

Subject: DWH-Early Restoration- Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Initiation-Florida Gulf Breeze Wayside Park Boat Ramp Improvements project

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Mr. Thompson,

Attached is the Essential Fish Habitat Assessment for the Florida Gulf Breeze Wayside Park Boat Ramp Improvements 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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— Attachments: —

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Determination of Effect on Essential Fish Habitat from Florida Gulf Breeze Wayside Park 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 Gulf Breeze Wayside Park Boat Ramp Improvements project would improve the existing boat ramp at Wayside Park in the City of Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa County, FL. The proposed improvements include repairing cracks and damage to the existing boat ramp and seawall cap, constructing a public restroom facility, and repairing and enhancing the parking area to improve access. Figure 1 illustrates the project area.

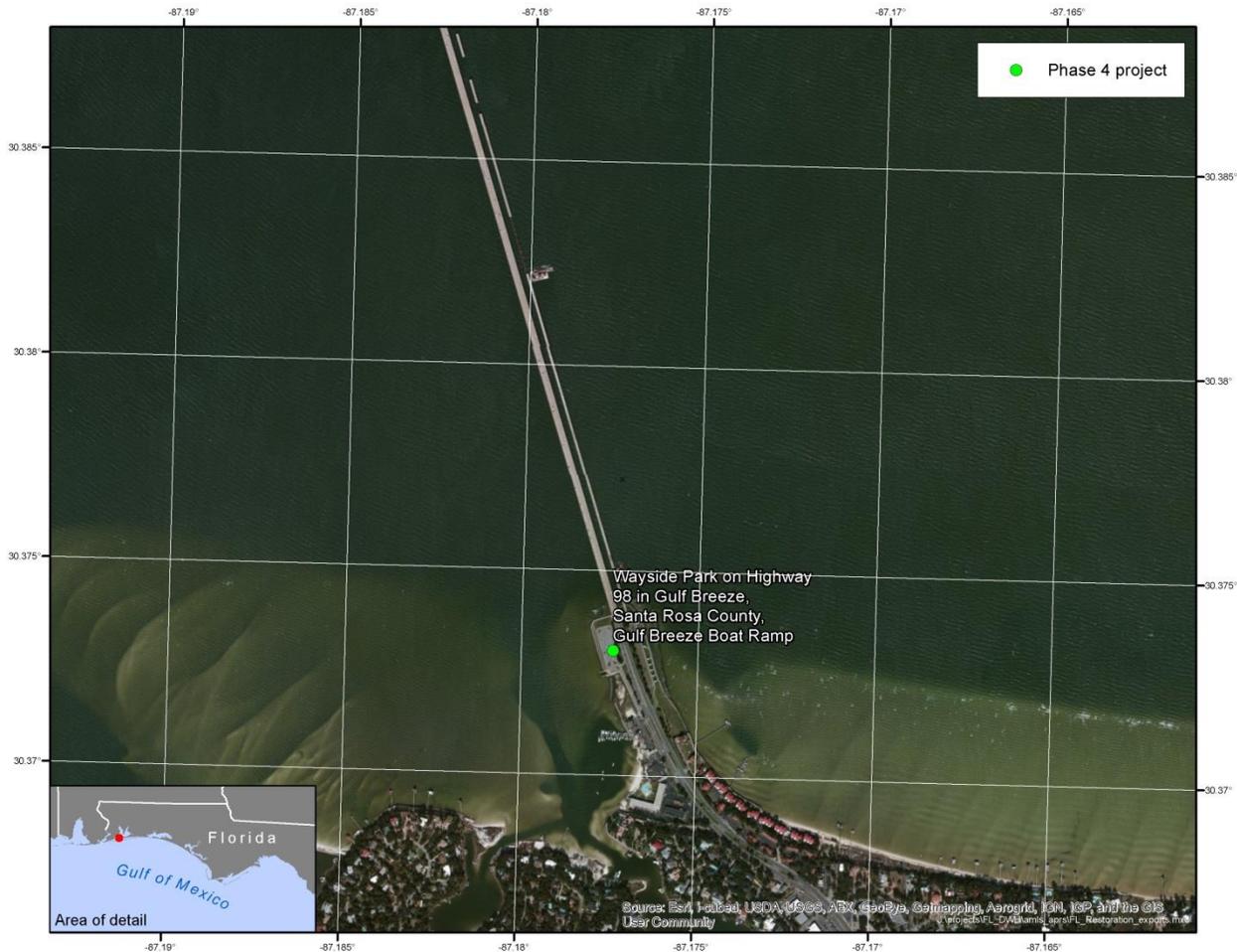


Figure 1. Gulf Breeze Park boat ramp project area.

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/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
	Sandbar Shark-Adult

	Sandbar Shark-Neonate
	Scalloped Hammerhead Shark-Neonate
	Spinner Shark-Adult
	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 Gulf Breeze Wayside Park boat ramp are expected to have no to minor impacts on EFH. The proposed project would utilize standard construction methods to repair the existing Wayside Park public boat ramp and seawall cap that were previously damaged from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill cleanup efforts. Some demolition and debris removal may be required during repairs and enhancements to the existing structures. A portion of the boat ramp and seawall repair work would likely take place in-water; however, all other activities, including installing a restroom facility and repairing and enhancing the parking area, would take place above mean high water and are not expected to affect EFH. Repair to the existing seawall would not change the seawall's overall footprint. There would be no expansion outside of the existing 2-acre site. Total construction time would be between 4 and 6 months, and total duration of work in-water would be a fraction of the total construction time. Because all planned work would take place within the footprint of the existing structures, no habitat conversion is expected to result from this project work.

Figure 2 provides a sense of the project surroundings.



Figure 2. Photo showing the existing boat ramp and seawall.

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 repairing the boat ramp and seawall cap may affect any species using the habitat near the boat ramp. 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 affect EFH. The proposed boat ramp and seawall cap repairs will take place within the footprint of the existing structures. No habitat conversion is anticipated as part of this project. Disturbance to species will be minor and brief.