



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast>

May 13, 2020 F/SER46:CG/RS

MEMORANDUM TO: Christy Fellas
DWH Environmental Compliance Coordinator, Restoration Center

FROM: Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator, Habitat Conservation Division

SUBJECT: Essential fish habitat review of the Louisiana Trustee
Implementation Group Restoration Plan #5 and Environmental
Assessment: Oyster Projects

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, NOAA and the other Trustee agencies propose to fund a suite of oyster restoration projects in coastal Louisiana across multiple parishes. The three oyster restoration projects would include: (1) enhancing oyster recovery using brood reefs, (2) cultch-based oyster restoration, and (3) hatchery-based oyster restoration. The specific and programmatic projects being proposed would result in minimal and temporary impacts to estuarine habitats, primarily to water bottoms categorized as essential fish habitat (EFH) under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

The NOAA's Restoration Center (RC) prepared biological evaluation (BE) forms in addition to the Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment containing an EFH assessment for the project, and provided the documents for our review by electronic mail dated May 6, 2020. Technical assistance has been provided by the Southeast Regional Office's Habitat Conservation Division (SERO HCD) to avoid and minimize impacts to EFH. The NOAA's RC determined the project will not have a substantial adverse effect on EFH because the project is restorative in nature, and has been designed to minimize permanent impacts. The SERO HCD has reviewed the EFH assessment and have determined the documents adequately evaluates proposed project impacts to EFH. We concur the project implementation would result in minimal temporary impacts to estuarine EFH through the conversion of water bottoms into oyster reef habitat; however, these changes would result in overall ecosystem and fishery benefits. The SERO HCD has no EFH conservation recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act at this time. Further consultation on this matter is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed and such actions may result in adverse impacts to EFH.

cc:
F/HC3 – Sweeney
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