

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Initial Comprehensive Plan Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) conducted an environmental analysis of the Initial Comprehensive Plan. In July 2012, the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council). The Council is comprised of the Governors of the five Gulf Coast States and Cabinet-level officials from six federal agencies. One of the Council's primary responsibilities is to develop an Initial Comprehensive Plan (Plan) to restore the ecosystem and the economy of the Gulf Coast region.

The Proposed Action is the creation of the Plan. The Plan sets forth the Council's overarching goals for restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast region. Additionally, the Plan: (1) incorporates recommendations and findings of the *Strategy*; (2) describes how projects and programs under the Council-selected Restoration Component will be solicited, evaluated, and funded; (3) outlines the process for the development, review, and approval of State Expenditure Plans; (4) includes a list of any project or program authorized prior to enactment of the RESTORE Act, but not yet commenced; and (5) provides the Council's next steps. The Plan does not select projects or programs to be funded by the Council. The Council will subsequently develop a proposal solicitation process to evaluate projects and programs based on the Priority Criteria set forth in the Act.

A Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) was prepared that evaluates the potential impacts, beneficial and adverse, associated with the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative. The PEA summarizes the current environmental setting of the Gulf Coast region, describes the purpose and need for the Plan, identifies the No Action and Proposed Action Alternatives, including a description of the process for developing the Proposed Action, and assesses the potential environmental consequences based upon available information.

A draft of the PEA was released for public notice and comment on May 23, the comment period extended to July 8, 2013. A summary of the public comments on the PEA and the Council's response can be found in the Final PEA. The Final PEA is attached for reference.

Based upon the information contained in the PEA, the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts resulting from implementation of the Proposed Action, and in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508 the following is concluded:

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required based upon the fact that there will be no long-term adverse direct, indirect,

or cumulative impacts on the human environment resulting from the Plan, as identified in the PEA, for the purpose of Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration and protection. The PEA does not analyze the specific effects of projects that the Council may later fund. Therefore, the appropriate level of NEPA analysis will be performed on proposed projects prior to their selection by the Council for funding. Additionally, all projects and programs must comply with applicable Federal statutes, regulations and Executive Orders.



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Date