



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, MOBILE DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 2288
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36628-0001

CESAM-RD-M
PUBLIC NOTICE NO. SAM-2018-00559-RCV

June 8, 2018

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
OFFICE OF POLLUTION CONTROL

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

**PROPOSED IMPACTS FOR THE CREATION OF MISSISSIPPI REEF ZONE 2 (MRZ 2)
WITHIN THE MISSISSIPPI SOUND**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: This District has received an application for a Department of the Army permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Please communicate this information to interested parties.

APPLICANT: **Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR)**
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

AGENT: **Department of Marine Resources**
Office of Marine Fisheries
Attention: Mr. Joe Jewel
Artificial Reef Bureau Director
1141 Bayview Avenue
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

LOCATION OF WORK: **The Mississippi Reef Zone 2 (MRZ 2) is located approximately 20 miles south of the Pascagoula River, adjacent to and between Fish Haven-13. The project is located in Mississippi Sound at the following coordinates:**

NW: 30.028333 / -88.488333

SW: 29.986667 / -88.488333

SE: 29.986417 / -88.444717

PROJECT PURPOSE: **The basic project purpose of the development of artificial reef zone named Mississippi Reef Zone 2 (MRZ 2). This project is to increase the availability of fishing and diving opportunities on desirable habitat. The selected site is in the vicinity of other favorable fishing areas for local fishermen. The construction of the artificial reef habitat in this area is expected to enhance fishing opportunities by providing a more diverse habitat. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has initially determined this project to be water dependent.**

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The Mississippi Reef Zone 2 (MRZ 2) is located approximately 20 miles south of the Pascagoula River, adjacent to previously permitted Fish Haven-13. The environmental conditions of the Mississippi Sound naturally fluctuate throughout the year. Mean low water depth on the project site is approximately 88 feet. The seafloor in this reef zone is mud and sand. To date, there is no evidence, nor has there been any observance of submerged aquatic vegetation near any of the proposed sites.

PROPOSED WORK: The proposed MRZ 2 reef zone is a three-sided polygon that will cover approximately 2,403 acres with a minimum clearance of 50 feet of all structures deployed in the reef zone. Material to be used for the construction of the structures within the MRZ 2 will consist of steel hull vessels, materials of design such as pyramids and reef balls, and materials of opportunity such as clean concrete culverts or rubble. Steel hull vessels will be transported and deployed according to protocol developed by contractors hired to perform the work. Materials of design will be lowered to the sea floor via cables, one piece at a time to minimize any disturbance to the sea floor while ensuring that the materials are oriented correctly. Concrete rubble will be deployed over the side of a barge using an excavator.

AVOIDANCE & MINIMIZATION: The proposed project site will be confined to the proposed dimensions. No Alternative sites or configuration were considered for this project because the proposed site is joining two existing, previously permitted reef sites and the proposed configuration will create a larger, nearly contiguous reef fishing area in federal waters. The USACE has not verified the accuracy or adequacy of the applicant's avoidance and minimization at this time.

MITIGATION: No mitigation will be necessary for this project as the objective of the project is to create an artificial reef site by periodic deployments of approved reef material in a manner that does not adversely affect the surrounding environments or the organisms inhabiting those environments. Overall this project will enhance existing habitat and will aid in creating valuable near shore habitat for marine fish and invertebrates. The USACE has not verified the adequacy of this mitigation proposal at this time.

The applicant has applied for certification from the State of Mississippi in accordance with Section 401(a)(1) of the Clean Water Act, and upon completion of the required advertising, a determination relative to certification will be made by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) will be consulted for properties listed in or eligible for the National Register, which would be affected by the proposed work. Copies of this notice are being sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and Division of Archeological Services for further consultation and comments. **Previous investigations for the facility have determined that no properties are listed in or eligible for listing in the**

NRHP. In accordance with Appendix C of 33 CFR Part 325, the USACE has determined the permit area is the full area of development for the overall project footprint. Copies of this public notice are being sent to the SHPO.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: Preliminary review of this application and the U.S. Department of the Interior List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants indicate the proposed activity may require additional coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The sites are within the boundary of the area listed as Gulf Sturgeon Critical Habitat and the range of several listed species, including Gulf Sturgeon, Green, Hawksbill, Kemp's Ridley, Loggerhead, and Leatherback Turtles. Additional coordination will be performed with the FWS on the proposed project and is subject to review by and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The proposal is expected to enhance EFH by creation of this artificial reef. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not adversely impact EFH or Federally managed fisheries. Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the NMFS.

This public notice is being distributed to all known interested persons in order to assist in developing facts on which a decision by the USACE can be based. For accuracy and completeness of the record, all data in support of or in opposition to the proposed work should be submitted in writing setting forth sufficient detail to furnish a clear understanding of the reasons for support or opposition. The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources.

The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, protected species, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food production and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The USACE is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the USACE to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties,

water quality, general environmental effects and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.

Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held for consideration of this application. Requests for public hearings shall state with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

Correspondence concerning this Public Notice should refer to Public Notice Number **SAM-2018-00559-RCV**, and should be directed to the District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Attention: Mr. Rudolph C. Villarreal, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001, with a copy to the Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control, Attention: Ms. Florance Bass, P.E., Post Office Box 2261, Jackson, Mississippi 39225-2261, and the Department of Marine Resources, Attention: Ms. Kristyn McGuire 1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530.

All Comments should be received no later than 30 days from the date of this Public Notice. If you have any questions concerning this publication, you may contact the project manager at (251) 690-3246, or at rudolph.c.villarreal@usace.army.mil. Please refer to the above Public Notice number.



For additional information about our Regulatory Program, please visit our web site at www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory.aspx.

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MOBILE DISTRICT
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

MDMR Proposed Artificial Reef Zone 2

Approximately 2,403 acres
 NW: 30.028333 / -88.488333
 SW: 29.986667 / -88.488333
 SE: 29.986417 / -88.444717
 (Coordinates in Decimal Degrees)

- Legend**
-  Purposed MRZ 2
 -  MRZ 2 Corners

