UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

NOV 19 2013

To All Interested Government Agencies and Public Groups:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental review has been performed on the following action.

TITLE: Final Environmental Assessment for Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary Site Improvements in Dauphin Island, Alabama

LOCATION: Dauphin Island, Alabama

SUMMARY: Under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management provides financial assistance to approved state coastal management programs, including the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program (ACAMP), to protect, restore, and responsibly develop coastal areas. Under Section 306A of the CZMA, funds may be used for low-cost construction projects to improve public access to coastal resources. One of the "areas for preservation and restoration" designated by ACAMP is the 155-acre Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary, where there is a trail system that includes both foot paths and boardwalks. In 2011, a wildfire destroyed boardwalks and damaged vegetation across more than 60 acres at the Sanctuary. NOAA proposes to provide CZMA funding to ACAMP for improvements at the Sanctuary: rebuilding two boardwalks and one observation platform in locations where they had existed prior to the fire, installing new interpretive signs throughout the trail system, and planting native vegetation in parts of the Sanctuary affected by the fire. ACAMP would partner with the Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board, the local agency that owns the Sanctuary, to complete the project.

Most of the construction activities would be carried out by hand, without heavy machinery, and they would occur during the winter, outside the peak growing season and peak seasons for bird migrations and nesting. NOAA's evaluation of potential impacts of the proposed project indicates that it would have minimal adverse environmental impacts in the short term and a number of beneficial impacts in the long term. Boardwalks would provide access to trails for individuals with disabilities, improve pedestrian safety, and provide a raised surface so people do not need to walk through habitats in the trail areas. Vegetation in the areas where the boardwalks would be installed has been degraded by people walking through these areas; the elevated boardwalks will improve environmental conditions. Most other species that could be impacted by the construction

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zone. Replanting native vegetation would improve habitat quality. Installing new interpretive signs would enhance the educational value of visiting the Sanctuary, while having minimal adverse environmental impacts.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

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The environmental review process led us to conclude that this action will not have a significant adverse effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. A copy of the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) including the supporting environmental assessment (EA) is enclosed for your information.

Although NOAA is not soliciting comments on this completed EA/FONSI we will consider any comments submitted that would assist us in preparing future NEPA documents. Please submit any written comments to the responsible official named above.

Sincerely,

for Patricia A. Montanio
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure