



August 5, 2026

MEMORANDUM

CRC-26-78

TO: Coastal Resources Commission

FROM: Charlie Deaton

SUBJECT: Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Update

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) is mandated by the Fisheries Reform Act of 1997 (SL 1997-400) to be adopted every five years by the Environmental Management Commission, Coastal Resources Commission, and Marine Fisheries Commission. The Fisheries Reform Act also requires the Division of Coastal Management, the Division of Marine Fisheries, and the Division of Water Resources to work together to address threats to coastal habitats across their areas of expertise, and the first CHPP was adopted in 2005.

The 2016 CHPP serves as the base plan CHPP, providing in-depth documentation of the status and trends of coastal habitats, their importance to fisheries, the threats to those habitats from fishing gear, coastal development, and water quality, and recommended actions to address those threats. Priority areas in the 2016 CHPP included oyster reef restoration, studying sedimentation in tidal creeks, developing indicator metrics for habitat monitoring, and advancing living shoreline permitting. The 2021 CHPP was passed as an amendment to the 2016 CHPP, adding five new issue papers focusing on protecting submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) through water quality improvements, protecting wetlands through nature-based solutions, improved rule compliance, wastewater infrastructure solutions, and improved habitat mapping. The 2026 CHPP also takes the form of an amendment, presenting four new issue papers focused on strategic habitat area validation, a coastwide ecosystem assessment and report card, SAV protection and restoration, and thin-layer placement as a wetland restoration technique.

At your August meeting, staff from DMF's habitat protection team will give a presentation reviewing the issue papers in the 2026 CHPP, request any feedback and suggestions you may have, and request a CRC vote signaling preliminary support for the plan. As part of this process, DMF will also request to circulate the draft for public comment. To assist, DMF has provided the 2026 CHPP issue papers to be included in the meeting materials. CRC Commissioners Bob Emory and Larry Baldwin served on the CHPP Steering Committee and DMF staff will ask the Commissioners to start the discussion after the presentation.



Looking ahead, DMF habitat protection staff will give a shorter presentation to the CRC in October focusing on any changes made to the CHPP in response to the CRC's feedback, to MFC and EMC feedback, and to public comments, and will ask for a vote for final approval of the 2026 CHPP. An updated draft of the 2026 CHPP will be provided ahead of time for the meeting materials.

DMF staff are presenting the CHPP to the MFC and EMC on similar timelines, and after all three commissions vote for final approval by mid-November, the CHPP will go to the Department of Environmental Quality and be submitted for legislative review with the goal of officially finalizing the CHPP at the end of 2026.

Questions or comments welcome: please email Charlie.Deaton@deq.nc.gov or call 252-725-2484.



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