

**North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan  
Southeast U.S. Implementation Team  
May 16-17, 2018 Meeting**

Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Ponte Vedra, FL

**KEY OUTCOMES MEMORANDUM**

**I. Overview**

The North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery Plan Southeast U.S. Implementation Team (SEIT) conducted a two-day meeting on May 16 and 17, 2018 at the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve in Ponte Vedra, Florida. The SEIT's Forum was conducted from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on May 16 and was open to the public. The SEIT deliberated from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm on May 17. The Forum agenda was planned with input from the SEIT in order to facilitate priority information updates and discussion with participants and SEIT members. Agendas from both days are attached. The May 17 SEIT deliberations focused on prioritizing the recommended 5-Year Action Plan.

This Key Outcomes memorandum summarizes the primary results of the SEIT deliberations on May 17. In general, the synthesis integrates the main themes discussed at the meeting and are presented in five main sections: Overview, Participants, Meeting Materials, Key Outcomes, and Next Steps. The Key Outcomes section is further segmented into the following sections:

- Welcome and Meeting Kick Off. This section provides a brief overview of meeting purpose and agenda review.
- SEIT business
- Focused SEIT discussions

**II. Participants**

The SEIT meeting was attended in-person by 11 of the 12 Team members: Brock Durig, Clay George, Mike Getchell, Hardee Kavanaugh (alternate for Bill Kavanaugh), Amy Knowlton, Bill McLellan, Katie Moore, Becky Shortland, Leslie Ward (Team Lead), Tom Wright, and Sharon Young. Barb Zoodsma, SERO PRD, and Diane Borggaard, GARFO PRD, represented NOAA Fisheries. Lance Garrison attended remotely via telephone.

**III. Meeting Materials**

The following materials were provided to SEIT members via email prior to the meeting:

- The final meeting agenda
- NMFS 5-Year Review Oct 2017
- Draft 5-Year Plan (version Feb 1 2017)
- Feedback from SERO on the draft 5-year plan

#### IV. Key Outcomes

This summary is not a meeting transcript. Rather, it provides an overview of the main topic covered.

##### A. Welcome and Meeting Kick Off

The meeting kicked off with a brief review of the meeting purpose and agenda. The meeting focused on prioritizing the recommended 5-year plan.

##### B. SEIT Business

The SEIT discussed the November 14-15 or Nov 27-29 timeframes as possible dates for the fall 2018 SEIT meeting.

##### C. Focused Discussions

To assist the Team in prioritizing action items relative to one another, B. Zoodsma proposed and the Team agreed to using the action priority matrix reflected in Figure 1.

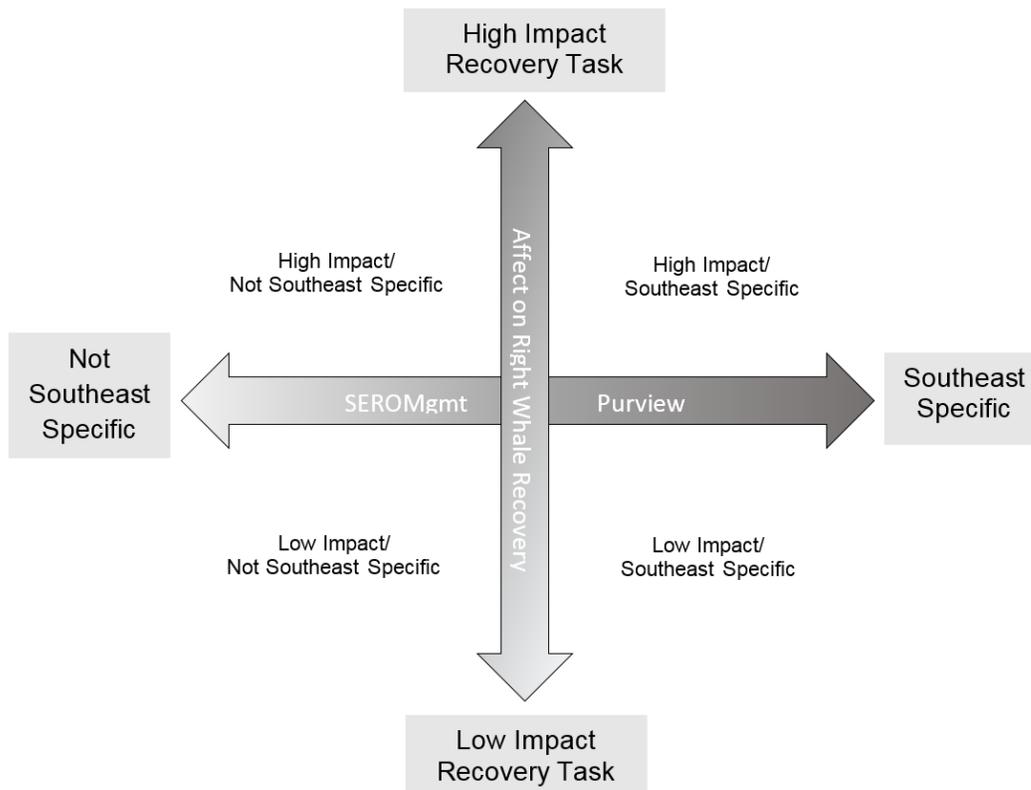


Figure 1. Priority matrix used to rank recommended action items from SEIT’s draft 5-year action plan. The vertical axis reflects relative level of impact on right whale recovery (high to low) and the horizontal axis reflects whether an action item is Southeast U.S. specific or not (high to low).

Tasks were plotted on the graph relative to one another with respect to recovery impact and Southeast-related focus (Figures 2-4).

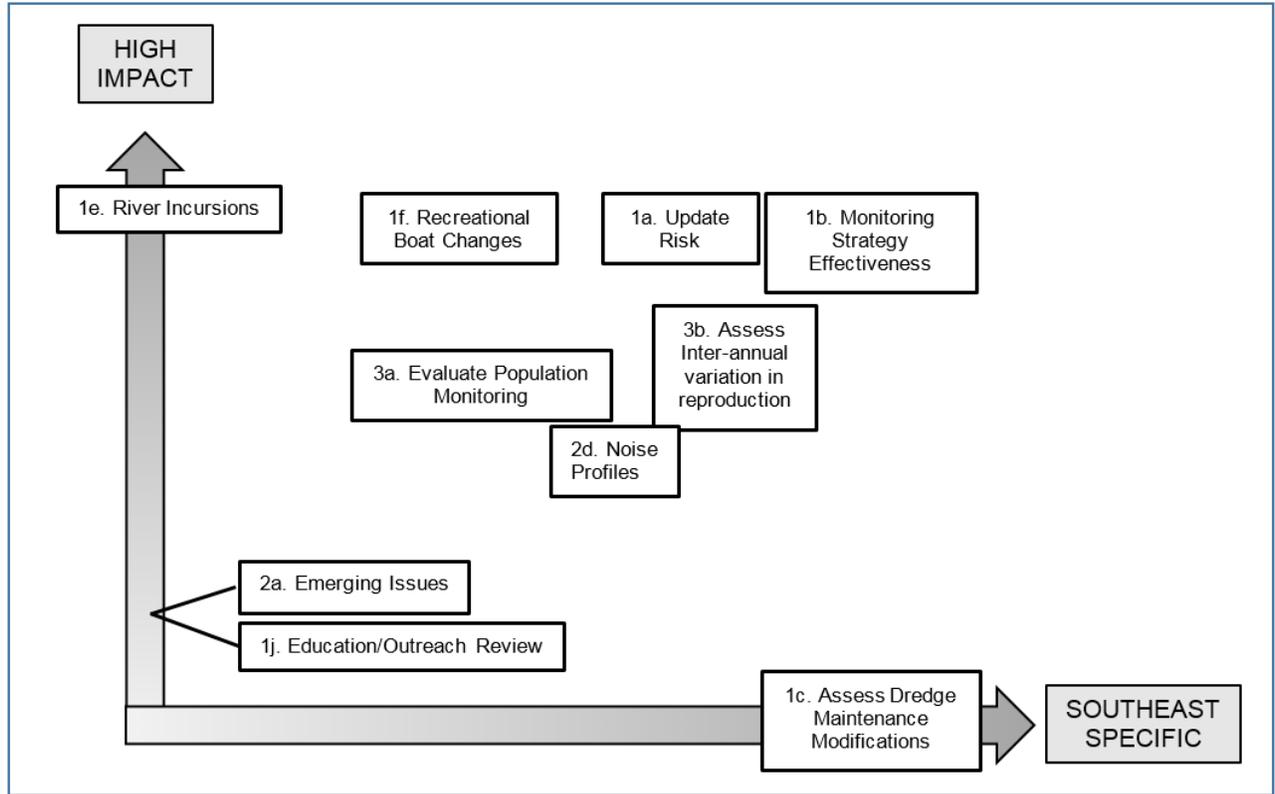


Figure 2. The SEIT’s ranking of action items from the recommended 5-year action plan. Action items located at the top of the figure were judged to have a higher impact on recovery relative to those items toward the bottom of the figure, and action items located on the right side of the figure were more Southeast-Specific relative to those located on the left side of the figure. “Emerging Issues” and “Education/Outreach Review” were assigned the same ranking. Note: Number-letter combinations identify task location within the recommended 5-year action plan’s multilevel list.

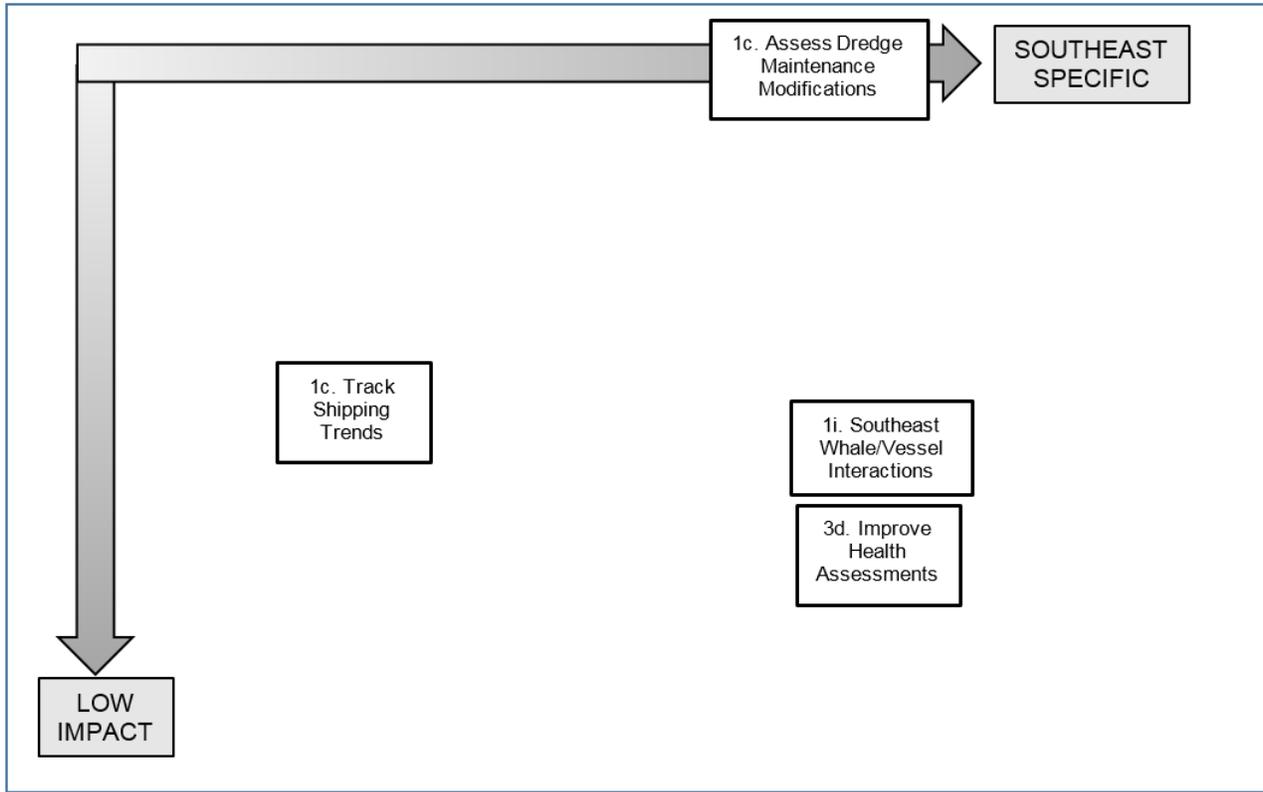


Figure 3. The SEIT's ranking of action items from the recommended 5-year action plan. Action items located at the bottom were judged to have a lower impact on recovery relative to those items toward the top of the figure, and action items located on the right side of the figure were more Southeast-Specific relative to those located on the left side of the figure. Note: Number-letter combinations identify task location within the recommended 5-year action plan's multilevel list.

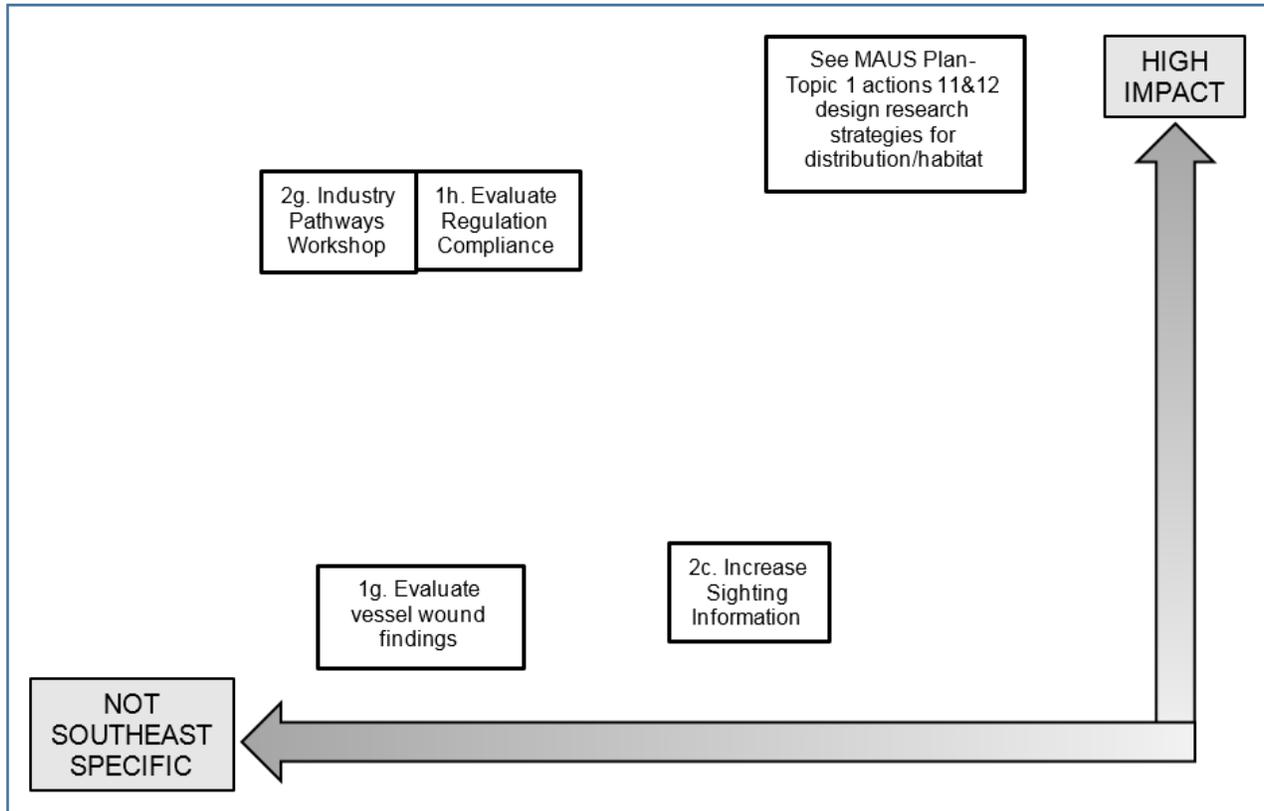


Figure 4. The SEIT’s ranking of action items from the recommended 5-year action plan. Action items located at the top were judged to have a higher impact on recovery relative to those items toward the bottom of the figure, and action items located on the left side of the figure were not as Southeast-Specific relative to those located on the right side of the figure. Note: Number-letter combinations identify task location within the recommended 5-year action plan’s multilevel list.

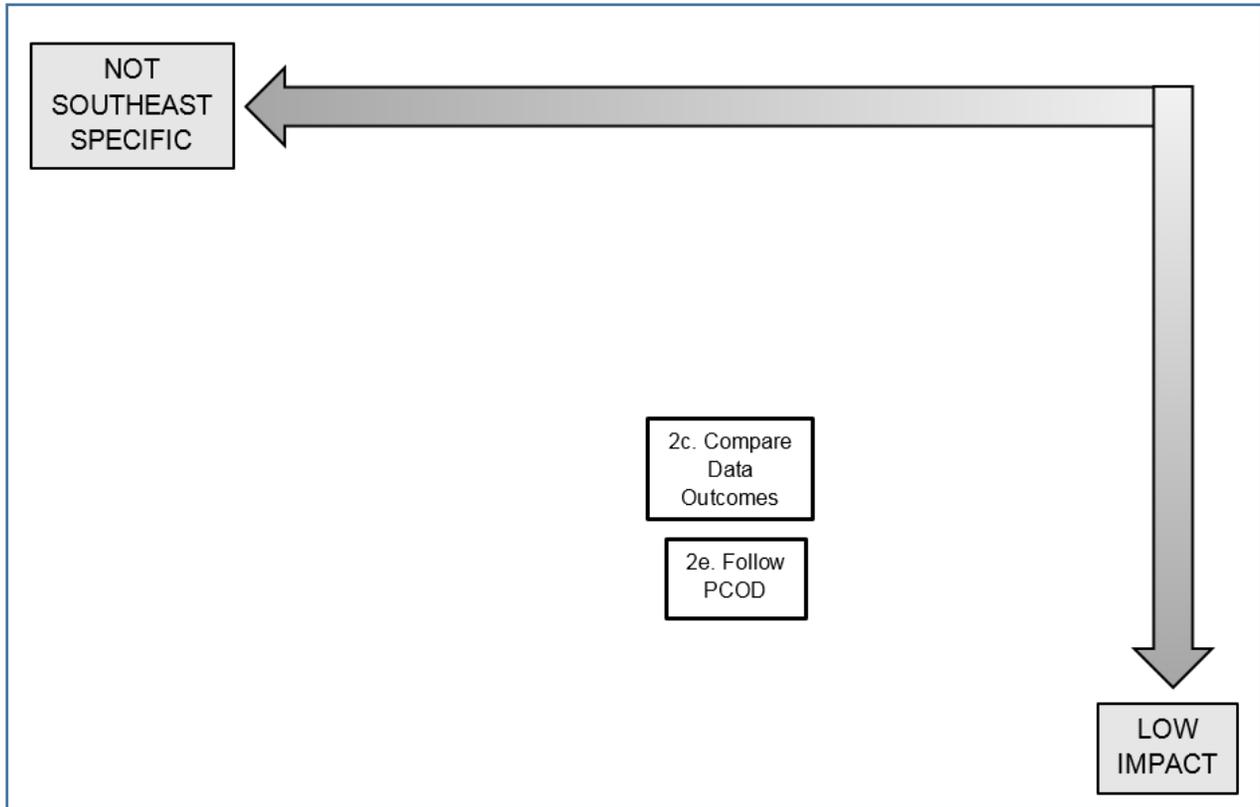
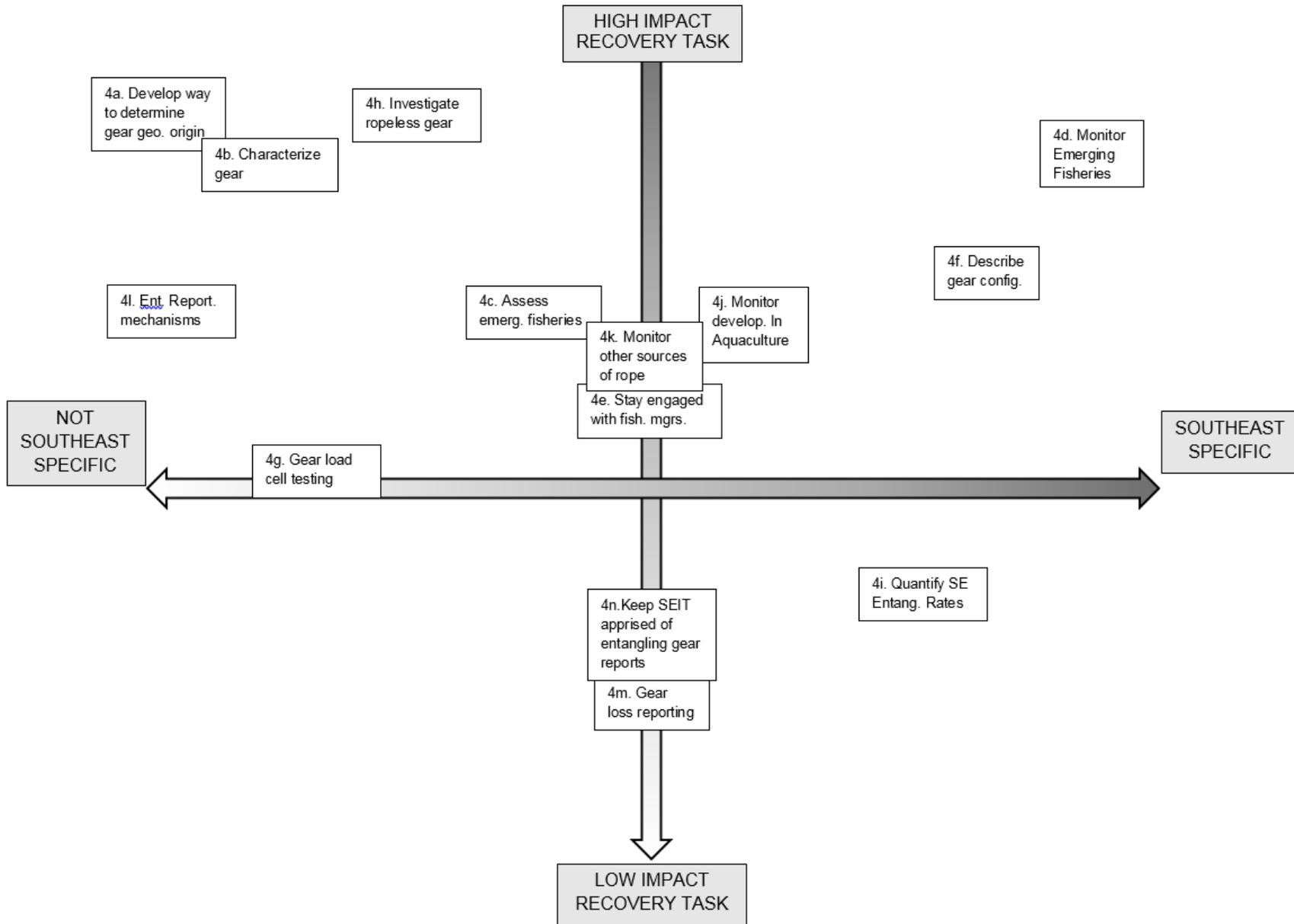


Figure 5. The SEIT's ranking of action items from the recommended 5-year action plan. Action items located at the bottom were judged to have a higher impact on recovery relative to those items at the top of the figure, and action items located on the left side of the figure were not as Southeast-Specific relative to those located on the right side of the figure. Note: Number-letter combinations identify task location within the recommended 5-year action plan's multilevel list.

Final



Final

Figure 6. *The SEIT's ranking of entanglement-related action items from the recommended 5-year action plan. Action items located at the bottom were judged to have a lower impact on recovery relative to those items at the top of the figure, and action items located on the left side of the figure were judged to be not as Southeast-specific relative to those located on the right side of the figure. Note: Number-letter combinations identify task location within the multilevel list of SEIT's recommended 5-year plan topic 4. Emerging Fisheries. Reduce or Eliminate Fishery Entanglements.*

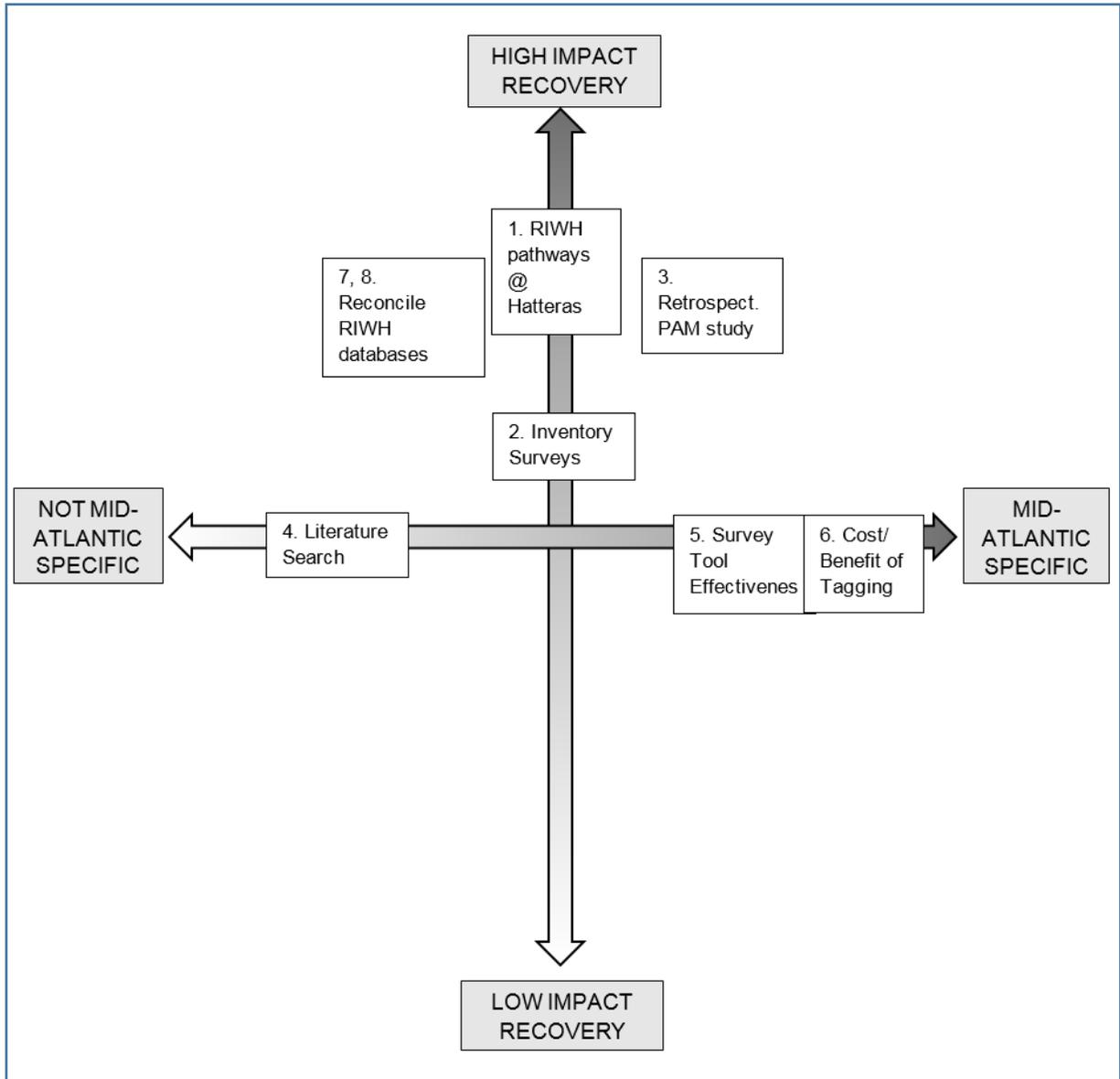


Figure 7. The SEIT's ranking of mid-Atlantic-related action items from the recommended 5-year action plan (Appendix A in the 5-year action plan). Action items located at the bottom were judged to have a lower impact on recovery relative to those items at the top of the figure, and action items located on the left side of the figure were judged to be not as Southeast-specific relative to those located on the right side of the figure. Note: Number-letter combinations represent tiered paragraphs in the recommended 5-year action plan. Did not complete prioritization of MAUS actions.

Final

Once the prioritization matrices were completed and all of the 5-year plan action items were ranked relative to recovery task impact level and Southeast specificity, the SEIT reviewed the list of items that were deemed impactful from a recovery standpoint and specific to the Southeast U.S. The prioritized list included:

- 1b. Monitoring strategy effectiveness (Topic: vessel-related impacts)
- 1a Updated risk assessment (Topic: vessel-related impacts)
- 1f. Recreation boating changes (Topic: vessel-related impacts)
- 1e. Review river incursions (Topic: vessel-related impacts)
- 3b. Assess inter-annual variation in reproduction (Topic: population assessment/monitoring)
- 3a. Evaluate population monitoring (Topic: population assessment/monitoring)
- 2d Noise profiles (Topic: cumulative effect of non-lethal impacts/noise)
- 2a. Emerging issues (Topic: cumulative effect of non-lethal impacts/noise)
- 3c. Tagging/distribution (Topic: population assessment/monitoring, was moved from vessel-related impacts 1d)
- 1j. Education and outreach plan (Topic: vessel-related impacts)

From Topic 4 : Fishery related impacts:

- 4d Monitor emerging fisheries in SEUS
- 4f Describe gear configuration and fishing practices
- 4j Keep abreast of future aquaculture activities in SEUS
- 4k Keep abreast of activities that put rope in water column
- 4e Engage fishery managers to stay informed about upcoming fishery issues of interest

There were no objections to the list.

In the limited time remaining, the Team began briefly sketching out partners and timelines for the priority action items. The group agreed that more time and thought was needed for a well-thought out approach; however, the following may serve as a launching point for fleshing out the plan:

1b. Monitoring strategy effectiveness

Lead Partners: NMFS and WAM

Other: USCG, Navy, Tom P., Amy Knowlton

Proposed Start: Immediately

Expected completion date: 1 yr

1a. Updated risk assessment

Lead Partner: FWRI (Nate and Tim)

Other Partners: Mike G.

Proposed Start: Underway

Exp. Completion date: Phase I in 6 mos.

1f. Recreation boating changes

Lead Partner: FWRI

Other Partners: NMFS, USCG

1e. Review river incursions

Lead Partner: NMFS

Final

Other Partners: Navy, USCG, Stranding Coordinator

Proposed Start: Underway

Expected completion date: 1yr

3b. Assess inter-annual variation in reproduction

Lead Partner: FWRI and SEFSC

Other Partners: Neaq

3a. Evaluate population monitoring

Lead Partner: SEFSC

Other Partners: GDNR, FWC, NEFSC

2d Noise profiles

Lead Partner: TBD

2a. Emerging issues

Lead Partner: GDNR

3c. Tagging/distribution: NEFSC, GDNR

1j. Education and outreach plan

Lead Partner: NMFS-SERO

Parking lot:

1c(ii) Assess dredging maintenance modifications/updates ACOE information

Team discussed NOAA 5-Year Review: Future Actions, linkages w/ SEIT 5-year recommendations, continue to follow-up.

## **V. Next Steps**

1. Continue efforts on action items where efforts are already underway.
2. Identify partners for outstanding action items.
3. Develop living document with priority action items; share and continuously update the document as progress on action items is achieved.
4. Finish prioritization of MAUS plan, provide plan to GARFO, # 11, #12 from MAUS Habitat Topic 1 discussed as very important but coastwide: design appropriately scaled research to improve knowledge on distribution patterns and habitat use (see MAUS recommended plan).
5. SEIT's recommended 5-year plan topic 4. Emerging Fisheries. Reduce or Eliminate Fishery Entanglements was quickly prioritized- review again.
6. Convene technical team to recap the unusual SEUS winter season
7. Schedule summer SEIT call (August)