Title:

S-108: Revise/create Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method for coral reef environments to improve application of this rule to coastal ecosystems, to provide more consistent/accurate calculations, and to ensure ecological functions are maintained.

Background:

- This recommended management action relates to the entire state of Florida and is relevant to all habitats, but is most applicable to hardbottom, coral reefs, and submerged aquatic vegetation.
- This recommended management action is being put forth because the Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) rule that is currently used for coastal ecosystems was designed for freshwater wetlands. Thus, there is a lack of consistency with the application of this rule, and resulting differences in calculations between regulatory agencies and other stakeholders that use the rule have been identified as a problem. The rule revision will generate a worksheet developed specifically for coastal ecosystems and a guidance document will be prepared to facilitate the application of this new UMAM worksheet for coastal ecosystems, including coral reef, hardbottom and associated habitats such as seagrass.

Objective:

- The intended outcome of this action is to ensure more consistent and accurate mitigation calculations by various regulatory agencies and stakeholder groups, thereby ensuring that functions provided by coastal ecosystems are maintained. Additionally, the UMAM process will be more transparent to the public and data on UMAM calculations for permitted projects will be more readily available for review by regulatory agencies.
- The use of a worksheet with specific questions will hopefully facilitate conversations between regulatory agencies and applicants and enable UMAM discussions for projects to be more constructive. Instead of debating whether the water environment is a 7 or an 8, discussions will be able to focus on specific attributes of the assessment area that are related to its ecological functions

Intended Benefits and/or Potential Adverse Effects:

- Benefits of implementation of this recommended management action include the potential for a more efficient process (after an initial learning curve) and a better understanding of calculations by the public, which may lead to a more positive perception of UMAM in general.
- Some possible issues that may arise with implementation of this management action include an initial learning curve for users adjusting to the new UMAM rule and training that will be required to bring everyone up-to-speed. Regulatory agencies will need to invest time into development, testing, training, implementation, and enforcement of the new rule.
- The duration of the benefits of this recommended management action is long term.
- If this recommended management action is not implemented, the UMAM rule currently used for coastal ecosystems will continue to apply. Inaccuracy and inconsistency in mitigation calculations may compromise the maintenance of ecosystem functions provided by coastal habitats.

Agencies/ Organizations:

- The lead agency for implementation of this recommended management action would be the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).
- Other potential agencies or organizations who could be involved include local regulatory agencies, such as the water management districts involved in the implementation of this rule revision.
- The key stakeholders for this recommended management action would be any stakeholders involved in coastal construction activities (including permittees and regulatory agencies).
- There were no legislative considerations to take into account with this action.

Permitting/ Enforcement Requirements of RMA:

- There are no permitting requirements for this recommended management action.
- There are no enforcement requirements for this recommended management action.
- A means of demonstrating success of this recommended management action is the consistency of UMAM scores between regulatory agencies and groups of individuals, which can be measured. Success will have been achieved when mitigation acreage calculations are comparable to the previous UMAM, and the consistency of scores between users has improved. Additionally, the new web-based user interface for UMAM will allow for better data management, make the UMAM process more transparent, and make UMAM data more readily available and easier to query and analyze.

Cost:

- The estimated direct cost of implementing this recommended management action is very little because it would be done in-house by FDEP.

Time Frame & Extent:

- The anticipated timeframe for implementation of this recommended management action is 0 - 2 years.

Miscellaneous Info:

- This recommended management action is linked to N-117 to revise reef mitigation processes for permitted and non-permitted activities.
- Some uncertainties or gaps with this recommended management action include needing additional information regarding the best way(s) to structure a quantitative worksheet in order to capture the ecological functions of assessment areas. Additional information regarding how to capture the functional loss associated with various types of coastal construction projects and the functional gain provided by different types of mitigation activities would inform the UMAM revision process.
- Supporting and relevant data includes the following:
    - Chapter 62-345, F.A.C. the Rule which governs UMAM, as well as 373.414., F.S.
    - The ecosystem services group referred to is “A Community on Ecosystem Services (ACES)”:
        - http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/aces/
    - “NESP’s guidebook”:
        - https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/focal-areas/online-

guidebook#.VdH1p7VRHIW .

- Examples of BMPs:
  - https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/ecosystem/publications/best-practices-integrating-ecosystem-services-federal-decision-making#.VdH2C7VRHIU .

- Currently, FDEP is revising the UMAM for coastal ecosystems. A worksheet for hardbottom and coral habitats is being developed. A workgroup of stakeholders from various regulatory agencies and other interested parties, including local governments and monitoring firms, has been asked to review the worksheet and provide comments. Comments will be used to amend the worksheet to ensure optimal functionality prior to the distribution of a draft rule. Once a rule is drafted, it will be made available for public comment. Constructive feedback received from the public can be used to further refine rule language and worksheets at that time. In addition to the UMAM worksheet, the FDEP aims to develop a guidance document, which should provide instructions for assessing time-lag and risk for marine ecosystems to ensure that these parameters are appropriately and consistently applied in UMAM and, in turn, correctly calculate the amount of mitigation needed to compensate for impacts.

Goals/ Objectives to be achieved:

Refer to the SEFCRI Coral Reef Management Goals and Objectives Reference Guide

- FL Priorities Goal C4 Obj. 4.
- FDEP CRCP Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Goals A4 Obj. 3.
- SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 1 Goal Obj. 1 / SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 2 Goal / SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 3 Goal / SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 3 Goal Obj. 3.