

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Minerals Management Service****Completion of a Multi-Project Environmental Assessment To Evaluate the Potential Environmental Impacts Associated With the Removal of Sand Resources From Ship Shoal, Outer Continental Shelf, Offshore Central Louisiana**

**AGENCY:** Minerals Management Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Availability of an environmental assessment.

**SUMMARY:** The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has completed an environmental assessment (EA) which examines the potential effects on the marine and coastal environments from using sand from Ship Shoal, a sand shoal located approximately 10 miles south of Isle Dernieres, offshore the central coast of Louisiana. Geological and geophysical studies of Ship Shoal have determined that the shoal's sand is an ideal source of material to place on the rapidly eroding Louisiana barrier islands. Several coastal restoration and storm protection projects that propose to use sand from Ship Shoal are already in the planning stages. Comments on a preliminary version of the EA were submitted by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These comments were considered during completion of the final document.

The MMS concludes that the proposed action to dredge and emplace the proposed amount of sand from Ship Shoal will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27) and preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. Mitigation will be necessary to ensure environmental protection, consistent environmental policy, and safety as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended, or to avoid or minimize any possible adverse effects on the quality of the human environment. Mitigation includes:

- Requiring stipulations to protect sea turtles when it is determined that there is a likelihood of sea turtle presence within the area during a dredging operation, and a trailing suction hopper dredge is used.
- Avoiding potential historic archaeological site locations identified in both the Ship Shoal and South Pelto areas through a remote sensing survey conducted previously.

- Sampling and monitoring dredge material from within both the Ship Shoal and South Pelto areas to identify and protect possible prehistoric resources located within the borrow sites.

- Establishing a minimum "no dredge" setback distance of 1000 feet from existing pipelines.
- Requiring the use of an electronic positioning system on the dredge vessels and transmittal of location and production information to the MMS.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Minerals Management Service, Leasing Division, Marine Minerals Branch, 381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4010, Herndon, Virginia 20170, Mr. Barry Drucker, telephone (703) 787-1296, e-mail: [barry.drucker@mms.gov](mailto:barry.drucker@mms.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

Louisiana's coastal land loss problem continues at a rate of more than 30 square miles per year severely affecting the storm buffering capacity and the protection that nearshore barrier islands provide to human populations, oil and gas infrastructure, inland bays, estuaries, and wetlands. The bays inshore of the islands are huge estuaries where fresh and saltwater mix, and most of Louisiana's commercial and recreational fisheries depend on them during parts of their life cycle. Without barrier islands, coastal fisheries will experience significant adverse impacts. The entire Isle Dernieres chain in offshore central Louisiana, a critical component of the Louisiana barrier island system, is projected to be lost by the year 2010. A study by the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act task force recommended returning Isles Dernieres and the Timbalier Islands to 1992 conditions (pre-Hurricane Andrew), which would require adding sand to build them to a width of about 1,230 feet wide and 8-9 feet above sea level. The current overall strategy is to restore the island chains to a condition suitable for providing coastal protection and for maintaining the integrity of the estuarine system.

Geological and geophysical studies of Ship Shoal indicate that very significant similarities exist among the properties of Ship Shoal and the nearby barrier islands. Ship Shoal sand is considered to be ideal material for use in restoration and nourishment projects along the Louisiana coast within the Terrebonne and Barataria Basins. Resource estimates for the volumes of sand comprising Ship Shoal are 1.2 billion cubic meters.

The MMS has already been notified by LDNR and the EPA that they will seek leases for the use of Ship Shoal

sand for planned projects at Whiskey Island and New Cut, Louisiana. In addition, the USACE is considering using Ship Shoal sand as a base for the levee system for the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane Protection Project. Besides these efforts, MMS anticipates that Ship Shoal will serve as a long-term source of material for further Louisiana coastal restoration efforts well into the future.

Public Law 103-426, enacted October 31, 1994, gave the MMS the authority to convey, on a noncompetitive basis, the rights to Federal sand, gravel, or shell resources for shore protection, beach or wetlands restoration projects, or for use in construction projects funded in whole or part or authorized by the Federal government.

**Public Comments**

The MMS encourages interested parties to submit comments specific to the EA and the environmental issues related to the removal of sand from Ship Shoal. Comments should be sent to Minerals Management Service, Leasing Division, Attention: Chief, Marine Minerals Branch, 381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4010, Herndon, Virginia 20170. In addition, comments may be sent via e-mail to [barry.drucker@mms.gov](mailto:barry.drucker@mms.gov).

Dated: April 22, 2004.

**Thomas Readinger,**

*Associate Director for Offshore Minerals Management.*

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**BILLING CODE 4310-MR-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****National Park Service****30-Day Notice of Submission of Study Package to Office of Management and Budget; Opportunity for Public Comment**

**AGENCY:** Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Yellowstone National Park Wolf Economic Study will provide park managers and others with important, accurate information about the Yellowstone National Park visitor population in general as well as visitor and trip characteristics of those who specifically view wolves in the park. The importance of visitation specifically tied to wolves in the park will be examined. The mail-back questionnaire is designed to systematically collect data from visitors in several different topic areas: individual characteristics,

trip/visit characteristics, individual activities and individual opinions on park and wildlife management.

|   | Estimated numbers of |              |
|---|----------------------|--------------|
|   | Responses            | Burden hours |
| Yellowstone National Park Wolf Economic Study | 5,000                | 1,369        |

Under provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and 5 CFR part 1320, Reporting and Recordkeeping Requirements, the National Park Service (NPS) invites comments on a request submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve a new collection of information (OMB #1024-XXXX). Comments are invited on: (1) The practical utility of the information being gathered; (2) the accuracy of the burden hour estimate; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden to respondents, including use of automated information collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

The NPS goal in conducting this survey is to develop statistically valid estimates of Yellowstone National Park visitation and to evaluate the economic effects of wolf restoration in the context of an accurate regional economic model that measures the role of Yellowstone National Park in the overall regional economy.

The broader information on visitation, visitor demographics, and the regional economy will have application to other park planning efforts where reliable visitation and economic data is needed for evaluation of project proposals and other management issues.

**DATES:** Public comments will be accepted on or before August 5, 2004.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments directly to the Desk Officer for the Department of the Interior, (OMB # 1024-XXXX) Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, OMB, by fax at (202) 395-6566, or by electronic mail at *oira\_docket@omb.eop.gov*. You may also mail or hand carry a copy of your comments to Dr. John Duffield, University of Montana, Department of Economics, Missoula, MT 59812 or by fax at (406) 721-2265, or by electronic mail at *bioecon@montana.com*.

The OMB has up to 60 days to approve or disapprove the information collection but may respond after 30 days. Therefore, to ensure maximum consideration, OMB should receive public comments within thirty days of

the date on which this notice is published in the **Federal Register**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR A COPY OF THE STUDY PACKAGE SUBMITTED FOR OMB REVIEW, CONTACT:** Dr. John Duffield, University of Montana, Department of Economics, Missoula, MT 59812, via phone at (406) 721-2265, via fax at (406) 721-2265, or via electronic mail at *bioecon@montana.com*.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*Titles:* Yellowstone National Park Wolf Economic Study

*Bureau Form Number:* None.

*OMB Number:* To be requested.

*Expiration Date:* To be requested.

*Type of request:* New Collection.

*Description of need:* Wolf restoration in Yellowstone is an internationally important wildlife conservation success story. The visibility and public interest in wolves, wolf viewing, and wolf-based education programs has far exceeded initial expectations. A major public issue with wolf restoration was the cost to implement, in tax dollars, versus economic benefits. Proponents thought it a boon; opponents predicted negative regional economic impacts. Economic studies done prior to restoration predicted large positive economic benefits. The wolf recovery program has now matured; this proposal would quantify the economic and social effects due to wolf restoration as well as provide critical baseline information for other planning and analyses.

Wolf recovery generates positive economic impacts on the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) regional economy in several ways. The most significant impacts arise from visitors traveling from outside the region who choose to come to Yellowstone because wolves are present or who extend their stay because of wolves. Other impacts include wolf-program related expenditures. Economic impacts depend on visitor numbers and expenditures, which are best measured through visitor surveys. Understanding the contribution of wolf recovery requires development of a model of the actual aggregate role of Yellowstone National Park in the regional economy.

*Automated data collection:* At the present time, there is no automated way to gather this information because it includes directly contacting visitors to Yellowstone National Park.

*Description of respondents:* Visitors to Yellowstone National Park.

*Estimated average number of respondents:* 5,000.

*Estimated average number of responses:* 5,000.

*Estimated average burden hours per response:* 23 minutes.

*Frequency of Response:* 1 time per respondent.

*Estimated annual reporting burden:* 1,369 hours.

Dated: May 25, 2004.

**Leonard E. Stowe,**

*Acting, National Park Service Information Collection Clearance Officer.*

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**BILLING CODE 4312-52-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**National Park Service**

**60 Day Notice of Intention To Request Clearance of Collection of Information; Opportunity for Public Comment**

**AGENCY:** Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Cape Cod National Seashore Impacts of Hunting Survey of Hunters, Visitors and Residents will provide park managers and others with important social science input about public attitudes on hunting and an assessment about whether conflicts over hunting are occurring at the Cape Cod National Seashore. Specifically the study will use hunter, resident and visitor surveys to (1) Assess attitudes about hunting and hunting programs at the Cape Cod National Seashore, (2) determine the extent of conflict between hunters and nonhunters in the Cape Cod National Seashore and surrounding communities, (3) assess the extent to which the attitudes and characteristics of area residents and visitors to Cape Cod National Seashore have changed since the early 1990s, and (4) estimate the extent, and distribution of hunters and profile the behaviors of hunters within the Seashore.

|  | Estimated numbers of |              |
|--|----------------------|--------------|
|  | Responses            | Burden hours |
| Cape Cod National Seashore Impacts of Hunting Survey ..... | 1,500                | 625          |

Under provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and 5 CFR part 1320, Reporting and Record Keeping Requirements, the National Park Service invites comments on the need for gathering the information in the proposed survey. Comments are invited on: (1) The practical utility of the information being gathered; (2) the accuracy of the burden hour estimate;