Subject: DWH-Early Restoration- Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Initiation-Norriego Point Restoration Project-Florida
From: Jamie Schubert-NOAA Federal <jamie.schubert@noaa.gov>
Date: 3/5/2014 1:22 PM
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Mr. Thompson,
Attached is the Essential Fish Habitat Assessment for the Norriego Point Restoration Project-Florida. 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 or at jamie.schubert@noaa.gov.
Thanks,

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Jamie Schubert
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Attachments:

DWH-ER-EFH-NorriegoPoint-2014-02-14.docx 3.0 MB

Determination of Effect on Essential Fish Habitat from Florida Norriego Point Restoration 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

Norriego Point is a natural sand feature in the inlet of East Pass, Destin, Florida. It serves as the protective barrier for the boat channel entering Destin Harbor. Most significantly, it is the hub and focal point for Destin's water-based recreational opportunities.

The proposed Norriego Point Restoration and Recreation project would involve stabilizing and re-establishing recreational activities that have historically been available at Norriego Point (see Figure 1 for project location). The point has a long history of eroding away and has been replenished numerous times over the years. Figures 2-5 present a series of pictures depicting this erosion over the period of 2003-2013.. Improvements from this project would include constructing erosion control structures to dissipate wave energy and placing dredged sand behind the structures to create approximately 8 acres of habitat. Two new embayments will provide additional swimming areas as well as more space for boat and kayaks to pull-in. In addition, this project would involve constructing new public amenities including a picnic pavilion with restrooms, showers, and drinking fountains; educational signage; a multi-use trail; bike racks; and vehicle parking along the access road adjacent to the Point. Figure 6 provides a conceptual design for the major infrastructure work associated with the project.

The project also includes repair of existing erosion control (groin) structures and construction of several new erosion control structures. The existing erosion control structures will be excavated and re-constructed. The old material will be re-used and reinforced with new sheet pilings and armoring rock. The new erosion control structures will be built by excavating the area, placing a marine mattress constructed of geogrid materials and filled with material dredged from the site. Stone fill will be placed on top of the marine mattress, armor stone will be placed over the foundation to create a structure approximately 4 feet above North American Vertical Datum (NAVD) at the highest point and will be in the shape of a trapezoid. The finished erosion control structures will vary in size depending on the location, together, the five erosion control structures will be approximately 1,000 linear feet. Much or all of the erosion control structure work and embayment construction would be completed in-water.

Sheet piling would be installed as part of the erosion control structures. Jetting methods may be used within 2 feet of the required elevation; the final 2 feet would be driven without the use of jetting. The final pile-driving method would be approved before the selected contractor mobilizes to begin work. The size and number of sheet pilings would be finalized with final engineering designs, based on the size of material available and the amount required. Pilings would be made of rolled steel. Coal Tar Epoxy would be applied to all steel sheet piles in a controlled production facility before installation. The steel sheet pile would be covered with a concrete cap.

Sand fill material would be placed behind the renovated and new erosion control structures; the source of the fill material would be dredge material obtained during routine maintenance dredging of the navigation channels in the area. Standard construction methods would be used for all aspects of the project. All permits and BMPs would be followed to minimize any adverse effects of the construction. Project construction will take approximately 9-12 months, including both in-water and upland work.

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

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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

EFH - Category	Species
	Speckled Hind
	Tilefish
	Vermilion Snapper
	Warsaw Grouper
	Wenchman
	Yellowedge Grouper
	Yellowfin Grouper
	Yellowmouth Grouper

Assessment of effects to EFH

Mitigation measures required for siltation, erosion, turbidity, and release of chemicals would be strictly adhered to during construction. Best management practices and boom placement, along with other avoidance and mitigation measures required by state and federal regulatory agencies, would be employed to minimize any water quality and sedimentation impacts. Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) permit conditions require erosion and turbidity mitigation measures, which include the following:

- Installation of floating turbidity barriers;
- Installation of erosion control measures along the perimeter of all work areas;
- Stabilization of all filled areas with sod, mats, barriers, or a combination; and
- Stoppage of work if turbidity thresholds are exceeded. The soils would then be stabilized, work procedures would be modified, and the FDEP would be notified.

Impacts from chemicals that could be released from sources such as construction equipment and boats would be expected to be negligible. Required spill containment measures would be implemented for applicable construction activities. FDEP permit conditions require spill containment protection and mitigation measures as follows:

- Boat repair or fueling facilities over the water would be prohibited.
- Prohibiting vessels from being removed from the water for the purposes of maintenance or repair.

- Prohibited activities include hull cleaning and painting, and discharges or release of oils, greases, and related metal-based bottom paints associated with hull scraping, cleaning, and painting.

Instances of increased noise would occur during the project. Equipment and vehicles used during the construction of the project would generate noise. The noise would be temporary, and the construction period is not anticipated to last more than 12 months. Because of the temporary nature of the construction noise, negative impacts to the soundscape would be short term. After completion of the project, the soundscape would return to pre-project levels. Long-term noise effects from boating and other recreational activities would remain minor.

The proposed project would likely have short-term, minor adverse impacts to fish that may be present during the in-water construction as a result of turbidity and noise disturbance during placement of groin structures. However, these effects would be short term and minor and would not result in a measurable impact to these species. The habitat areas around the groin structures may provide surface for attachment of sessile organisms, which would indirectly benefit the ecosystem around the structures.

If federally managed highly migratory species (HMS) are present during the in-water work area, short-term disturbances from noise and turbidity would occur. Habitat adjacent to the in-water work would remain available to HMS and the species would likely move away during in-water activities. Impacts to EFH or the natural processes sustaining EFH and HMS may be detectable, but would be localized and would not measurably alter natural conditions. Small changes to local population numbers, population structure, and other demographic factors would be unlikely to occur. Sufficient habitat would remain functional at both the local and range-wide scales to maintain the viability of the HMS species. Therefore, adverse effects to EFH would be short term and minor.

During construction of the erosion control structures, construction vessels may affect species. However, the vessels will be near the shoreline and will follow appropriate guidelines, permit conditions, and BMPs to ensure that any potential impacts are minimized. After construction is completed, additional vessel traffic impacts would be minimal since the project area is an existing recreational facility that includes boat launch and mooring facilities.

The conversion of subtidal habitat to land is relatively small, at 8 acres, compared to the size of the project area (figures 1 and 6). Conversion of the subtital habitat would have minimal impacts to EFH since the proposed conversion would occur in an area where land had previously existed but had eroded away. It is likely that the subtital habitat in proposed conversion area is low quality due to beach erosion and the high current levels of recreational use of the existing area at Norriego Point and the associated commercial and recreational boat traffic in the area. (see

Figure 7 for examples of use from original project application for Early Restoration Consideration)

Conclusion

The Norriego Point Restoration and Recreation project may lead to potentially adverse physical impacts and habitat conversion of EFH on a limited scale. Strict adherence to BMPs and permits would limit adverse impacts from the Point restoration project. As a result the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect EFH in the project area.

Figure 1. Location of Norriego Point Restoration and Recreation Project.

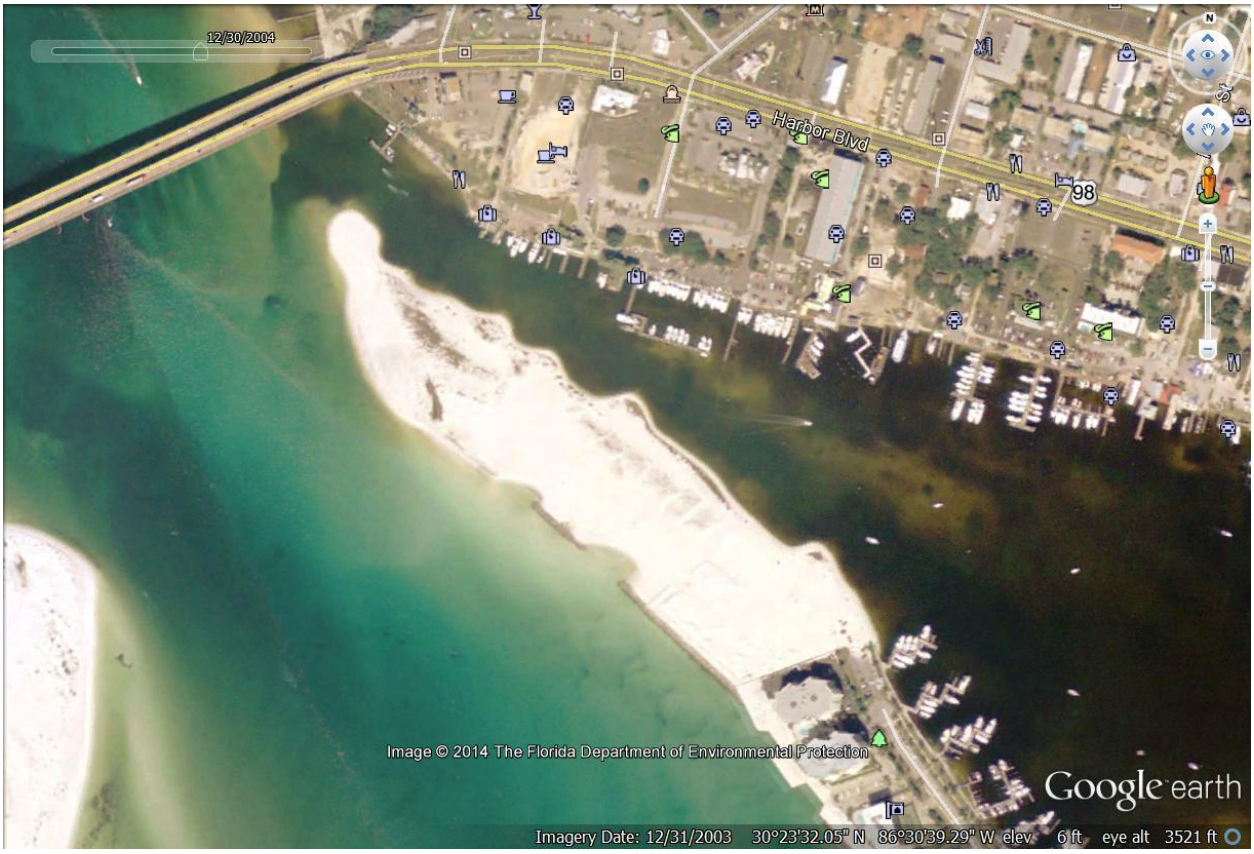

Figure 2. Norriego Point on December 31, 2003

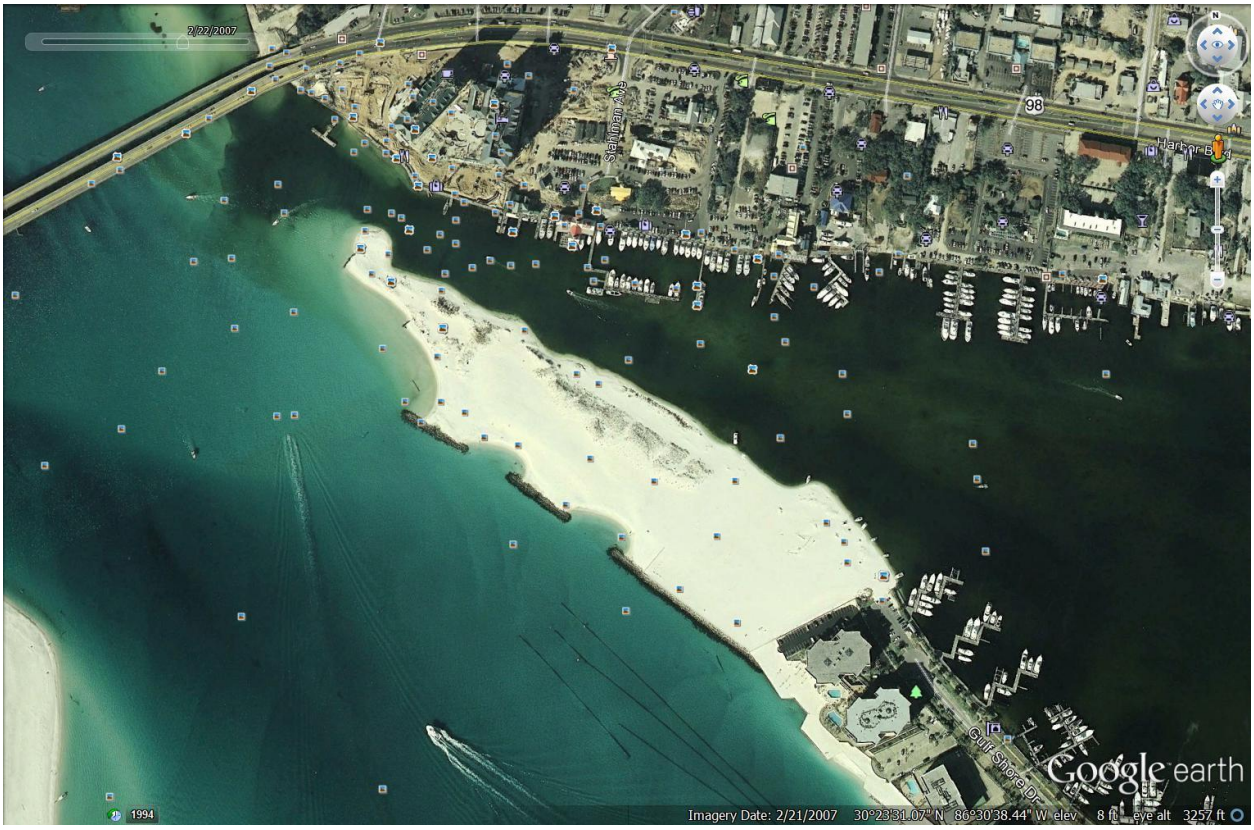

Figure 3. Norriego Point on February 21, 2007

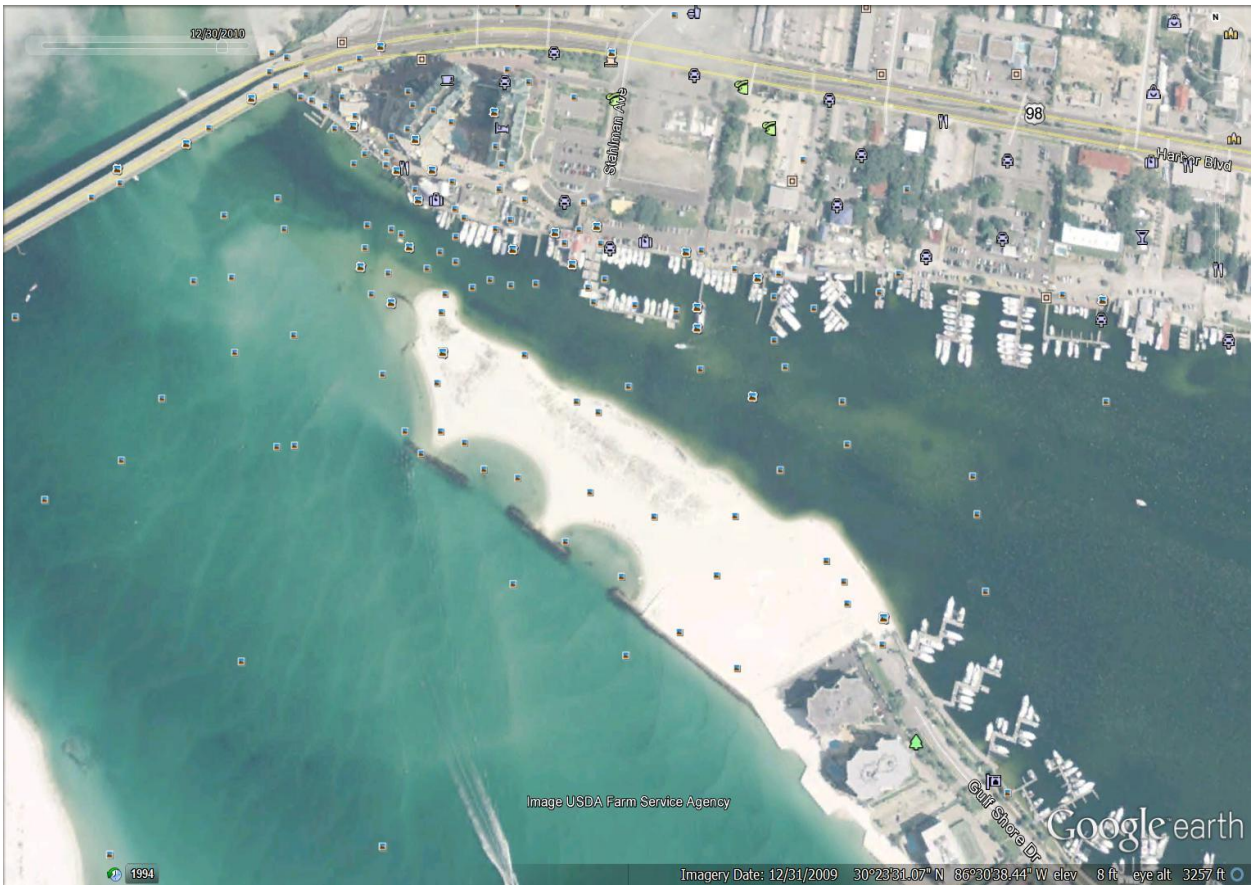

Figure 4. Norriego Point on December 31, 2009

Figure 5. Norriego Point on March 28, 2013

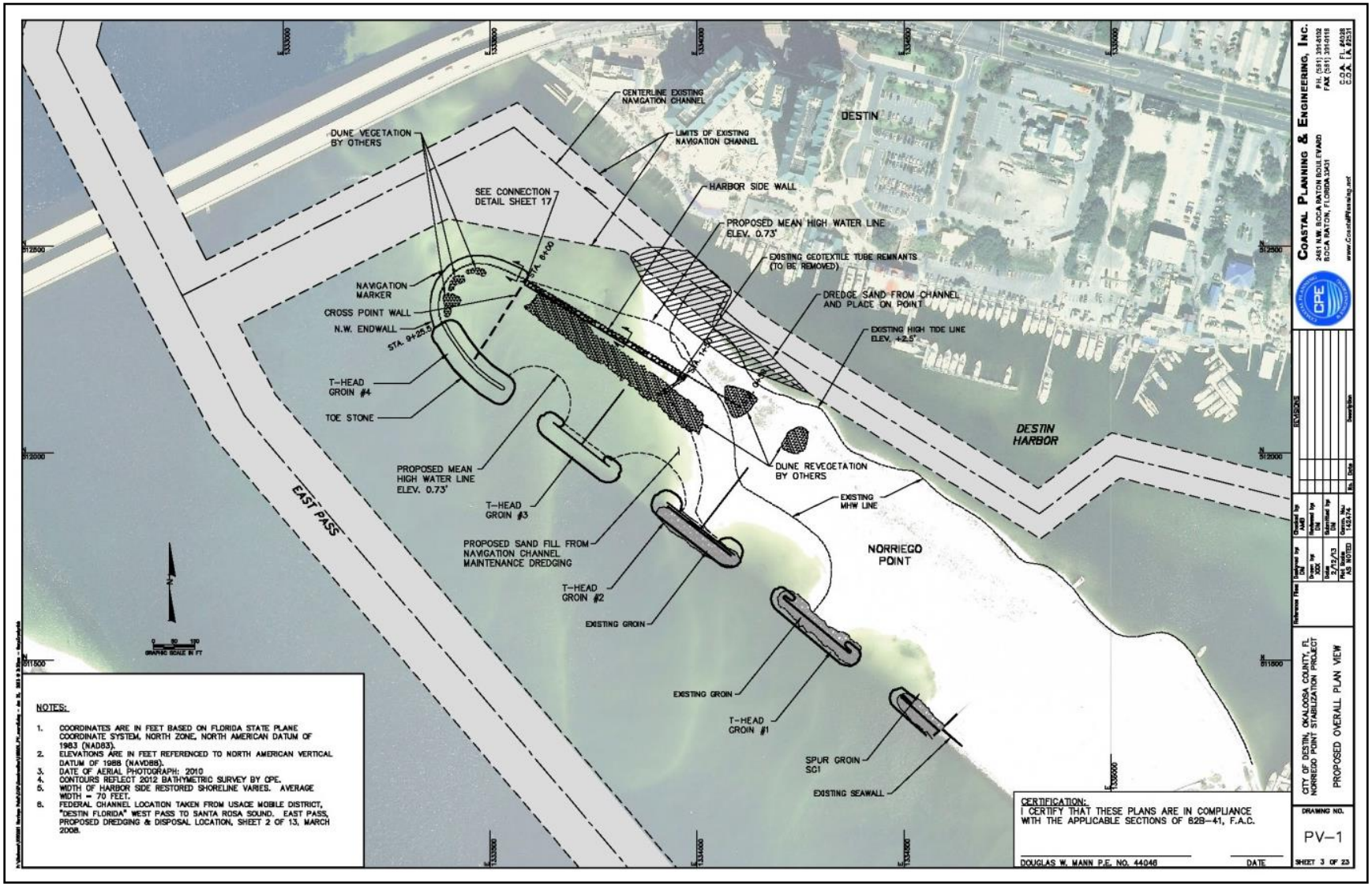

Figure 6. Layout of existing and proposed erosion control structures.

Figure 7. Examples of a day of recreational use at the current Norriego Point – Norriego Point is the white sand beach spit in the center of the photograph. Destin Harbor is on the left side of Norriego Point (Source: City of Destin)