



United States Department of the Interior


FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Louisiana Ecological Services
200 Dulles Drive
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506



April 1, 2020

Memorandum

To: Deputy *Deepwater Horizon* Department of the Interior Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) Case Manager

From: Field Supervisor, Louisiana Ecological Services Office 

Subject: Informal Consultation for the proposed Biloxi Marsh Living Shoreline project

Please reference your March 23, 2020, memorandum requesting our review of the subject project which would be implemented in Louisiana by the Deepwater Horizon NRDAR Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (LA TIG). The LA TIG has evaluated this project as a potential restoration project to restore natural resources in Louisiana that were injured as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon (DWH)* oil spill. The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Louisiana Ecological Services Office has reviewed the information provided and offers the following comments in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

The proposed project involves creating bioengineered, marsh-fringing oyster reefs to promote the formation of self-sustaining living shoreline protection structures, reduce wave erosion, provide oyster habitat, and prevent further marsh degradation in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Your office provided a revised Biological Evaluation (BE) form on March 23, 2020, addressing the potential effects, conservation measures, and justifications and requested our concurrence with your determination of effects on federally listed threatened and endangered species in Louisiana under the Service's jurisdiction.

West Indian Manatee

The proposed project would be located in an area where the federally threatened West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) may occur. The West Indian manatee is known to regularly occur in Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas and their associated coastal waters and streams. It also can be found less regularly in other Louisiana coastal areas, most likely while the average water temperature is warm. Based on data maintained by the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP), over 80 percent of reported manatee sightings in Louisiana have occurred from the months of June through December. Manatee occurrences in Louisiana appear to be increasing and they have been regularly reported in the Amite, Blind, Tchefuncte, and Tickfaw Rivers, and in canals within the adjacent coastal marshes of southeastern Louisiana. Manatees

may also infrequently be observed in the Mississippi River and coastal areas of southwestern Louisiana. Cold weather and outbreaks of red tide may adversely affect these animals; however, human activity is the primary cause for declines in species number due to collisions with boats and barges, entrapment in flood control structures, poaching, habitat loss, and pollution.

According to the BE, the West Indian manatee protection measures would be employed to minimize potential interactions with manatees. Based on the above information, the Service's Louisiana Ecological Services Office concurs with your determination that implementation of the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the West Indian manatee.

The Service's, Louisiana Ecological Services Office appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in the planning stages of this proposed project. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Karen Soileau (337-291-3132) of this office for further assistance.

Copies provided via electronic mail:

LDWF, Wildlife Diversity Program, Baton Rouge, LA