

Joint Coral and Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee Report
October 2, 2017
Dale Diaz and John Sanchez, Chairs

Summary of the Southeast Deep-sea Coral Initiative

Staff presented the results from the SEDCI research expedition. A more detailed final report will be presented to the SSC at its January 2018 meeting.

Review Public Hearing Draft of Coral Amendment 9

Staff presented the Committee with the Public Hearing Draft of Coral Amendment 9. There are nine actions in the document. The Committee made several recommendations regarding background information including changing some terminology and highlighting the difference between VMS (census) and ELB (survey) data. The Committee requested that staff make the units consistent throughout the document and adding the zeroes to the economic sections.

Staff reviewed Action 1 incorporation of deep-water octocorals in the fishery management unit (FMU) and clarified that only the genera included in Table 2.1.1 would be included in the FMU should the Council choose any alternative other than Alternative 1. NOAA GC provided an overview of the process and rationale for including species in the FMU. A Committee member gave some rationale for including deep-water octocorals in the FMU such as: octocorals provide important structural habitat; octocorals contribute to high biodiversity; and octocorals are significant contributors to the ecosystem. Other Committee members discussed that octocorals are non-reef building and currently there is not enough information in the document to warrant inclusion. Should the Council incorporate octocorals in the FMU, the SSC will need to set an OFL and an ABC which is problematic as there is no evidence of harvest other than shallow-water octocorals off Florida. Further, there is not a stock assessment for either deep or shallow water octocorals. Staff requested that the Committee select a preferred alternative as Action 2 is directly affected by the Council's preferred alternative in Action 1.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **In Action 1, to make Alternative 1 the preferred Alternative.**

Alternative 1: No Action. Do not incorporate deep-water octocorals into the Gulf FMU.

Motion carried 5 to 2.

Staff proceeded to review Action 2, but noted that with the Committee's preferred alternative in Action 1, only one Alternative (Alternative 1) was appropriate.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **In Action 2, to make Alternative 1 the preferred alternative.**

Alternative 1: No Action. Management benchmarks will not be established for octocorals.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Staff proceeded to review Actions 3-8 which all address creating new HAPCs in the various regions of the Gulf. Action 3 addresses potential modifications to the boundaries of the Pulley Ridge HAPC. The expansion of the area is contentious as bottom long-liners currently use this area, especially during the 35 fathom seaward seasonal closure. The Committee asked if having two adjacent areas with different regulations would be too cumbersome for law enforcement. Staff noted that this document was scheduled to be reviewed at the LETC/LEC meeting at the GSMFC meeting in two weeks.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **In Action 3, to make Alternative 4 the preferred.**

Alternative 4: Add a new area, Pulley Ridge South Portion A, within the Pulley Ridge North HAPC adjacent to Pulley Ridge South HAPC with separate regulations. Pulley Ridge South A will have the following regulations: fishing with a bottom trawl, buoy gear*, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels are prohibited year-round in the area of the HAPC. Pulley Ridge South Portion A will be bounded by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Site	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Pulley Ridge South Portion A	A	83°41.366'	24°40.000'
	B	83°42.648'	24°39.666'
	C	83°55.240'	24°47.555'
	D	83°48.405'	24°57.065'
	E	83°41.841'	24°52.859'
	F	83°47.250'	24°44.833'
	A	83°41.366'	24°40.000'

Motion carried 7 to 2.

Staff reviewed Actions 4-7. In these actions, depending upon current usage of the area indicated by VMS and ELB data, there may be specific options for exempting certain gear types from bottom tending gear prohibitions. The Committee discussed that there are different mechanisms for mitigating bottom anchoring such as mooring buoys, breakaway anchor requirements, stationing, and outreach and education efforts. The Committee made the following motions:

The Committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 4, to make Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 and option b the preferred.**

Alternative 2: Establish a new HAPC named Long Mound bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Long Mound	A	84°47.955'	26°28.835'
	B	84°45.051'	26°28.790'
	C	84°45.153'	26°23.562'
	D	84°48.055'	26°23.607'

	A	84°47.955'	26°28.835'
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Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Long Mound HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 3: Establish a new HAPC named Many Mounds bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Many Mounds	A	84°45.246'	26°13.000'
	B	84°39.559'	26°13.015'
	C	84°39.611'	26°10.401'
	D	84°45.435'	26°10.565'
	A	84°45.246'	26°13.000'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Many Mounds HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 4: Establish a new HAPC named North Reed bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
North Reed	A	84°48.104'	26°20.993'
	B	84°42.302'	26°20.902'
	C	84°42.354'	26°18.289'
	D	84°48.154'	26°18.380'
	A	84°48.104'	26°20.993'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the North Reed HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Motion carried (8 to 0) with no opposition.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 5, to make Alternatives 2-6, option b and Alternative 7, option c the preferred.**

Alternative 2: Establish a new HAPC named Alabama Alps Reef bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Alabama Alps Reef	A	88°20.525'	29°16.160'
	B	88°18.990'	29°15.427'
	C	88°19.051'	29°13.380'
	D	88°20.533'	29°14.140'
	A	88°20.525'	29°16.160'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Alabama Alps Reef HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 3: Establish a new HAPC named L&W Pinnacles and Scamp Reef bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
L&W Pinnacles and Scamp Reef	A	87°48.757'	29°18.595'
	B	87°50.688'	29°18.484'
	C	87°52.484'	29°19.754'
	D	87°51.449'	29°20.401'
	E	87°50.933'	29°20.095'
	F	87°46.631'	29°20.832'
	G	87°46.326'	29°21.473'
	H	87°45.535'	29°21.314'
	I	87°43.465'	29°22.518'
	J	87°42.632'	29°21.144'
	K	87°45.525'	29°19.269'
A	87°48.757'	29°18.595'	

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the L&W Pinnacles and Scamp Reef HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 4: Establish a new HAPC named Mississippi Canyon 118 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Mississippi Canyon 118	A	88°30.789'	28°53.183'
	B	88°27.819'	28°53.216'
	C	88°27.782'	28°50.602'
	D	88°27.759'	28°48.944'
	E	88°30.727'	28°48.962'
	A	88°30.789'	28°53.183'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Mississippi Canyon 118 HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 5: Establish a new HAPC named Roughtongue Reef bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Roughtongue Reef	A	87°37.527'	29°27.596'
	B	87°31.552'	29°27.621'
	C	87°31.539'	29°25.007'
	D	87°37.510'	29°24.981'
	A	87°37.527'	29°27.596'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Roughtongue Reef HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 6: Establish a new HAPC named Viosca Knoll 826 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Viosca Knoll 826	A	88°3.509'	29°10.920'
	B	87°59.460'	29°10.877'
	C	87°59.448'	29°7.974'
	D	88°3.532'	29°8.017'
	A	88°3.509'	29°10.920'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Viosca Knoll 826 HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 7: Establish a new HAPC named Viosca Knoll 862/906 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Viosca Knoll 862/906	A	88°23.608'	29°7.640'
	B	88°20.590'	29°7.603'
	C	88°20.554'	29°3.749'
	D	88°22.016'	29°3.734'
	E	88°21.998'	29°2.367'
	F	88°24.972'	29°2.281'
	G	88°25.044'	29°7.568'
	H	88°25.044'	29°7.592'
	I	88°25.045'	29°7.676'
	A	88°23.608'	29°7.640'

Option c. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Viosca Knoll 862/906 HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels. Provide an exemption to the bottom tending gear for fishermen possessing a royal red shrimp endorsement and is fishing with royal red shrimp fishing gear.

Motion carried 6 to 1.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 6, to make Alternatives 2, 3, 4 and option b the preferred.**

Alternative 2: Establish a new HAPC named AT 047 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
AT 047	A	89°49.404'	27°54.426'
	B	89°46.464'	27°54.486'
	C	89°46.397'	27°51.874'
	D	89°49.336'	27°51.814'
	A	89°49.404'	27°54.426'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the AT 047 Bank HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 3: Establish a new HAPC named AT 357 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
AT 357	A	89°43.068'	27°36.259'
	B	89°40.136'	27°36.315'
	C	89°40.073'	27°33.703'
	D	89°43.004'	27°33.646'
	A	89°43.068'	27°36.259'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the AT 357 HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Alternative 4: Establish a new HAPC named Green Canyon 852 bound by the following coordinates:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Green Canyon 852	A	91°8.929'	27°8.354'
	B	91°8.963'	27°5.740'
	C	91°10.610'	27°5.762'
	D	91°10.567'	27°8.376'
	A	91°8.929'	27°8.354'

Option b. Prohibit bottom tending gear in the Green Canyon 852 HAPC. Bottom tending gear is defined as: bottom longline, bottom trawl, buoy gear*, dredge, pot or trap, and bottom anchoring by fishing vessels.

Motion carried 6 to 3.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 7, to make Alternatives 2 and 3 and option a, the preferred.**

Alternative 2: Establish a new HAPC named Harte Bank bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Harte Bank	A	96°36.590'	26°40.826'
	B	96°32.220'	26°40.789'
	C	96°32.308'	26°37.992'
	D	96°36.636'	26°38.043'
	A	96°36.590'	26°40.826'

Option a. Do not establish fishing regulations in the Harte Bank HAPC.

Alternative 3: Establish a new HAPC named Southern Bank bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Southern Bank	A	96°31.902'	27°26.923'
	B	96°30.881'	27°26.989'
	C	96°31.134'	27°25.958'
	D	96°31.892'	27°25.958'
	A	96°31.902'	27°26.923'

Option a. Do not establish fishing regulations in the Southern Bank HAPC.

Motion carried 8 to 1.

Staff presented Action 8, which would establish 8 HAPCs with no fishing regulations. The Committee discussed adding information about individual areas and the fishermen that use those areas. Staff stated that the information would be provided at full Council. Four areas have VMS points- two are discussed in the document. Garden Banks 299 had only 15 VMS points for the entirety of the time series; Green Canyon 140 and 272 has VMS points in the north central portion of the area and points are nearly evenly divided between bandit gear and bottom trawl gear (approximately 50-60 points each); Mississippi Canyon 751 also has nine fishing points, mostly from bottom long-line and Mississippi Canyon 885 has five fishing points, four from bottom long-line. Based on ELB information, these areas are not shrimping areas.

The Committee recommends and I so move: **in Action 8, to make Alternatives 2 through 9 the preferred.**

Alternative 2: Establish a new HAPC named South Reed bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
South Reed	A	83°56.220'	24°40.870'
	B	83°53.360'	24°40.926'
	C	83°53.300'	24°38.313'
	D	83°56.159'	24°38.257'
	A	83°56.220'	24°40.870'

Alternative 3: Establish a new HAPC named Garden Banks 299 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Garden Bank 299	A	92°14.635'	27°42.963'
	B	92°11.697'	27°42.946'
	C	92°11.703'	27°40.457'
	D	92°14.652'	27°40.435'
	A	92°14.635'	27°42.963'

Alternative 4: Establish a new HAPC named Garden Banks 535 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Garden Banks 535	A	93°36.825'	27°27.314'
	B	93°33.894'	27°27.326'
	C	93°33.880'	27°24.711'
	D	93°36.811'	27°24.699'
	A	93°36.825'	27°27.314'

Alternative 5: Establish a new HAPC named Green Canyon 140 and 272 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Green Canyon 140/272	A	91°36.342'	27°50.510'
	B	91°30.460'	27°50.448'
	C	91°30.496'	27°47.834'
	D	91°24.616'	27°47.768'
	E	91°24.654'	27°45.154'
	F	91°27.593'	27°45.187'
	G	91°27.666'	27°39.959'
	H	91°36.475'	27°40.052'
	I	91°36.442'	27°42.666'
	J	91°39.379'	27°42.695'
	K	91°39.347'	27°45.310'
	L	91°36.408'	27°45.281'
	M	91°33.470'	27°45.251'
	N	91°33.435'	27°47.865'
O	91°36.375'	27°47.895'	
A	91°36.342'	27°50.510'	

Alternative 6: Establish a new HAPC named Green Canyon 234 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Green Canyon 234	A	91°15.798'	27°47.662'
	B	91°12.859'	27°47.625'
	C	91°12.944'	27°42.397'
	D	91°15.881'	27°42.434'
	A	91°15.798'	27°47.662'

Alternative 7: Establish a new HAPC named Green Canyon 354 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Green Canyon 354	A	91°51.185'	27°37.572'
	B	91°48.249'	27°37.547'
	C	91°48.278'	27°34.932'
	D	91°51.212'	27°34.957'
	A	91°51.185'	27°37.572'

Alternative 8: Establish a new HAPC named Mississippi Canyon 751 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Mississippi Canyon 751	A	89°49.883'	28°12.710'
	B	89°46.934'	28°12.770'
	C	89°46.866'	28°10.158'
	D	89°49.814'	28°10.098'
	A	89°49.883'	28°12.710'

Alternative 9: Establish a new HAPC named Mississippi Canyon 885 bound by the following coordinates, connecting in order:

Area	Point	Longitude (West)	Latitude (North)
Mississippi Canyon 885	A	89°43.787'	28°4.993'
	B	89°40.841'	28°5.051'
	C	89°40.777'	28°2.439'
	D	89°43.721'	28°2.381'
	A	89°43.787'	28°4.993'

Motion carried with one in opposition.

Staff presented Action 9 which would address prohibiting dredging in existing HAPCs with fishing regulations. The Committee did not make any recommendations on this Action.

Full Council is requested with determining if it would like to send the document out to public hearings after the January 2018 SSC meeting. The document will also be presented to the Reef Fish AP, the Shrimp AP, and the Coral AP at their next meetings. Staff has provided a list of proposed public hearing locations based on fishermen potentially affected in the document and historic participation in the action guide. These locations are:

- Brownsville, TX
- Galveston/Palacios, TX
- D'Iberville/Biloxi area, MS
- Bayou La Batre/Bon Secour, AL
- Madeira Beach, FL
- Key West, FL
- webinar

Madam Chair, this concludes my report.