

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY****Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program: Proposed Findings Documents, Environmental Assessments, and Findings of No Significant Impact**

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ACTION: Notice of Availability of Proposed Findings Documents, Environmental Assessments, and Findings of No Significant Impact on Approval of Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Programs for Louisiana and Puerto Rico.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given of the availability of the Proposed Findings Documents, Environmental Assessments (EA's), and Findings of No Significant Impact for Louisiana and Puerto Rico. Coastal states and territories were required to submit their coastal nonpoint programs to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval in July 1995. The Findings documents were prepared by NOAA and EPA to provide the rationale for the agencies' decision to approve each state and territory coastal nonpoint pollution control program. Section 6217 of the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments (CZARA), 16 U.S.C. section 1455b, requires states and territories with coastal zone management programs that have received approval under section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act to develop and implement coastal nonpoint pollution control programs. The EA's were prepared by NOAA, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. sections 4321 *et seq.*, to assess the environmental impacts associated with the approval of the coastal nonpoint pollution control programs submitted to NOAA and EPA by Louisiana and Puerto Rico.

NOAA and EPA have proposed to approve, with conditions, the coastal nonpoint pollution control programs submitted by Louisiana and Puerto Rico. The requirements of 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508 (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations to implement the National Environmental Policy Act) apply to the preparation of the Environmental Assessments.

Specifically, 40 CFR section 1506.6 requires agencies to provide public notice of the availability of environmental documents. This notice is part of NOAA's action to comply with this requirement.

Copies of the Proposed Findings Documents, Environmental Assessments, and Findings of No Significant Impact may be obtained upon request from: Joseph P. Flanagan, Coastal Programs Division (N/ORM3), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOS, NOAA, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910, tel. (301) 713-3121, ext. 201.

DATES: Individuals or organizations wishing to submit comments on the proposed Findings or Environmental Assessments should do so by August 18, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be made to: Joseph A. Uravitch, Coastal Programs Division (N/ORM3), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOS, NOAA, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910, tel. (301) 713-3155, ext. 195.

(Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog 11.419 Coastal Zone Management Program Administration)

Dated: Dated July 15, 1997.

Nancy Foster,

Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Robert H. Wayland, III,

Director, Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, Environmental Protection Agency.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****National Estuarine Research Reserve System**

AGENCY: Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of Public Meeting and Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and with section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, the State of Mississippi and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) intend to

conduct a public scoping meeting on the proposed Mississippi National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) to solicit comments on significant issues related to the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Management Plan (DMP). The DEIS and DMP will address research, monitoring, education and resource protection needs for the reserve.

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, August 6, 1997 at 6:00 p.m.

ADDRESS: East Jackson County Community Center, 9313 Old Stage Road, Pascagoula, Mississippi 39581.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jerry Mitchell, Coastal Ecology Division, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, at (601) 385-5860; Mark W. LaSalle, Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center (601) 388-4710; or Nathalie Peter, Sanctuaries and Reserves Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOAA, at (301) 713-3132, ext. 119.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In June 1997, NOAA approved the nomination of Grand Bay/Bangs Lake estuary complex as a proposed National Estuarine Research Reserve. Research reserves provide natural coastal habitats as field laboratories for baseline ecological studies and education programs. Research and monitoring programs are designed to enhance scientific understanding of the coastal environment and aid in resource management decision making.

The proposed Mississippi NERR is the Grand Bay/Bangs Lake estuary complex located in southeast Jackson County Mississippi. It encompasses approximately 15,000 acres of estuarine tidal marsh, shallow-water open bay, wet pine savanna, and coastal swamp habitats. Approximately 9,600 acres are state-owned estuarine marsh and shallow-bay bottoms that are currently recognized as the Grand Bay Estuarine Preserve. The remaining 5,400 acres are largely wet pine savanna that are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Grand Bay Savanna National Wildlife Refuge.

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center (MSU) have developed a preliminary draft management plan outline for the NERR which will identify specific needs and priorities related to research, monitoring, education, and resource protection at the proposed site. It also outlines an administrative plan, volunteer program and facilities development needs, public access, and visitor use policies.