



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
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March 26, 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 Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline project in Heron Bay and Mississippi Sound, Hancock County, Mississippi

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline project will employ living shoreline techniques utilizing natural and artificial breakwater material to stabilize eroding shorelines by dampening wave energy, while encouraging reestablishment of habitat once present in the region. In areas that have experienced erosion, marsh creation and subtidal oyster reefs would be used in combination with the living shoreline. The project would provide for construction of up to six miles of living shoreline and approximately 46 acres of marsh to protect and enhance existing shorelines in Mississippi Sound. Additionally, 46 acres of sub-tidal oyster reef would be created in Heron Bay to protect this shallow embayment and to increase oyster production in the area. Nearshore estuarine water column and sand and mud substrates will be impacted 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, NOAA's Restoration Center prepared an EFH assessment and provided that document for our review by electronic mail dated February 20, 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 the project may result in minor, adverse short-term impacts to EFH; however, the project is anticipated to result in long-term benefits to EFH. 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 is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed and such actions may result in adverse impacts to EFH.

cc:
F/SER-Giordano
F/HC3-Schubert
F/SER4-Dale
F/SER46-Thompson

