



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
POST OFFICE BOX 4970
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32232-0019

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

July 30, 2019

Regulatory Division
North Permits Branch
Mitigation Bank Team

PUBLIC NOTICE

Application Number: SAJ-2014-02681

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has received a complete prospectus proposing the establishment of a mitigation bank pursuant to the 2008 *Compensatory Mitigation for Losses of Aquatic Resources* regulations (33 CFR Part 332) as described below:

APPLICANT: City of St. Petersburg
Attn: Mr. Brejesh Prayman, P.E.
PO Box 2842
St. Petersburg, FL 33731

LOCATION: The proposed project, identified as the North Shore Park Seagrass Mitigation Bank (NSPSMB), is located in the waters of Tampa Bay waterward of 901 North Shore Drive NE, St. Petersburg, Pinellas County, Florida. The site is east of Section 17, Township 31 South, and Range 17 East. The site is not within a Section, Township, and Range as these boundaries end at the shoreline.

APPROXIMATE CENTRAL COORDINATES: Latitude: 27.783472°N
Longitude: -82.619978°W

PROSPECTUS SUMMARY: Pursuant to 33 CFR 332.8(d)(4), the Corps has posted a full copy of the NSPSMB prospectus online so that it is available for review by the public. The prospectus may be downloaded from the Regulatory In-Lieu Fee and Bank Information Tracking System (RIBITS) at web address: <https://ribits.usace.army.mil>.

Once on the RIBITS homepage, select "Jacksonville" from the "ALL DISTRICTS" drop down menu located in the lower left corner of the screen. Once the district filter has been selected, click on the "Banks & ILF Sites" link located in the Navigation box (upper left corner). This will generate a list of projects, scroll down the list and click on the "North Shore Park Seagrass MB" link. On this page, click on the "Cyber Repository" link located on the menu bar above the General Information box, then click on the

Prospectus Documents folder to access the prospectus associated with the NSPSMB project.

If you are unable to access the web address, a copy of the prospectus is available upon request to the project manager listed at the end of this public notice.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: The applicant seeks authorization to re-establish seagrass within a 31.66 acre dredge hole; re-establish seagrass within a historic spoil disposal area totaling 4.01 acres; re-establish seagrass within three depressional areas totaling 2.37 acres; improve 70.09 acres of degraded shoal habitat and rehabilitate the remaining 70.71 acres of seagrass meadow. within Tampa Bay. Specific restoration objectives include:

1. Perpetual protection. Preservation of the entire Bank site, totaling 178.83 acres, will be achieved by the granting of a perpetual conservation easement to the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) in a form acceptable to both SWFWMD and the USACE. The conservation easement, in conjunction with a City Ordinance, will create a “motor exclusion zone” (MEZ) within the boundaries of the Bank. Establishment of the MEZ will minimize manmade impacts to seagrasses within the Bank, and particularly the shallow shoals subject to frequent prop scarring and groundings.
2. Re-establishment of seagrass within the dredge hole. The 31.66-acre dredge hole will be backfilled to match the upper elevation of adjacent healthy seagrass grades. The Bank will provide a valuable disposal location for major new or maintenance dredging operations currently being evaluated by the USACE. The City will coordinate with the USACE to designate the filling of the dredge hole as a “Beneficial Use Project.” The dredge hole has been identified previously by the USACE as a placement site for dredge material. The dredge hole will be backfilled to adjacent grades with suitable material and subsequently revegetated with seagrass plugs from the adjacent seagrass meadows within a City-owned seagrass donor site, immediately north and adjacent to Coffee Pot Bayou entrance channel.
3. Re-establishment of seagrass within spoil disposal area. The City has evaluated the appropriateness of restoring and planting the 4.01 acres of barren spoil disposal area with seagrass. This area has never recovered from the dredging of the Coffee Pot Bayou channel due to limiting shallow water depths. Based on preliminary topography, it appears that approximately 8 to 12 inches of sediment will need to be removed from these areas to reach surrounding grades to facilitate establishment by seagrass. Once the sediment has been removed, this area will be revegetated with seagrass plugs in accordance with the Donor Site Methodology.
4. Re-establishment of seagrass within three depressions. The City has evaluated the appropriateness of restoring and planting 3 depressional areas totaling 2.37 acres. These unnatural depressions are likely the result of dredging activities or changes in water flow that have occurred due to the effects of the large dredge hole. Currents are focused in this area, particularly Area C, between the dredge hole and Coffee Pot

Bayou channel, creating an erosional scour hole. The higher water flow has resulted in a depressional area with little to no seagrass. Area D has been similarly dredged by scouring as a result of altered water currents. Where needed, portions of these three depressional areas will be filled with some of the material dredged from Area A.

5. Rehabilitation of seagrass shoal. Previous studies by Tampa Bay Watch have identified approximately 19,333 linear feet of propeller scars to the seagrasses along the perimeter of the Bank during two monitoring events. This shoal will be protected by the previously described MEZ, allowing seagrasses to naturally propagate into the degraded areas. Removing boats from this 70.09-acre area, compromised of the estuarine shelf and deeper waters at the southern border of the Bank will also reduce watercraft interactions with manatees that frequently utilize this corridor.

Rehabilitation of seagrass meadow. While the seagrasses within the meadow appear to have reached a healthy abundance, this habitat is not currently able to fulfill its full range of habitat functions. With degraded habitats surrounding the meadow, it is unable to meet its full potential as a nursery to valuable marine organisms. Restoration of the surrounding areas and creation of the motor exclusion zone will restore appropriate sheet flow across the meadow, decrease noise pollution, improve habitat connectivity, reduce turbidity, and improve the overall habitat quality of the seagrass meadow.

6. Establishment of the Motor Exclusion Zone (MEZ). The MEZ will provide an immediate benefit to the health and quality of the Bank's existing seagrass communities by reducing noise disturbance, turbidity, and vegetative impacts in real time and will reduce future impacts.

All credits generated by the Bank will be assessed using the Uniform Mitigation Assessment Method (UMAM) developed by the State of Florida. All credits generated will be marine credits comprised of seagrass meadows. This habitat type is classified as Seagrass (911) under the Florida Land Use, Cover, and Forms Classification System (FLUCCS).

ECOLOGICAL SUITABILITY OF THE SITE: A review of available information indicates that the property historically consisted of Seagrass.

ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF THE BANK: The proposed NSPSMB would be established and operated by the City of St. Petersburg as the Sponsor with the assistance of Tampa Bay Watch, Inc. The property that comprises the NSPSMB is owned by the City of St. Petersburg. The NSPSMB is proposed to be established as a single and complete project. Following NSPSMB successful implementation and attainment of final success criteria, long-term management activities will be implemented in order to ensure the sustainability of NSPSMB. In addition, the Sponsor will provide sufficient financial assurances to ensure construction and long-term management of the proposed NSPSMB.

PROPOSED SERVICE AREA: The service area is proposed to include the tidal waters from Charlotte Harbor to Anclote Florida and is delineated to the east by the upland surface saltwater interface and to the west by the 3-mile coastal boundary.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: The proposed bank is not expected to have any direct or indirect impact to cultural resources. Project review will, however, include review of the proposal for any potential impact to cultural resources.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: The site will be reviewed for potential critical habitat and presence of endangered species. The findings will be coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH): The proposed bank is located in EFH for Shrimp and Red Drum. This notice initiates consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service on EFH as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act 1996. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial adverse impact on EFH or Federally managed fisheries in Tampa Bay. Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

NOTE: This public notice is being issued based on information furnished by the applicant. This information has not been verified or evaluated to ensure compliance with laws and regulation governing the regulatory program.

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC HEARING: Any person may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the designated comment period of the notice and must state the specific reasons for requesting the public hearing.

COMMENTS: Comments regarding the proposed mitigation bank should be submitted in writing to the District Engineer at the address below within 30 days from the date of this notice.

The initial evaluation pertaining to whether or not this mitigation bank proposal has the potential for providing compensatory mitigation for activities authorized by issued Department of the Army permits will be based on the information contained in the prospectus, received from this public notice and obtained during an inspection of the project site.

If you have any questions concerning this proposed project, you may contact Mr. Steven Currie by electronic mail at steven.j.currie@usace.army.mil, by fax at 904-232-1904, or by telephone at 904-232-3701 or at the following address:

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IMPACT ON NATURAL RESOURCES: Preliminary review of this application indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required. Coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Marine Fisheries Services, and other Federal, State, and local agencies, environmental groups, and concerned citizens generally yields pertinent environmental information that is instrumental in determining the impact the proposed action will have on the natural resources of the area. By means of this notice, we are soliciting comments on the potential effects of the project on threatened or endangered species or their habitat

EVALUATION: After the end of the comment period, the district engineer will review all comments received and make an initial determination as to the potential of the proposed project to provide compensatory mitigation for activities authorized by Department of the Army permits. That determination will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. Factors relevant to the proposal will be considered including conservation, economics, esthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historical properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food, and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other Interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the proposed activity. All comments received will be considered by the Corps during the formulation of the initial determination of potential for the proposed activity.