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EFH submittal McClellanville Boardwalk

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Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 11:34 AM

To: "Riddle, Nicole L." <RiddleNL@scdot.org>

Hi Nicole,

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) reviewed the Essential Fish Habitat Screening form, dated July 1, 2015, and supplemented information provided through email dated July 17 and August 26, 2015, for the McClellanville Boardwalk project over Jeremy Creek in Charleston County. The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) submitted this information on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in anticipation of a Department of the Army general permit for work within jurisdictional waters of the U.S. As the nation's federal trustee for the conservation and management of marine, estuarine, and anadromous fishery resources, the following comments are provided pursuant to authorities of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

The SCDOT, with the Town of McClellanville, proposes to construct a wood-trestle type pedestrian bridge to connect Pinckney Street and its existing paved bike path to the new Cape Romain Environmental Education Charter School (CREECS) on Old Cemetery Road and existing neighborhoods south of the project area along Kit Hall Road. The proposed 11-foot wide bridge would be approximately 210 feet long and would traverse the existing tidal marsh and Jeremy Creek. The bridge (from Pinckney Street) would traverse the tidal marsh, stop over at an upland island with a few steps leading to the island area and then another section of bridge spanning Jeremy Creek ending at an upland area adjacent to Old Cemetery Road. A portion of tidal ditch would also be filled and piped to accommodate a new section of sidewalk along the corner of Kit Hall and Old Cemetery Roads.

As a result of the proposed project, a total of approximately 0.12 acres of estuarine marsh would be directly impacts from this project. Of this, approximately 0.008 acre is from permanent clearing, 0.011 acre is from permanent fill, and 0.032 acre is from shading impacts. The remaining 0.069 acre of impacts would be from temporary construction activities related to the construction of the bridge over these areas. The existing habitat consists of fully functional estuarine wetlands, intertidal unvegetated flats, and a named tidal creek (Jeremy Creek).

Steps the SCDOT has taken to avoid and minimize impacts from the proposed project include using a prefabricated bridge section over Jeremy Creek that will not require any piers to be placed in open water across the channel. Also, there are no large-scale bents to be placed in waters or tidal areas. Additionally, no fill will be placed in Jeremy Creek or it's associated critical area. Any possible sedimentation will be minimized by installing best management practices such as silt fencing, retaining walls, and slop stabilization. The contractor will comply with all State-approved erosion and sediment control plans. Furthermore, following coordination, SCDOT is willing to commit to using the maximum practicable spacing between boards for the deck of the pedestrian bridge that still comply with ADA requirements.

Mitigation for unavoidable impacts from the proposed project will be done in accordance with SCDHEC-OCRM mitigation requirements. The final mitigation plan will be submitted to NMFS when it is available.

NMFS has determined that impacts to EFH have been minimized and avoided to the maximum extent practicable and offer no Conservation Recommendations. Should the project change such that impacts are increased, SCDOT should coordinate with NMFS to determine if re-initiation is necessary.

Sincerely,
Keith

On Thu, Jan 28, 2016 at 3:31 PM, Riddle, Nicole L. <RiddleNL@scdot.org> wrote: