



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>

June 26, 2015

F/SER47:FR/pw

(Sent via Electronic Mail)

Colonel Kevin P. Landers, Sr., Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District
69 Darlington Avenue
Wilmington, North Carolina 28403-1398

Attention: Liz Hair

Dear Colonel Landers:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the public notice for Action ID No. SAW-2013-01747 dated May 26, 2015. The North Carolina State Ports Authority (SPA) proposes to modify its CAMA permit to allow for additional new and maintenance dredging in Bogue Sound/Newport River, adjacent to the SPA facility in Morehead City, Carteret County. The project plans propose to excavate an additional 48,384 cubic yards of material. Approximately 13,200 cubic yards would be new dredging from a portion of the northern fleeing area (east of Marsh Island) 150 feet by 750 feet (2.58 acres), and the final depth would be 12 feet normal low water (NLW) plus 2 feet of over dredge. Approximately 35,184 cubic yards would be maintenance dredging from a portion of the southern fleeing area (along Radio Island) 900 feet by 400 feet (8.26 acres), and the final depth would be 12 feet NLW plus 2 feet of over dredge. In total, the proposed dredging would disturb a total of 472,500 square feet (10.84 acres) of shallow bottom. The dredging areas are not Primary Nursery Areas and not open to shellfish harvesting. The Wilmington District's initial determination is the proposed project may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH) or associated fisheries managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, or the NMFS. As the nation's federal trustee for the conservation and management of marine, estuarine, and diadromous fishery resources, the following comments are provided pursuant to the authorities of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

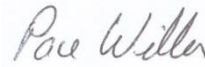
Unconsolidated soft bottom is the predominant EFH throughout the barge fleeing areas. Benthic infaunal organisms, such as polychaete worms, commonly occur within this sediment type at the depths and salinities characteristic of the barge fleeing areas. These organisms serve as prey for many fishery species. Depths in the northern fleeing area, which would be the new dredging, currently range from -10 to -16 feet NLW, so the proposed dredging would not substantially change the habitat. Depths in the southern fleeing area, which is where the maintenance dredging would occur, currently range up to -20 feet NLW. The method for excavation is unspecified in the application. If SPA selects a hopper or mechanical dredge, the NMFS recommends dredging only occur during ebbing tides to avoid sedimentation and turbidity impacts to upstream estuarine areas. If SPA selects a pipeline dredge for the work, the NMFS



expects industry standard best management practices would be sufficient to protect nearby areas from sedimentation and turbidity impacts.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. Related questions or comments should be directed to the attention of Mr. Fritz Rohde at our Beaufort Field Office, 101 Pivers Island Road, Beaufort, North Carolina 28516-9722, or at (252) 838-0828

Sincerely,



/ for

Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division

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