



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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March 26, 2014

MEMORANDUM TO: Leslie Craig
Southeast Region Supervisor, NOAA Restoration Center

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

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Review of the construction and operation of the Louisiana Marine Fisheries Enhancement, Research, & Science Center

In response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Louisiana Marine Fisheries Enhancement, Research, and Science Center (Center) is proposed for construction and operation to address a portion of the recreational uses lost as a result of the spill. The Center is a fish hatchery having a research, education, and outreach emphasis. Fish species to be produced at the Center include red drum, spotted seatrout, and southern flounder. The Center would be constructed largely in upland areas in Calcasieu Parish with some potential to impact wetlands and water bottoms categorized as essential fish habitat (EFH) under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

As specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, EFH consultation is required for federal actions which may adversely affect EFH. As the federal action agency for this matter, NOAA's Restoration Center prepared an EFH assessment for the Center and provided that document for our review by electronic mail dated February 20, 2014. The Southeast Region's Habitat Conservation Division (SER HCD) has reviewed the EFH assessment and finds the document adequately evaluates potential project impacts to EFH supportive of white shrimp, brown shrimp, and red drum. While the Center has the potential to adversely impact water quality of EFH in an area identified as an unnamed tributary of the Calcasieu Ship Channel, sufficient efforts have been incorporated into the project to ensure such impacts do not occur. As such, SER HCD concurs with the determination in the EFH assessment that effects of Center construction and operation on EFH would be minimal. As such, the SER HCD has no EFH conservation recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act at this time. Further consultation on this matter is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed and such actions may result in adverse impacts to EFH.

cc:
F/SER-Giordano
F/HC3-Schubert
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