

Council Coordination Committee (CCC) Habitat Work Group October 2022 Update

Since the last update provided at the May 2022 CCC Meeting, the full Habitat Work Group met (via webinar) in July 2022 and is scheduled to meet again in November 2022. The following are highlights of activities for the Work Group over the past year.

Wind Subgroup: The wind subgroup met 7 times, initially in February and monthly since April. This subgroup is comprised of staff from the councils, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) fishery science centers, and both headquarters and regional offices. Results of the meetings have included knowledge and information sharing, as well as collaboration and coordination on council written letters to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM).

Fishery Science Center (FSC) Engagement Subgroup: The FSC subgroup looks for opportunities to better connect FSC fish habitat science with the councils, and to integrate council fish habitat priorities into FSC science and research priorities and initiatives. In November 2022, the full Work Group will receive a presentation from staff at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Ocean Acidification Program (NOAA OAP; Dwight Gledhill, Courtney Cochran, and Kaity Goldsmith). The OAP supports a range of ocean acidification species research across the agency and academic community with the primary interface occurring at the NMFS FSCs. As they continue to support this work, they want to ensure their research portfolio best reflects the needs of resource managers. They are very interested in finding opportunities to address Council priorities and are seeking suggestions and ideas for OAP products and services that could aid decision support.

In-person Meeting Planning Subgroup: This subgroup is scheduled to meet on October 12, 2022, with staff from five councils and NMFS headquarters to pre-plan for the CCC Habitat Work Group meetings for 2023. This includes planning for an in-person meeting as well as any 2023 webinars to be scheduled.

Deeper Dive Presentations: Three councils have provided deeper dive presentations on their regional habitat work this year, with two other council presentations expected at the next full Work Group meeting in November. In addition, three presentations were received on the special topic of climate vulnerability. Presentations received to date in 2022 include:

GMFMC (Lisa Hollensead) - Staff are in the process of completing work on a Generic Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Amendment to update identifications and descriptions for Gulf Council's shrimp and finfish fishery management plans. Considered in the document, are two new analytical approaches for a few data rich species. Additionally, sections of the Generic Amendment will fulfill the stipulation requirements of the 5-year review. Council staff hope to complete this project towards the end of 2023.

NPFMC (Sarah Rheinsmith/Diana Evans) - The NPFMC is undergoing their EFH 5-year review working closely with a team that includes science center and regional office staff to advance EFH descriptions and identification maps for a better understanding of stock populations and fisheries. The presentation focused on the progress made by the EFH team and things learned throughout the process.

NEFMC (Michelle Bachman) - The NEFMC are developing one or more Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPCs) to bring some focus to specific concerns related to wind energy development in Southern New England. One is single species/lifestage focused and another alternative is for a multi-species HAPC. This presentation covered details about the objectives, alternatives, supporting data/information and Council discussion of the issue. Final action was taken in June 2022.

The following three presentations provided a coordinated deep dive on the topic of Climate Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs):

SEFSC (John Quinlan) - A *Fish Climate Vulnerability Assessment (FCVA)* was recently completed for the South Atlantic. Methods and results from this effort and the Gulf of Mexico CVA were provided.

GARFO (Mike Johnson) - A *Habitat Climate Vulnerability Assessment (HCVA)* was completed for the Northeast region in December 2021. Methods and results from the study were provided.

NEFMC (Michelle Bachman) - The *Fish+Habitat Climate Vulnerability Assessment Crosswalk* is a synthesis of information from NOAA's FCVA, HCVA, and Atlantic Coast Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP) species-habitat matrix that describes species and habitat climate vulnerabilities and habitat dependencies for Northeast region species. This is part of the larger Northeast Regional "Marine Fish" Habitat Assessment (NRHA) project. The crosswalk will highlight the critical/most concerning intersections of species and habitat climate vulnerability for fisheries managers and will be shared via the [NRHA Data Explorer](#).