

Subject: DWH-Early Restoration- Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Initiation-Florida FWC Strategic Boat Access: City of Panama City St. Andrews Marina Docking Facility Expansions project
From: Jamie Schubert-NOAA Federal <jamie.schubert@noaa.gov>
Date: 3/5/2014 1:47 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>, Jamey Redding <Jamey.Redding@noaa.gov>, "Jeff Shenot (Jeff.Shenot@noaa.gov)" <Jeff.Shenot@noaa.gov>

Mr. Thompson,

Attached is the Essential Fish Habitat Assessment for the Florida FWC Strategic Boat Access: City of Panama City St. Andrews Marina Docking Facility Expansions 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 4, 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.

Thanks,

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Phone-409-621-1248

— Attachments: —

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Determination of Effect on Essential Fish Habitat from Florida FWC Strategic Boat Access: City of Panama City St. Andrews Marina Docking Facility Expansions 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 St. Andrews Marina docking facility in Panama City. The proposed improvements include adding three boat slips, replacing the boat ramp, and replacing a fixed wooden dock with a concrete floating dock. The intention of the proposed strategic boat ramp project is to improve and enhance facilities at the existing St. Andrews Marina in Panama City. Figure 1 shows an overview of the project area, Figure 2 shows the project area from a regional scale perspective of the project location and surrounding area.

Project monitoring will be conducted, the cost of monitoring has been incorporated into project costs. Monitoring has been designed around the project goal and objective, which is to improve an existing marina facility. Performance monitoring will evaluate whether construction was completed as designed and permitted. During the one year construction performance monitoring period, the Florida Trustees' Project Manager will go out twice to the site to record the number of users.

Long-term monitoring and maintenance of the improved facilities will be completed by Panama City as part of their regular public facilities maintenance activities. Following the one year construction performance monitoring period, Panama City will monitor the human use activity at the site. Panama City staff will visit the site twice per year to count the number of users at the boat ramp. The visitation numbers will then be provided to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

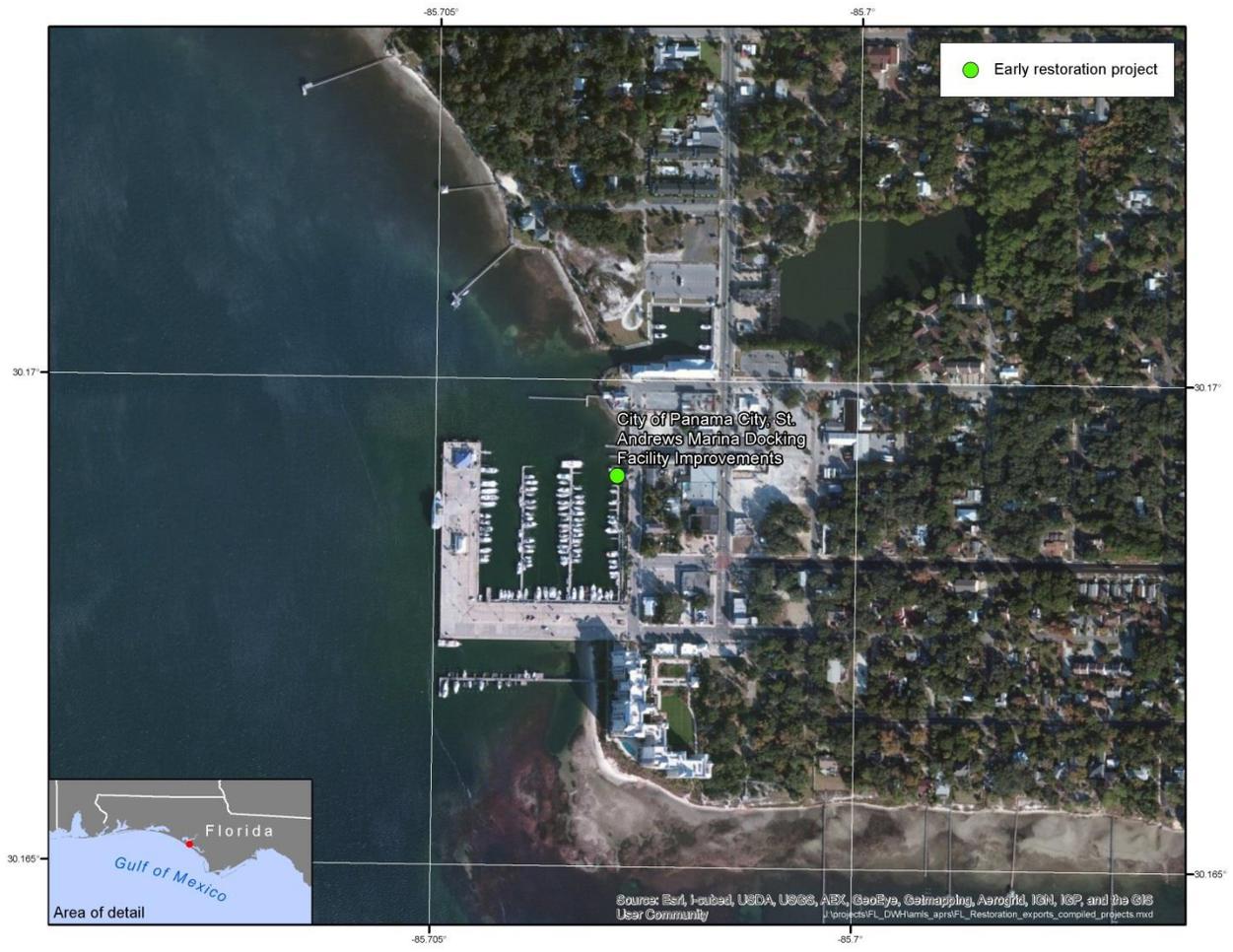


Figure 1. A detailed view of the project area.

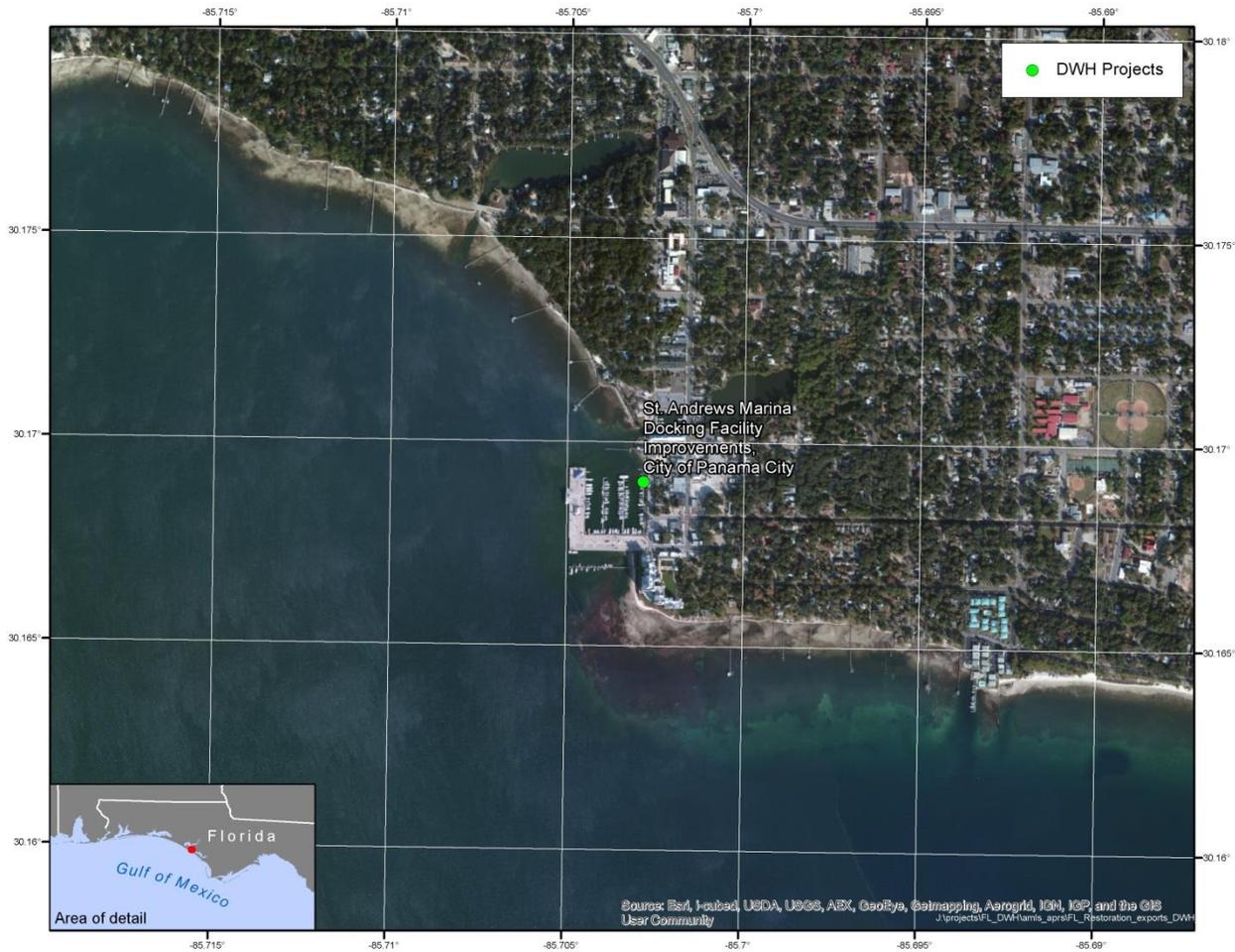


Figure 2. A regional-scale view of the project area.

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 fisheries with designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the proposed project area.

EFH_Category	species
Atlantic Highly Migratory Species	

	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
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
	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

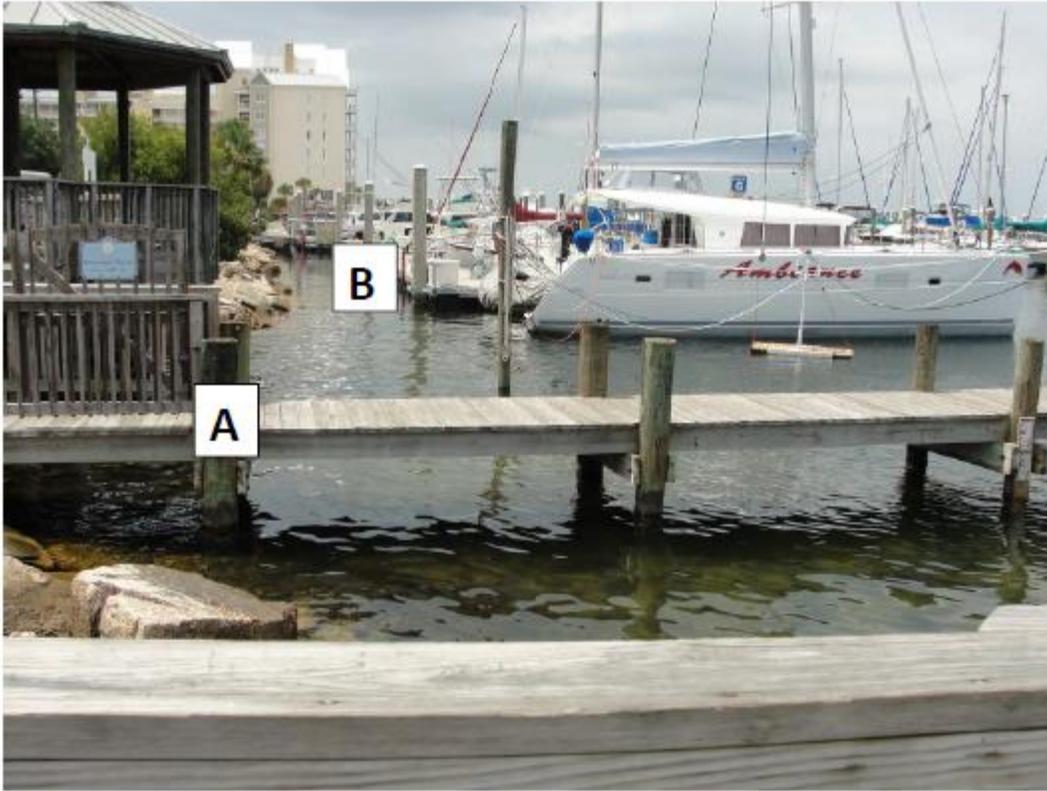
Assessment of effects to EFH

Restoration actions at the Panama City St. Andrews Marina are expected to have no to minor impacts on EFH. The project work will take place within the footprint of the existing marina facility. Adding new boat slips will potentially convert an area that may provide habitat to a less favorable condition, however, given the location of the new boat slips, it is unlikely that any habitat existing in the area is high-quality or frequently used by species present in the area. The other project components - replacing the existing boat ramp and replacing the existing dock – will not convert habitat to a new condition, this work will replace or repair existing structures within the marina’s existing footprint.

As mentioned above, three new boat slips will be constructed. This will, in theory, convert a small area that is potentially habitat now to a less desirable habitat condition. However, the marina already contains 100 boat slips and the entire project area, including repairs to existing structures, is approximately 630 square feet. The size of the impact and potential habitat conversion is very small relative to the amount of habitat available in the surrounding area. Further, the work will take place within the footprint of the existing developed, working marina.

A sense of the current state of the project area is provided in supporting information the City of Panama City provided for this proposed project.

Figure 3 provides a view of the proposed project area. This figure shows that the project area is within a highly developed area with considerable boat traffic and an armored shoreline.



Picture is taken from the view of the public boat ramp looking first at (A) the fixed dock which is to be replaced by the proposed floating dock and further at (B) the proposed marina expansion area.

Figure 3. View of proposed project area looking from existing boat ramp back toward the existing marina slips over area where the dock would be replaced and additional slips developed.

Construction activities will likely have a temporary negative impact on habitat. Disturbance caused by the use of heavy equipment, sediment disturbance, potential increase of debris in the water, and increased noise associated with removing and replacing the boat ramp, removing and replacing the existing dock, and developing the new slips (e.g., placing new pilings) may affect any species using the habitat near the marina. 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 undisturbed and organisms could move away from disturbed areas.

Conclusion

The project is not likely to adversely effect EFH. The proposed marina restoration will take place within the footprint of the existing marina facility. A very small area of subtidal habitat may be converted with the placing of pilings for the new boat slips and the new floating dock, however, this will take place within the existing marina boundaries where the habitat is already likely to be significantly disturbed as a result of both the boat traffic to and from the existing slips and use of the existing boat launch structure. Disturbance to species will be minor and brief.