

Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee Action Guide and Next Steps for Tab P

Agenda Item IV: Essential Fish Habitat Generic Amendment

Timeline Status: Demonstration, review, and discussion

Council input and next steps: Council staff will provide a demonstration of a webtool designed to better visualize available raw habitat and species observation data layers being considered in the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Generic Amendment. The webtool has been created to house spatial layer metadata and better contextualize discussion of the Amendment. Additionally, the webtool will provide map outputs of document alternative analyses for comparison. Council staff will also review the Amendment, and the Committee is encouraged to ask questions of staff about the webtool and document, review the Amendment, and provide guidance on the development of the document. If the Committee is amenable with the presented data sources, the webtool will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee in September, with a revised amendment document to be presented to the Committee in October.

Agenda Item V and VI: Results of the Aquaculture Opportunity Area Atlas for the Gulf of Mexico and Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in the Gulf of Mexico

Timeline Status: Informational presentations and comments requested

Council input and next steps: Mr. Andrew Richard, NMFS SERO will provide an overview presentation on the results of the Aquaculture Opportunity Area Atlas for the Gulf of Mexico. The Atlas was developed by National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) and uses spatial suitability modeling and incorporates multiple data layers that resulted in the identification of nine potential options for Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOA) in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Ken Riley, will be on the webinar to help answer any questions.

Next, Mr. Andrew Richard, NMFS SERO, will provide a presentation on the publishing of the Notice of Intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Gulf of Mexico Aquaculture Opportunity Areas (AOAs) and public scoping period. The Committee and Council are encouraged to ask questions, provide feedback and comments to Mr. Richard. Should the Committee decide to request that staff draft a more formal comment letter on behalf of the Council, a motion would be needed.

Agenda Item VII: Update on *Ocean Era* and *Manna Fish Farms* Projects in the Gulf of Mexico

Timeline Status: Informational presentation and discussion

Council input and next steps: Mr. Richard will provide a verbal update on the progress of *Ocean Era* and *Manna Fish Farms* Projects in the Gulf of Mexico. The Committee is encouraged to ask questions and provide comments related to these projects as it relates to the ongoing efforts discussed in the previous agenda items.

Agenda Item VIII: America the Beautiful 30 x 30 CCC Area-based Management Subcommittee Update

Timeline Status: Information and discussion

Council input and next steps: Council staff will provide a verbal update on the report entitled: *Evaluation of Conservation Areas in the U.S. EEZ*. This report was prepared by the area-based management Committee (Committee) and was presented to the Council Coordination Committee (CCC) at its May 2022 meeting. This report represents the shared interests of the eight U.S. fishery management councils and is intended to recommend conservation areas in the EEZ for inclusion into the American Conservation and Stewardship Atlas. The Committee continues to work on the report and the CCC has requested support from NOAA for additional GIS analyses necessary for this project. The Committee plans to prepare a peer-reviewed journal article later this year.
