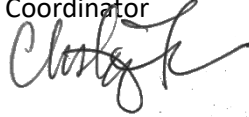MEMORANDUM FOR: FILE

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

DATE: May 5, 2020

SUBJECT: Increasing Capacity and Expanding Partnerships along the Louisiana
        Coastline for Marine Mammal Stranding Response Project from
        Louisiana TIG RP/EA #5: Covered by Existing Compliance

Based on my review of project materials including the Biological Evaluation forms (Fall 2019), and in coordination with representatives from NOAA's Protected Resource Division (PRD) and Habitat Conservation Division in the Southeast Regional Office, the NOAA Restoration Center (RC) determined that the project has existing coverage from previous compliance efforts. This project aims to address gaps and enhance capacity in the current capabilities of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network in Louisiana.

The Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program coordinates emergency responses to sick, injured, distressed, or dead seals, sea lions, dolphins, porpoises, and whales. The Program provides network members with a Stranding Agreement from the NOAA Fisheries regional offices to ensure that all activities performed are safe for both responders and animals. The Program has already undergone analysis with an environmental impact statement under NEPA and associated consultations and authorizations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act. For more detail on the existing compliance documents refer to the Biological Evaluation form with the references attached.

I also reviewed this project under the Magnuson Stevens Act for potential effects to designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Due to scope of responding to stranded marine mammals, often stranded on land, the NOAA RC determined that this project will not affect EFH.

This project will not require further evaluation under ESA, EFH or MMPA for species or habitats under the jurisdiction of NMFS. If the project is modified in a way that may not be covered by existing analyses, it will be reevaluated as appropriate.