increase enforcement of closed areas and result in increased habitat protection.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. Prohibit Fishing for Coastal Migratory Pelagics in the Experimental Closed Area.	Possible increase in net benefits in the long-term but negative in the short-term.	Likely positive.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Golden Crab		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Golden Crab.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. No Action to Establish EFH-HAPCs for Golden Crab.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Golden Crab.	None.	Likely negative.

Table 3(Continued). Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Spiny Lobster		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Spiny Lobster.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Spiny Lobster.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Proposed Action 3. No Action to Prohibit Fishing for Spiny Lobster in the Experimental Closed Area.	Positive in light of public testimony outlining the negative social and economic impacts of the prohibition.	Use of a vessel monitoring system will increase enforcement of closed areas and result in increased habitat protection.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. Prohibit Fishing for Spiny Lobster in the Experimental Closed Area.	Possible increase in net benefits in the long-term but negative in the short-term.	Likely positive.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitat		
Proposed Action 1. Identify Essential Fish Habitat for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region.	Required by revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, identifying essential fish habitat will provide the Council with important information on habitat for species in need of protection.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.

Table 3(Continued). Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Proposed Action 2. Establish EFH-HAPCs for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitats.	Encourages cooperative state and federal protection of key habitats leading to positive social and long-term economic benefits to society.	Identifies and encourages protection of habitats which are most critical to managed species.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
ACTION 3A. Expand the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) to an area bounded to the west by 80°W longitude, to the north by 28°30' N latitude, to the south by 27°30' N latitude, and to the east by the 100 fathom (600 feet) depth contour.	Possible increase in net benefit. Improves fairness by expanding protection to gear other than rock shrimp trawls.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
ACTION 3B. Establish two Satellite Oculina HAPCs.	Possible increase in net benefit. Provides the necessary level of protection without the larger negative impacts of other alternatives considered.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.
Action 4. No Action to Prohibit all fishing within the Experimental Closed Area.	Positive in light of public testimony outlining the negative social and economic impacts of the prohibition.	Use of a vessel monitoring system will increase enforcement of closed areas and result in increased habitat protection.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. Prohibit all fishing within the experimental closed area.	Possible increase in net benefits in the long-term but negative in the short-term.	Likely positive.

Table 3(Continued). Summary of Environmental Consequences.

Alternatives	Social & Economic:	Biological:
Framework		
<p>Mechanism for Determination of Framework Adjustments/Framework Procedure and Activities Authorized by the Secretary of Commerce. Establish a procedure to allow for rapid modification to definitions of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), and establishment of new, or modification of existing, Essential Fish Habitat-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs).</p>	Possible increase in net benefits.	EFH would be protected which could prevent further declines in productivity.
Other Possible Options:		
Option 1. No Action.	None.	Likely negative.

3.0 Affected Environment

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The affected environment including a description of the fisheries in the South Atlantic Region are presented in detail in the original plans and amendments. Also see Section 3.0 of the Habitat Plan.

3.1 List and General Description of Stocks Comprising the Management Unit

See the list of species in Section 1.3 of this document and Section 3.3 of the Habitat Plan. The latest amendment for each of the fishery management plans contains more detailed information.

3.1.1 Definitions of Overfishing for Managed Species

See Section 4.3.4 of the Comprehensive Amendment addressing Sustainable Fishery Act definitions and other required provisions in fishery management plans of the South Atlantic Region.

3.1.2 Optimum Yield for Managed Species

See Section 4.3.4 of the Comprehensive Amendment addressing Sustainable Fishery Act definitions and other required provisions in fishery management plans of the South Atlantic Region.

3.1.3 Summary of Present Harvest Levels for Managed Species

See the latest amendment for each fishery management plan.

3.1.4 Description of Fishing Activities for Managed Species

See Section 3.1.4 and Section 4.3.3 of the Comprehensive Amendment addressing Sustainable Fishery Act definitions and other required provisions in fishery management plans of the South Atlantic Region.

3.1.5 Status of Stocks for Managed Species

See the latest amendment for each fishery management plan.

3.2 Description and Distribution of Essential Fish Habitat for Managed Species

See Section 3.1 and 3.2 of the Habitat Plan for the South Atlantic Region.

3.3 Managed Species Distribution and Use of Essential Fish Habitat

See Section 3.3 of the Habitat Plan for the South Atlantic Region.

3.4 Threats to Essential Fish Habitat

See Section 4.0 of the Habitat Plan for the South Atlantic Region. The Council has adopted a general habitat policy and developed policy statements to address concerns and present recommendations on ocean dumping, dredging and dredge disposal, plastic pollution, oil and gas exploration, development and transportation, and submerged aquatic vegetation (See Section 6.0).