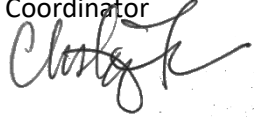MEMORANDUM FOR: FILE

FROM: Christy Fellas, DWH Environmental Compliance Coordinator
NOAA Restoration Center

DATE: July 14, 2021

SUBJECT: Regionwide TIG Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #1: Phased ESA Compliance with NMFS: Reducing Sea Turtle Bycatch at Recreational Fishing Sites

Based on my review of project materials including the Biological Evaluation forms (Summer 2021), and in coordination with representatives from NOAA's Protected Resource Division (PRD) and in the Southeast Regional Office, the NOAA Restoration Center (RC) determined that the project described below may need additional review once the methodologies and locations are determined in early phase planning activities.

Once this planning step is complete by the project team, the Regionwide TIG will evaluate potential effects that may require ESA compliance for species or habitats listed under the Endangered Species Act under the jurisdiction of National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). These details will be captured in updated BE forms and/or compliance memos documenting outcomes of the review and will identify any consultations, permits or reviews needed.

Reducing Sea Turtle Bycatch at Recreational Fishing Sites
The goal of the project is to identify factors contributing to sea turtle bycatch at shore-based recreational fishing sites (e.g., piers, bridges, jetties, and other shoreline structures where fishing occurs) and to implement voluntary angler education and other programs to reduce bycatch and bycatch-associated injuries. We do not expect any effects to ESA-listed species or habitats from the initial project efforts to compile and analyze data, survey anglers or develop and implement education and outreach efforts.

It is possible that in later years of the project (years 2-5) that pilot projects developed could have effects on ESA-listed species or habitats depending on the location and methods. At the time the information is available, the Regiowide TIG will evaluate the need for additional ESA compliance.