



# United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office  
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In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/R4/DH NRDAR

Memorandum

May 23, 2022

To: Patricia Kelly, Panama City Ecological Services Field Office, Panama City, FL

From: Assistant Restoration Manager, Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office

Subject: Coastal Barrier Resources Act Consistency Determination Request for Implementation of the Project: Sea Turtle Habitat Use and Abundance in Eastern Louisiana Waters

The Department of the Interior Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office is working through various environmental compliance consultations on post-settlement proposed restoration projects. We are currently working on the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) consistency determination for the project: Sea Turtle Habitat Use and Abundance in Eastern Louisiana Waters. The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (LA TIG) has evaluated and intends to implement the project.

We used the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS) mapper (<https://www.fws.gov/cbra/maps-and-data> [accessed May 20, 2022]) to determine if the proposed project is located within a CBRS Unit or within an Otherwise Protected Area (OPA). The proposed project does occur within CBRS Units and OPAs. Please refer to Table 1 below for the CBRS Units involved and the consistency determination for the project.

### Project Location

The proposed project is located in coastal Louisiana. Please see project map below (Figure 1).

### Description of the Proposed Action or Project

The proposed project is designed to restore natural resources injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Please see below for project description and consistency analysis.

### Justification for Exception

Please see below for Justification for Exception.

Contact Information

Please provide response via email to the following:

Michael Barron  
Environmental Compliance Coordinator  
Deepwater Horizon Gulf Restoration Office  
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### **Sea Turtle Habitat Use and Abundance in Eastern Louisiana Waters**

Loggerhead, Kemp's Ridley and green sea turtles are known to occur in Louisiana waters, but gaps exist in our understanding of relative abundance, and seasonal and spatial habitat use. The goal of this monitoring and adaptive management (MAM) Activity is to provide updated information on sea turtle habitat use and abundance in eastern Louisiana waters to inform restoration planning and restoration evaluation in the Louisiana restoration area. It will include two years of field work in Chandeleur Sound and Lake Borgne, Louisiana and one year of data analysis, focused primarily on loggerhead, Kemp's Ridley, and green sea turtles. The objectives are to document sea turtle distribution and habitat use in Louisiana; to understand how and where important habitats overlap with known threats; and to inform the development of MAM Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Appropriate Timeline (SMART) objectives for sea turtles. This work will directly benefit the ability to effectively restore sea turtles in Louisiana waters and to inform and evaluate the success of future sea turtle restoration efforts.

#### Tasks

- Conduct 2 years of field work, with sampling three times each year
- Employ transect surveys by trawl vessels to capture turtles at designated study sites
- Conduct health assessments on captured turtles and apply satellite tags to a subset of captured turtles
- Estimate habitat use by overlaying collected satellite tracking data on available GIS benthic habitat layers, as well as salinity information collected by the satellite tags.
- Complete development of a predictive model for sea turtle species habitat use and distribution in relation to physical and biological habitat characteristics.

#### *Consistency Analysis*

The proposed action is within the following CBRS Units: LA-01 and LA-02 and the following OPA: LA-03P. Programmatic activities include the following Louisiana parish: St. Bernard. Therefore, this project is subject to a Consistency Analysis under CBRA. Within the CBRS Unit, the proposed action involves no construction and consists primarily of the study of fish and wildlife resources and habitats. Consequently, this activity is consistent with CBRA per exemption 16 U.S.C. 3505(a)(6)(A) for "Projects for the study, management, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources and habitats, including acquisition of fish and wildlife habitats, and related lands, stabilization projects for fish and wildlife habitats, and recreational projects." The purposes of CBRA are "to minimize the loss of human life, wasteful expenditure of Federal revenues, and the damages to fish, wildlife, and other natural resources associated with the coastal barriers along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts..." 16 U.S.C. §3501(b). This project is designed to enhance natural resources injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Accordingly, this project is consistent with the purposes of CBRA and the exemption below.

#### *Applicable Exception under 16 U.S.C. 3505(a)*

- ☒ 16 U.S.C. 3505(a)(6)(A): **Projects for the study, management, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources and habitats**, including acquisition of fish and wildlife habitats, and related lands, stabilization projects for fish and wildlife habitats, and recreational projects.

*Consistency Determination*

- Located within OPA and not subject to a consistency determination.
- Meets the selected CBRA exception(s) and requires no further case-by-case consultation
- Meets different CBRA exception(s) than the one(s) selected above (see additional information/comments below) and requires no further case-by-case consultation
- Does not meet the selected CBRA exception or requires separate case-by-case consultation (see additional information/comments below)

Additional Information/Comments:

Sea turtle habitat use in LA.

FWS# CBRA-FWCA-2022\_37 until put into Ecosphere.



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Patricia Kelly, Regions 2 & 4 CBRA Coordinator

Date 8/17/2022

**Figure 1.** Map showing the Sea Turtle Habitat Use and Abundance in Eastern Louisiana Waters project area.

