



*Department of Environmental Quality*



# *North Carolina's Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP)*



2017 APNEP Symposium

November 1, 2017

*Department of Environmental Quality*



# *Coastal Habitat Protection Plan – Origin and Purpose*

## G.S. 143B-279.8

- Required DEQ (formerly DENR) to draft the plan
  - Division of Marine Fisheries
  - Division of Coastal Management
  - Division of Water Resources
  - Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources
- Specified information to be included
- Required the Environmental Management, Coastal Resources, and Marine Fisheries commissions to approve and implement recommendations
- Must be reviewed on five year cycles

## Purpose

- Long-term enhancement of coastal fisheries by addressing habitat and water quality needs of fishery species.
- Recommend actions to protect and restore fish habitats

# Coastal Habitat Protection Plan- What Is It?

*A resource and guidance document* to aid DEQ divisions and commissions in management of fish habitat and water quality.

## Coastal Habitat Protection Plan

### Habitats

- Description
- Ecological significance
- Status

### Threats

- Physical
- Hydrological
- Water Quality

### Recommendations

- Supported by science
- General to allow flexibility
- Organized under 4 goals

## Implementation Plans (for CHPP recommendations)

- Developed by DEQ staff
- Two year plans
- Reviewed by the CHPP Steering Committee
- Adopted by the commissions



# Coastal Habitat Protection Plan



**1) WETLANDS:** border vital nursery areas, export food, remove pollutants and are a buffer between water and land-based impacts.



**2) SOFT BOTTOM:** stores and regulates nutrients, and chemicals, and provides crucial foraging areas for fish.



**3) SHELL BOTTOM:** fish spawning and nursery area, improve water quality, and protect nearby shorelines from erosion.



**4) SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION:** provides refuge and food for small fish and invertebrates, improves water quality.



**5) HARD BOTTOM:** complex structure, often covered by living organisms, supports a temperate-subtropical reef fish community and snapper–grouper fishery.



**6) WATER COLUMN:** the basic habitat and the medium through which all other fish habitats are connected.

# *Coastal Habitat Protection Plan - Recommendations*

**Goal 1. Improve effectiveness of existing rules and programs protecting coastal fish habitats.**

- 5 recommendations - compliance, monitoring, outreach, coordination, and invasive species.

**Goal 2. Identify and delineate strategic coastal habitats.**

- 2 recommendations – mapping, monitoring, and assessing fish habitat, and identifying priority areas for fish species.

**Goal 3. Enhance and protect habitats from adverse physical impacts.**

- 8 recommendations - habitat restoration, managing ocean and estuarine shorelines, protecting habitat from fishing gear and dredging and filling impacts.

**Goal 4. Enhance and protect water quality.**

- 8 recommendations - reduce point and non-point sources of pollution through BMPs, assistance, outreach, and coordination. Applies to not only DEQ activities, but for all land use activities, including forestry, agriculture and road construction.

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# *Coastal Habitat Protection Plan - Public Comments*

- News release requesting comments – 1 month public comment
- Presented at 4 MFC Advisory Committees
- Input from advisory committee members and 7 individuals at those meetings.
- Commenting individuals represented the NC Fisheries Association, NC Wildlife Federation, Pamlico-Tar River Foundation
- Comments from CRC representatives of the CHPP Steering Committee.
- All of the advisory committees recommended that the CHPP and Source Document be approved.
- The majority of the public comments stated that they would like to see stronger recommendations for protecting fish habitat.

# *Coastal Habitat Protection Plan*

The CHPP was adopted in the first half of 2016. In the next two weeks, the 2018-2020 Implementation Plan will be presented to the three commissions for their approval. The Implementation Plan presents the actions based on the CHPP's recommendations.





# *NC's Coastal Habitat Protection Plan*



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