



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
South Florida Ecological Services Office  
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Vero Beach, Florida 32960



August 2, 2011

E. M. Barnum  
Environmental Director  
Department of the Navy  
Post Office Box 9001  
Key West, Florida 33040-9001

Service Federal Activity Code: 41420-2011-CPA-0188  
Service Consultation Code: 41420-2006-F-0297  
Date Received: May 20, 2011  
Formal Consultation Re-Initiation Date: June 20, 2011  
Project: Restoration of Clear Zones and  
Stormwater Drainage Systems  
Applicant: Department of the Navy  
County: Monroe

Dear Mr. Barnum:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the May 20, 2011, request from the Department of the Navy (Navy) to consult on its mitigation plan (Plan) for the restoration of airfield clear zones and storm water drainage systems at the Naval Air Station Key West (NASKW), Monroe County, Florida. The Service's March 7, 2007, Biological Opinion provided an incidental take statement for the endangered Lower Keys (=marsh) rabbit (*Sylvilagus palustris hefneri*) (LKMR). This letter is submitted in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (87 Stat. 884; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

The Navy and the Service met on February 17, 2011, to review the Plan and visit the mitigation sites. On May 20, 2011, the Service received the Navy's consultation request for informal consultation, making a determination of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" the LKMR. NASKW proposes to implement its Plan for the restoration of clear zones and storm water drainage systems. The project consists of restoration of various disturbed wetland habitats at NASKW. The Plan had not yet been completed when the Biological Opinion was finalized. The project purpose is to mitigate habitat impacts incurred in the airfield restoration.

The mitigation described in the Plan was included in the 2007 Biological Opinion project description. The Environmental Resource Permit for the project requires mitigation to offset wetland impacts associated with the airfield restoration. The Plan proposes to satisfy this requirement by restoring and enhancing wetlands through the removal of fill materials, soil enhancements, invasive exotic plant control, and hydrologic restoration by re-establishing historic flow patterns. The mitigation area consists of seven mitigation sites selected for not



being in conflict with present or projected military operations, potential for improving ecological function, and potential for maximum restoration benefits. In addition to removing and restoring roads and fill pads, hydrologic function will also be restored in the 25.78-acre mitigation area. Including open water habitats, hydrologic function will be restored to over 948 acres. Table 1 summarizes the known LKMR rabbit habitats that will be restored, which include 3.01 acres of degraded marsh rabbit habitat.

**Table 1.** LKMR Habitat Restoration within Mitigation Sites

Mitigation Site	Acres LKMR Habitat within Site	Acres Restored	Current Habitat Type	Restored Habitat Type	LKMR Patch Number
Northeast Boca Chica Key Hydrological Enhancement	8.39	No habitat w/in construction limits of mitigation site	Mangrove/salt marsh wetlands	N/A	1,2,& 160
Boca Chica Perimeter Road Removal	2.18	2.18	Pavement & associated roadbed	Mangrove/salt marsh wetlands	60 & 71
Boca Chica West Lagoons Hydrological Enhancement	14.63	0.09	Pavement & associated roadbed	Open water	16, 60, 71, 82, 102 & 178
		0.16	Pavement & associated roadbed	Mangrove/salt marsh wetlands	2
Former Antenna Pads	0.33	0.33	Historic fill pads	Mangrove/salt marsh wetlands	14
North Geiger Key Subdivision	0.25	0.25	Disturbed fill & salt marsh wetlands	Mangrove/salt marsh wetlands	13
Rockland Staging Area	No LKMR habitat	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Big Coppitt Site 2 East	No LKMR habitat	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	25.78	3.01			

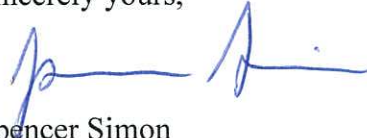
The Service has reviewed the Plan and finds it consistent with the Reasonable and Prudent Measures and their implementing Terms and Conditions specified in the Biological Opinion. As such, the Service also finds that implementation of the Plan is covered by the Biological Opinion's Incidental Take Statement.

This concludes consultation on the action outlined in the request. As provided in 50 CFR §402.16, reinitiation of formal consultation is required where discretionary Federal agency involvement or control over the action has been retained (or is authorized by law) and if: (1) the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded; (2) new information reveals effects of the agency action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in this opinion; (3) the agency action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species or critical habitat not considered in this opinion; or (4) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action. In instances

where the amount or extent of incidental take is exceeded, any operations causing such take must cease pending reinitiation.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Winston Hobgood at 772-469-4306.

Sincerely yours,



Spencer Simon  
Acting Field Supervisor  
South Florida Ecological Services Office

cc: electronic copy only

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