



Science and Technology

September 10, 2024

NOAA Fisheries
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Habitat and Ecosystem Services Division
55 Great Republic Dr
Gloucester, MA 01930

Attn: Louis Chiarella, Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat and Ecosystem Services;
Karen Greene, Mid-Atlantic Branch Chief and EFH Regional Coordinator; Jessie Murray,
Marine Habitat Resources Specialist (New Jersey and New York)

**SUBJECT: RE: Project Review Request, Essential Fish Habitat, Plum Island Animal
Disease Center Undersea Cable Installation, Plum Island, New York**

Dear Mr. Chiarella,

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) thanks you for your letter on September 6, 2024, responding to our Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Assessment and consultation request, regarding the proposed activities for abandonment in place of an existing undersea utility cable and the installation of a new undersea utility cable between Orient Point, New York (NY) and the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) on Plum Island, NY (Proposed Action).

Pursuant to Section 305(b)(4)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), DHS S&T is providing NMFS with its written response to the EFH conservation recommendations. Further, pursuant to Section 305(b)(4)(A) of the MSA, DHS S&T agrees to adopt the following EFH conservation recommendations to minimize or offset adverse impacts on EFH. The following conservation measures include:

- DHS S&T will provide NMFS with a copy of the deliverables created following the pre-installation survey, including, but not limited to, revised site plans, methods, best management practices, and any additional measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the aquatic environment, at least 30 days prior to the installation and laying of the cable.
- DHS S&T will reinitiate consultation with NMFS should the anticipated project disturbances be greater than anticipated, if complex bottom habitat may be disturbed, or if any boulders are identified that will need to be moved prior to placing the cable.
- Pursuant to 50 CFR 600.920(l), DHS S&T will reinitiate consultation with NMFS if DHS S&T substantially revises its plans in a manner that may adversely affect EFH or if new information becomes available that affects the basis for NMFS conservation recommendations.

DHS S&T will adhere to and incorporate the NFMS conservation measures to the Final Environmental Assessment. Further, DHS S&T will adhere to and incorporate the best management practices as detailed in previous correspondence to the Final Environmental Assessment. We certify that we have used the best scientific and commercial data available to complete this analysis. For additional information, please contact Kimberly Poli at kimberly.poli@hq.dhs.gov.

Respectfully,

John M. Searing, PE, PMP
Deputy Center Director
PICS Program Director
Plum Island Animal Disease Center
Office of National Laboratories
Science and Technology Directorate