

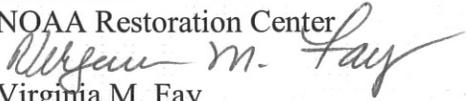


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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February 14, 2012

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Jeff Shenot
NOAA Restoration Center

FROM: 
Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator, Habitat Conservation Division

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) review of the Phase I Early
Restoration Projects

This responds to your February 2, 2012, electronic mail correspondence requesting an EFH review of the subject action. The natural resource Trustees for the BP/Deepwater Horizon incident propose to conduct eight early restoration projects in the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

As specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), EFH consultation is required for federal actions which may adversely affect EFH. Representing the federal Trustees for the subject action, the NOAA Restoration Center determined the proposed actions would not adversely affect EFH, and overall, would likely benefit federally managed fishery species. It is important to note the EFH assessment identifies and analyzes the conversion of habitat types that may result from the proposed restoration activities. The assessment also identifies best management practices and measures to minimize indirect impacts to EFH. Based on our review of the preliminary projects, we do not have any EFH Conservation Recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act at this time. Please be advised that further consultation on this matter is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed.

Future EFH Assessments should reflect recent actions by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and approved by the NMFS, removing certain species from federal management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The fishery management plan for stone crab in the Gulf of Mexico was repealed effective October 24, 2011. Additionally, the following were removed from fishery management units and plans effective in January 2012: dog snapper, mahogany snapper, schoolmaster, misty grouper, red hind, rock hind, blackline tilefish, anchor tilefish, dwarf sand perch, sand perch, bluefish, cero, dolphin, little tunny, and slipper lobster.

Questions regarding EFH in the Southeast Region may be directed to David Dale at 727-824-5317 or by email at david.dale@noaa.gov.

