

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

From Implementation of the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group 2018 Strategic Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment

Introduction

The “Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group 2018 Strategic Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #3: Restoration of Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats in the Barataria Basin, Louisiana” (SRP/EA), incorporated herein by reference, fulfills the restoration plan requirement under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the implementing regulations, and the environmental assessment requirement for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as implemented by the regulations published by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR 1500-1508). It was prepared by the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (LA TIG) to partially restore ecosystem-level injuries in the Gulf of Mexico through restoration of critical wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitat resources and services in the Barataria Basin caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill (DWH oil spill), using Natural Resource Damage funds as set forth in the DWH post-settlement Consent Decree.

The SRP/EA selects from a range of alternatives a restoration strategy for the Barataria Basin and advances several specific projects for further development and evaluation under both OPA and NEPA in subsequent project-specific Phase II restoration plans and their associated NEPA analyses. The SRP/EA does not select specific projects for construction.

Under OPA, as set forth in the DWH Consent Decree and as described in the DWH Trustees’ 2016 Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PDARP/PEIS), the LA TIG comprises the following state and federal Natural Resource Trustees Agencies (Trustees): the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA); the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR); the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ); the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator’s Office (LOSCO); the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF); the United States Department of Commerce, represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); the United States Department of the Interior (DOI), represented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Park Service (NPS); the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The SRP/EA tiers from the PDARP/PEIS, which is a programmatic document developed by the DWH Trustees to guide and direct the massive DWH oil spill restoration effort. The LA TIG prepared this SRP/EA consistent with the PDARP/PEIS, the March 2016 Record of Decision (ROD) selecting a Comprehensive Integrated Ecosystem Alternative, the OPA and NEPA statutes, and relevant Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) and NEPA regulations. As noted in Chapter 7 of the PDARP/PEIS, TIGs may prepare strategic frameworks to focus and sequence priorities within a restoration area. In preparing the SRP/EA, the LA TIG relied on, incorporated by reference, and summarized relevant analyses in the PDARP/PEIS.

The PDARP/PEIS includes a portfolio of Restoration Types that addresses the diverse suite of injuries that occurred at both regional and local scales. Consistent with the PDARP/PEIS, the SRP/EA focuses on wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitat restoration type projects in the Barataria Basin restoration area. The PDARP/PEIS found that the Barataria Basin experienced some of the heaviest and most persistent oiling and associated response activities from the DWH oil spill. The Barataria Basin supports very high primary and secondary production that contributes to the overall health of the northern Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

In the SRP/EA, the LA TIG evaluated a suite of restoration approaches and associated techniques that fall under the “Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats” restoration type described in the PDARP/PEIS, for example large-scale diversions or marsh creation, to determine how to best support restoring ecosystem-level injuries in the Gulf of Mexico through restoration in the Barataria Basin. The SRP/EA aids the LA TIG’s consideration of resources at the ecosystem level and provides context for prioritization, sequencing, evaluating, and selecting specific projects for construction in subsequent project-specific restoration plans. The LA TIG is not authorizing these projects or proposing these projects for construction funding at this time. Rather, the LA TIG proposes selecting these projects for further development and evaluation under both OPA and NEPA in subsequent project-specific restoration plans. The SRP/EA was intended to provide sufficient environmental information regarding the alternatives evaluated to foster informed and meaningful public participation and to support the LA TIG in selecting between restoration approaches and techniques for the Barataria Basin.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies

The Council on Environmental Quality’s NEPA implementing regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) require a federal agency to serve as lead agency to supervise the NEPA analysis when more than one federal agency is involved in the same action (40 CFR 1501.5(a)). The LA TIG designated NOAA as the lead agency responsible for NEPA analysis for the SRP/EA. Each of the other federal and state agencies of the LA TIG are acting as cooperating agencies pursuant to NEPA (40 CFR § 1508.5) and the “*Trustee Council Standard Operating Procedures for Implementation of the Natural Resource Restoration for the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) Oil Spill*” (page 27, and Appendix F, pages 2 and 3).

Public Participation

On December 20, 2017, the LA TIG published a Draft SRP/EA, and the public was encouraged to review and comment on the Draft SRP/EA during a forty-five (45) day comment period, which closed on February 5, 2018. A Notification of Availability for the Draft SRP/EA was published in the Federal and Louisiana Registers. Comments were accepted via the internet, U.S. Postal Service mail, and at the Public Meeting on January 24, 2018. As a result, the LA TIG received submissions from private citizens; state and local agencies; and non-governmental organizations. The LA TIG reviewed the comments and considered them prior to finalization of the SRP/EA. Section 7.0 of the Final SRP/EA provides further detail on the public comment process including a summary of all public comments received on the Draft SRP/EA and the LA TIG’s responses. The LA TIG has evaluated and considered public comments in the course of finalizing the SRP/EA and considering whether a FONSI was warranted.

Adoption of the SRP/EA NEPA Analysis by Federal Agency Members of the LA TIG

Each federal agency on the LA TIG must make its own independent evaluation of the NEPA analysis in support of its decision-making responsibilities. In accordance with 40 CFR 1506.3(a) and the Trustee Council Standard Operating Procedures (Appendix F, Page 4), each of the federal agencies participating on the LA TIG has reviewed the SRP/EA, found that it meets the requirements of NEPA, the CEQ regulations and standards set forth in its own NEPA implementing procedures, and accordingly has adopted the SRP/EA NEPA analysis.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

The CEQ NEPA regulations require the decision maker to consider the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and a reasonable range of alternatives, including the No Action Alternative (40 CFR § 1502.14). The SRP/EA analyzes the following four alternatives, including the No Action alternative.

Alternative 1: Marsh creation and ridge restoration plus large-scale sediment diversion

Alternative 2: Marsh creation and ridge restoration plus shoreline protection

Alternative 3: Marsh creation and ridge restoration

Alternative 4: Natural recovery/No Action

With the exception of the natural recovery (No Action) alternative, each of these alternatives meets the SRP/EA's purpose and need "to restore ecosystem-level injuries in the Gulf of Mexico through restoration of critical wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitat resources and services in the Barataria Basin." As explained further below, the LA TIG selected Alternative 1 and selected to advance for restoration planning and detailed environmental review several identified projects described further below (collectively the "Proposed Action"), which will best meet the goals described in the PDARP/PEIS.

Alternative 1: Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration Plus Large-scale Sediment Diversion

Alternative 1 includes marsh creation and ridge restoration projects together with the implementation of large-scale sediment diversions to restore deltaic processes. This alternative involves a combination of restoration approaches and techniques identified in the PDARP/PEIS. First, the alternative includes restoration projects that pertain to the identified restoration technique "Create or enhance coastal wetlands through placement of dredged material," which is part of the more general restoration approach to "Create, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands." Second, the alternative includes the restoration approach to "Restore and preserve Mississippi-Atchafalaya River processes," with a focus on large-scale sediment diversions. The goal of this alternative is to increase the function, extent, and sustainability of the highly productive habitats in the Barataria Basin through a complementary suite of restoration projects that interact to provide both short-term and long-term benefits to injured resources throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

The LA TIG has identified a series of example projects that would meet the objectives of this alternative, if implemented. These projects include two large-scale sediment diversion projects (Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and the Ama Sediment Diversion), two marsh creation

projects (Large-scale Marsh Creation and Lower Barataria Marsh Creation), four ridge restoration projects (Grand Bayou Ridge Restoration, Bayou Eau Noire Ridge Restoration, Adams Bay Ridge Restoration, and Red Pass Ridge Restoration), and one combined ridge restoration and marsh creation project (Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation). At this time, the LA TIG has decided to move forward with project-specific restoration planning for three of the projects identified within this alternative, as described below in “Projects Advanced for Further Evaluation.” The LA TIG may also choose to move forward with future (Phase II) restoration plans for other additional similar restoration projects that correspond to this alternative.

Alternative 2: Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration plus Shoreline Protection

Alternative 2 includes marsh creation and ridge restoration projects paired with shoreline protection projects. This alternative includes projects that pertain to the identified restoration technique “Create or enhance coastal wetlands through placement of dredged material,” as well as the identified restoration technique “Construct breakwaters;” both of these techniques are part of the PDARP/PEIS restoration approach to “Create, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands.” The goal of this alternative is to increase the function, extent, and sustainability of the highly productive habitats in the Barataria Basin through a complementary suite of restoration projects that interact to provide both short-term and long-term benefits to injured resources throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

The LA TIG has identified a series of example projects that would meet the objectives of this alternative, if implemented. These projects include two marsh creation projects (Large-scale Marsh Creation and Lower Barataria Marsh Creation), four ridge restoration projects (Grand Bayou Ridge Restoration, Bayou Eau Noire Ridge Restoration, Adams Bay Ridge Restoration, and Red Pass Ridge Restoration), one combined ridge restoration and marsh creation project (Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation), and four breakwater construction projects (Lake Hermitage Shoreline Protection, East Snail Bay Shoreline Protection, West Snail Bay Shoreline Protection, and Bayou Perot Shoreline Protection).

Alternative 3: Marsh Creation and Ridge Restoration

Alternative 3 includes marsh creation and ridge restoration projects. Projects under this alternative pertain to the identified restoration technique “Create or enhance coastal wetlands through placement of dredged material.” The goal of this alternative is to increase the function, extent, and sustainability of the highly productive habitats in the Barataria Basin through a complementary suite of restoration projects that interact to provide both short-term and long-term benefits to injured resources throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

The LA TIG has identified a series of example projects that would meet the objectives of this alternative, if implemented. These projects include two marsh creation projects (Large-scale Marsh Creation and Lower Barataria Marsh Creation), four ridge restoration projects (Grand Bayou Ridge Restoration, Bayou Eau Noire Ridge Restoration, Adams Bay Ridge Restoration, and Red Pass Ridge Restoration), and one combined ridge restoration and marsh creation project (Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation).

Alternative 4: Natural Recovery/No Action

For the SRP/EA, the No Action alternative means strategic restoration planning for the Barataria Basin is not finalized or implemented at this time. That would mean the LA TIG would not currently implement any strategic alternative for the Barataria Basin. The LA TIG could, however, undertake further strategic or project-specific restoration planning within the Barataria Basin in the future. This would not mean that future LA TIG-funded restoration projects would not be pursued in the Barataria Basin; however, no such projects are currently predictable.

The Preferred Alternative (Alternative 1 or the Proposed Action)

The LA TIG selected Alternative 1 (marsh creation and ridge restoration plus large-scale sediment diversion) as the preferred strategic alternative for wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitat restoration in the Barataria Basin. Although the three action alternatives all incorporate restoration approaches and techniques included in the PDARP/PEIS, Alternative 1 best meets the goals for this restoration type described in the PDARP/PEIS, as well as the more focused purpose and need stated in the SRP/EA. The analysis under OPA demonstrates that Alternative 1 would provide the greatest level of benefits to injured Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore habitats and to the large suite of injured resources that depend in their lifecycle on productive and sustainable wetland habitats. This alternative has a high likelihood of success and would reduce some sources of future injury (particularly erosion).

Based on both the OPA and NEPA analyses, the LA TIG acknowledges that the restoration techniques included in Alternative 1 would, if they are selected for implementation after Phase II restoration planning, likely cause collateral injury and adverse environmental impacts to public health and safety, physical, biological, and socioeconomic resources in the Barataria Basin. These impacts were evaluated as part of the PDARP/PEIS; confirmed in the SRP/EA, including public comments on that document; and will be evaluated and analyzed in greater detail as part of any Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. Mitigation, monitoring and adaptive management addressing potential adverse impacts, including those identified in public comments, will be explored in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. After considering the potential for a range of possible adverse impacts disclosed in the PDARP/PEIS and SRP/EA, the LA TIG has determined that Alternative 1 has the greatest potential to provide long-term ecosystem-level benefits and restoration of injured resources.

Projects Advanced for Further Evaluation

Based on the historic loss of marsh habitat in the Barataria Basin, which was demonstrably accelerated and exacerbated by impacts from the DWH oil spill, the LA TIG has identified an immediate and urgent need to continue to carry forward projects for further restoration planning and environmental analysis that will address coastal habitat loss to provide for a more sustainable coast, and that will provide ecosystem-level benefits appropriate for the ecosystem-level injury resulting from the spill. Given the identification of Alternative 1 as the preferred alternative, the LA TIG proposes the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion and one increment of the Large-scale Marsh Creation - Component E in northern Barataria Bay as the projects to immediately carry forward into Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The LA TIG also confirms their 2017 decision to move the Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin

Ridge and Marsh Creation project forward for further evaluation and planning under both OPA and NEPA.

Analysis Summary

Section 3.0 of the SRP/EA, explains the impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives. As part of this analysis, the SRP/EA tiers from and incorporates by reference relevant portions of the PDARP/PEIS. When a programmatic review has been prepared (PEIS or PEA), and an action is anticipated in and consistent with the programmatic review, a tiered proposal need only summarize the issues discussed in the broader statement and incorporate discussion from the broader statement by reference and concentrate on issues specific to the tiered proposal. The appropriate question is not if there is a significant impact from the Proposed Action, but if there is a new significant impact that was not already considered and addressed in the programmatic review. If there are no new significant impacts, an EA may be appropriate instead of an EIS, so long as the aspects of the Proposed Action that involve significant effects have not changed since the PEIS. The Proposed Action in the SRP/EA is consistent with and anticipated and explored in the PDARP/PEIS. The focus of the SRP/EA is thus on the comparison of the suite of restoration techniques analyzed under each alternative, and whether there are any new significant impacts not identified in the PDARP/PEIS.

As explained in the SRP/EA, the LA TIG has determined that the discussion of potential environmental impacts in the PDARP/PEIS is a thorough analysis of the range of potential impacts from the alternatives considered in the SRP/EA. The analysis in the SRP/EA confirmed the range of potential impacts disclosed by the PDARP/PEIS. While the SRP/EA allowed the LA TIG to reevaluate and refine these analyses, including through evaluation of information included in public comments, the LA TIG concluded that there were no new environmental issues or impacts identified beyond those disclosed in the PDARP/PEIS. The SRP/EA evaluated both beneficial and adverse impacts of the alternatives, including the Proposed Action. Implementation of the Proposed Action has the potential to provide many benefits to injured natural resources on an ecosystem level; however, site-specific adverse environmental effects of different context and intensity are likely to occur. Additional restoration planning and environmental review will be conducted as part of a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis for any projects identified in the SRP/EA prior to any decision to fully fund such project or projects. Subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses will evaluate in greater detail the potential environmental impacts of particular projects and consider reasonable measures for mitigating adverse effects as needed. Adaptive management scenarios will also be considered.

Based on the foregoing, the LA TIG finds as follows:

- The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse impacts on public health and safety. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on public health or safety, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on public health and safety from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The restoration measures/management activities proposed as part of the Proposed Action have the potential to provide long-term beneficial impacts to improve natural ecosystem functions (storm protection) for surrounding communities. As the SRP/EA indicates, any potential

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adverse impacts on public health and safety from implementation of the projects selected for further restoration planning will be evaluated by the LA TIG in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses.

- The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse impacts to unique characteristics of the geographic areas. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on wetlands, floodplains, municipal water sources, ecologically critical areas, wild and scenic river corridors, park lands, wilderness, wilderness research areas, research natural areas, inventoried roadless areas, national recreation areas, or prime farmlands, particularly on a regional basis, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on these geographic areas from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to improve the condition of natural resources damaged by the DWH oil spill.
- The effects of the Proposed Action on the quality of the human environment are not controversial. The LA TIG's review of environmental impacts per the PDARP/PEIS and the SRP/EA, including potential beneficial and adverse impacts identified by public comment, did not reveal any effect over which there is substantial disagreement. The LA TIG's review of adverse effects found that the effects predicted in the PDARP/PEIS are the type of adverse effects likely to occur should projects selected in the SRP/EA for further planning and evaluation be constructed. Public comments helped to clarify the nature of potential adverse impacts to certain resources, but they were generally consistent with the LA TIG's understanding of the type and degree of impact. Therefore, the LA TIG does not anticipate controversy and would evaluate the potential project-specific impacts identified through public comment, the PDARP/PEIS, and the SRP/EA in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses.
- There are no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks associated with the Proposed Action. The engineering, design, and planning activities are well-established, and based on commonly used practices for developing habitat restoration and land conservation projects, including the use of recognized technical models.
- The Proposed Action neither establishes a precedent for future LA TIG actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. Future LA TIG actions will be determined through separate planning processes.
- The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse cumulative impacts. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any cumulative effects, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The cumulative effects from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. Analysis of project-level cumulative impacts will be conducted as part of a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis.
- The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse impacts on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic

Places or cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on cultural or historic resources, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on cultural or historic resources from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The Proposed Action will be implemented in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations concerning the protection of cultural and historic resources.

- The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse impacts on endangered or threatened species, or their critical habitat as defined under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on endangered or threatened species, or their critical habitat, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on endangered or threatened species, or their critical habitat from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. As the SRP/EA indicates, any potential beneficial or adverse impacts on federally listed species and/or critical habitat from implementation of the projects identified would be evaluated by the LA TIG in a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis, and addressed through the ESA's Section 7 process if necessary.
- Based on information in the SRP/EA, the Proposed Action is not expected to threaten a violation of Federal, state, or local laws, or requirements imposed for environmental protection. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The LA TIG; therefore, has not identified the potential for adoption of the SRP/EA to result in any violation of law.
- The Proposed Action will not adversely affect stocks of marine mammals as defined in the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on stocks of marine mammals, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on stocks of marine mammals from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The potential impacts on marine mammals are described in general terms in Section 3.2.1.2.4 of the SRP/EA. As the SRP/EA indicates, any potential adverse impacts on marine mammals from implementation of the projects selected for further restoration planning will be evaluated by the LA TIG in a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis.
- The Proposed Action will not adversely affect fish species managed under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The Proposed

Action is not expected to have any effects on fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The LA TIG, therefore has not identified any potential for adverse effects to managed fish species likely to result from implementation of the SRP/EA. The potential impacts on fish species from diversions are described in general terms in Section 3.2.1.2.4 of the SRP/EA. As the SRP/EA indicates, any potential adverse impacts on fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and recreational and commercial fisheries from implementation of the projects selected for further restoration planning will be evaluated by the LA TIG in a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis.

- The Proposed Action will not adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH) as defined under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on EFH, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on EFH from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses. The LA TIG, therefore has not identified any potential for adverse effects to EFH likely to result from implementation of the SRP/EA. The potential impacts on EFH (i.e., submerged aquatic vegetation and oyster reefs) from diversions are described in general terms in Section 3.2.1.2.4 of the SRP/EA. As the SRP/EA indicates, any potential adverse impacts on EFH from implementation of the projects selected for further restoration planning would be evaluated by the LA TIG in a Phase II restoration plan and associated NEPA analysis.
- The Proposed Action will not adversely affect vulnerable marine or coastal ecosystems, including but not limited to deep coral ecosystems. The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on vulnerable marine or coastal ecosystems, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on vulnerable marine or coastal ecosystems from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses.
- The Proposed Action is not expected to adversely affect biodiversity or ecosystem functioning (e.g., benthic productivity, predator-prey relationships, etc.). The Proposed Action is not expected to have any effects on biodiversity or ecosystem functioning, beyond those disclosed and evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. The effects on biodiversity or ecosystem functioning from the restoration techniques in the SRP/EA were evaluated in the SRP/EA and found to be within the scope of effects evaluated in the PDARP/PEIS. As explained herein, the SRP/EA is a strategic planning document that selects a restoration approach for

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the Barataria Basin and several restoration projects for further consideration in subsequent Phase II restoration plans and associated NEPA analyses.

- The Proposed Action is not expected to result in the introduction or spread of a nonindigenous species. Any projects with an identified potential for invasive species colonization will include provisions for invasive species management and best practices to minimize the risk of the introduction or spread of nonindigenous species

Approach to NEPA Review of Restoration and Management Activities

The LA TIG indicates in Section 3.1.7 of the SRP/EA that the discussion of potential environmental impacts in the PDARP/PEIS is a thorough analysis of the potential range of impacts from the alternatives considered in the SRP/EA, and there is no significant new information relevant to environmental concerns or impacts. Furthermore, because the Trustees are not selecting any specific projects for construction, there is no irretrievable commitment of resources beyond those necessary for evaluation and planning for future restoration plans. In Section 5.2 of the SRP/EA, the LA TIG indicates draft Monitoring and Adaptive Management (MAM) plans will be developed in a subsequent Phase II restoration plan for any project selected for construction. All such plans will be developed consistent with the requirements and guidelines set forth in the PDARP/PEIS, the Trustee Council SOPs, and the MAM Manual developed by the cross-TIG MAM work group in accordance with Section 10 of the Trustee Council SOPs.

Determination

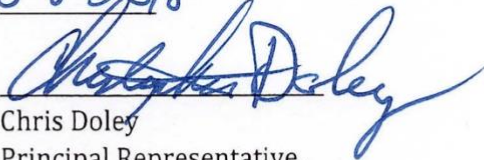
In view of the information presented in this document, the analysis contained in the SRP/EA, including the information and analyses incorporated by reference from the PDARP/PEIS, and review of public comments, the LA TIG hereby determines that adoption and implementation of the *Strategic Restoration Plan* will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment as described above. Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared.

Signatures are on the following pages.

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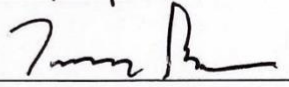
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Date: 3-8-2018

Signature: 

Chris Doley
Principal Representative,
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Date: 3/8/18

Signature: 

Tony Penn
Division Chief, Assessment and Restoration
Office of Response and Restoration
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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Date: 3/8/2018

Signature: Homer L Wilkes

Dr. Homer Wilkes

Director, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team


U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Date: 3/7/2018

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Kay Lynch", written over a horizontal line.

Mary Kay Lynch

Alternate to Principal Representative, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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Date: 3/8/2018

Signature: Kevin D. Reynolds

Kevin Reynolds

Designated Department of the Interior Natural Resource Trustee Official

U.S. Department of the Interior