REGION 4
INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

[Note: This form provides the outline of information needed for intra-Service consultation. If additional space is needed, attach additional sheets, or set up this form to accommodate your responses.]

Originating Person: ____Joyce Kleen_____
Telephone Number: _352-302-2378_____ **E-Mail:** ___joyce_kleen@fws.gov_____
Date: _11/06/2020_revised 4/20/2021_____

PROJECT NAME (Grant Title/Number): Egmont Key Vegetation Management and Dune Retention (B2) [Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan for Deepwater Horizon NRDA Project]

I. Service Program:

___ Ecological Services
___ Federal Aid
___ Clean Vessel Act
___ Coastal Wetlands
___ Endangered Species Section 6
___ Partners for Fish and Wildlife
___ Sport Fish Restoration
___ Wildlife Restoration
___ Fisheries
_X_ Refuges/Wildlife

II. State/Agency: Florida/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

III. Station Name: Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge and State Park

IV. Description of Proposed Action (attach additional pages as needed):

This restoration project is the second phase of an ongoing project intended to protect and restore bird nesting and foraging habitat on Egmont Key NWR by removing invasive vegetation, planting native vegetation, and reducing shoreline erosion. In the first phase, exotic plants including Brazilian pepper and Australian pine and 13 acres of invasive coin vine were removed. The native coin vine forms dense, impenetrable thickets that have shaded out desirable vegetation and degraded bird nesting and foraging habitat. Approximately 210,000 plants, including sea oats, panic grass, railroad vine, beach elder, and dune sunflower were planted on the west beach to stabilize the sand and help prevent erosion. An additional 3,000 sea grapes were planted where the dense coin vine was removed; the sea grapes have established well. This project will chemically treat and remove dense coin vine from an additional 12 acres, plant native vegetation in the treated area, if necessary, and retreat any re-emerging coin vine as needed to prevent dense thickets. As in phase one, the coin vine in phase two will be chipped in place.

In addition, this project would protect bird nesting and foraging habitat from erosion on a portion of the northwest part of Egmont Key by installing sand fencing. The western side of the island has eroded significantly in recent decades. Before the first phase of this

project, approximately 420,000 cubic yards of dredged material was deposited on the west side of the island to renourish part of the shoreline. Unfortunately, approximately 5 acres have already been lost to erosion. Sand fencing would protect the remaining habitat from erosion and contribute to dune creation, where native vegetation could be planted, if warranted. Restoring these areas will increase available bird nesting and foraging habitat.

This project also proposes to install 500 linear feet of turtle friendly sand fence, according to DEP guidelines (attached), on Egmont Key over a 750 ft. stretch of beach on the west side of the island. The fence will be installed in 10 ft. sections spaced 15 ft. apart in the back dune area above the mean high high water line (MHHWL). The 50 individual fence sections, 4 ft. high and 10 ft. in length for each section, are installed at a 45 degree angle to the shoreline. Each of these fence sections will have a 15 ft. wide space in between to allow turtles to pass through. The fencing will be installed outside sea turtle nesting season (May 15- October 15). Additionally, 20 signs and posts stating "Please Keep Off Dunes, Dune Restoration in Progress" would be installed. The posts are pressure treated pine, 2" x 4' x 6', and would be hand-dug 2.6 ft. down, with post hole diggers. Assembly will include 16 gauge, stainless steel, 1.5" staples using a gas-powered compressor. All materials will be transported to the island by boat and moved to the site by ATV/UTV using existing trails.

Figure 1: Egmont Key NWR and SP Phase 1 and Phase 2 restoration projects.

V. Pertinent Species and Habitat:

A. Include species/habitat occurrence map:

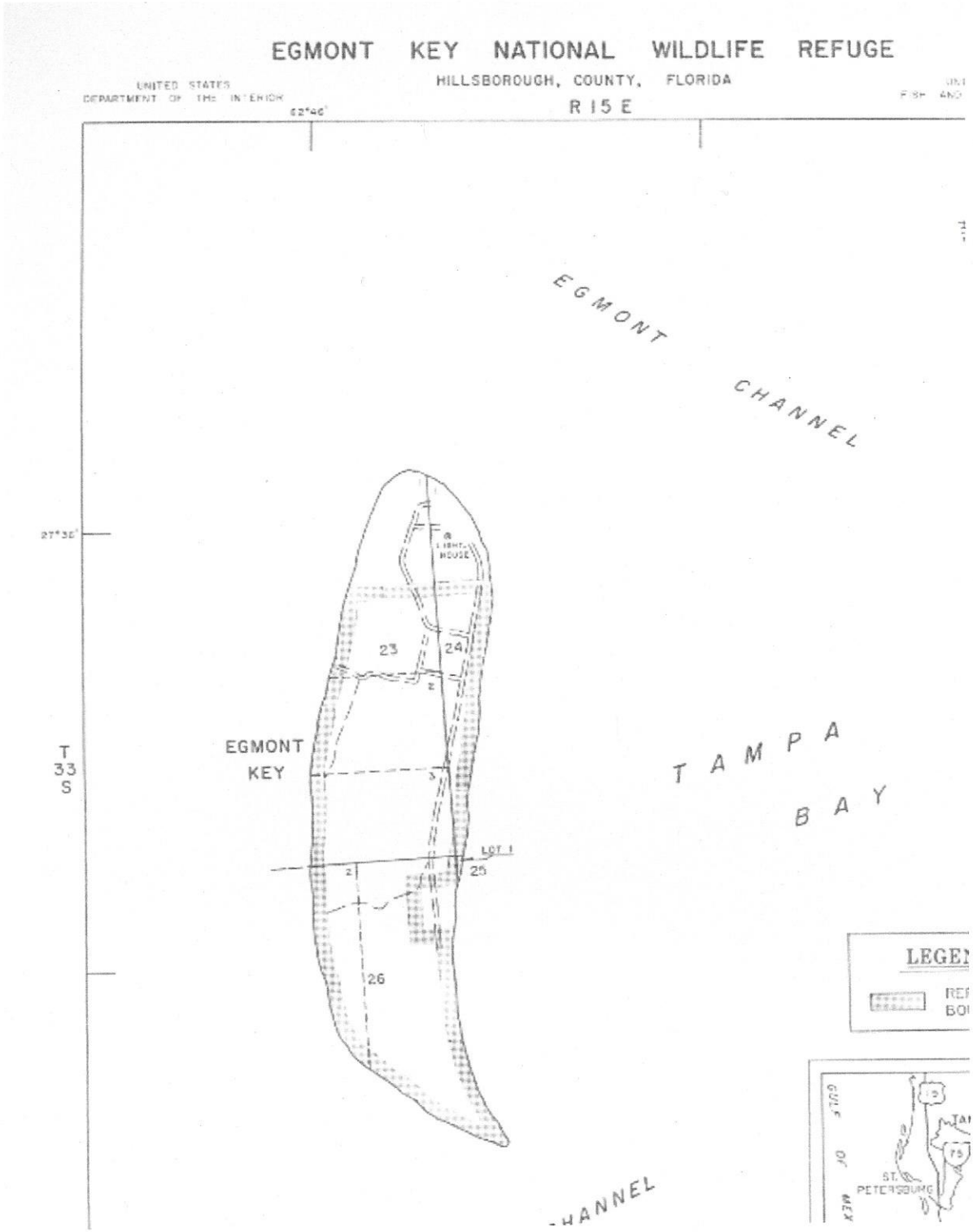
The entire island of Egmont Key NWR and State Park, see Figure 2 below.

B. Complete the following table:

SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT	STATUS[1]
Piping plover	T
West Indian manatee	T
Loggerhead sea turtle	T
Green sea turtle	T
Kemps Ridley sea turtle	E
Wood storks	T

[1]STATUS: E=endangered, T=threatened, PE=proposed endangered, PT=proposed threatened, CH=critical habitat, PCH=proposed critical habitat, C=candidate species

VI. Location (attach map): Figure 2: Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge and State Park



A. Ecoregion Number and Name: Ecoregion 32, North Florida Ecosystem

B. County and State: Hillsborough County, Florida

C. Section, township, and range (or latitude and longitude):

T 33 S, R 15 E, S 23, 24, 25, 26 for Egmont Key

D. Distance (miles) and direction to nearest town:

Less than 2 miles southeast of St. Petersburg, FL

E. Species/habitat occurrence:

Piping plovers are seen on the Egmont beach during the fall months and occasionally during the winter (usually September-December). The Egmont beach is designated as critical habitat for piping plovers. Plovers will not be affected by upland exotic plant control and/or planting of native plants. The sand fencing will be located above the MHHWL, so piping plovers should not be affected while they feed along the shoreline.

Wood storks are infrequent visitors to Egmont Key and would be unaffected by the exotic plant control, planting of natives, and the sand fencing.

West Indian manatees forage in the sea grass beds along the east side of Egmont Key. They will not be affected by exotic plant control, revegetation, or sand fencing.

Loggerhead sea turtles nest on the beaches around the perimeter of Egmont Key. Green and Kemps Ridley sea turtles are occasional visitors to the sea grass beds along the east side of Egmont Key. Nesting loggerheads will not be affected by the upland exotic plant control and/or revegetation project. Turtle friendly sand fencing will be installed on the west beach outside turtle nesting season (May 15-October 15). The sand fencing will follow DEP guidelines (attached).

VII. Determination of Effects:

A. Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in item V. B (attach additional pages as needed):

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	IMPACTS TO SPECIES/CRITICAL HABITAT
Piping plover/CH	Upland exotic plant control and/or revegetation, as well as sand fencing, will not affect wintering piping plovers.
West Indian manatee	Exotic plant control and revegetation in the uplands, as well as sand fencing on the beach, will not affect manatees.
Loggerhead sea turtle	Upland exotic plant control and revegetation will not affect nesting loggerheads. Sand fencing will be installed outside sea turtle nesting season (May 15-October 15).
Green sea turtle	Upland exotic plant control and revegetation will not affect any green turtles attempting to nest on the island. Sand fencing will be installed outside sea turtle nesting season (May 15-October 15).
Kemps Ridley sea turtle	Upland exotic plant control and revegetation, as well as turtle friendly sand fencing, will not affect any Kemps Ridley sea turtles found in the coastal waters.
Wood storks	Upland exotic plant control and revegetation, as well as turtle friendly sand fencing, will not affect wood storks which infrequently visit Egmont Key.

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects:

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	ACTIONS TO MITIGATE/MINIMIZE IMPACTS
Piping plover/CH	This project will occur above the MHHWL and should not affect piping plovers feeding along the shoreline.
West Indian manatee	This project will occur in the uplands and will not affect manatees in the coastal waters.
Loggerhead sea turtle	The configuration of the sand fencing on the west beach is turtle friendly, will follow DEP guidelines (attached), and will be installed outside sea turtle nesting season (May 15-October 15).
Green sea turtle	The configuration of the sand fencing on the west beach is turtle friendly, will follow DEP guidelines (attached), and will be installed outside sea turtle nesting season (May 15-October 15).
Kemps Ridley sea turtle	This project will occur in the uplands and will not affect Kemps found in coastal waters.
Wood stork	This project will be temporarily halted if wood storks are present.

VIII. Effect Determination and Response Requested:

SPECIES/ CRITICAL HABITAT	DETERMINATION[1]			RESPONSE[1] REQUESTED
	NE	NA	AA	
Piping plover/CH	X			
West Indian manatee	X			
Loggerhead sea turtle		X		
Green sea turtle		X		
Kemps Ridley sea turtle	X			
Wood stork	X			

[1]DETERMINATION/RESPONSE REQUESTED:

NE = no effect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action will not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact, either positively or negatively, any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat. Response Requested is optional but a "Concurrence" is recommended for a complete Administrative Record.

NA = not likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is not likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat or there may be beneficial effects to these resources. Response Requested is a "Concurrence".

AA = likely to adversely affect. This determination is appropriate when the proposed action is likely to adversely impact any listed, proposed, candidate species or designated/proposed critical habitat. Response Requested for listed species is "Formal Consultation". Response Requested for proposed or candidate species is "Conference".

Joyce Palmer 4/22/21

Signature (originating station) **date**

Refuge Manager

Title

IX. Reviewing Ecological Services Office Evaluation:

A. Concurrence ☑ **Nonconcurrence** _____

B. Formal consultation required _____

C. Conference required _____

D. Informal conference required _____

E. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

CECELIA DZIERGOWSKI Digitally signed by CECELIA DZIERGOWSKI Date: 2021.04.23 13:32:22 -04'00'

Signature **date**

Deputy Field Supervisor **Florida Ecological Services Office - Jacksonville**

Title **office**