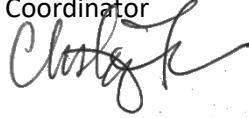




MEMORANDUM FOR: FILE

FROM: Christy Fellas, DWH Environmental Compliance Coordinator
NOAA Restoration Center 

DATE: August 10, 2020

SUBJECT: Open Ocean TIG RP/EA #2: Phased Compliance for Marine Mammal Project to Reduce Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans

Based on my review of project materials in October 2019, it was determined that several projects would need additional review in the future, based on updated location of activities, to determine if additional compliance is needed. Planning is underway for the marine mammal restoration project to Reduce Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans. Passive acoustic monitoring equipment in the Gulf of Mexico will be deployed and/or data retrieved during the August 2020 field work. This equipment supports the restoration project goals to monitor noise, including marine mammal presence. During the August 2020 field work, the following activities will take place:

High-frequency acoustic recording package (HARPs)

Four HARPs currently located in the Gulf of Mexico will be visited for instrument servicing and data retrieval. The data retrieved from this equipment will be analyzed at a later date by NOAA to further the objectives of this project. One currently existing HARP (MP) will be recovered and redeployed at a new location (USW). The location of each HARP is shown in the table below. None of these HARPs will be placed in international waters.

Low-frequency acoustic recording package (LARPs)

Two new LARPs will be deployed in for the first time in the Gulf of Mexico as part of this project's August 2020 field work to capture data in other locations. The location of each LARP is shown in the table below. Neither of these LARPs will be placed in international waters.

HARP Name	Location (lat/long)
GC	27.43030142 N, 91.1934W
MC	28.59846846 N, 88.52W
DC	28.85917853 N, 86.2052W
DT	25.48138034 N, 84.6456W
MP	29.2559 N, 88.295W (recovery only, for redeployment at USW)
USW	26.8979 N, 94.5009W
LARP Name	
GA	27.9071 N, 92.6154 W (230m)
NO	28.5997N 89.2782W (230m)

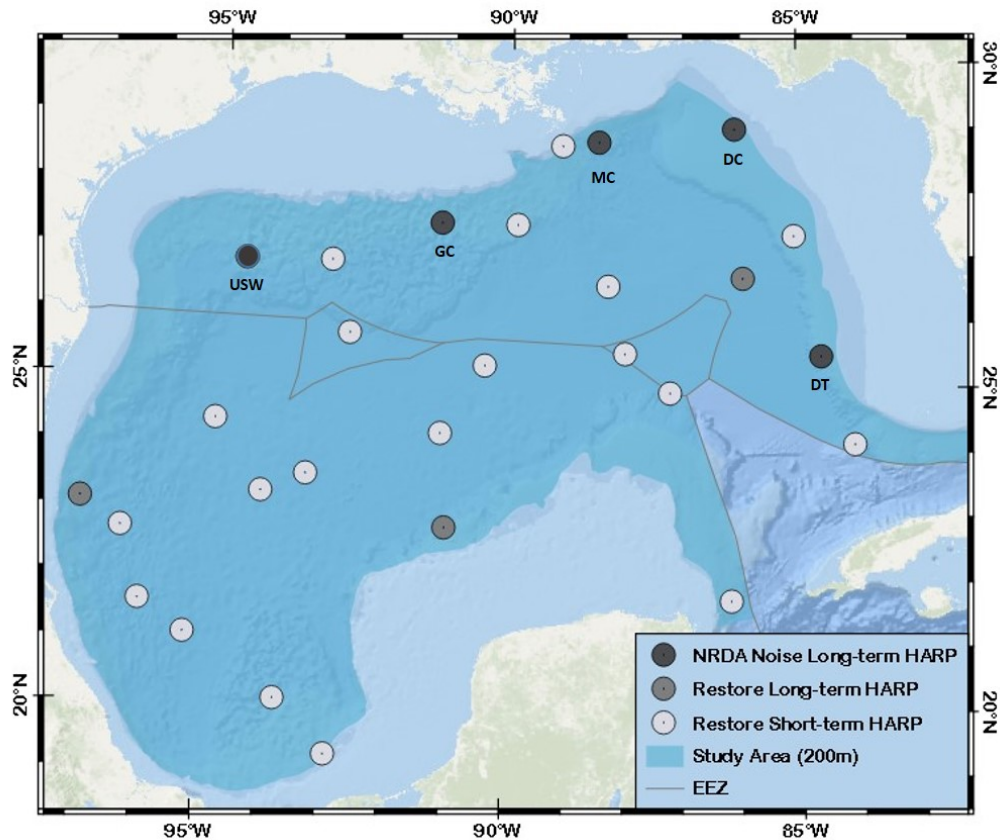


Figure 1. Long-term and short-term HARP sites as covered by NRDA and Restore project are depicted here. The five dark gray circles are part of this NRDA project, and equate to GC, MC, DC, DT, and USW named HARPs in table above. The HARPs at GC, MC, DC, and DT will not change locations, but maintenance and data retrieval will take place. The MP HARP will be redeployed at the USW site.

NEPA Analysis (2020)

Section 4.4 of the 2019 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group Final Restoration Plan 2/Environmental Assessment: Fish, Sea Turtles, Marine Mammals, and Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities (OO RP2 RP/EA) analyzed the environmental consequences of this project and determined that the adverse impacts are minor, including the deployment and monitoring of acoustic monitoring equipment and anchoring equipment to the sea floor. The August 2020 field work will deploy two LARPs and move one HARP, the other equipment already exists in place and locations will not be changed. Based on location and minimal (two LARPs and one HARP) equipment being deployed, these activities fit within the existing analysis associated Finding of No Significant Impact OO RP2 RP/EA. If equipment is moved or deployed in subsequent years, this follow on NEPA review may be revisited.

Other Compliance Analysis (2020)

Similar to the NEPA analysis above, this project was reviewed for potential effects to species or habitats listed under the Endangered Species Act, designated Essential Fish Habitat or animals protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act under the jurisdiction of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in OO RP2. At the time OO RP2 was published, locations of the acoustic equipment to be deployed were unknown. Now that those locations of the LARPs are known (see table above), this analysis can be



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completed. Based on the locations of newly deployed moorings in the Gulf of Mexico, offshore but not international waters, the NOAA Restoration Center has determined there will be no effects to species or habitats listed under the Endangered Species Act or designated Essential Fish Habitat under NMFS' jurisdiction. The NOAA Restoration Center also determined there is no potential for take of animals protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act under the jurisdiction of NMFS from this field work. If equipment is moved or deployed in subsequent years, this follow on compliance review may be revisited.