

GUIDANCE FOR PART 2, CHAPTER 17

May 2026

This document provides guidance for the development of coordination letters for Essential Fish Habitat Assessments. Agency contact information, other information sources, and guidance for Emergency Consultations are also included.

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Fishery Management Councils and NMFS Contact Information

Gulf Council

2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607
(813) 348-1630
(888) 833-1844 – Toll Free
Fax (813) 348-1711 <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
(843) 571-4366
(866) SAFMC-10 – Toll Free
Fax. (843) 769-4520
<http://www.safmc.net>

NMFS Southeast Region

NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office (SERO)
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-5317
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC)
75 Virginia Beach Drive
Miami, FL 33149
(305) 361-4200

<https://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/>

Information Sources and Websites

EFH information links:

General:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat_conservation/index.html

NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation

<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/>

Within this site there are the following helpful links:

<http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/protection/efh/habitatmapper.html>

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/essential-fish-habitat>

NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Habitat Conservation Division

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat_conservation/index.html

Gulf States:

Gulf States Marine Fishery Commission EFH site

<http://www.gsmfc.org/index.php>

EFH Research and EFH maps

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/map/essential-fish-habitat-mapper>

South Atlantic:

<http://safmc.net/>

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Public Law 94-265 as amended through October 11, 1996

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/magnuson-stevens-fishery-conservation-and-management-act>

Scientific Literature Review:

Dobrzynski, Tanya and Korie Johnson. May 2001. Regional Council Approaches to the Identification and Protection of Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. NOAA/NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation. Silver Spring, MD

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. October 1998. Generic Amendment for addressing EFH requirements in the following fishery management plans of the Gulf of Mexico. Tampa, FL

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. 1998. Public hearing draft generic amendment for addressing EFH requirements in the following fishery management plans of the Gulf of Mexico: Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico, United States Waters; Red Drum Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (Mackerels) in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic; Stone Crab Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Spiny Lobster in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, Coral and Coral Reef of the Gulf of Mexico (includes environmental assessment). Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Tampa, FL

* Stone Crab is no longer federally managed. Management was transferred to the State of Florida.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 1998. Highly migratory species essential fish habitat pre-draft materials for the highly migratory species fishery management plan amendment. National Marine Fisheries Service. Silver Spring, MD

National Marine Fisheries Service. February 2002. Essential Fish Habitat: A Marine Fish Habitat Conservation mandate for Federal Agencies. Gulf of Mexico Region. NMFS Habitat Conservation Division, Southeast Regional Office. St. Petersburg, FL

National Marine Fisheries Service. September 2003. Essential Fish Habitat: New Marine Fish Habitat Conservation Mandate for Federal Agencies. NMFS Habitat Conservation Division, Southeast Regional Office. St. Petersburg, FL

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. 1998. Final habitat plan for the South Atlantic region: Essential Fish habitat requirements for Fishery Management Plans of the South Atlantic fishery Management Council: The Shrimp Fishery Management Plan, The Red Drum Fishery Management Plan, The Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, The Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Management Plan, The Golden Crab Fishery Management Plan, The Spiny Lobster Fishery Management Plan, The Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hard Bottom Habitat Fishery Management Plan, The Calico Scallop Fishery Management Plan. South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Charleston, SC

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. April 2002. Final Essential Habitat Plan. Charleston, SC

Habitat Conservation Division Contacts by FDOT District

FDOT Districts 1, 2 (Gulf Coast only), 3, and 7

David Rydene
National Marine Fisheries Service
Habitat Conservation Division
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
(727) 824-5379
David.Rydene@noaa.gov

FDOT Districts 2 (Atlantic Coast only), 4, 5 and 6

Kurtis Gregg
National Marine Fisheries Service
Habitat Conservation Division
2198 Edison Avenue, MS2814 Jacksonville, FL 32204 (561) 219-9843
Kurtis.Gregg@noaa.gov

Turnpike projects should default to project's geographic district location.

Sample Letter Request for Confirmation of Abbreviated List

(Date)

Mr./Ms. _____

Title

National Marine Fisheries Service

Habitat Conservation Division

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

SUBJECT: Request for EFH Assessment Assistance

Project title and limits

Financial Management Number: xxxxxx xx xx

Federal Project ID: xx-xxx-xxxx-(x)

County: _____

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is proposing...*[Project need and description should be added.]*

Attached to this correspondence is an abbreviated list of federally managed species and their EFH, as identified by FDOT as potentially being adversely affected by the proposed project. This list was developed from the _____ Fisheries Management Council and NMFS Federally Managed Species Lists, Fishery Management Plans, and associated habitat maps.

The FDOT requests that you confirm which species should be included in an EFH Assessment for this project and add information on any project specific issues that may need to be addressed in the assessment. Please place a "check mark" next to the appropriate species on the attached list(s), and return to the FDOT so that a complete and accurate EFH Assessment can be prepared. We would appreciate the courtesy of a reply within 10 days.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at _____. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Attachments: Location Map

Abbreviated species and habitat list

Cc:

Preparer if different from the signee

Project File

Sample Interim Response Letter

(Date)

Mr./Ms. _____

Title

National Marine Fisheries Service

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

SUBJECT: Interim Response to Conservation Recommendations

Project title and limits

Financial Management Number: xxxxxx xx xx

Federal Project ID: xx-xxx-xxxx-(x)

County: _____

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is in receipt of the NMFS' Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Recommendations received from (commenter) in a letter dated (date). Please accept this as an interim response within the 30 day time period requested by NMFS for Essential Fish Habitat consultation. At this time FDOT is considering your Conservation Recommendations for the XXX project. FDOT will respond in detail within the final environmental document (CE, EA, EIS), or via a letter to NMFS, at least 10 days before the final agency action.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Cc:

Preparer if different from signee

Project File

Sample Response to Conservation Recommendations Letter

(Date)

Mr./Ms. _____

Title

National Marine Fisheries Service

Address

Dear Mr./Ms. _____:

SUBJECT: Response to Conservation Recommendations

Project title and limits

Financial Management Number: xxxxxx xx xx

Federal Project ID: xx-xxx-xxxx-(x)

County: _____

The Florida Department of Transportation is in receipt of the NMFS' Essential Fish Habitat Conservation Recommendations received from (*commenter*) in a letter dated (*date*). Please accept this letter as a response to NMFS Essential Fish Habitat consultation Conservation Recommendations.

[Add project specific responses including a description of measures proposed by FDOT for avoiding, mitigating or offsetting the impact of the proposed activity on EFH.]

Please note the environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated May 26, 2022 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at_____.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Cc:

Preparer if different from signee
Project File

Emergency Consultation Procedure

Endangered Species Act and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act Consultation Guidance

In cases where emergency actions may affect federally listed species, critical habitats, and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) emergency consultation with the Services is required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), as appropriate.

For emergency Section 7 consultation with the USFWS, use the Information for Planning and Consultation [IPaC, [IPaC: Home \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/ipac)]. In response, IPaC will provide acknowledgement of the request, a unique tracking number, and available recommended minimization measures for ESA-listed species or critical habitat that may be present. IPaC also notifies the Field Office of the request, who may then contact FDOT as needed. These requests are logged in ECOSphere, which allows the Service to track and report on these emergency requests. More information on USFWS emergency consultation process can be found at [Southeastern Emergency Endangered Species Act Sec. 7 Consultation Resources | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/ipac).

For emergency consultation with the NMFS, FDOT should contact NMFS as quickly as possible following the onset of the emergency. The following information is needed to conduct the consultation:

- What is the emergency you are responding to? Please specify the emergency you are responding to, including specific incident names when appropriate (e.g., Hurricane Ivan).
- What is the nature of your emergency action? Please describe, briefly, the response action you are undertaking (e.g., removing collapsed sections of the I-10 Escambia Bay Bridge).
- When did the emergency occur, or, if unknown, when did you become aware of the emergency?
- Is the original source of the emergency still occurring?
- Provide location coordinates in Decimal Degrees ONLY (example lat 27.8046) of the emergency response (North latitude is assumed). Even though response efforts may occur over large areas, please identify a single point that roughly conveys where efforts will occur.
- Who should NOAA Fisheries contact with follow-up recommendations or questions? Please provide the name, email, and phone number of your agency's Point-of-Contact for this emergency consultation. Submit this information and consultation requests via email to nmfs.ser.emergency.consult@noaa.gov and copy appropriate NMFS ETAT representative David Rydene (david.rydene@noaa.gov) or Kurtis Gregg (kurtis.gregg@noaa.gov).

More detailed information on the emergency consultation process with NMFS can be found at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/endangered-species-conservation/endangered-species-act-emergencyconsultations-southeast>.

In certain circumstances, after the fact consultation may be required. For example, when hurricane debris is pushed off the roadway onto right of way that is designated as critical habitat, this activity will require after the fact consultation with the USFWS. Another example is when a bridge or causeway is being repaired, any adverse impacts to essential fish habitat (EFH) will require consultation with the NMFS. Refer to [Part 2, Chapter 16, Protected Species and Habitat](#) and [Part 2, Chapter 17, Essential Fish Habitat](#) of the PD&E Manual.

Consultation should be completed within 270 days of the emergency declaration for emergency repairs to be eligible for 100% reimbursement. Permanent repairs will follow the typical NEPA process and should be submitted within 2 years of the event. Documentation of the consultation should be saved in the project file.

Best Practice: Keep track of any specific avoidance or mitigation measures used during the repair, such as placing special sand in coastal areas, in the project file for documentation during consultation with the USFWS, NMFS or permitting agencies. It is important to follow-up with the agencies with an email or memo documenting completion of the emergency consultation. Documentation of the consultation should be added to the project file.

Below are links to general emergency environmental consultation guidance:

USFWS Emergency Consultation information: [Emergency Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation in the Southeast](#)

NMFS and NOAA Emergency Guidance: [Endangered Species Act Emergency Consultations in the Southeast | NOAA Fisheries](#)