

**Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee Report
November 3, 2025
Mr. John Marquez –Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab P, No. 1**) and the minutes (**Tab P, No. 2**) from the November 2024 meeting were approved as written.

The Council is developing Generic Amendment 5 for Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as part of the 2025 EFH 5-year review, as required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery and Conservation Act. Council staff presented a summary of the revised EFH text and associated maps for reef fish, coastal migratory pelagics, red drum, spiny lobster, and shrimp species and the associated EFH web application. Following Council review of the EFH text and map descriptions, Council staff will compile the remaining components of the EFH 5-year review and bring it back to the Council to finalize the amendment. This process and resulting document will concurrently meet the requirements of the EFH 5-year review process. A Council member inquired on suggested habitat type for adult gag grouper off the coast of Louisiana. Council staff clarified that the EFH maps provided are not visual depictions of distributions for species by life stage, but rather display known habitat linkages for each species and life stage and are consistent with Level 1 information as defined in the document. The EFH textual identification provides the legal definition by species life stage to be used in the consultation process. Additionally, a Committee member suggested that having literature citations and potential full text papers accessible for stock assessment authors during the assessment process would be beneficial. The Committee agreed with the proposed SSC recommendations to be included in the final document.

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

Alternative 2: Update essential fish habitat identification and descriptions and habitat attribute tables for the Shrimp, Reef fish, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Spiny Lobster, and Red Drum Fishery Management Plans to include primary research and technical literature sources through 2024. This alternative could be used for all managed species for every life stage, as data are available.

Motion carried without opposition.

Mr. Chair this concludes my report.