UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast

December 5, 2023 F/SER46/AR:rs
225-380-0081

Mr. Eric M. Williams, Chief
Environmental Planning Branch
Regional Planning and Environment Division South
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans Environmental Branch, CEMVN-PDS-C
7400 Leake Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Dear Mr. Williams:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received your letter dated October 20, 2023, pertaining to the NMFS July 22, 2021, essential fish habitat (EFH) conservation recommendations provided to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) New Orleans District's regarding the revised draft Integrated Feasibility Report and the revised draft Environmental Impact Statement for the St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, Feasibility Study.

In response to NMFS EFH conservation recommendations the USACE provided: 1) a complete EFH assessment, 2) a preliminary operations plan, 3) a hydrologic modeling report on project features, and 4) a mitigation and monitoring plan to offset the 123 acres of fresh/intermediate marsh impacts through the potential construction of marsh mitigation sites in approximately 221 acres of open water. The USACE stated that if the project is authorized and funded to proceed to preconstruction, engineering, and design, a refined operations plan, hydrologic modeling and analysis, and mitigation and monitoring plan will be developed and coordinated with NMFS.

The NMFS appreciates the USACE's letter addressing our concerns and have determined the response satisfies the EFH consultation requirements for the feasibility study. We anticipate continued coordination with your office on the EFH consultation when the study proceeds to the preconstruction, engineering, and design phase. If you wish to discuss this project, further or have questions concerning our recommendations, please contact Alexis Rixner at (225) 380-0081 or by e-mail at Alexis.Rixner@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Virginia M. Fay

Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division

c:
USACE, New Orleans, Dixon
USFWS, Lafayette, Soileau
EPA, Gutierrez
LDWF, Balkum
F/SER1, Silverman, Rosegger
F/SER46, Swafford, Murray
F/SER4, Dale,
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