

**Agenda Item: 16-13 Final Adoption of the 2015 Coastal Habitat Protection Plan**

**Explanation:**

The Coastal Habitat Protection Plan (CHPP) Steering Committee has met over the past year to update and revise the CHPP to reflect changes in the implementation goals and recommendations as the result of accomplishments and new information based on scientific studies. Also added to the CHPP were four Priority Habitat Issues for the next five years. These four issues are Oyster Restoration, Living Shorelines, Sedimentation and Developing Metrics. The goals, recommendations and Priority Habitat Issues are all designed to achieve the CHPP's legislated goal of the "long-term enhancement of coastal fisheries associated with each coastal habitat" for the benefit of the people of North Carolina.

The CHPP Steering Committee revises every two years, Implementation Plans, containing action items for the participating commissions: Environmental Management Commission, Coastal Resources Commission, and Marine Fisheries Commission and their supporting agencies. Any recommended rule changes or regulations will come back before each of the respective commissions for their agreement and approval.

The four working goals of the CHPP are: (1) Improve effectiveness of existing rules and programs protecting coastal fish habitats; (2) Identify, Designate and Protect Strategic Habitat Areas; (3) Enhance Habitat and Protect it from physical impacts; and (4) Enhance and Protect Water Quality.

**Recommendation:** Approve for public comment NC's 2015 Coastal Habitat Protection Plan