



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

March 17, 2014

MEMORANDUM TO: Leslie Craig
Southeast Region Supervisor, NOAA Restoration Center

FROM: *Virginia M. Fay*
Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator, Habitat Conservation Division

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) assessment review for the proposed Florida panhandle scallop enhancement project by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC)

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the FWCC proposes to enhance local scallop populations in targeted areas through a combination of the collection and redistribution of naturally-occurring juvenile scallops and potentially supplemented with stocking of juvenile scallops obtained from a commercial scallop hatchery. This approach incorporates restoration methods previously developed by the FWCC. Estuarine mud, sand, and shell substrates and water column will be impacted from the spat collection devices and are identified and described as EFH under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

As specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, EFH consultation is required for federal actions which may adversely affect EFH. As the federal action agency for this matter, NOAA's Restoration Center prepared an EFH assessment for the FWCC and provided that document for our review by electronic mail dated March 5, 2014. The Southeast Region's Habitat Conservation Division (SER HCD) has reviewed the EFH assessment and finds the Restoration Center adequately evaluated potential project impacts to the federally managed species occurring within the influence of the project. We concur with the EFH assessment that adverse effects to EFH would be brief and insignificant. The SER HCD has no EFH conservation recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act at this time. Further consultation on this matter is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed and such actions may result in adverse impacts to EFH.

cc:
F/SER-Giordano
F/OHC-Schubert
F/SER4-Dale
F/SER46-Thompson

