



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office
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Fairhope, Alabama 36532

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/RW/DH NRDAR

Memorandum

June 9, 2020

To: Manatee Recovery Coordinator, North Florida Ecological Services Field Office

From: Assistant Gulf Restoration Manager, Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office

Subject: Notification of Compliance with Marine Mammal Protection Act

Overview

The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (LA TIG) evaluated this project to restore natural resources injured as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon (DWH)* oil spill. This project will involve in-water work in areas where West Indian manatee could be present and, as such, consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), was initiated (Table 1). The Department of the Interior (DOI) determined that this project may affect, but would not likely adversely affect the West Indian manatee. The Lafayette Ecological Services Field Office concurred with this determination on April 14, 2020. A brief summary of the project and ESA consultation, as related to the West Indian manatee, is provided below in Table 1. This memo serves as notification of compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

Background

After the DWH oil spill, federal and state natural resource trustee agencies (Trustees) came together to assess the effects of the spill and plan for the restoration of injured natural resources. As part of the legal settlement reached with BP in 2016, the Trustees prepared a Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final PDARP/PEIS), to provide the framework for DWH oil spill restoration across the Gulf.

The Final PDARP/PEIS established Trustee Implementation Groups (TIGs) that develop plans for, choose, and implement specific restoration actions under the Final PDARP/PEIS. The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (TIG) includes five Louisiana state trustee agencies and four federal trustee agencies: the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA); the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR); the Louisiana Department of

Environmental Quality (LDEQ); the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office (LOSCO); the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF); the United States Department of Commerce, represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); the United States Department of the Interior (USDOI), represented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Park Service (NPS); the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The LA TIG has evaluated this project as a potential restoration project under the *Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group Draft Phase II Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #3.3: Large Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper Barataria Component (BA-207)*, which was open to public comment through April 20, 2020. NOAA Fisheries Restoration Center will implement the project.

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Project Compliance Information

The project in the LA RP/EA includes in-water work in areas where West Indian manatee could be present and as such, consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), was initiated. Table 1 includes a general description of in-water work and conservation measures for each project.

Because take of manatees, incidental or otherwise, is not presently authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1461 *et seq.*), each consultation where manatees could be affected includes conservation measures to ensure potential effects to manatees are avoided or minimized to an insignificant and discountable level. This consultation considered the likelihood of manatee presence and the potential adverse effects of the projects to the manatee. While manatees are not likely to be present at the site locations, they could be transiting the project areas. Therefore, conservation measures for manatee were incorporated into the consultation because in-water work would occur where manatees could be present. In general, where in-water work will occur and manatees could be present, the Trustees will implement the Service's "Standard Manatee Conditions for In-Water Work" dated 2011 or other conservation measures specific to the project (Table 1). The Trustees will also implement NOAA's "Sea Turtle and Small-tooth Sawfish Construction Conditions" dated 2006 for two projects, as described in Table 1.

Conclusion

DOI anticipates this project may affect, but would not likely adversely affect the West Indian manatee. A brief summary of the project and ESA consultation, as related to the West Indian manatee, is provided in Table 1 below.

DOI believes the procedures contained within these consultations constitute appropriate and responsible steps to promote compliance with MMPA prohibitions on take by requiring the activities to achieve a standard of No Effect or May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect for manatees. As such, we do not anticipate any take, incidental or otherwise, under the ESA or MMPA for West Indian manatee as a result of the implementation of these projects.

In addition, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NFMS) also coordinated with the Trustees under MMPA in order to protect other species of marine mammals that could be present in

project areas. NMFS may require additional avoidance measures to protect dolphins or other marine mammals at the project sites. While we have not attempted to catalogue avoidance and minimization measures from NMFS, we believe any additional measures they require will further avoid impacts to manatees should they be present at these project areas.

If modifications are made to this project in a manner that may affect the manatee or its habitat; if additional information involving potential effects to the manatee or other listed species not previously considered becomes available; or if in the unlikely event that the take of a manatee occurs during the project, consultation will be reinitiated.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this response, please immediately contact Erin Chandler, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, at 470-361-3153, or erin_chandler@fws.gov.

Attachments (3)

- Map of project location (Figures 1 and 2)
- Summary of Project Information and ESA Determination (Table 1)

Figure 1. Map showing the Large-Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper Barataria Component project area in Barataria Basin, coastal Louisiana.

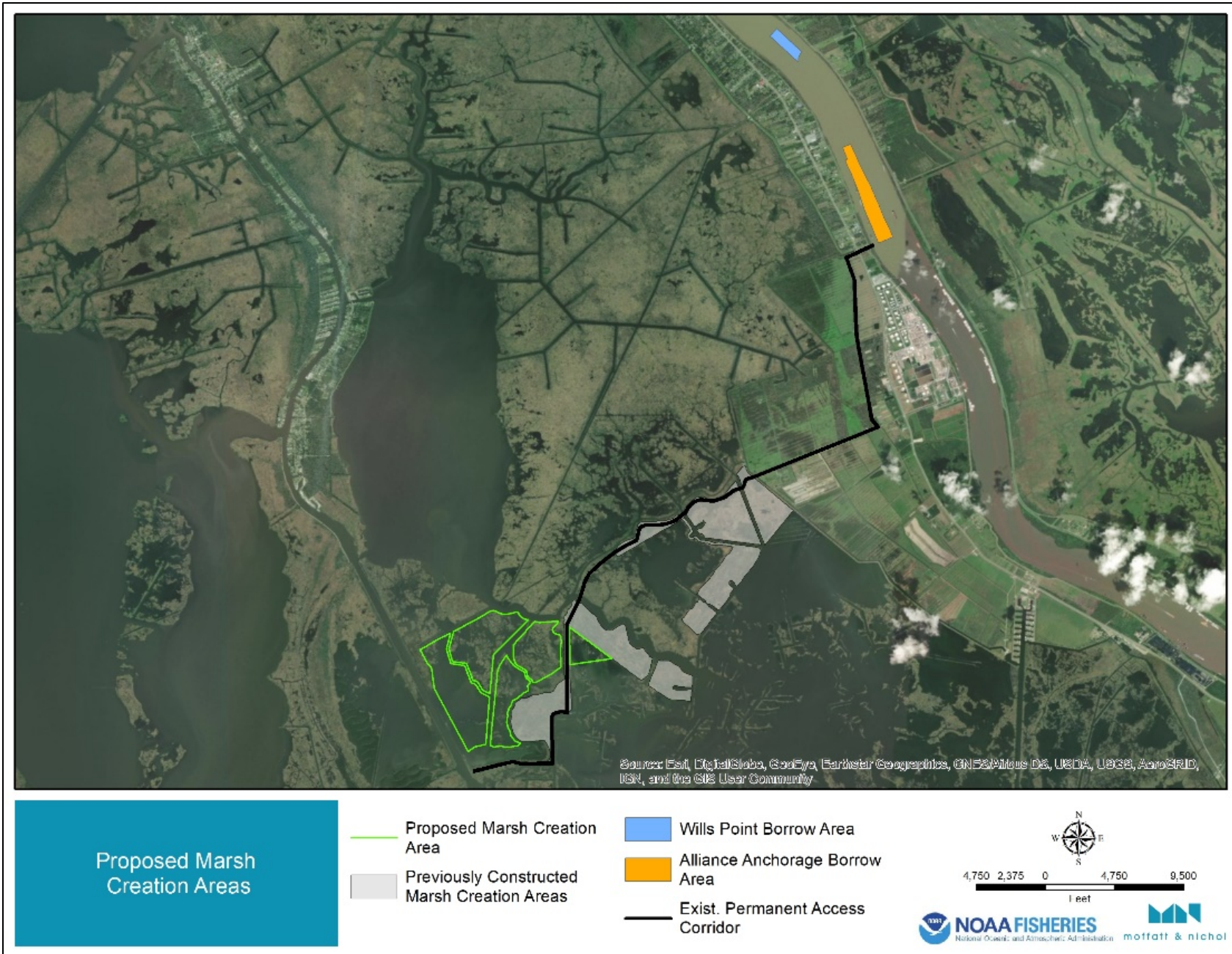


Figure 2. Map showing the interior marsh features of Large-Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper Barataria Component project area in Barataria Basin, coastal Louisiana.

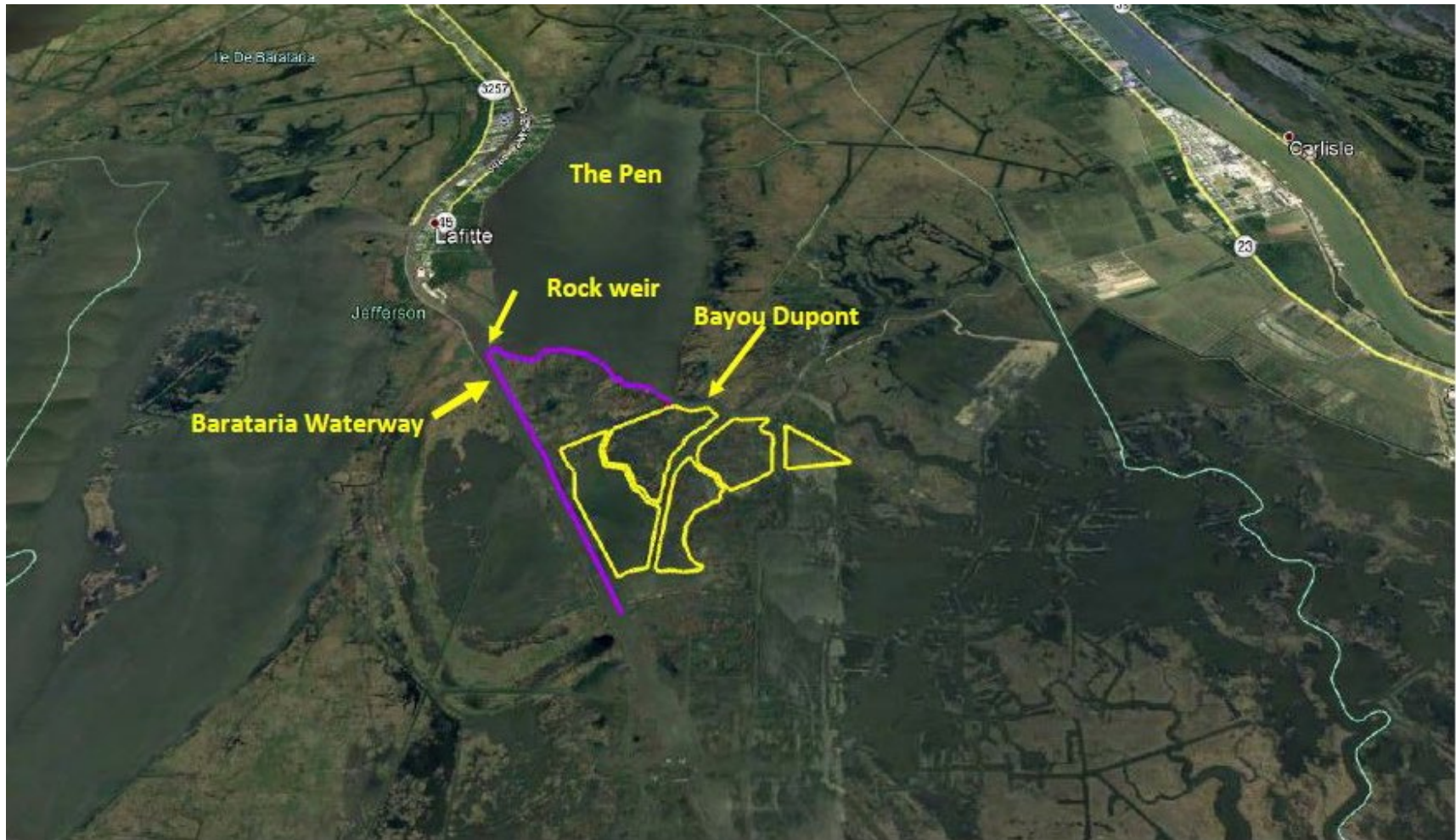


Table 1. Summary of in-water work and conservation measures to protect the West Indian manatee for the project included in LA TIG RP/EA #3.3. Project will not proceed with implementation until compliance with all relevant laws is achieved.

NLAA = May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect; *S* = Standard Manatee Conditions for In-Water Work, dated 2011;

SS = Sea Turtle and Small-tooth Sawfish Construction Conditions, dated 2006; *M* = NMFS Measures for Reducing Entrapment Risk to Protected Species;

V = NMFS Vessel Strike Avoidance Measures and Reporting for Mariners (including searching area for marine mammals)

Proposed Project	In-Water Work	ESA Determination for Manatee	Conservation Measures for Manatee	Field Office Concurrence
Large-Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper Barataria Component	Proposed project in-water work includes a cutterhead suction dredge to excavate material in the Mississippi River borrow areas. Containment dikes in the fill areas are expected to be constructed from adjacent material dredged with a mechanical dredge. Access corridors in The Pen and Bayou Dupont will be dredged with a mechanical dredge with material disposed of in adjacent areas; access corridor dredging areas will be filled in upon project completion.	NLAA	S, SS, M, V	April 14, 2020