

Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee Report
April 14, 2021
Mr. Patrick Banks, Chair

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab P, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab P, No. 2**) of the August 2019 meeting as written.

Presentation on Development of Generic EFH Amendment (Tab P, No. 4)

Due to time constraints, the Committee decided to delay this presentation until the next Committee meeting.

Discussion Session of President Biden's E.O. 14008, Section 216 (c) titled Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad (Tab P, No. 5)

Dr. Paul Doremus provided an overview of executive order (E.O.) 14008 Section 216(c) which aims to address issues related to the climate crisis and fisheries resiliency. NOAA is working closely with partners to obtain input on developing action plans that will focus on addressing the effects of climate change on fishery sustainability and protected species. NOAA will continue to receive input throughout 2021 and Dr. Doremus provided a website link where comments on the E.O. could be submitted. He encouraged the Committee to provide any insight related to the objectives of the E.O.

A Committee member responded that it would be beneficial to have access to a variety of physiochemical data (i.e. depth-dependent water temperatures, pH) to better understand climate change effects within the Gulf of Mexico. She also commented that fishery resiliency was related to economic resiliency and that the influence of climate factors on that stability would affect the next generation of fishermen. It was noted that the State of Louisiana strives to consider options to industry stakeholders to improve business resiliency such as expanding areas to fishing and modifying marketing strategies to include more species.

Another Committee member noted that the objective of the E.O. was expansive and suggested that other Committees should be able to consider the E.O. The Committee agreed that the public (during Council public testimony), other Council Committees, the Outreach and Education Technical Committee, and the Ecosystem Technical Committee should also have the opportunity to comment on the E.O as well. The Committee recognized that specialized advice would be required to properly comment on environmental effects; as specialized biological processes, such as temperature-dependent sex determination, are difficult to predict in a shifting climate. Dr. Clay Porch stated that the Southeast Fishery Science Center had produced an ecosystem status report¹ that could inform comments from the various committees. Ms. Martha Guyas replied that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission had submitted a letter regarding the E.O and would distribute it to the group.

¹ https://www.aoml.noaa.gov/ocd/ocdweb/ESR_GOMIEA/index.html

Dr. Carrie Simmons stated staff would develop a draft list of considerations for the E.O. that could be presented to various committees, incorporate that feedback, and could then be submitted. She indicated that a letter was sent to the U.S. Department of Interior and Secretary of Commerce on March 12, 2021 which provided comments on both sections 216(a)(ii) and 216(c) regarding creating a taskforce and provided information on what the Council had done in the past to manage sustainable fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and begin to address climate change. Additionally, the Council Coordination Committee was scheduled to discuss the E.O. at their May 2021 meeting. She inquired whether there was a deadline to provide further comment and Dr. Doreums answered that comment on the E.O. would continue throughout 2021. He encouraged written comment as it could be easily added to the formal record.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.