

Chip Collier/Roger Pugliese

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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

(843) 571-4366

Willing to Attend Workshop?

Yes

Target Name(s):

Blake Plateau and South Atlantic Slope and Shelf Edge

Geographic Area(s) of Interest within the North Atlantic Ocean (Indicate all that apply)

Southeast

Relevant Subject Area(s) (Indicate all that apply)

Biology, Physical Oceanography, Management

Description of Topic or Region Recommended for Exploration

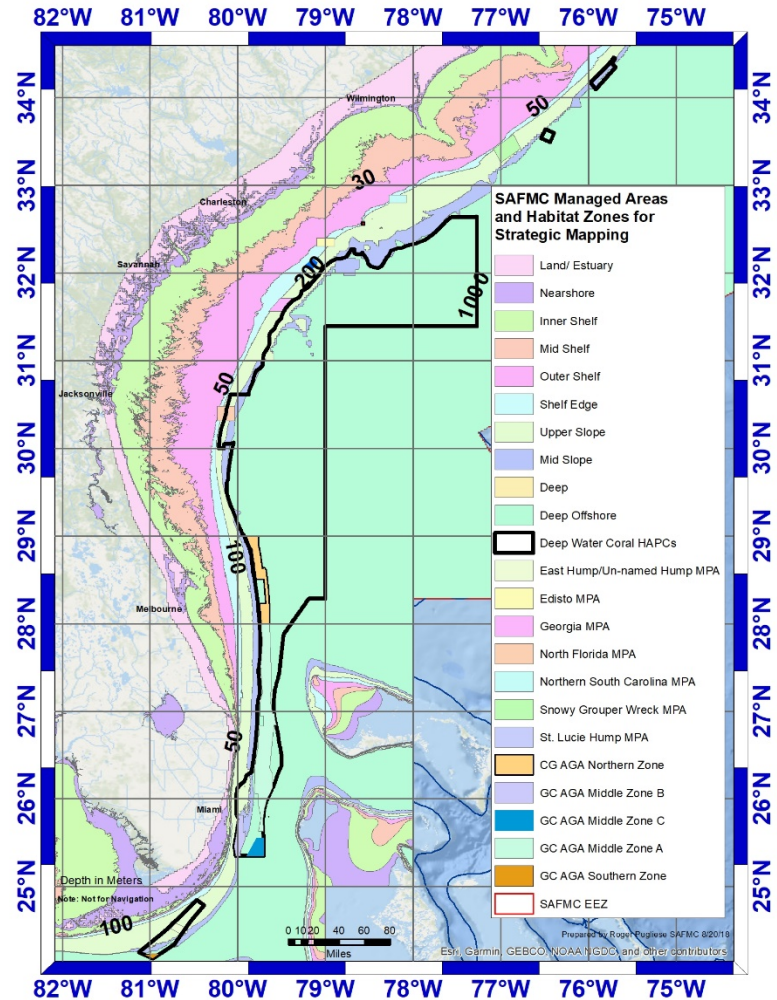
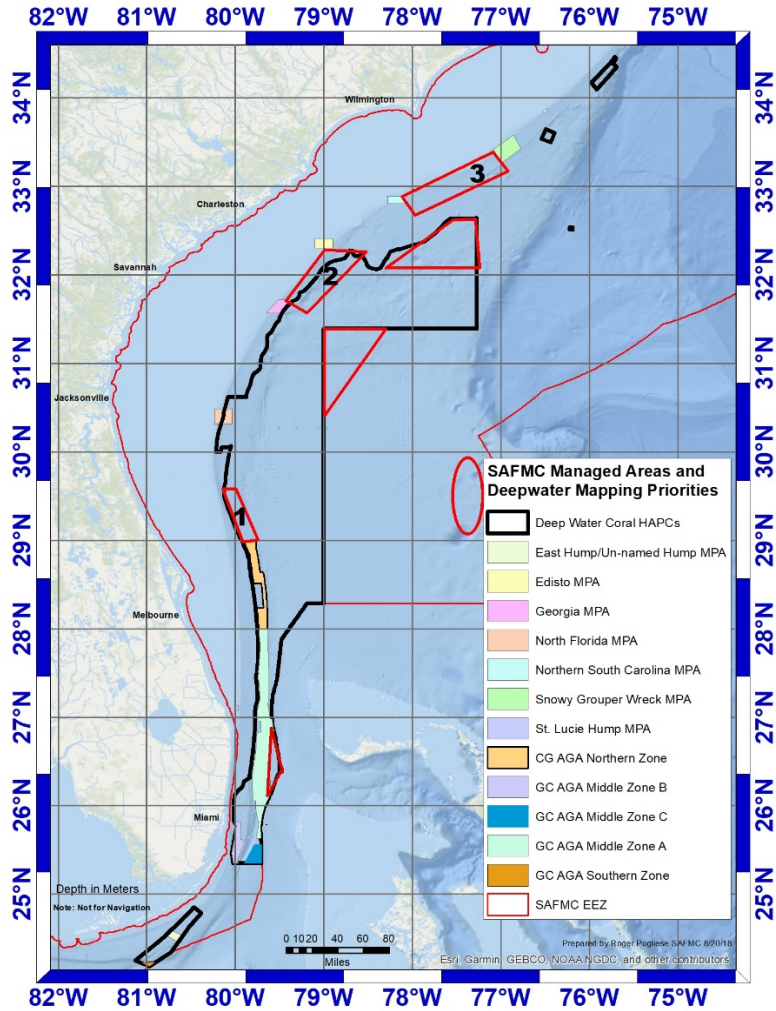
The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has a long history of protecting deep-water ecosystems including coral, coral reef and live hard bottom habitats in addressing Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates to prevent fishing impacts to sensitive habitats and provide policy guidance addressing impacts of non-fishing activities on these resources. The Council through the federal FMP prevents harvest or retention of coral and live hard bottom habitat resources and focuses additional conservation to protect these habitats through creation of Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (CHAPC). Data gathered during previous Ocean Exploration and Okeanos mapping research cruises provided critical data in the establishment of or refined understanding associated with the detailed mapping and characterization of complex habitats making up these protected deep-water ecosystems. While some core areas have been mapped, much of the South Atlantic region is lacking high resolution mapping data and habitat characterization crucial to informing management decisions.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is reviewing available mapping and habitat characterization information associated with the Stetson-Miami Terrace CHAPC as it relates to a request from the Golden Crab Fishery to consider adjusting allowable gear areas. EX 1806 explored some areas in the South Atlantic region and provided insight in the habitats that are in the region. This is extremely valuable information that will be provided to managers and fishermen as the fishery access area amendment is being developed. This is extremely important considering the Council manages these as deep-water ecosystems protecting the coral, coral reefs and live hard bottom habitat and providing policy guidance on all associated benthic and pelagic habitats essential to other Council manages species.

Continuing to map the area is critical to prevent fishing impacts to sensitive habitats and potential protect other unknown areas. Areas outside of the access area are currently open to fishing. It is unlikely that fishermen are currently using this area, but they could explore new fishing grounds. Areas in the Blake Plateau east of CHAPC are open to trap fishing and are in the depth range where fishermen have caught golden crab in the Southeast region (490 to 730 m). Mapping data have been extremely useful in protecting potential coral habitats. Below is a general target area for mapping in the region managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Relevant Partnerships (If Applicable)

South Atlantic LCC, SECOORA, SAFMC Digital Dashboard



SAFMC Mapping Priorities based on managed areas (left) and habitat zones (right). Areas outlined in red (right) are ranked for the top three priorities and other priorities are mapped for reference. Area 1 is a deep offshore habitat with little mapping data and highest interest from Golden Crab fishermen. This area is next to high density coral areas based on observations in EX 1806. Areas 2 and 3 would address deep offshore and upper slope habitats with little mapping information and will be useful in our understandings of connectivity ecosystems.