

**FEMA PUBLIC NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
CITY OF MEXICO BEACH PIER,
CITY OF MEXICO BEACH, BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hereby gives notice to the public of its intent to reimburse eligible applicants for eligible costs to repair or replace facilities damaged by **Hurricane Michael** occurring during the incident period of **October 7, 2018, to October 19, 2018**. This notice applies to the Public Assistance (PA) project for the City of Mexico Beach (COMB) proposed pier extension and repair project at R-Monument (R) 129 or the end of South 37th Street in Mexico Beach, Bay County, Florida, Section 22, Township 3 South, Range 12 West, implemented under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207. Under a major disaster declaration, **FEMA-DR-4399-FL**, signed by President Trump on **October 11, 2018**, Bay County was designated as adversely affected by the disaster and eligible for PA funding.

This public notice concerns activities pertaining to the City of Mexico Beach proposed pier extension and repair project. The proposed construction activities would occur at the end of South 37th Street in Mexico Beach, Bay County, Florida. The pier facility begins at the base of the parking lot at the end of South 37th St., to the top of the beach below the coastal construction control line and extends southwest over the sandy beach and surface waters of the Gulf of America Start: (29.949492, -85.424278), End: (29.947076, -85.426074).

The proposed project is to reconstruct and extend the Mexico Beach Fishing Pier by replacing the entire structure, including pilings, and extending the structure 230ft seaward. The pier structure will consist of four sections: a sidewalk, an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) approach ramp, restroom facilities, and the pier. In addition, the complex would include exterior site lighting, fish cleaning stations, wood benches and a bathroom facility (29.949581, -85.424061).

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended; DHS Directive 023-01-01, Revision 01; DHS Instruction 023-01-001-01, Revision 01; FEMA Directive 108-1-1; FEMA Instruction 108-1-1; the National Historic Preservation Act, Executive Order 11988; Executive Order 11990; and 44 CFR Part 9; FEMA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA). An alternatives analysis was performed, which included the evaluation of the proposed action, repair to pre-disaster conditions, and the no action alternative. Further detailed descriptions of all alternatives may be reviewed in the EA conducted by FEMA or by contacting FEMA-R4EHP-FLORIDA@fema.dhs.gov for a copy. The draft EA is available for public comment and can be viewed on FEMA's and the City of Mexico Beach websites at the following locations:

FEMA WEBSITE LOCATION: <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners/environmental-historic/nepa-repository>

CITY OF MEXICO BEACH WEBSITE LOCATION: <https://mexicobeachfl.gov/>

A hardcopy of the EA is available for review at the City of Mexico Beach City Hall, located at: 201 Paradise Path, Mexico Beach, FL 32410, from 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday - Friday.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires federal agencies to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat of such species. Based on a desktop review of the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) database (USFWS, 2024) and project coordination with National Marine Fisheries (NMFS) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), FEMA has determined that the proposed project work in water **may affect but is not likely to adversely affect (MANLAA)** green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys kempii*), Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*), the giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) and the smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*), and will have no effect (NE) on leatherback sea turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*). FEMA also determined for the impacts of in-water construction including the replacement of pilings that the effects from pile removal, repair, and installation **MANLAA** the green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley sea turtles (*Lepidochelys kempii*), Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*), the giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*) and the smalltooth sawfish (*Pristis pectinata*).

FEMA initiated a formal consultation with NMFS Southeast Regional Office on June 11, 2024. NMFS issued a Biological Opinion (BO) on March 11, 2025 (Appendix H). NMFS concludes that the proposed action may affect but is not likely to adversely affect smalltooth sawfish, Gulf sturgeon, designated loggerhead sea turtle critical habitat (Unit LOGG-N-32), and designated Gulf sturgeon critical habitat (Unit 11, Florida Nearshore). NMFS concludes that the proposed action is likely to adversely affect (LAA) but is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of, green sea turtle (North Atlantic Distinct Population Segment (DPS)), Kemp's ridley sea turtle, loggerhead sea turtle (Northwest Atlantic DPS), and giant manta ray. Although the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) was not present on the IPaC species list for the project area it did occur in the dataset provided by Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network data for zone 8. NMFS determined that although the species is mentioned in the data set used as part of their determination of present species, it is not likely present in the action area.

FEMA initiated an informal consultation with USFWS on June 12, 2024. A revised formal consultation request with a **LAA** determination for the green sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley Sea turtle, Northwest Atlantic Ocean (NWAO) DPS loggerhead sea turtle and a MANLAA determination for the St. Andrew beach mouse, West Indian manatee, and the NWAO DPS loggerhead sea turtle designated critical habitat was submitted on November 14, 2024. USFWS issued a BO received on May 5, 2025 (Appendix I). USFWS concluded that the proposed project is **LAA** but is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia*

mydas), Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), and Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*). USFWS concluded that the proposed project is **MANLAA** for St. Andrew Beach Mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus peninsularis*) and West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus*) and its designated critical habitat. USFWS has concluded no effect on the Leatherback sea turtle, Eastern black rail, Red knot, and Eastern indigo snake.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of their undertakings on historic properties. FEMA consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and received concurrence for a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. Tribal consultation letters were submitted to ten federally recognized tribes with vested interest in Bay County, Florida. None of the tribes express any objections to the proposed project.

Presidential Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 require that all federal actions in or affecting the floodplain or wetlands be reviewed for opportunities to relocate and evaluated for social, economic, historical, environmental, legal, and safety considerations. The proposed development would be constructed within a special flood hazard area, per Bay County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) # 12005C0508J, dated October 24, 2024. The Proposed Project includes the replacement of the pier and the restroom with improvements. The pier would be built at an elevation of 26.0 ft (NAVD 88), This elevates the sections of the pier above the Zone VE, BFE of 14ft and 16ft, therefore providing protection to the pier and the floodplain. The restroom would be built in an AE zone (BFE 9), at the same place it was located before the storm with a finished first floor elevation of 9.57 and dry-proofed to 10.5 ft per codes and standards.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the primary law governing marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters and is meant to foster long-term biological and economic sustainability of our nation's marine fisheries. Key objectives of the MSA are to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, increase long-term economic and social benefits, and ensure a safe and sustainable supply of seafood. The NOAA Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Mapper online tool has identified designated EFH for species in the project area. However, there are no hardbottom habitats, coral reefs, or seagrass habitats near the project location. FEMA sent an MSA-EFH consultation letter to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on June 13, 2024, requesting concurrence with the determination that the Proposed Project may adversely affect (MAA) EFH. Concurrence was received on July 11, 2024, from NOAA NMFS, Southeast Region, Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) that any adverse effects that might occur on marine and anadromous fishery resources would be minimal.

This notice serves as the final public notice regarding the above-described action proposed for funding by the FEMA PA and Hazard Mitigation programs. Interested persons may obtain information about these actions by writing to the Federal Emergency Management Agency,

Region 4, 3005 Chamblee Tucker Road, Atlanta, Georgia 30341, or by emailing FEMA-R4EHP-FLORIDA@fema.dhs.gov. Comments should be sent in writing with the subject line, “PA 4339-02300, City of Mexico Beach Pier” at the above address within 30 days of the date of this notice.