INTRA-SERVICE SECTION 7 BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FORM

Originating Person: Ben Frater
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Date: 02/02/2012

Project Name: Alabama Dune Cooperative Restoration Project

I. Service Program: Ecological Services

II. State: Alabama

III. Station Name: Deepwater Horizon NRDAR Field Office

IV. Description of proposed action:

The City of Gulf Shores, City of Orange Beach, Gulf State Park, Bon Secour NWR and the BLM form the largest group of coastal land owners along the Alabama Gulf Coast. These owners collectively own and/or manage more than 20 miles of dune habitat. The Alabama Dune Restoration Cooperative Project would result in the formation of a partnership, the Coastal Alabama Dune Restoration Cooperative (CADRC), to restore dune habitat injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and response efforts. The CADRC would restore approximately 55 acres of primary dune habitat in Alabama by planting native dune vegetation and installing sand fencing. The proposed project would help prevent erosion by restoring a "living shoreline": a coastline protected by plants and associated dunes rather than hard structures. These natural resources provide habitat to wildlife and increase the storm protection to both habitat and human resources.

Approximately 680,000 native plants would be planted within designated project areas (Figure 15). Proportions of plants would include approximately 70% sea oats grasses, 20% panic and smooth cord grasses, and 10% ground cover plants (sea purslane, beach elder, white morning glories and railroad vine) to maximize sand stabilization and limit wind erosion. All plants would be grown from seeds or cuttings from the Alabama or North Florida coast to ensure appropriate genetic stocks are used in the project. Plants would be installed at 18-inch centers and 6 inches deep to ensure that sufficient moisture is available to roots. Planting would be targeted for the March-June time frame. Slow release fertilizer would be added during plant installation and plants would be periodically watered, as needed, to facilitate establishment.

Protective sand fencing would be installed around dunes on BLM property at the Our Road tract and in areas managed by the cities of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores. Sand fencing would be installed according to the approved Alabama Department of Environmental Management

guidelines seaward of existing dunes, or as needed to promote sand accumulation in areas without established dunes.

No new access roads or staging areas would be built as part of this project. Vehicles would use existing roads and parking areas. All participants involved in the project would follow guidelines and designated access points established by DOI and its partners to minimize foot traffic and human presence across ecologically sensitive areas.

Informative dune restoration signage would be placed on the project area at a rate of 10-25 signs per mile in an effort to reduce human disturbance of restored areas.

All aspects of the project would be implemented using the best management practices described below.

Perdido Key beach mouse:

- To minimize potential impacts during instillation of dune plants and sand fencing, all possible Perdido Key beach mouse burrows will be flagged under the supervision of a qualified biologist. These flagged burrows will be avoided during the project.
- If a Perdido Key beach mouse burrow cannot be avoided, the qualified biologist will stop installation activities and consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Panama City Ecological Service Office.

The estimated cost for this project is $1,145,976.00. Project is proposed to occur sometime between March 15, 2012 and March 15, 2014.

V. Pertinent Species and Habitat: Perdido Key beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus trissyllepsus*) and its critical habitat. An informal consultation for other federally protected species within the project area was already completed with the Daphne, Alabama field office.

VI. Location (attach map):

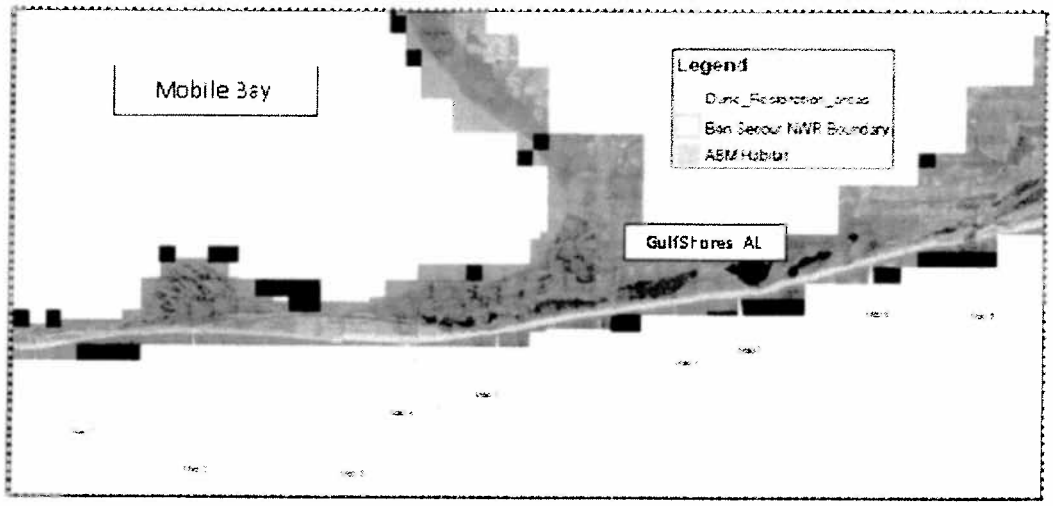

Figure 1. Alabama Dune Restoration Cooperative Project planting/fencing areas.

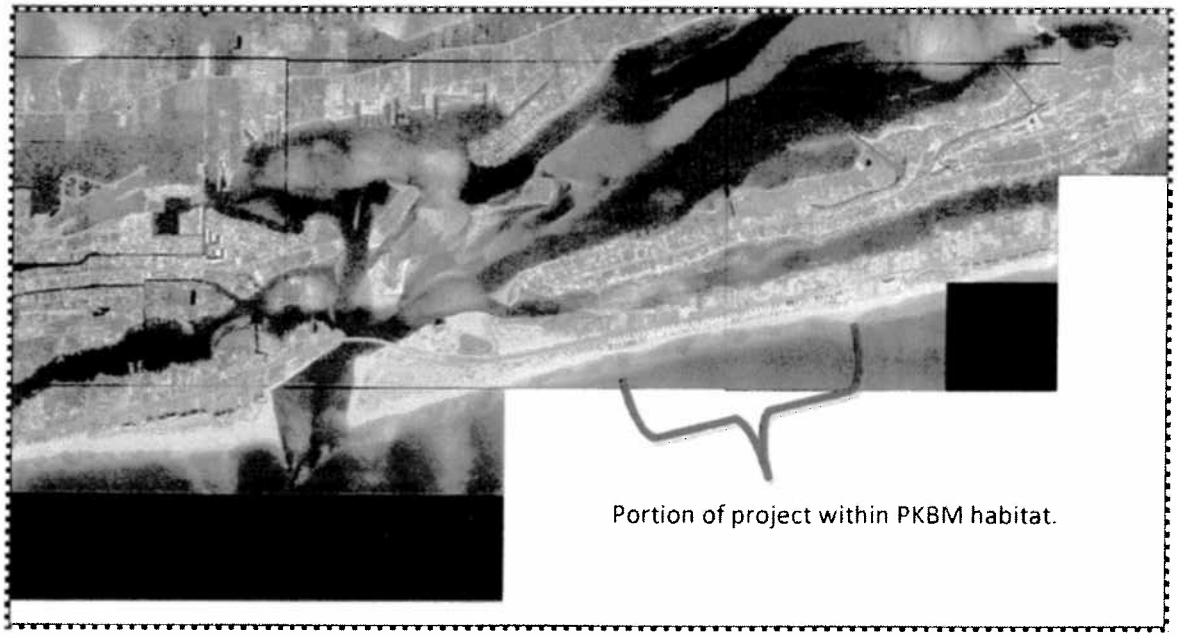

Figure 2. Portion of project on Perdido Key, Alabama.

A. County and State: Baldwin County, Alabama

B. Species/habitat occurrence: Perdido Key beach mouse and its critical habitat

VII. Determination of effects:

A. Explanation of effects of the action on species and critical habitats in item IV. Young seedlings will be planted seaward of the primary dune. Due to coastal processes, it will be difficult to tell if the project will be within critical habitat. However, project related activities would only occur within critical habitat if it has been degraded so severely that restoration is necessary. Field crews will be planting by hand. No sand will be moved other than during the process of inserting plugs into the ground. No vegetation will be crushed, nor will any burrows be impacted. Staging will occur at currently existing access points.

B. Explanation of actions to be implemented to reduce adverse effects: Work will be conducted during the daylight to avoid interfering with nocturnal behaviors of the PKBM. Access to the beach will be taken through existing access points. Any potential burrows will be identified by a qualified biologist and flagged for avoidance.

VIII. Effect determination and response requested:

Our determination is that this project is not likely to adversely affect the Perdido Key beach mouse nor is it likely to adversely modify its designated critical habitat.

Signature from originating station — **Date** 2/2/2012

Restoration Specialist — **Title**

DWH NRDAR FO — **Office**

IX. Reviewing ESO Evaluation:

A. Concurrence X **Nonconcurrence** _____
B. Formal consultation required _____
C. Conference required _____
D. Informal conference required _____
E. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

Signature of reviewing official — **Date** 2/9/12

Deputy Supervisor — **Title**

Panama City Ecological Services — **Office**