



## **Protect Deep Sea Corals in the Southeast** Approve Comprehensive Ecosystem-based Amendment 1

### **Protect Deep Sea Coral Reefs**

- Protect more than 23,000 square miles of known deep sea corals from North Carolina to Florida, including hundreds of pinnacles up to 500 feet tall documented with submarine and ROV research by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce, Florida, and others.
- Deep sea coral reefs provide homes for fish, and in the southeast support commercially valuable wreckfish populations.
- Proposed “Habitat Areas of Particular Concern” (HAPCs) will be closed to bottom trawls and other bottom-tending gear. Fishing royal red shrimp and golden crab will continue in the designated allowable areas. Commercial wreckfish populations would benefit from protection of the areas where they live.

### **Stop Destructive Trawling**

- Bottom trawl fishing is the most widespread human threat to deep sea coral communities. Fishing vessels pull bottom trawl nets across the ocean floor to catch shrimp and fish, capturing many other unwanted fish, mammals, sea turtles, and deep sea corals. The largest trawl gear is capable of moving 18-ton rocks and pulverizes everything in its path.

### **Approve the Ecosystem Amendment**

- Only the second Fishery Ecosystem Plan to be completed in the nation, and the first to enact corresponding management measures to protect the ecosystem. Council and agency concerns have been addressed.
- Extensive consultation with scientists, industry, and conservation groups since 2004 supports this amendment. The target date for completion was 2007. The amendment has been delayed repeatedly from the target date of late 2007 to June 2008, September 2008, March 2009 and June 2009. We need your help to prevent further stalling, which risks delay until September.
- NOAA General Counsel needs to prioritize this review. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the ecosystem amendment needs to be printed in the Federal Register on or around April 3, to allow a 45-day comment period, compilation of comments, and make possible final consideration by the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council at their June meeting.