

**Habitat Protection/Restoration Committee Report
April 3, 2019
Mr. Patrick Banks – Chair**

The agenda and minutes of the October 2017 meeting were approved.

Results of the Council's 5-year Essential Fish Habitat Review

Mr. Dale from the Southeast Regional Office gave a presentation outlining the results of the Council's 5-year essential fish habitat (EFH) review. Mr. Dale indicated that the report is complete and noted that the applicable FMPs must be amended with this information for management and future consultation purposes. It was clearly expressed that recommendations of the SERO should be considered by the Committee, and the Committee should decide at a future meeting how best to incorporate the updated EFH information into Council documents.

The Committee inquired how protected species, such as Gulf sturgeon, may be incorporated into future EFH reviews. Mr. Dale and Dr. Crabtree replied that since Gulf sturgeon is covered under the Endangered Species Act, that NOAA's protected resource division would be the best avenue for working with states to identify critical habitat.

The Committee expressed concern about a possible future directive looking to remove public EFH information for species that are no longer under management since those EFH delineations would not be updated regularly. The Committee recommended that EFH data should still be made available to the public even if the species are no longer subject federal management. The Committee additionally suggested that potential EFH may exist for some species beyond the current 100 fathom boundary and may be worth exploring.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.