



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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April 24, 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 construction and updating of recreational amenities at the existing Popp's Ferry Causeway Park, Harrison County, Mississippi

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the City of Biloxi proposes to enhance coastal recreational access and opportunities at the Popp's Ferry Causeway Park by providing improvements such as boardwalks, nature trails, an Interpretive Center, fishing piers, and other amenities intended to provide access to shoreline habitats and replacement opportunities for coastal-based recreation. Tidal marsh, estuarine mud and sand, and water column within Back Bay of Biloxi and Big Lake 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 (RC) prepared an EFH assessment and provided that initial document for our review by electronic mail dated March 13, 2014, and additional revisions/information were provided through several subsequent electronic mailings with the last being April 17, 2014. The Southeast Region's Habitat Conservation Division (SER HCD) has reviewed the EFH assessment and finds the RC adequately evaluated potential project impacts to the federally managed species occurring within the influence of the project. Best Management Practices will be employed to minimize impacts associated with the parking areas and during construction. Also, all structures will be designed to minimize shading impact to tidal and non-tidal wetland grasses. We concur with the EFH assessment that adverse impacts related to the project will be minimal and temporary. 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
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DWH-AR0225485