



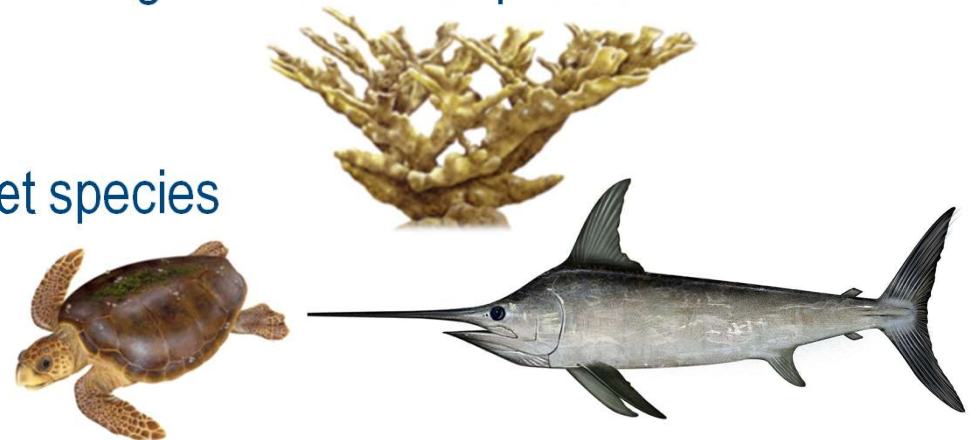
**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# Options for Data Collection and Research to Support Spatial Fisheries Management

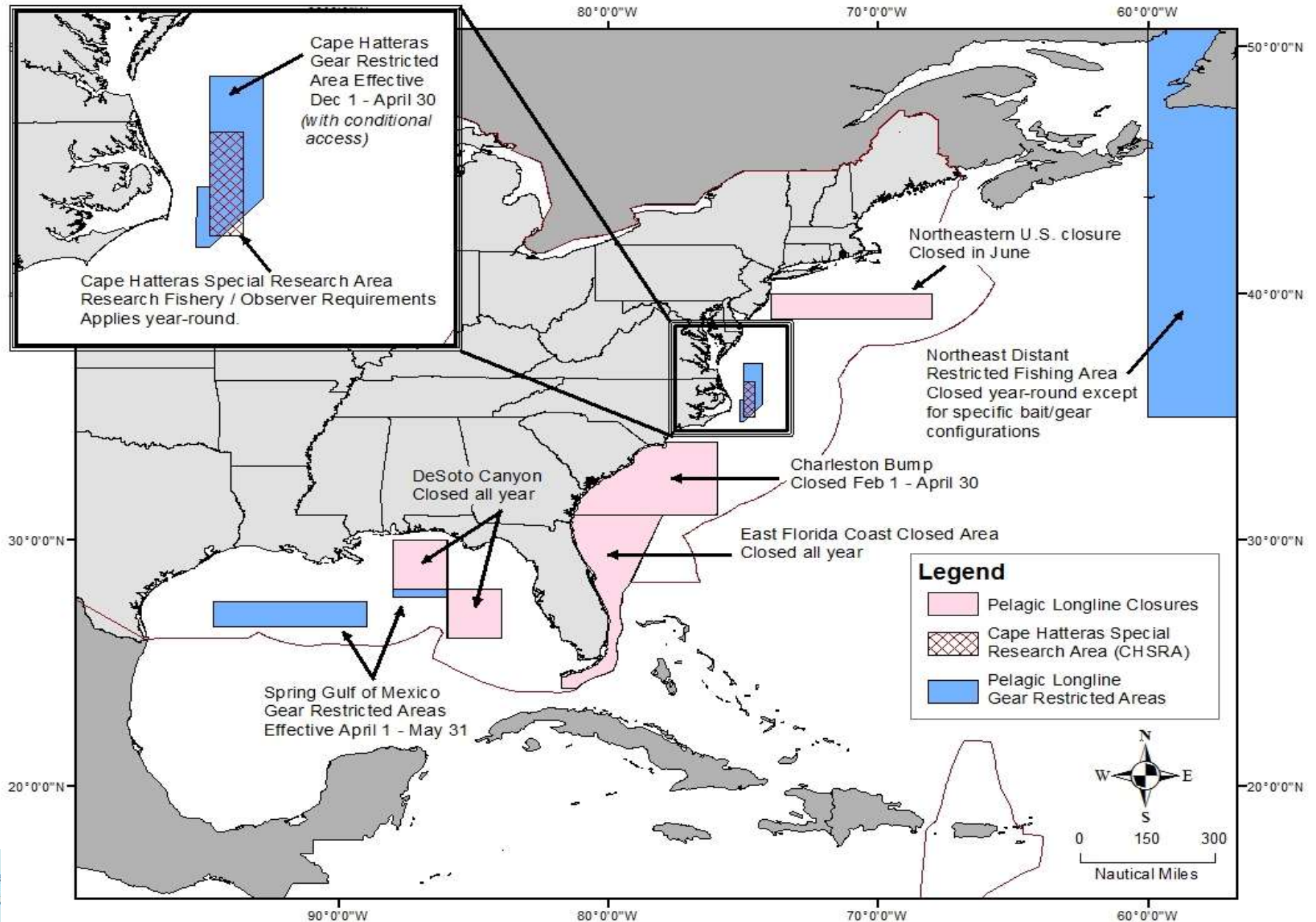
Issues and Options Paper  
Summer 2019

# Spatial Fisheries Management

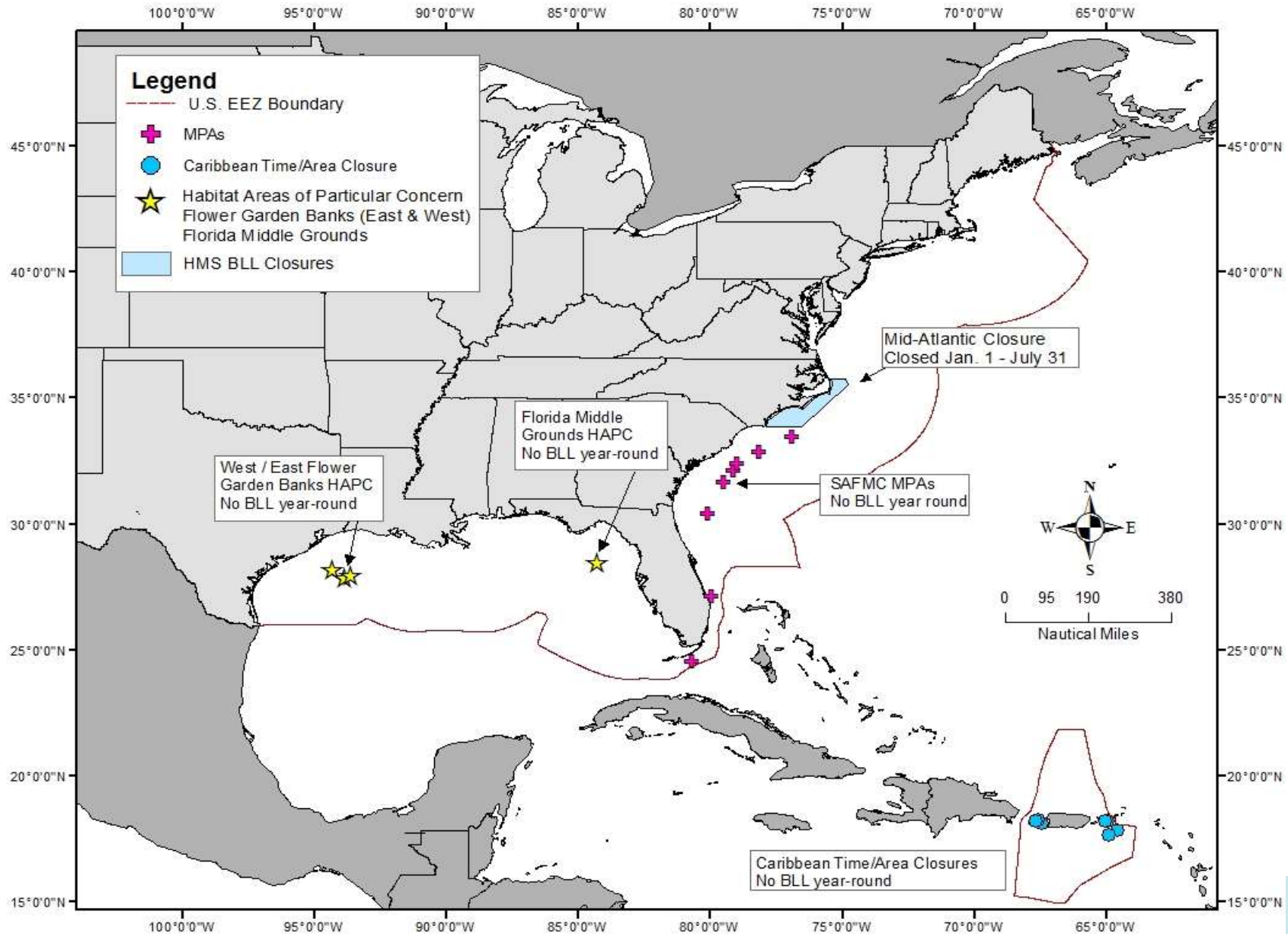
- Spatial fisheries management includes a range of management tools often designed to control adverse ecological fishing impacts
- Time/area closures, closed areas, controlled access areas, marine monuments, and gear restricted areas (GRAs) are all types of spatial fisheries management
- Commercial and recreational fishing and certain boating activities can be impacted
- Adverse ecological impacts can be controlled, mitigated, reduced, or eliminated using spatial fisheries management tools to protect:
  - Benthic habitat
  - Nursery grounds
  - Vulnerable life stages of target species
  - Bycatch and incidental catch



# Pelagic Longline Closed Areas and GRAs



# Closures that Restrict Bottom Longline



# Data Collection and Research in Closed Areas

- Closed areas can be effective at reducing fishing mortality by curtailing or eliminating certain fishing activities
- However, closed areas can also proportionally reduce fishery-dependent data collection and research
- In some cases, fishery-dependent data collection is the most cost effective method and most applicable to the gear-specific research questions



# Why is data collection and research so important in closed areas?

- Fisheries management is most effective when it is based on sound, scientifically rigorous, and up-to-date research
- Ensures that original goals of the closure are still being met
- Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates using best available science and closed areas can compromise collection of supporting data
- Closures affecting HMS are geographically stationary in a changing ocean with migratory species
- Ensures that fish, protected resources, and other species are still in the area

Regular monitoring of closed areas can help ensure that the intended species are protected in the appropriate areas while maximizing U.S. fishermen's access to target resources

# 7 Possible Options to Collect Data and Perform Research in HMS Closed Areas



# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 1 – No action. Continue to authorize any closed area research through the current HMS exempted fishing permit (EFP) program
  - Continue to consider authorizing closed area research as applications/requests are submitted
  - Each EFP application would undergo NEPA analyses and public comment
  - Agency has limited control over the type of research, timing, and management applicability



# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 2 – Authorize closed area research through a streamlined HMS EFP process
  - Streamline issuance of HMS EFPs for closed area research
    - Analyze effects of closed area research
    - Submit effects analyses for public comment
  - Could simplify EFP issuance
  - Agency has limited control over the type of research, timing, and management applicability
  - Not expensive for the Agency

# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 3 – Collect data on closed area catch through an observed access program
  - Vessels with an observer can enter and fish in the closed area
  - Minimal agency control
  - No formal scientific research plan
  - Would take time to gather a sufficient amount of data to analyze
  - Would require full rulemaking

# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 4 – Institute a closed area research program, similar to the current shark research fishery
  - Fishermen apply to be part of the program to fish in certain closed areas
  - NOAA Fisheries creates an overarching closed area research plan
  - More formal data collection and more rigorous analysis
  - Requires voluntary application and participation
  - Moderate investment in Agency time and personnel

# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 5 – Conduct closed area research through public/private partnerships, partially funded by NOAA Fisheries, similar to the 2003 NED research program
  - Fishermen could fish in certain closed areas under an Agency-developed research plan
  - To incentivize fishing in closed areas with unknown catch rates, Agency could consider some level of compensation
  - Formalized research plan with more robust results
  - Expensive for the Agency

# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 6 – Conduct closed area research through a research program led by NOAA Fisheries, using NOAA or contract vessels
  - NOAA Fisheries would design, fund, and execute a formal research project to study closed areas
  - Could provide the most temporally and geographically broad research plan resulting in scientifically-rigorous data and results
  - Most expensive option for the Agency



# Data Collection and Research Options

- Option 7 – Performance-based closed area access
  - Similar to the Cape Hatteras GRA\* to limit bluefin tuna interactions, allow access to closed areas for fishermen that meet Agency-established criteria
  - Criteria could include observer and reporting requirement compliance
  - This option could provide a greater quantity of data than observed access or EFPs, but would not be organized under a formal research plan

\* Note that NOAA Fisheries proposes to remove the Cape Hatteras GRA in the Proposed Rule Modifying Pelagic Longline Bluefin Tuna Area-Based and Weak Hook Management Measures

# Hearing Schedule

Date/Time	Location	Notes
June 4; 5 – 8 pm	Gloucester, MA	Held in conjunction with scoping for Amendment 13 and Amendment 14
June 19; 2 - 4 pm	Public Webinar	
June 25; 5 – 8 pm	Ft. Pierce, FL;	Held in conjunction with scoping for Amendment 13 and Amendment 14
July 10; 5 – 8 pm	Manteo, NC;	Held in conjunction with scoping for Amendment 13 and Amendment 14
July 25; 5 – 8 pm	Houma, LA; Terrebonne Parish Library	Held in conjunction with scoping for Amendment 13 and Amendment 14

# Next Steps

- Solicit comments on the Issues and Options paper or collect new ideas for research and data collection
- Public comment period ends on July 31, 2019
- Consider publishing a proposed rule

Issues and Options Paper:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/research-and-data-collection-support-spatial-fisheries-management>

Please submit comments through <http://www.regulations.gov>

Keyword - “NOAA-NMFS-2019-0035”

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