

Council Consideration of Fishing Impacts on Habitat Policy

**Virginia Beach, VA
August 10, 2016**



Policy Purpose

- **Ensure changes to FMPs incorporate effective approaches to managing impacts of fishing on sensitive fish habitat areas**
- **Assist Council committees in considering policy elements supporting EAFM when making FMP changes**
- **Focus research and funding opportunities on information needs regarding ocean habitat mapping and possible impacts of fishing activities on habitat**

Policy Purpose

- **High level policy framework**
- **Specific measures will be considered in FMP changes and other Council actions**



Consistent with Council Strategic Plan elements

- **Determine and incorporate the relationship between essential fish habitat and productivity of marine resources into management decisions**
- **Develop management approaches that minimize adverse ecosystem impacts**

One component of Council EAFM work

- **Policies on Fishing Activities that Impact Fish Habitat**
- **Policies on Non-Fishing Activities and Projects that Impact Fish Habitat**
- **Deep Sea Corals Amendment to the Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**
- **Unmanaged Forage Fish Amendment**
- **Essential Fish Habitat Reviews**

Timeline

- **All EOP AP members contacted before EOP AP meeting**
- **EOP AP meeting - 11 May**
- **EOP Committee meeting – 13 June**
- **Revise Fishing-impacts Draft Policy**
 - Comments at meeting and 2 written comments
- **Council review and approval of Policy**



Principles guiding Council EAFM policy development

- An ecosystem approach is fundamental to the sustainable use of our marine resources.
- The impacts of fishing in sensitive fish habitats should be considered in fisheries management decisions.
- Not all fish habitat areas require equal levels of protection and not all areas are equally significant or vulnerable to particular fishing gears or practices.

Draft fishing impact policy focused in three areas

- Actions that apply to all areas of the marine ecosystem.
- Actions that apply to areas of the marine ecosystem where there is a history of significant fishing activity, including ongoing fishing activity.
- Actions that apply to areas of the marine ecosystem where there is little or no history of fishing.

Policies that apply to all areas

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The Council will consider measures to:

- Avoid or reduce impacts of Ghost gear
- Fishing gear modifications to reduce habitat impacts
- All areas in a species range
- Measures that vary in space and time
- Habitat restoration

Policies that apply to areas with history of significant fishing (Page 3 & 4)

The Council will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing management measures for minimizing habitat impacts, and determine whether changes are required
- Identify fish habitat areas and high productivity areas that may be more at risk than others to the impacts of fisheries and fishing gears on habitat through fishing gear impact analyses

Policies that apply to areas with little or no history of fishing

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- In areas with little or no historical fishing, the Council will evaluate expanding and new fisheries, or new fishing gears, for potential impacts to fish habitats, and determine the sensitivity of fish habitat in these areas to the proposed fishing activity.



Forage

- **This policy does not explicitly address impacts on forage fish, as a part of habitat, because other Council initiatives address forage fish directly and indirectly.**



Essential Fish Habitat

- **Definition of EFH added to preamble**



Areas with a history of significant fishing activity

- In general, a history of significant fishing means that a pattern of using an area for fishing occurs and has occurred in the last 50 years.
- Another time period?



Time / area restrictions (Page 3)

- **The Council will consider measures across FMPs that vary in space (i.e., spatial management measures) and time (i.e., seasonally or temporarily) to minimize the impacts of fishing gear and/or practices on fish habitat.**

Habitat Restoration

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- **The Council will consider and support measures to restore significant habitats that have been altered by past fishing activities. This policy applies to both physical or biological features that may have been lost.**

Questions / Comments

