Determination of Effect on Essential Fish Habitat from Florida FWC Strategic Boat Access: City of Parker, Earl Gilbert Dock and Boat Ramp Improvements 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 Florida FWC Strategic Boat Access project would improve the existing Earl Gilbert dock and boat ramp in the City of Parker. The proposed work includes improving the existing dock and boat ramp and expanding the existing parking. Figure 1 illustrates the location of the project area. Figures 2 and 3 illustrates the project location and the surrounding area.

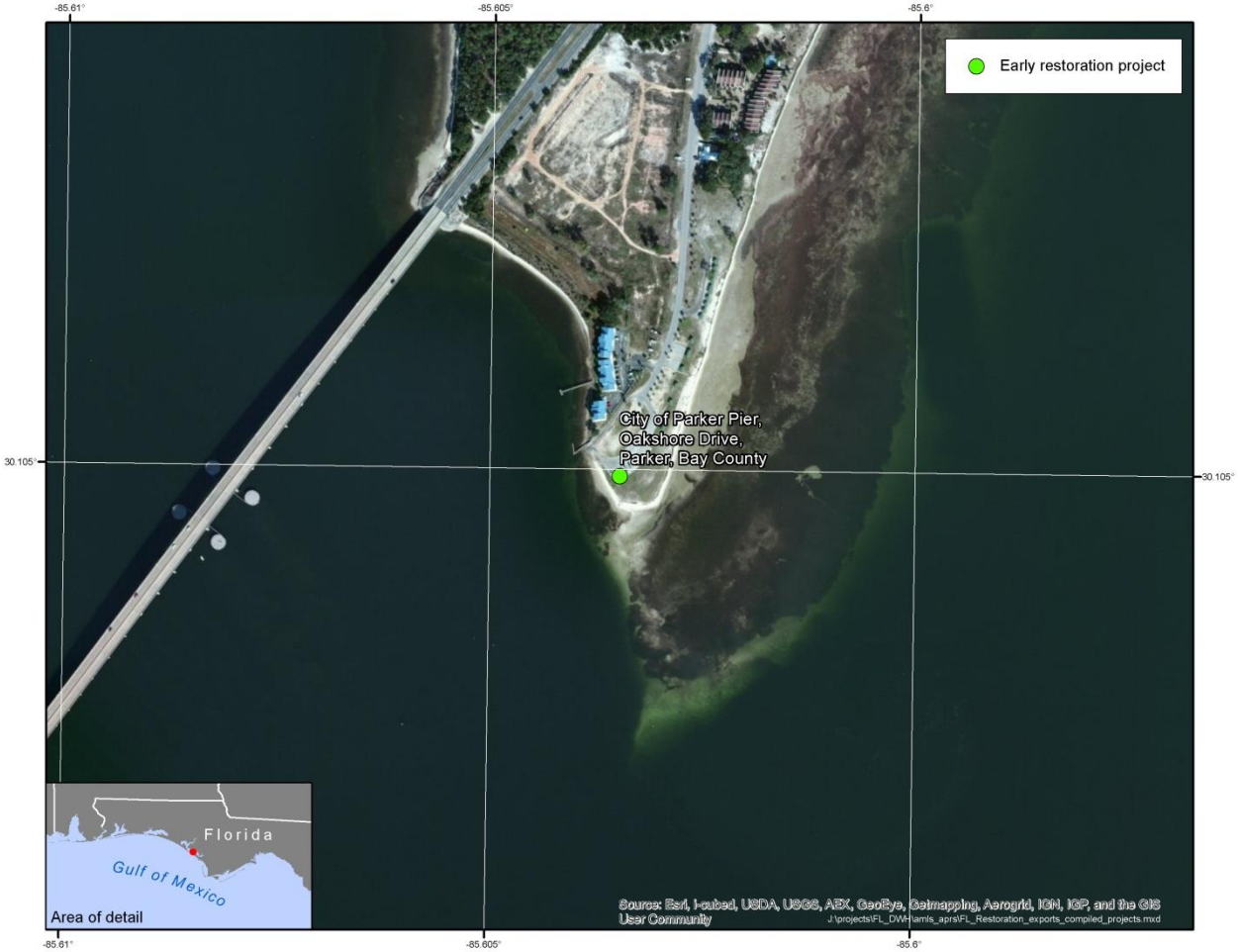

Figure 1. City of Parker Earl Gilbert Boat Ramp project area.

Figure 2. Photo of the proposed project area including the boat ramp and dock that will be repaired.

Figure 3. Photo of the proposed project area including the boat ramp and dock that will be repaired looking back at the ramp from the dock.

Federally managed fisheries and EFH (develop table from

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/index.html*. 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 highly migratory species (HMS) with designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the proposed project area.

EFH Category	Species
Coastal Migratory Pelagics of the Gulf of Mexico AND South Atlantic	
	Cobia
	King Mackerel
	Spanish Mackerel
Gulf of Mexico Red Drum	
	Red Drum
Gulf of Mexico Shrimp	
	Brown Shrimp
	Pink Shrimp
	Rock Shrimp
	Royal Red Shrimp
	Seabob Shrimp
	White Shrimp
Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico	
	Almaco Jack
	Banded Rudderfish
	Black Grouper
	Blackfin Snapper
	Blueline Tilefish
	Cubera Snapper
	Gag
	Goldface Tilefish
	Gray (Mangrove) Snapper
	Gray Triggerfish
	Greater Amberjack
	Hogfish
	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

Assessment of effects to EFH

Restoration actions at the Parker Earl Gilbert boat ramp are expected to have no to minor impacts on EFH. The proposed work includes improvements and repairs to the existing dock and boat ramp structures at the site. No new structures will be added to the area as part of this project and the repairs and improvements will not expand the area of the structures beyond the current footprint. Further, use of accepted practices such as dewatering any in-water portions of the existing ramp to be improved prior to repair/improvement work, will limit in water impacts associated with turbidity and construction activity.

No habitat will be permanently converted as a result of project actions. Improvements to the existing boat ramp and dock may result in temporary disturbance of habitat in the immediate vicinity of the existing structures but no permanent habitat changes are expected. Further, the boat ramp and dock are actively used and managed to support recreational boating activities in an area with other launch facilities nearby and the Intracoastal Waterway offshore from the ramp. Thus it is unlikely that any habitat in the project area is of high quality.

Contruction activities will likely have a temporary negative impact on habitat. Disturbance caused by the use of heavy equipment, sediment disturbance, and potential increase in debris in the water may affect any species using habitat near the boat ramp and dock. During construction all appropriate BMPs will be followed to minimize the potential impacts of construction activities on EFH and species in the area. During construction, adjacent areas with equivalent or better habitat will be available and undsiturbed and organisms could move away from disturbed areas.

Conclusion

The project is not likely to adversely affect EFH. The proposed boat ramp and dock repair work will take place within the footprint of the existing boat ramp and dock. No habitat in the project area or outside of the area where structures already exist will be converted as a result of project actions. Disturbance to species will be minor and brief.