



Seagrass Habitat Matters to Fish, and People Too

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NOAA Fisheries Mission

Stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems





NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service

Southeast Region – Habitat Conservation Division



South Atlantic Branch

- Charleston, SC
- Beaufort, NC
- West Palm Beach, FL
- San Juan, PR
- St. Croix, USVI

Gulf of Mexico Branch

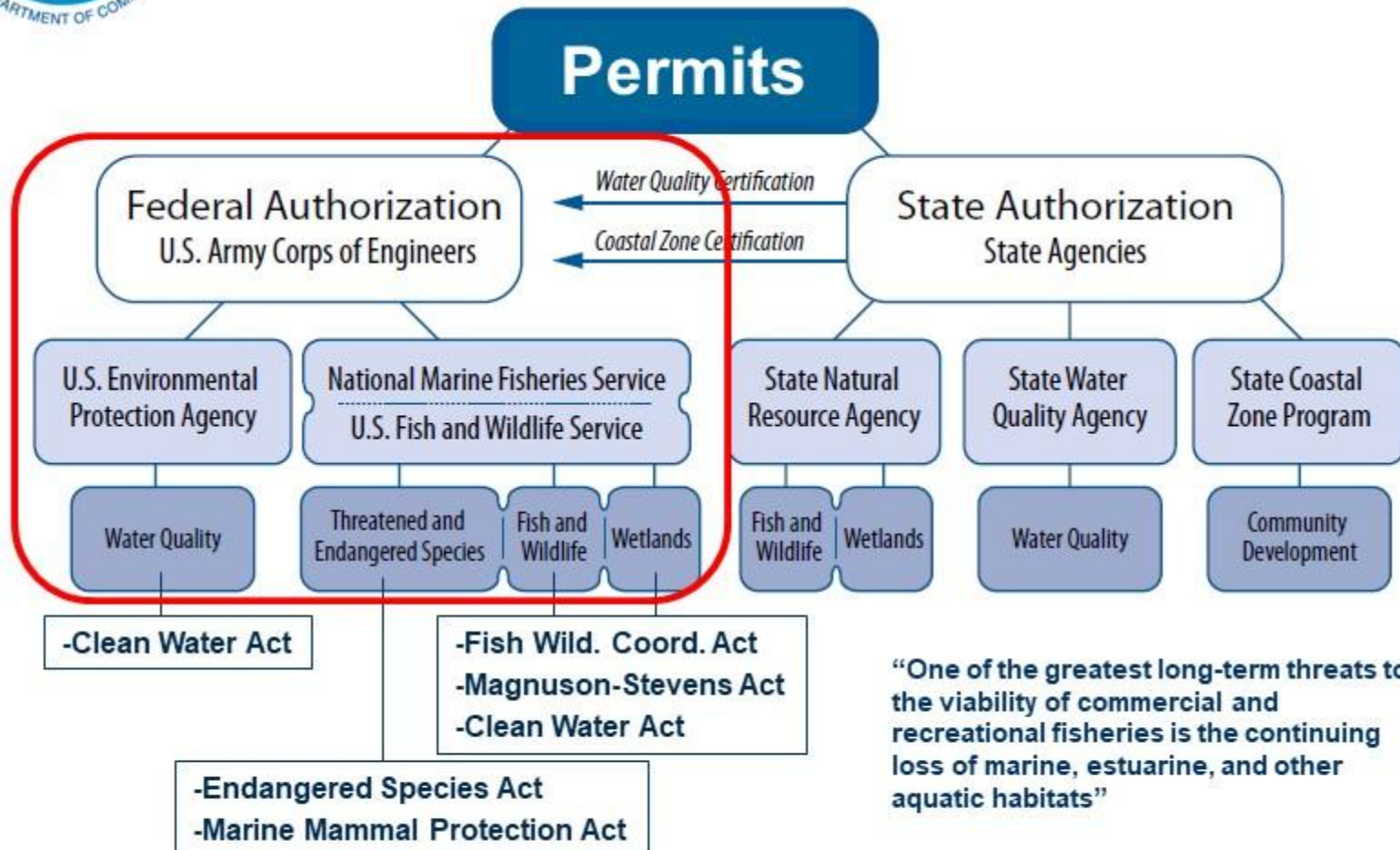
- Galveston, TX
- Baton Rouge, LA
- St. Petersburg, FL

Regional Office

- St. Petersburg, Florida



Federal Permitting Authorities



“One of the greatest long-term threats to the viability of commercial and recreational fisheries is the continuing loss of marine, estuarine, and other aquatic habitats”

What is Essential Fish Habitat?



“...waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.”

Important Coastal Habitats

ESTUARY



SALT MARSH



OYSTERS

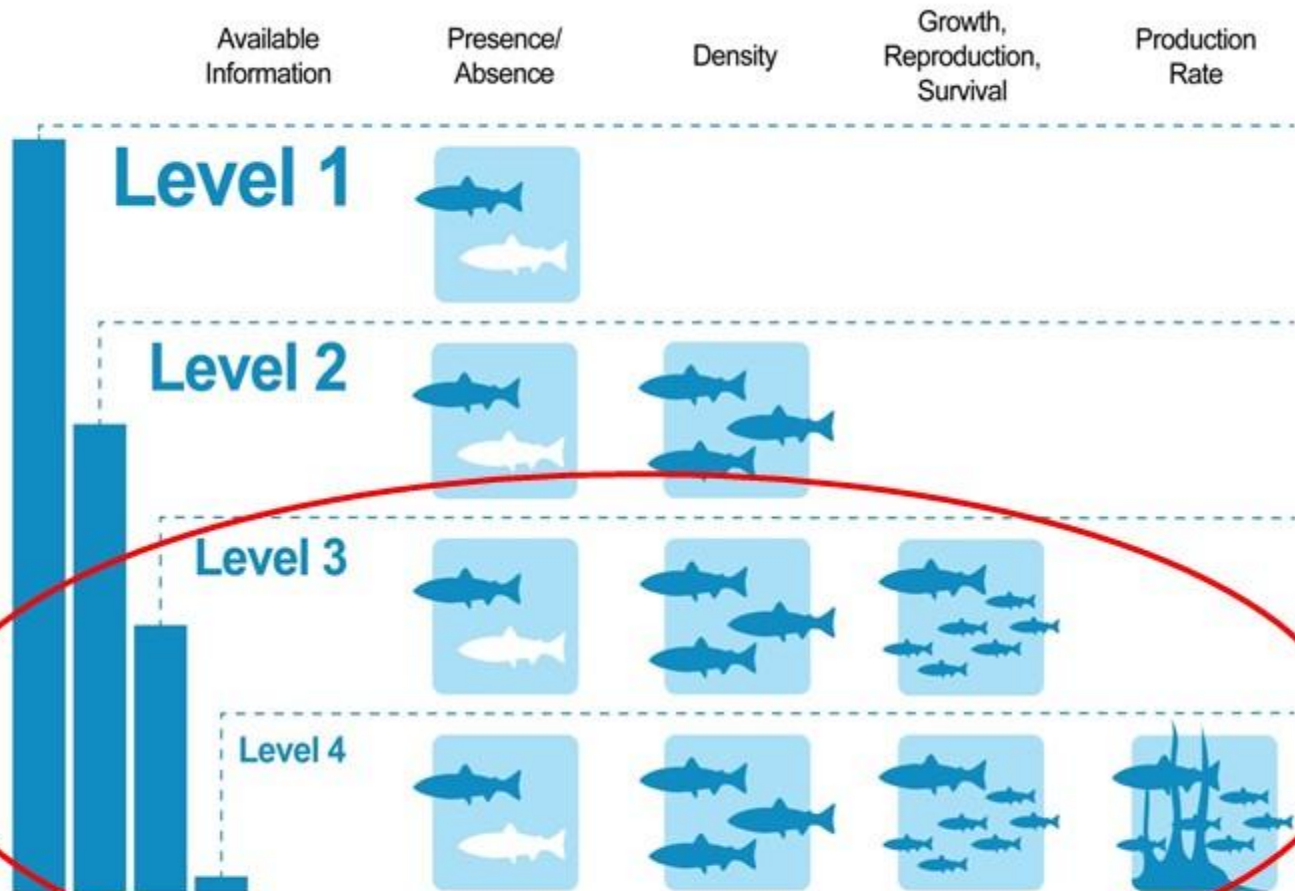


SEAGRASS



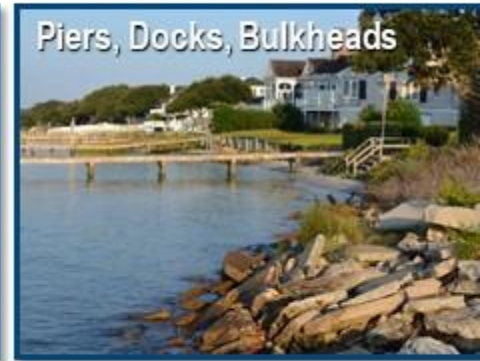


EFH Levels of Habitat Importance



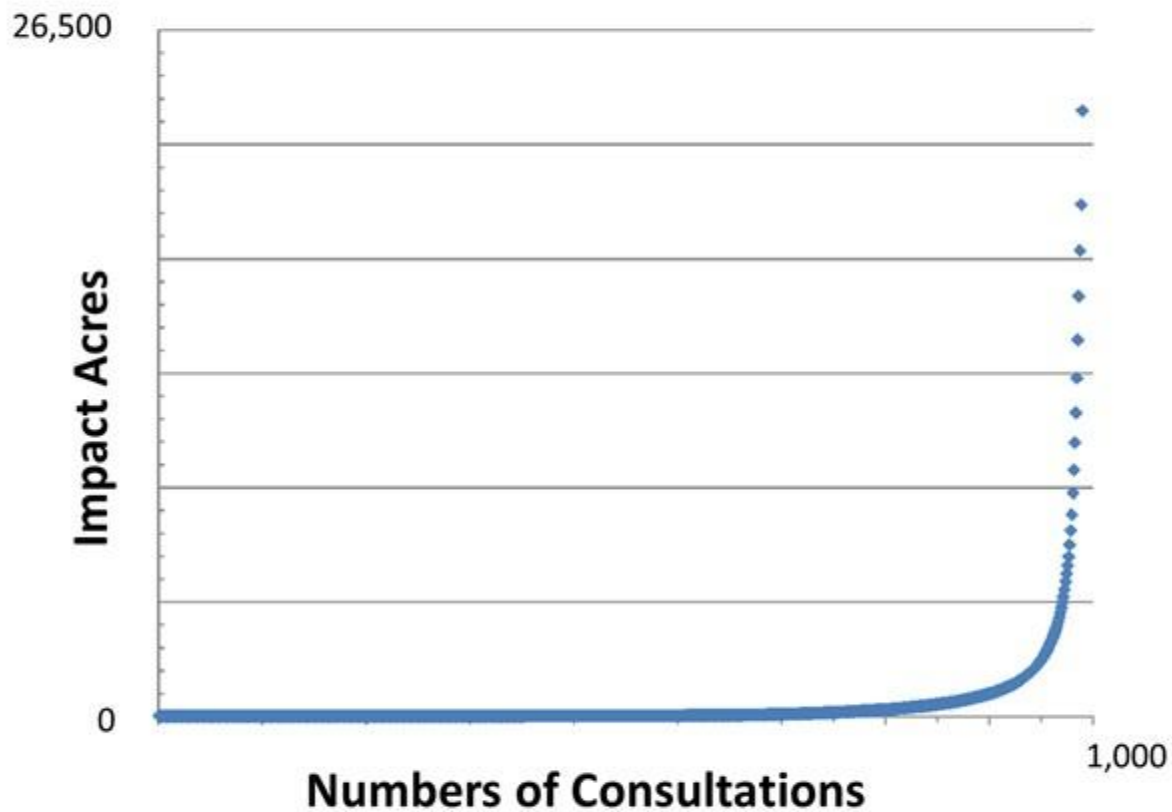
LEVEL 1 - DISTRIBUTION DATA ARE AVAILABLE FOR SOME OR ALL PORTIONS OF THE GEOGRAPHIC RANGE.
 LEVEL 2 - HABITAT-RELATED DENSITIES ARE AVAILABLE.
 LEVEL 3 - GROWTH, REPRODUCTION, OR SURVIVAL RATES WITHIN HABITATS ARE AVAILABLE.
 LEVEL 4 - PRODUCTION RATES BY HABITAT TYPE ARE AVAILABLE.

Coastal Development and Projects



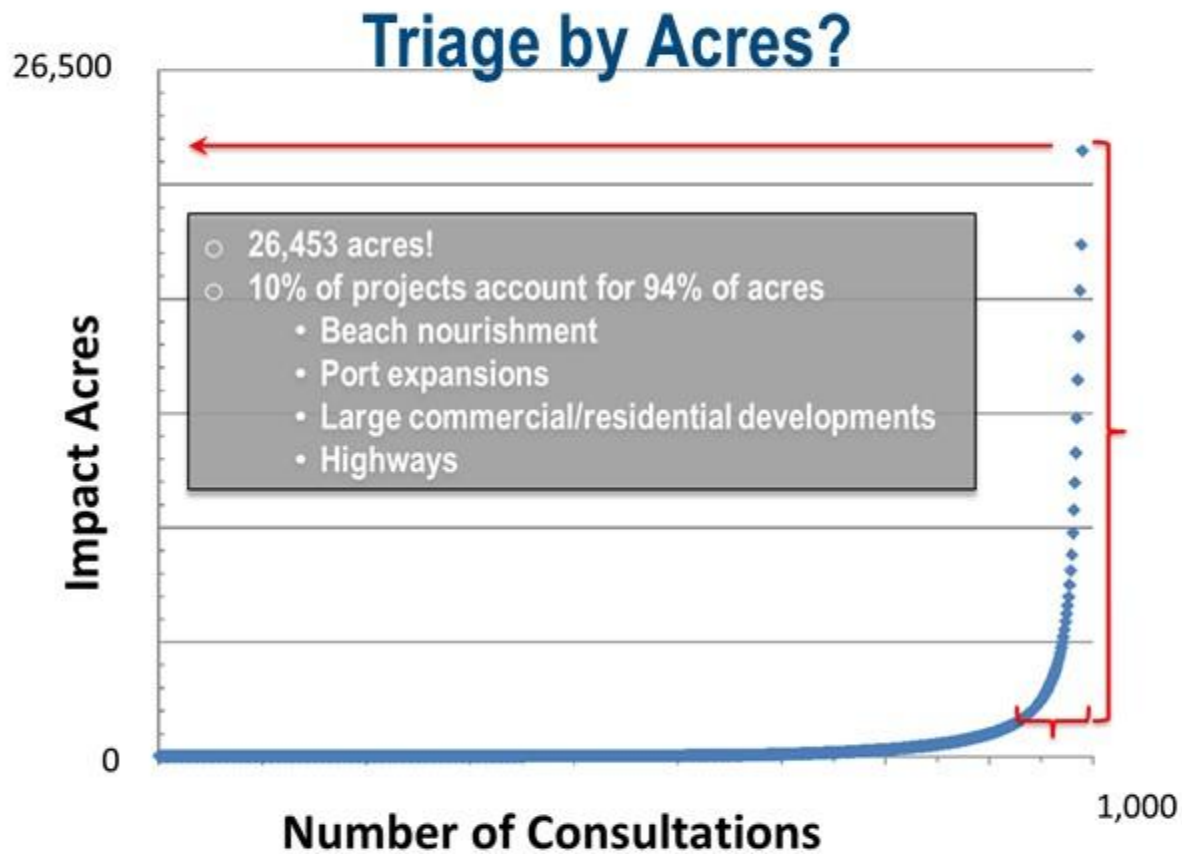
Focus Areas

1) Efficient permitting



Focus Areas

1) Efficient permitting



Focus Areas

2) Research on environmental effects



Shellfish aquaculture interactions with seagrass habitat



Effects of piers and docks on seagrass habitat

Focus Areas

3) Mapping and restoration practices



Seagrass mapping and restoration with NC Department of Transportation

Focus Areas

3) Mapping and restoration practices



Seagrass mapping technology workshop with NC Division of Marine Fisheries

Partner with us:

Contact: Dr. Ken Riley – Fishery Biologist
NMFS Habitat Conservation Division

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SAFMC Users Guide to EFH Designations

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Conserving and managing America's fisheries from three to 200 miles off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Home / Ecosystem Management / Essential Fish Habitat

Essential Fish Habitat

Essential Fish Habitat is defined as: "... those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity." – Magnuson-Stevens Act §3(10).

Mandates established through the Magnuson-Stevens Act task the regional Councils to identify, describe, map and protect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).

- The general distribution and geographic limits of EFH for each life history stage should be presented in the form of maps.
- Ultimately, these data should be incorporated into a GIS to facilitate analysis and presentation.

These mandates were established to facilitate the conservation of EFH and to effectively portray this information to fishing industries, regulatory agencies and the public at large. You can access available maps of EFH and HAPCs in the South Atlantic region on the **Habitat and Ecosystem Internet Map Server** on the Mapping/GIS page.

A requirement for FMPs is to include maps that display the geographic locations of EFH or the geographic boundaries within which EFH is found. Also FMPs should include maps of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs). HAPCs are subsets of EFH which are rare, particularly susceptible to human-induced degradation, especially ecologically important, or located in an environmentally stressed area. Mapping EFH/HAPCs will make it easier to focus conservation efforts on those areas.

The South Atlantic's EFH designations and EFH-HAPCs and Coral HAPCs can be viewed below:
[Users Guide to Essential Fish Habitat Designations by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council \(November 2016\)](#)

Calendar of Events

Scoping Webinar
01/12/2017 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm
webinar
[See more details](#)

Q&A webinar - Snapper Groupers Amendments 43 and 44
01/17/2017 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
[See more details](#)

Public Hearing-Listening Station - Key West, FL
01/18/2017 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Harvey Government Center, 1200 Truman Avenue, 2nd Floor, Key West, FL, United States
[See more details](#)

Public Hearing - Listening Station - Marathon, FL
01/19/2017 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Hyatt Place Marathon/Florida Keys, 1396 Overseas Hwy, Marathon, FL 33956, USA
[See more details](#)

Public Hearing - Jacksonville, FL
01/23/2017 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Lexington Hotel & Conference Center - Jacksonville Riverwalk, 1515 Prudential Dr., Jacksonville, FL 32207, USA
[See more details](#)

Users Guide to Essential Fish Habitat Designations by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Final November 2016

Purpose and Scope of this Guide
The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires federal fishery management councils and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to designate Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for species managed under federal fishery management plans (FMPs). Federal regulations that implement the EFH program encourage fishery management councils and NMFS also to designate subsets of EFH as a way to highlight priority areas within EFH for conservation and management. These subsets of EFH are called EFH-Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (EFH-HAPCs or HAPCs) and are designated based on ecological importance, susceptibility to human-induced environmental degradation, susceptibility to stress from development, or rarity of the habitat type.

In 1998 through a single administrative action referred to as a "comprehensive amendment," the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) amended nine FMPs under its jurisdiction or co-jurisdiction¹ to designate EFH (SAFMC 1998b). When SAFMC completed the FMP for dolphin and wahoo, EFH designations for those species were included in that FMP. In 2012, SAFMC used Comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 (CEBA-2) to designate new EFH-HAPCs for tilefish (managed under the FMP for the snapper/groupers complex) and deepwater coral (managed under the FMP for coral, coral reef and live/hardbottom) and new EFH for the pelagic sargassum (managed under the FMP for Sargassum). The supporting information for the initial EFH and HAPC designations is presented in a report commonly referred to by its abbreviated title *Habitat Plan for the South Atlantic Region* (SAFMC 1998a). Supporting information for designations made after 1998 appear in the respective FMP or in CEBA-2. More recently, *Fishery Ecosystem Plan of the South Atlantic Region* (SAFMC 2009) reviews and updates much of the supporting information².

During development of the *Fishery Ecosystem Plan of the South Atlantic Region*, SAFMC's advisory panels and partners identified portions of EFH designations that were not clear and led to divergent EFH assessments. With one exception³, while these differences did not significantly

¹ Red drum was managed by SAFMC at the time of these EFH designations. However, in 2008, management of Atlantic red drum was transferred from the Magnuson-Stevens Act to the Atlantic Coast Act, and with that transfer the EFH designations for red drum were no longer applicable, although NMFS may still use the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act to comment on the effects of a project to Atlantic red drum.

² Specifically, Volume II of *Fishery Ecosystem Plan of the South Atlantic Region* (SAFMC 2009). This plan is available at www.safmc.net/ecosystem/Home/EcosystemHome/tabid/2435/Default.aspx

³ The exception is the HAPC designation for golden and bluefin tilefish. These species managed within the fishery management plan for the snapper-groupers complex have a life history that differs markedly from other species within the complex.

<http://safmc.net/ecosystem-management/essential-fish-habitat-2/>

Where to get more information...

SAFMC Provides EFH Guidance & Shows HCD Consultations



Shoreline-stabilization

EFH Presence	HAPC Present
EFH Affects	Would Adversely Affect
Project Link	http://ocean.floridamarine.org
Waterway	Core Sound
Notice Date	08-Apr-15
Response Date	12-May-15
Project Number	2006-40176-16; National Park Service, Cape Lookout National Seashore
State	NC

LayerList

Layer Visibility

- SAFMC EFH
 - SantePax
 - South Atlantic Public Notices FY2015
 - Southeast Bathymetry
- SAFMC EFH-HAPC
 - Tilefish EFH-HAPC
 - Coastal Migratory Pelagics EFH-HAPC
 - Coral, Coral Reef, Live/Hard Bottom EI
 - Dolphin-Wahoo EFH-HAPC
 - Snapper Grouper EFH-HAPC
 - Shrimp EFH-HAPC
 - Spiny Lobster EFH-HAPC

http://ocean.floridamarine.org/SA_EFH/

EFH Resources:

EFH essentials:

- EFH website: <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/efh>
- EFH Final Rule:
<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/efhregulatoryguidelines.pdf>
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act:
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/magact/MSA_Amended_2007%20.pdf

Guidance documents:

- EFH Consultation Guidance:
http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/efhconsultationguidanceev1_1.pdf
- Preparing EFH Assessments:
<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/pdf/preparingefhassessments.pdf>

Regional contact information:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat_conservation/faqs/hcd_contact_us.html