

**Joint Coral/Habitat Protection Committee Report
October 19, 2016
Dale Diaz and John Sanchez, Chairs**

Final Draft of 5-year EFH Review

The Committee was presented with the final draft of the 5-year EFH review. Staff highlighted new portions of the document that were added since the August 2016 Council meeting, emphasizing the EFH maps by species and life stage, the EFH web application, and EFH recommendations. The Committee briefly discussed the importance of determining whether or not to include habitat data collected from studies conducted outside Gulf Council jurisdiction; moving forward staff may want to work with the SEFSC to solve this problem. It was requested that ‘proxy’ as used throughout the habitat association tables in Appendix A be defined in the document.

The Committee recommends and I so move: To forward this 5-year EFH Review to NMFS by the end of 2016 and give editorial license to staff to modify the document as needed with approval of the Chair.

Motion carried with no opposition.

Scoping Draft for Coral HAPC Amendment 7

Staff presented the scoping document for Coral Amendment 7. The Committee requested that more information be provided for the goals of the amendment and general biological information about deepsea corals and overarching information about the areas proposed. Staff will modify current regulations for octocorals to better reflect Florida’s regulations. There was discussion on the inclusion of octocorals in the fishery management unit as Florida manages octocoral harvest off of Florida. Staff will provide the Council with a brief presentation on the information available for these areas and the different types of corals so that the Council can be better informed moving forward. Staff will bring a revised document to the January 2017 Council meeting.

Madam Chair, this concludes my report.