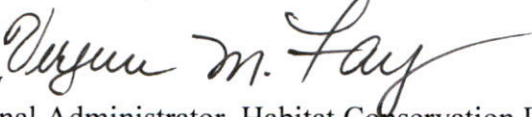




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast>

March 12, 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 #3.3 and Environmental
Assessment: Large-Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper
Barataria Component

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, NOAA and the other Trustee agencies propose to fund a marsh restoration project in Barataria Basin, Louisiana. The Large-Scale Barataria Marsh Creation: Upper Barataria Component Restoration Project would result in minimal and temporary impacts to estuarine habitats, including tidal wetlands, water column, and 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 a biological evaluation (BE) form in addition to the Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (RP/EA) containing an EFH assessment for the project, and provided the documents for our review by electronic mail dated March 11, 2020. Technical assistance has been provided by the Southeast Regional Office's Habitat Conservation Division (SERO HCD) to avoid and minimize impacts to EFH. Those changes were incorporated into the BE form and the draft RP/EA #3.3, which will be shared with the public on March 18, 2020. 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 document adequately evaluates proposed project impacts to EFH. We concur the project implementation would result in minimal temporary impacts to estuarine EFH; however, these impacts will not be substantial. Best management practices to minimize both short-term construction impacts and long-term impacts to habitats have been developed. The SER 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
F/SER – Giordano
F/SER4 – Dale
F/SER46 – Gothreaux, Swafford

