



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Mississippi Field Office
6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A
Jackson, Mississippi 39213



January 26, 2024

IN REPLY REFER TO:
2024-0007922

Benjamin Frater
Department of the Interior
United States Fish and Wildlife Service - Gulf Restoration Office
341 N. Greeno Road
Fairhope, AL 36532

Dear Mr. Frater:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mississippi Ecological Services Office (Mississippi ES Office) has reviewed your email dated June 5, 2023, and Biological Evaluation Form, requesting section 7 consultation for the Bird Nesting and Foraging Area Stewardship. The project locations include the mainland beaches of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties of Mississippi, and Round Island, Deer Island, and portions of Cat Island in the Mississippi Sound. Our comments are submitted in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

The bird stewardship activities outlined in the project description may be implemented in several ways, depending on the location, and could include:

- Stewardship of nesting areas to reduce human disturbance (e.g., exclusion devices and vegetated buffers, symbolic fencing around nesting areas, and/or beach wrack and distance buffers)
- Lethal and nonlethal predator control
- Vegetation management
- Signage
- Development of site management plans
- Implement or increase monitoring coverage
- Bird banding and recapture/re-sighting
- Patrols by wildlife stewards or law enforcement (including training and support)

- Targeted community engagement, outreach, and education

The Mississippi ES Office concurs with the effects determinations you have made for species and critical habitat areas outlined in the Biological Evaluation Form (BEF) for this project. Additionally, we concur with the conditions and protective measures outlined in the BEF to minimize impacts to species and habitats found within the project area. Further, our office supports the proposed project, and its intent to better manage shorebirds and their habitats along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Consultation should be reinitiated with our office if the scope of the proposed work changes, or new information reveals that the effects of the proposed action may affect listed species in a manner or to an extent not considered, or a new species or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by the proposed action. This concludes consultation on this project. If you have any questions, please contact Paul Necaie in our office, telephone: (228) 493-6631.

Sincerely,

James Austin
Field Supervisor
Mississippi Field Office