

**Subject:** DWH-Early Restoration- Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Initiation-Florida City of Panama City Marina Fishing Pier, Boat Ramp, and Staging Docks project

**From:** Jamie Schubert-NOAA Federal <jamie.schubert@noaa.gov>

**Date:** 3/13/2014 2:39 PM

**To:** "Mark Thompson (NOAA Federal)" <mark.thompson@noaa.gov>

**CC:** Virginia Fay <virginia.fay@noaa.gov>, Rusty Swafford <Rusty.Swafford@noaa.gov>, Leslie Craig <leslie.craig@noaa.gov>, "Jeff Shenot (Jeff.Shenot@noaa.gov)" <Jeff.Shenot@noaa.gov>, Jamey Redding <Jamey.Redding@noaa.gov>

Mr. Thompson,

Attached is the Essential Fish Habitat Assessment for the Florida City of Panama City Marina Fishing Pier, Boat Ramp, and Staging Docks project. This project is being proposed in the Deepwater Horizon Draft Phase III Early Restoration plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Please consider this our initiation of our Essential Fish Habitat consultation. If you anticipate this consultation requiring more than 30 days (April 14, 2014) please let me know.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at [409-621-1248](tel:409-621-1248) or at [jamie.schubert@noaa.gov](mailto:jamie.schubert@noaa.gov).

Thanks,

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Jamie Schubert  
NOAA Fisheries-Restoration Center  
4700 Avenue U  
Galveston, Texas 77551

Phone-409-621-1248

— Attachments: —

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## **Determination of Effect on Essential Fish Habitat from Florida City of Panama City Marina Fishing Pier, Boat Ramp, and Staging Docks project**

### ***EFH overview from Magnuson Stevens Act***

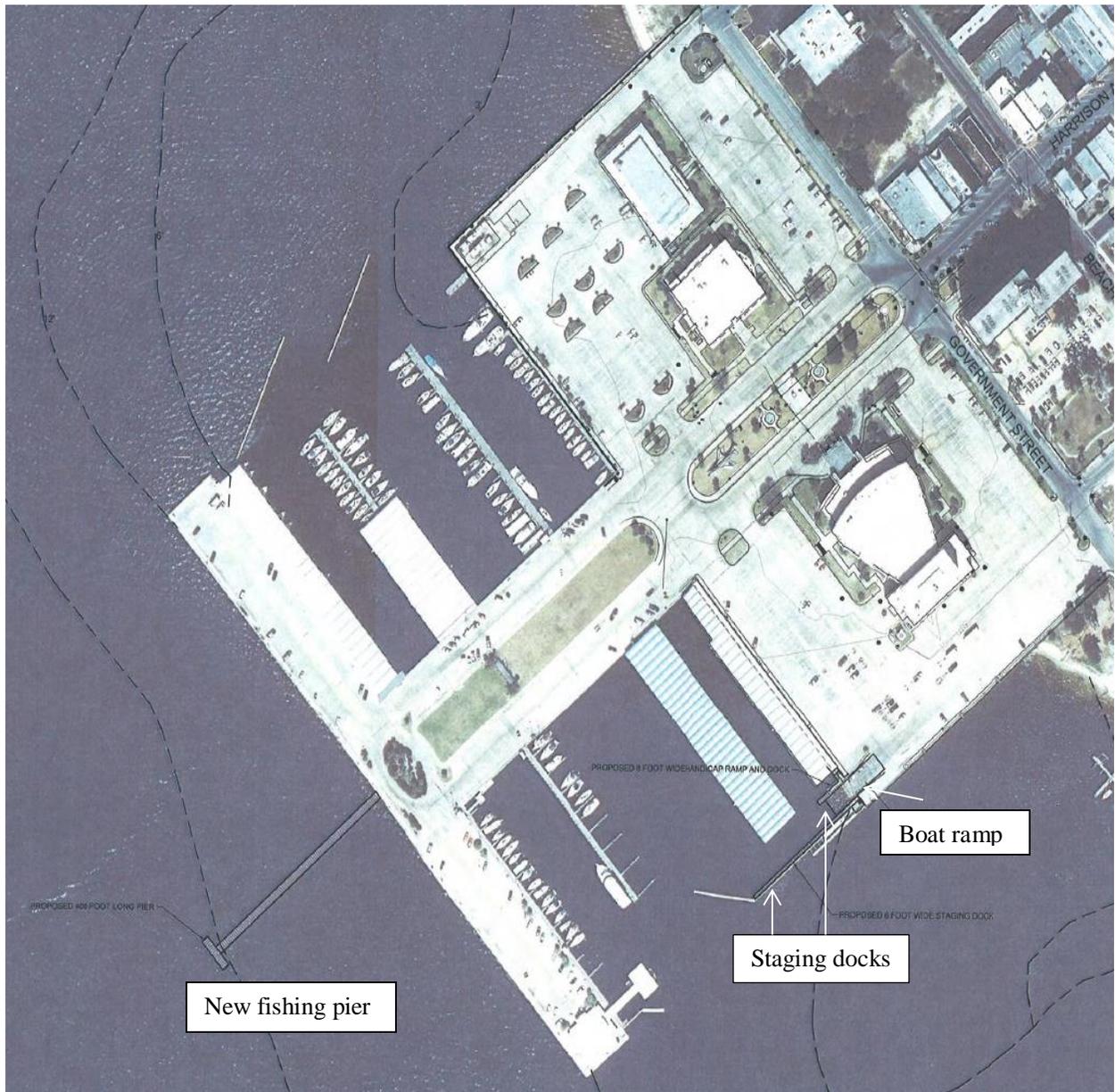
The 1996 Magnuson-Stevens Act requires cooperation among the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), anglers, and federal and state agencies to protect, conserve, and enhance Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). EFH is defined as those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. The designation and conservation of EFH seek to minimize adverse effects on habitat caused by fishing and non-fishing activities.

### ***Project description***

The proposed Panama City Marina Fishing Pier, Boat Ramp, and Staging Docks project would provide additional recreational fishing opportunities for the public in Panama City in Bay County. The proposed improvements include constructing 400-foot long pier, replacing a poorly functioning boat ramp, and constructing new docks at the Panama City Marina. Figure 1 illustrates the project location; Figure 2 illustrates the planned improvements at the Panama City Marina.



**Figure 1. Location of the Panama City Marina.**



**Figure 2. Drawing of the proposed improvements at the Panama City Marina**

***Federally managed fisheries and EFH***

Information on designated EFH in the Gulf of Mexico was obtained in September, 2013 from the NMFS' EFH web site at <http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/efh/newInv>. Table 1 provides a

summary of the species identified as having designated EFH for one or more life stages within the area of potential affect for the proposed project.

**Table 1. Federally managed species with designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the proposed project area.**

<b>EFH Category</b>	<b>Species</b>
<b>Atlantic Highly Migratory Species</b>	
	Atlantic Sharpnose Shark-Neonate
	Blacktip Shark-Adult
	Blacktip Shark-Juvenile
	Blacktip Shark-Neonate
	Bonnethead Shark-Juvenile
	Bonnethead Shark-Neonate
	Bull Shark-Juvenile
	Nurse Shark-Juvenile
	Sandbar Shark-Adult
	Scalloped Hammerhead Shark-Juvenile
	Scalloped Hammerhead Shark-Neonate
	Spinner Shark-Juvenile
	Spinner Shark-Neonate
	Tiger Shark-Juvenile
	Tiger Shark-Neonate
<b>Coastal Migratory Pelagics of the Gulf of Mexico AND South Atlantic</b>	
	Spanish Mackerel
	Cobia
	King Mackerel
<b>Gulf of Mexico Red Drum</b>	
	Red Drum
<b>Gulf of Mexico Shrimp</b>	
	Pink Shrimp
	Rock Shrimp
	Seabob Shrimp
	White Shrimp
	Brown Shrimp
<b>Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico</b>	
	Lane Snapper
	Lesser Amberjack
	Mutton Snapper
	Nassau Grouper
	Queen Snapper
	Red Grouper
	Red Snapper
	Scamp
	Silk Snapper

	Snowy Grouper
	Speckled Hind
	Tilefish
	Vermilion Snapper
	Warsaw Grouper
	Wenchman
	Yellowedge Grouper
	Yellowfin Grouper
	Yellowmouth Grouper
	Almaco Jack
	Banded Rudderfish
	Black Grouper
	Blackfin Snapper
	Blueline Tilefish
	Cubera Snapper
	Gag
	Goldface Tilefish
	Gray (Mangrove) Snapper
	Gray Triggerfish
	Greater Amberjack
	Hogfish

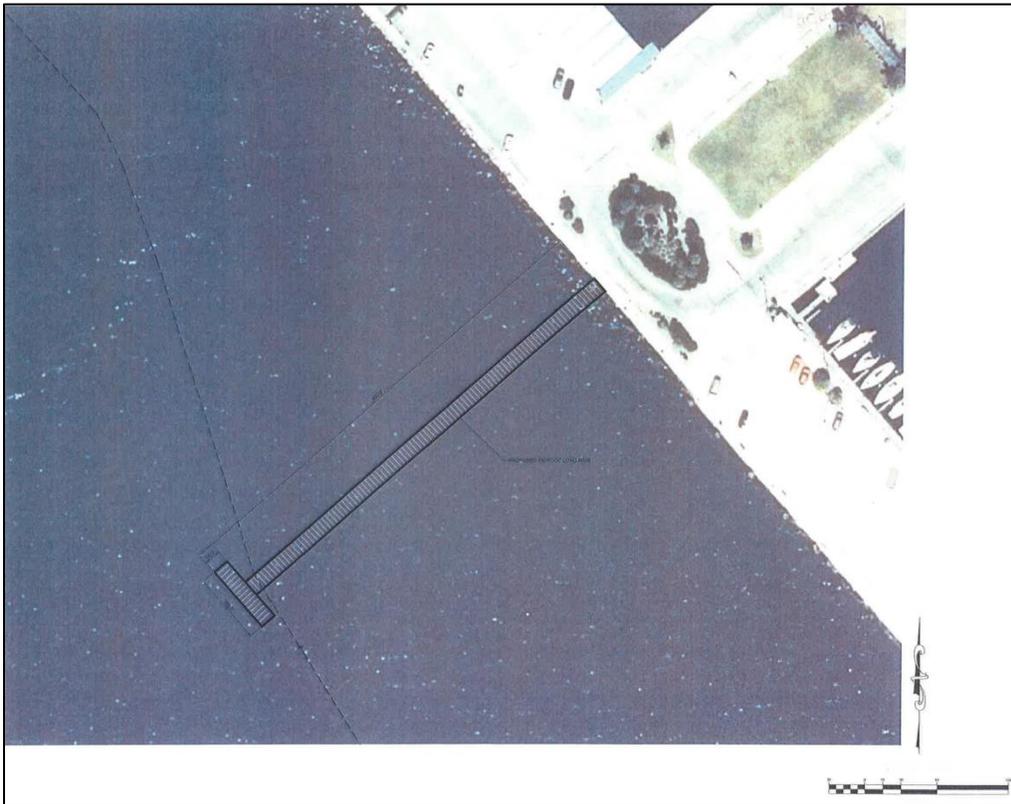
***Assessment of effects to EFH***

Construction of the new fishing pier, replacing the boat ramp, and constructing two new staging docks are unlikely to adversely affect EFH.

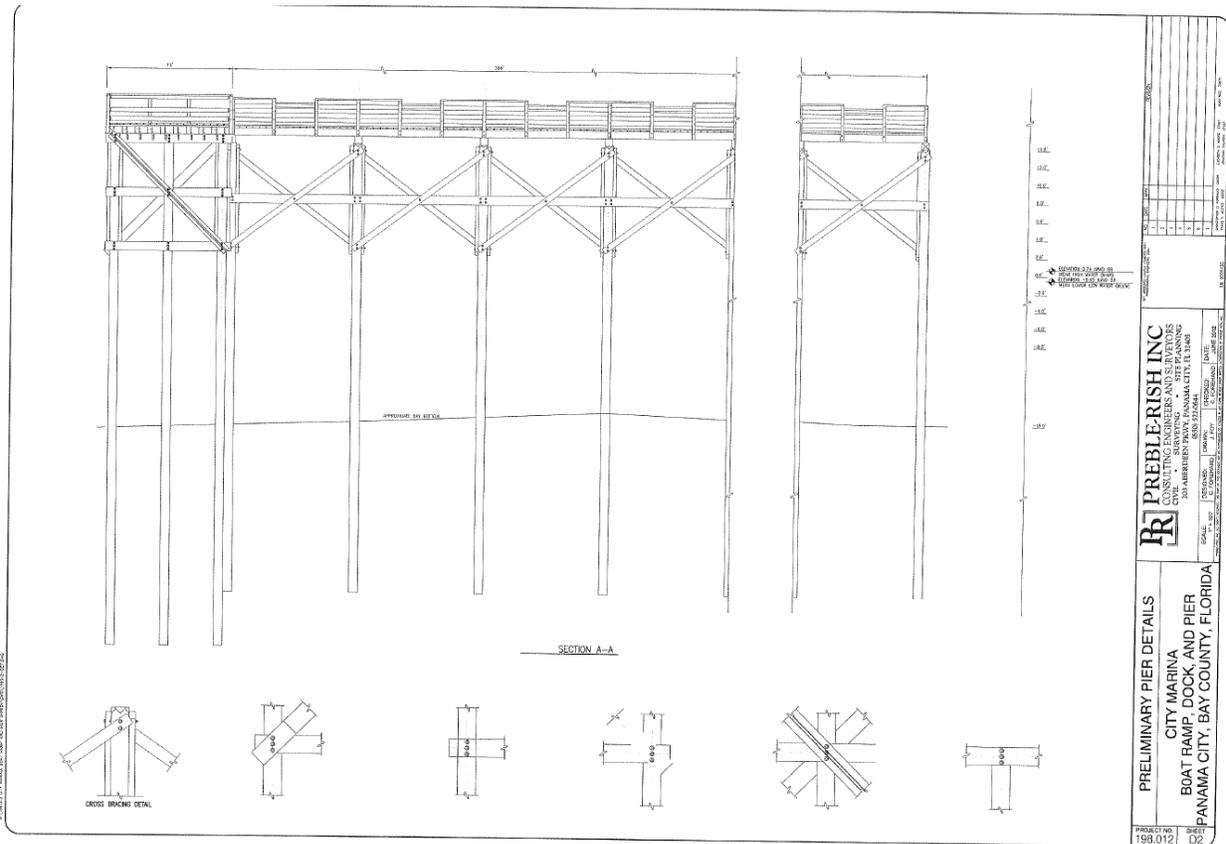
Constructing the new fishing pier would convert an area of habitat from unobstructed open water habitat to habitat interrupted by pilings and periodically shaded by the new pier structure. The new fishing pier would be approximately 400 feet long and 14 feet wide extending southwest from the marina (at the end of Harrison Avenue) into St. Andrews Bay (Figures 2 and 3). At the end of the pier, a small section would be oriented perpendicular to the rest of the pier and have dimensions of approximately 60 feet long by 14 feet wide, giving the pier an overall total area of approximately 6,440 square feet. The pier decking would be approximately 14 feet above mean high water (Figure 4), which will help reduce the impact of shading on the in-water habitat. The final dimensions, number of pilings, and height above the water have not yet been finalized and will be provided in the final design documents. The new pier will extend off the end of the Panama City Marina parking area and, thus, is located in an area with frequent boat traffic and developed shoreline habitat.

In order to minimize potential affects to species caused by fishing from the new pier, fixed signs that are consistent with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and State of

Florida guidelines with instructions on what to do in the event of hooking a listed species (e.g., sea turtle) would be placed at the entrance to the fishing pier and strategically at fixed intervals along its length. Additionally, a kiosk/booth would be placed at the entrance to the pier with additional information for best practices on catch and release and other fishing practices (e.g., placing cut line and hooks for disposal in trash cans) designed to limit potential adverse impacts to species. Any facilities (e.g., trash cans) needed to help anglers comply with these recommendations would also be provided.



**Figure 3. Drawing of the proposed fishing pier at the Panama City Marina.**

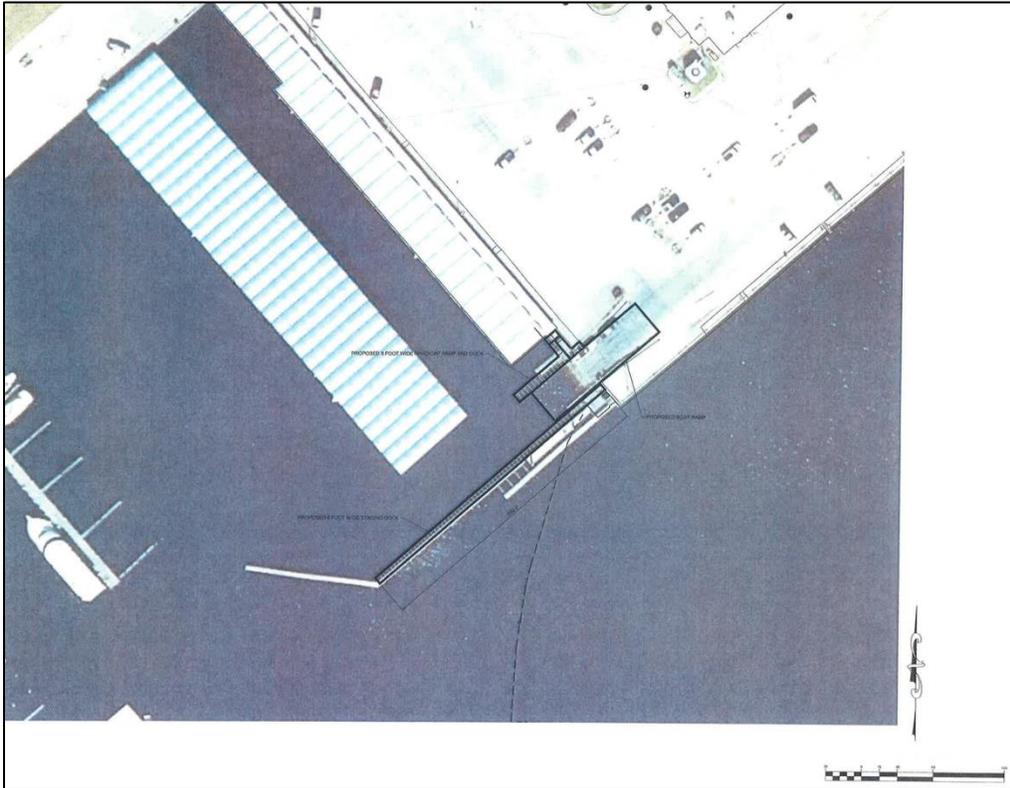


**Figure 4. Drawing of the proposed fishing pier at the Panama City Marina, illustrating the proposed dimensions and height above mean high water.**

The existing boat ramp at the marina is approximately 60 feet long and 20 feet wide. The ramp would be removed and replaced with a concrete boat ramp with similar footprint and a 13.33 percent grade (Figure 5). At the end of the boat ramp, 12-inch rip-rap would extend another 10 feet. Because this work will be completed almost entirely within the footprint of the existing paved ramp, and the new portions will be constructed within the footprint of the working marina, no habitat conversion will take place. The boat ramp serves a busy marina with 240 boat slips, supporting boats ranging in size from 30 feet to 120 feet. It is unlikely that habitat within the marina footprint or near the boat ramp is of value to species present in the area.

The new staging docks would be constructed on both sides and parallel the boat ramp (Figure 4). On the southeast side of the ramp the dock would be approximately 250 feet long by 6 feet wide (Figure 5). The dock on the northwest side of the ramp would be handicap accessible with dimension of approximately 72 feet long by 8 feet wide. Final dimensions of the docks would be determined during the final project design. The dock construction will include repairing and extending existing structures within the footprint of the marina. Given that the area is highly

disturbed by frequent boat traffic, it is unlikely that habitat that may be affected by the small changes in the footprint of the staging docks is of value to species present in the area.



**Figure 5. Drawing illustrating the boat ramp replacement and staging dock project areas.**

Construction activities for the proposed project would occur from both in-water and on land. Most of the work for the fishing pier and staging docks would take place in-water, while work for the boat ramp would take place both in-water and from land. A range of hand tools and mechanized equipment would be used to construct the pier, staging docks, and boat ramp. Pilings would need to be placed to support the new pier and staging docks. The exact number of pilings to support the structures and the depth to which they are placed would be determined during the final engineering design phase for the project. The pilings would most likely be put in place by mechanically auguring holes. In-water work would be conducted from a barge, and best management practices (BMPs), such as the use of sediment curtains, would be used; all conditions set forth in federal, state, and local permits would be followed. Backhoes or other heavy equipment would be used to remove the old boat ramp and staging dock material and prepare the area for replacement structures. All materials removed would be properly disposed of in accordance with appropriate federal, state, and local regulations and guidelines. Staging of construction materials would occur in the parking lot of the Panama City Marina.

Construction is estimated to begin during the summer/fall 2014 and take approximately 12 to 24 months. Construction for the boat ramp is estimated to take less than 6 months and would likely occur outside of the fishing season (April – September) to avoid conflicts with the peak use of the boat ramp. During construction, adjacent areas with equivalent or better habitat will be available and undisturbed and organisms could move away from disturbed areas.

### ***Conclusion***

The project is not likely to adversely affect EFH. The proposed pier construction will take place adjacent to the existing Panama City Marina and the boat ramp replacement and staging dock construction will take place within the footprint of the marina. A small area of subtidal habitat would be converted with the placing of pilings for the new pier, however, this would be a relatively small area compared with the surrounding habitat and would not completely convert or block habitat in the area where the pier is constructed. Very small areas of habitat may be converted as part of boat ramp repairs and staging dock construction work, however, this work will be completed at the site of existing structures and within the footprint of the marina. Disturbance to species will be minor and brief.