



Robin Wiebler - NOAA Federal &lt;robin.wiebler@noaa.gov&gt;

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**SAJ-2014-03664(SP-AWP) SR 50 over the Ekonlockhatchee**

1 message

**Brandon Howard - NOAA Federal** <brandon.howard@noaa.gov>

Mon, Jan 5, 2015 at 11:06 AM

To: Andrew Phillips &lt;Andrew.W.Phillips@usace.army.mil&gt;

Cc: Pace Wilber - NOAA Federal &lt;Pace.Wilber@noaa.gov&gt;, Robin Wiebler - NOAA Federal &lt;robin.wiebler@noaa.gov&gt;, ashleigh\_blackford@fws.gov, casey.lyon@dot.state.fl.us

Re: D5ORA-0498\_SR50EkonBridge\_FWCA\_FINAL

Location: 28.565433° North, 81.154355° West

Hi Andy.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the Jacksonville District's public notice SAJ-2014-03664(SP-AWP), dated December 24, 2014. The applicant, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District 5, requests authorization from the Department of the Army to impact 2.20 acres of wetlands to replace the SR 50 bridge over the Ekonlockhatchee River in Orange County, Florida. As the nation's federal trustee for the conservation and management of marine, estuarine, and anadromous fishery resources, the following comments and recommendations are provided pursuant to authorities of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

Wetlands and surface waters within the project area are part of a larger freshwater wetland complex associated with Ekonlockhatchee River. The Ekonlockhatchee River drains to the St. Johns River. The wetlands that would be impacted by the project range from high to low in quality. Vegetation within these wetlands includes red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Carolina willow (*Salix caroliniana*), and water oak (*Quercus nigra*). The wetlands that would be impacted by the bridge replacement provide water quality functions, such as removal of sediments, excess nutrients, and contaminants, that benefit and support these aquatic ecosystems. Through hydrological connections, these wetlands also contribute plant material and other useable nutrients (both dissolved and particulate organic matter) into aquatic food webs that include recreationally, commercially, and ecologically important species within downstream estuaries.

The public notice states that FDOT has already purchased credits from the TM Ekon Mitigation Bank. The use of this bank ensures that the lost function and values will be replaced within the same watershed.

In addition to the direct impacts from filling wetlands, construction activities may impact adjacent wetlands through sedimentation and runoff. To minimize these impacts, NMFS recommends the applicant utilize best management practices, including staked hay bales, silt fencing, mats for construction equipment, and re-vegetation of denuded areas, to stabilize the disturbed soils.

Brandon

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Brandon Howard  
Fishery Biologist  
NOAA Fisheries Service  
400 N Congress Avenue, Suite 110  
West Palm Beach, Florida 33401

561-249-1652

FAX 561-429-4168

[brandon.howard@noaa.gov](mailto:brandon.howard@noaa.gov)[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat\\_conservation/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat_conservation/index.html)

