



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

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

April 30, 2014

F/SER4:DD

Captain Brian Penoyer
Commander U.S. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston
13411 Hillard Street
Houston, Texas 77034

Dear Captain Penoyer:

The U.S. Coast Guard provided the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office the Surface Washing Agent Plan (Section 3253) of the Central Texas Coastal Area Contingency Plan for review. This section of the plan outlines procedures for use of surface washing agents in pre-approved locations in the Central Texas Coastal area and would allow the Federal On-Scene Commander, in consultation with the Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator, to authorize the use of Environmental Protection Agency approved "lift and float" surface washing agents if conventional methods are not sufficient in the cleanup of oil from contaminated vessel hulls and hard structure surfaces in certain locations identified in the plan. These locations are generally industrial port areas of the Upper Houston Ship Channel, Bayport Ship Channel, Texas City Ship Channel, Galveston Channel, and Freeport Ship Channel.

As specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation is required for federal actions which may adversely affect EFH. As the federal action agency in this matter, the U.S. Coast Guard has determined the proposed actions would not adversely affect the environment in the pre-approved areas. The Habitat Conservation Division has reviewed the proposed actions and determined any adverse impact to EFH resulting from the proposed response activities would be minimal. Due to the context and nature of the proposed activities, we have no EFH conservation recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the MSFCMA.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments. Please direct related correspondence to the attention of Mr. David Dale at the letterhead address. He may be reached at (727) 824-5317 or by e-mail at david.dale@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division



cc:

F/SER31, Kyle.Baker@noaa.gov

F/SER46, Rusty.Swafford@noaa.gov

USCG, Kevin.C.Boyd@uscg.mil

USCG, Michael.K.Sams@uscg.mil