

Title:

N-113: Eliminate Lake Worth inlet port Expansion project to reduce siltation on coral reefs and keep coastal communities and habitat in balance.

Background:

- This recommended management action relates to Palm Beach County and all relevant habitats within the Lake Worth Lagoon.
- This recommended management action is being put forth due to the proposed Lake Worth Inlet and turning basin dredging (expansion) project and its high potential for negative impacts on the environment and the community. This recommended management action aims to address the bigger issue of a large-scale economic development project that outweighs the environment's health. Recent port expansion projects have resulted in extreme and unanticipated environmental impacts. There is a need to adequately document estuarine resources which may not have been accurately inventoried when the project was initially proposed.

Objective:

- The intended outcome of this action is the preservation of existing habitat and community (below and above the water) including estuarine and ocean resources and the reduction in siltation of existing habitat in the Intercoastal Waterway. This recommended management action applies to a proposed United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project but not maintenance dredging activities.

Intended Benefits and/or Potential Adverse Effects:

- Benefits with implementation of this recommended management action would include: (1) increased protection of resources, estuarine and ocean, that have the potential to be impacted by port/inlet modification projects, (2) maintaining the beauty and enjoyment of the area, including the areas around Peanut Island, and (3) protection of nearby resources that also have economic value to the community especially through tourism and boating in the area.
- The anticipated negative environmental impacts include: (1) the threat to seagrass beds by completely removing them, (2) destruction of the Blue Heron bridge diving area, (3) the inlet will be unsafe to smaller craft vessels (boats and kayakers) due to larger ships accessing the inlet, and (4) destruction to the beaches and coral reefs located to the north and south of the inlet.
- Some anticipated potential negative social and economic impacts the recommended management action may have include: (1) the money to run this project and the only benefit will go to the shipping industry not the Town or the County of Palm Beach and (2) a new cruise ship which occupies one of the Port slips may require the expansion to facilitate ingress and egress.
- The duration of the benefits of this recommended management action are long term.
- If this recommended management action were not to be implemented there will be a loss of existing important resources (corals, coral habitat, hardbottom, seagrass, etc.) and a loss of the economic benefits these resources provide for this area. The community that currently enjoy this area for ecotourism, recreation, water-sports, family-time, etc. could be diminished significantly.

Agencies/ Organizations:

- The lead agency for implementation of this recommended management action would be the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, United States Environmental Protection Agency, and the USACE.
- Other potential agencies or organizations who could be involved include the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, non-governmental organizations, and Palm Beach County.
- The key stakeholders for this recommended management action would be the resource users (e.g.

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divers, fishermen, and those with ecotourism interests). However, the shipping and coastal construction industries, including the Port of Palm Beach, are anticipated to not support this action.

- A potential challenge to getting this recommended management action implemented is: corporations that are funding the expansion project have a lot of monetary backing to see the project go through.
- There were no listed legislative considerations for this recommended management action.

Permitting/ Enforcement Requirements of RMA:

- There are no permitting requirements with this recommended management action.
- A way to provide a means to measure the success of this recommended management action would be the halt of the project or deauthorization of the port expansion.

Cost:

- The estimated direct cost of implementing this recommended management action is a onetime cost of less than \$10,000 to initiate some conversations and/or produce some materials to educate the community on why this project should not go forward.
- A potential funding source can be acquired through the residents of Palm Beach that have the funding available and want to protect their property value or value of places to recreate.

Time Frame & Extent:

- The anticipated timeframe for implementation of this recommended management action is 0 - 2 years.
- A portion of the community working group believes that the timeline for Our Florida Reefs (OFR) will not be timely enough to have an effective action that will actually effectuate change to the project, but would like to keep it an open recommended management action in the event the timelines get pushed back or there is a community effort to stop the project. In this fashion the record will reflect that the OFR process had recommended that the expansion not occur.

Miscellaneous Info:

- This recommended management action is not linked with any other recommended management action.
- Uncertainties or information gaps with this recommended management action include that the methodology for predicating, monitoring and evaluating the outcome from a port expansion project has proven inadequate based on what has happened at the first port expansion project.
- Supporting and relevant data was not identified within the recommended management action.
- Currently the USACE has not granted the permit, but it's under review and Palm Beach County's Artificial Reef and Estuarine Enhancement Committee has submitted a letter to the Corps of Engineers recommending that the proposed project be removed from consideration. This project has not been appropriated yet, while it is still feasible. If congress never funds it, then it will not move forward. Congress has de-authorized a lot of port expansion projects in this last Water Resources and Development Act, and the USACE was given time to de-authorize it. To get authorization there needs to be congressional support, so if the project doesn't get the funding from the feds or from the county the expansion will not move forward.
- Need better publicized information and public forums to discuss these projects.

Goals/ Objectives to be achieved:

Refer to the [SEFCRI Coral Reef Management Goals and Objectives Reference Guide](#)

- FL Priorities Goal C3 Obj. 4 / FL Priorities Goal C4 Obj. 3.
- SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 1 Goal Obj. 2 / SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 1: Obj. 1: Project 3; Obj. 3 / SEFCRI LAS MICCI Issue 2: Obj. 1.

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