ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for

"COMMUNITY BEACH CENTER"

(RCS 04-899 & 05-350)

19 Dec 05

Prepared by: **Environmental Analysis Section**
Stewardship Branch
Environmental Management Division
96 Civil Engineer Group
96 Air Base Wing

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Community Beach Center

RCS 04-899 & 05-350

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), and 32 CFR Part 989, the Department of the Air Force has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the probable environmental consequences of constructing a Community Beach Center at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action: The 796th CES/CEOPD proposes to reconstruct a Community Beach Center similar to, and 165 feet north of, the facility that was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan on 16 September 2004. The Center is to be located on the Gulf side of Santa Rosa Island, Okaloosa County, Florida, approximately 3,000 feet from the eastern tip of the island. Three action alternatives are examined: building a "full-service" facility (Alternative A), building a "minimum-service" facility (Alternative B), and starting with a minimum service facility and then, as funding permits and demand requires, expanding the Center along the line of Alternative A (Alternative C). Alternative C is the preferred alternative.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, a Community Beach Center would not be constructed at Eglin AFB.

SUMMARY OF THE ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS (refer to Section 4 of the EA for additional information):

PUBLIC REVIEW: A notice of the availability of the EA was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on 31 October 2005. A 15-day comment period for public review of this EA ended on 14 November 2005. No comments were received for this action.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on my review of the facts and the environmental analysis contained in the attached EA and as summarized above, I find the proposed decision of the Air Force to construct and operate a community beach facility at Eglin AFB, Florida, will not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the President's Council on Environmental Quality and 32 CFR Part 989.

TIMOTHY P. GAFFNEY, Colonel, USAF
Commander, 96th Civil Engineer Group

20 Dec 05
Date

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
"COMMUNITY BEACH CENTER"
RCS 04-899 & 05-350

1.0 Purpose and Need for Action

The Eglin Community Beach Facility (CBF), the only military community gathering facility on Okaloosa Island, was destroyed by Hurricane (H.) Ivan on 16 Sep 04 (see Figure 1). Its predecessor, the NCO Beach Club, had previously been destroyed by H. Opal on 4 Oct 1995. Rebuilt on the same site but renamed the CBF, it was severely damaged again by H. Georges on 28 Sep 1998 and subsequently repaired. The purpose of this project is to construct a new Community Beach Center (CBC) to replace the CBF.

Having suitable recreation facilities is a necessity for all large military installations. Eglin Air Force Base, being one of the largest in the world, requires these facilities to maintain morale of the military and civilian personnel employed on the base. These facilities help alleviate the stress associated with military duties.[1]

Figure 1: Post-Ivan Status

1.1 Related Environmental Documents

Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan, Inc., Draft Environmental Assessment, "Renovate and Reconstruct the Noncommissioned Officer's Beach Club", August 1996.
Eglin AFB, "EA for Shoreline Restoration Experiment", 27 Sep 00.
Eglin AFB, "Santa Rosa Island Mission Utilization Plan PEA," March 2005.
AF Form 813, Eglin RCS 00-443, "Okaloosa County East Pass Dredging", June 2000.

1.2 Scope Of The Environmental Assessment

The initial environmental review of this proposal by an interdisciplinary team at Eglin AFB considered the following issues:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Foreseeable Consequences/Future Actions
- Hazardous Materials/Waste
- Land Use
- Noise
- Physical Resources
- Safety/Restricted Access
- Socioeconomics
- Soils
- Water Quality

The team found that the project would not have a significant impact to the following: air quality, cultural resources, hazardous materials, land use, noise, safety, soils, and water quality.

2.0 Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives:

PROPOSED ACTION is to construct a new Community Beach Center. This document will examine three alternatives and the no action alternative.

ALTERNATIVE A, proposed by RCS 05-350, is to replace the destroyed CBF with a structure with about a 6,500 ft^2 footprint that would support retail sales and dining. Attached to the structure would be covered pavilions, decking, walkways, and latrine/dressing areas comprising about another 10,000 ft^2 area. Figure 2 depicts an award-winning design for such a facility.

ALTERNATIVE B, proposed by RSC 04-899, is to replace the destroyed CBF with a 10,000 square foot, single floor, wood frame structure elevated on pilings approximately 6 feet similar to local "beach-style" businesses and residences. It will include covered pavilions, elevated laminated timber deck walkways, and bathroom/dressing areas. The building will be constructed 165 feet north of the previous Beach Center and above the primary dune line (Figure 6).

ALTERNATIVE C is to initially build as described in Alternative B, then, when funding permits, expand the facility along the lines of Alternative A. This is preferred alternative. Figure 6 illustrates the site plan for the first phase.

ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION) is to not rebuild. The parking lot will be repaired as a separate action. The net result would be providing users with a parking lot and beach access only. Mr Herb Sykes of Eglin's 96 Services Squadron, Business Flight (96 SVS/SVB), stated that his flight could in addition provide dumpsters, port-a-let services, and a lifeguard during the summer season. [2]

NOTE: All the action alternatives (*i.e.*, Alternatives A-C) involve building the CBC on a portion of the former parking lot behind the primary dune line. All debris, structures, and asphalt seaward of the new building site will be removed and the main parking lot repaired. A boardwalk from the facility to the beach will be constructed at a height to allow natural dune formation and growth to occur (about 3 feet above grade). The dune habitat will be restored by planting native dune vegetation. Appropriate habitat protection signage will be installed and all lighting associated with the facility will be sea turtle compatible. The destroyed septic field would be replaced. Electric, water, and gas utilities will be reconnected for continued usage of these services.

Figure 2: Design for Alternative A

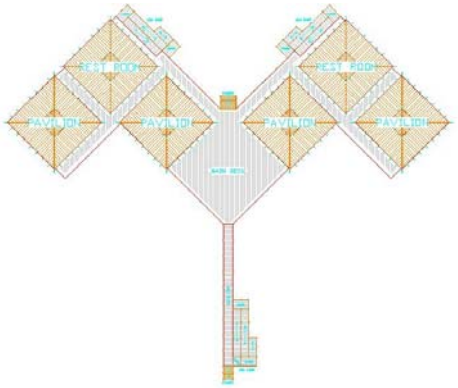

Figure 3: Design for Alternative B

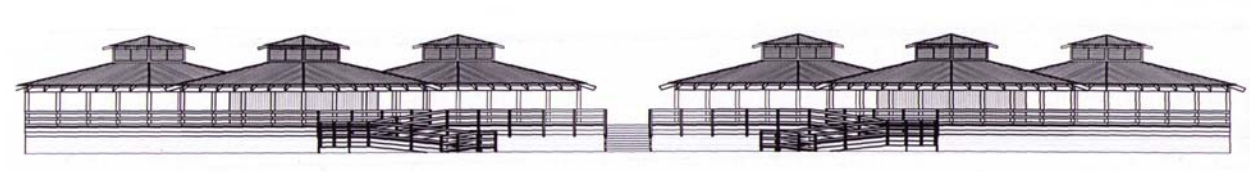

Figure 4: Front View of Alternative B

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT EVALUATED FURTHER: Rebuilding on the old footprint was rejected for several reasons. First, since portions of the old site are now below the mean high tide line (and thus on State owned lands), a lease from the State would be required before construction could begin. Second, this option would require a formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Third, rebuilding in place would likely result in the facility's destruction by the next big storm. Fourth, rebuilding farther back would afford more usable beach.

Rebuilding at another location along the beach was briefly considered but rejected as too costly as well as likely having more environmental impact than building on an already developed site. The most likely sites, A-2, A-3, and A-5 also suffered other disadvantages. A-2 has very little beach depth. A-3, the site of the Officer's Beach Club destroyed by H. Opal in 1995, is an active test site and is also suffering from severe beach erosion. A-5 is too narrow so would have insufficient space for parking and is too near private beaches to prevent intrusion by the general public.

2.1 Issues:

The issues remaining after the initial Environmental Impact Analysis Process interdisciplinary team review (*vide* Section 1.2) are: endangered species, socioeconomic, consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act, environmental justice/child safety, and foreseeable consequences.

3.0 Affected Environment:

The area that would be affected by the proposed action would be Eglin-owned beachfront on Santa Rosa Island (see Figures 5 and 6).

3.1 Natural Resources:

Several protected species inhabit the area near the site and the nearby water.

3.1.1 Santa Rosa Beach Mouse: The Santa Rosa beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus leucocephalus*) is a species of concern and is known to inhabit the dunes near the site. It is found within primary, secondary, and occasionally tertiary sand dunes with a moderate cover of grasses and forbs, including sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*), Gulf bluestem (*Schizichyrium maritimum*), beach dropseed (*Sporobolus virginicus*), and telegraph weed (*Heterotheca subaxillaris*). High, stable areas supporting live oak (*Quercus geminata*) may be important following hurricanes that remove substantial dune habitat.

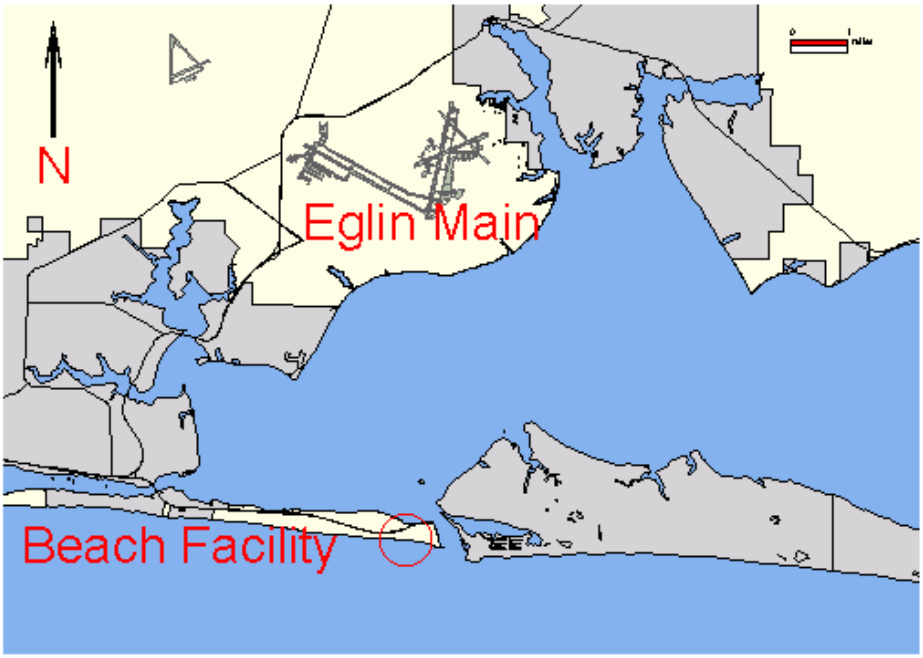

Figure 5. Location of Beach Center

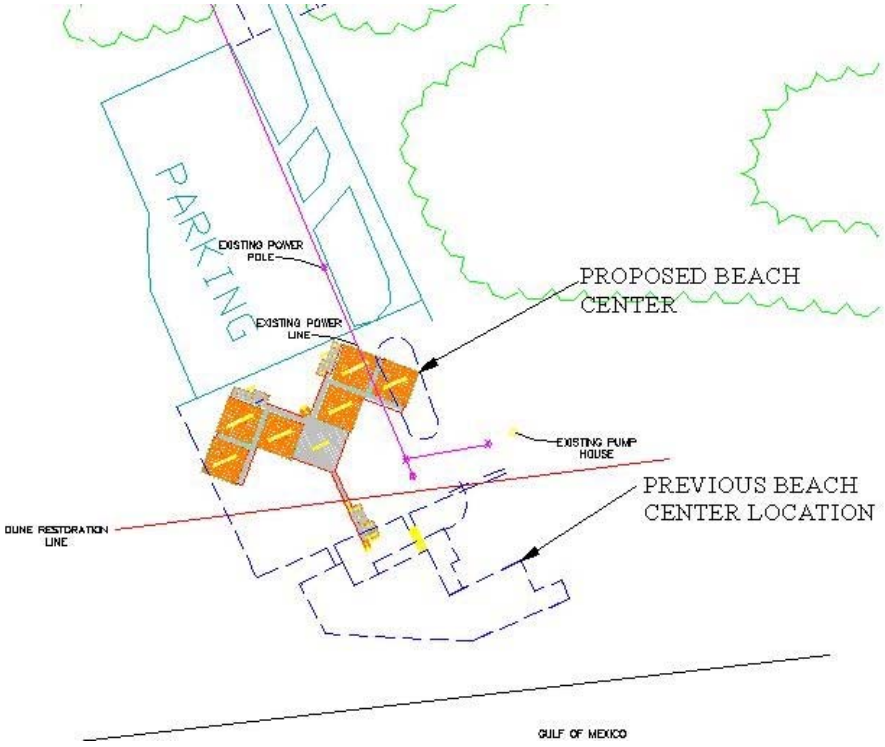

Figure 6. Site Plan for Beach Center

3.1.2 Florida Perforate Cladonia: Florida perforate cladonia (*Cladonia perforata*) is an endangered lichen that typically occurs in open patches of sand between Rosemary shrubs in areas with sparse or no herbaceous cover. It is currently found in these areas to the west of the destroyed CBF from Test site A-2 to just west of the beach facility as well as north of Hwy 98 from the Coast Guard Station to approximate 2.0 miles to the west.

3.1.3 Sea Oats: The sea oat (*Uniola paniculata*) is a Florida protected species that grows in the area along and behind the dune lines.

3.1.4 Least Tern: The least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), a Florida protected species, nests on the flat beach area to the east of the Beach Center and inhabits the Eglin area from April to September.

3.1.5 Sea Turtles: Stranding reports for all five sea turtle species have been documented from the northern Gulf region, including the occurrence of a juvenile Kemp's ridley stranding from Choctawhatchee Bay in Okaloosa County. Based on documented nesting and stranding information, there is a potential for any of the five sea turtle species to occur within the proposed project area, however, only three of these species are known to have nested on Eglin beaches, the leatherback, the loggerhead, and the Atlantic green. Leatherback nesting only occurred in 2000.

Atlantic loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and the Atlantic green (*Chelondia mydas*) turtle nesting in the northwest region of Florida generally initiates in mid-May, with turtles beginning to congregate offshore in the March/April time frame. Peak nesting activity occurs in June and July, and nesting generally concludes by the end of August.

As the largest of the sea turtle species, the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) is widely distributed but predominantly pelagic. They are generally found in waters exceeding 50 meters depth except during the nesting period. Although major nesting beaches are located in tropical waters outside the US, nesting does occur on the Atlantic coast of Florida and, on rare occasions, in the panhandle region of Florida. Leatherbacks are frequently sighted in northern gulf water. Leatherback turtles feed primarily on jellyfish but will occasionally eat sea urchins, squid, tunicates, fish, blue-green algae, and floating seaweed.

The hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) occurs throughout the Caribbean and is observed with some regularity in waters near the Florida Keys. Preferred habitat for the species includes coral reefs, with northern range rarely extending beyond Florida. Hawksbill turtles mainly feed on a wide variety of sponges but will also consume bryozoans, coelenterates, and molluscs. Although primary nesting areas are located in the Caribbean, the species has been reported as nesting along the gulf coast of Florida but there have been no known nestings on Eglin beaches.

Along with the olive ridley, the Kemp's ridley (*Lepidocheyls kempi*) is the smallest of the sea turtle species. Kemp's ridleys are considered to be the most endangered of all marine turtles and have the most restricted breeding range. The major nesting beach for the species is located near Rancho Nuevo on the northeastern coast of Mexico, where adult females nest in daytime aggregations known as "arribadas". Adult Kemp's ridleys are found almost exclusively in the Gulf of Mexico and have been observed in the mouth of the Mississippi River. Ridley hatchlings are believed to associate with *Sargassum* rafts, while juveniles can be found in the northern Gulf of Mexico and in embayments along the eastern Atlantic seaboard. Hatchlings are presumed to feed upon *Sargassum* and its associated infauna, while adult diet consists primarily of crabs. Not known to nest on Eglin's Beaches.

3.1.6 Gulf Sturgeon. The Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrhynichus desotoi*) is classified as anadromous, with immature and mature fish participating in freshwater migrations. Subadults and adults spend eight to nine months each year in rivers and three to four of the coolest months in estuaries of Gulf waters. It appears that Gulf sturgeon less than two years old remain in riverine habitats and estuarine areas throughout the year. The sturgeon begin entering rivers as early as February or March and remain until October or November, before returning to saltwater habitats. Little is known about sturgeon use of the Gulf of Mexico, but they have been caught in bottom fisheries to depths of about 55 meters. Radio monitoring in the Gulf of Mexico during the 1998-99 winter recorded several radio-tagged Gulf sturgeon. They were located in water depths of 17 to 37 feet. Frank Parauka[3] of the US Fish and Wildlife Service indicated that it does not appear that sturgeon use the Gulf waters within 200 meters of the shore, but that data is insufficient to make a conclusive statement. Gulf sturgeon feed on bottom-dwelling organisms such as amphipods, isopods, crustaceans, and marine worms. Critical habitat for the Gulf sturgeon has been designated in the Gulf of Mexico extending out from the shore one nautical mile.

Gulf sturgeon have the potential to be present in Gulf waters during winter months. Previous USFWS monitoring of radio-tagged sturgeon has shown that the sturgeon utilize Gulf waters during winter months. Data collected during the winter of 1999 showed that the sturgeon appear to use waters that are deeper than those found near the proposed project area, though data are insufficient to rule out the possibility that sturgeon could use the near shore waters. In any case, sturgeon would occur in the Gulf during the center's off-season.

3.1.7 Marine Mammals. Marine mammals are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Atlantic bottlenose and Atlantic spotted dolphins are fairly common near the affected waters. Manatees are seldom seen this far west and never in the fall and winter months.[4]

3.2 Socioeconomic

The beach area by the CBF was in general use by members of the base population from April through October, although Memorial Day to Labor Day was the period of heaviest use. The area is normally accessible year round, but has been closed since H. Ivan except for about a week before H. Dennis in late June and early July 2005. In winter months, this section of the beach was popular with the local surfers. Sales at the CBF in 2003 amounted to $78,172 (seven month season) and in 2004 to $75,577 (six-month season).[2]

Although entry to the Beach Clubs was restricted in the past to holders of passes purchased from the Eglin and Hurlburt Officer and NCO Clubs, in recent years this has not been the case. Entry has been essentially unrestricted, although people without DOD ID cards could not make purchases from the snack bar, etc.

3.3 Coastal Zone Management Act

The area under study is within the Coastal Zone of the State of Florida.

3.4 Environmental Justice/Child Safety.

Executive Orders 12898 and 13045 require federal agencies to adopt strategies to address the environmental concerns of minority and low-income communities that may be impacted by the implementation of federal missions and to assign a high priority to addressing health and safety risks to children, respectively.

3.5 Foreseeable Consequences/Cumulative Effects

Foreseeable Consequences/Cumulative Effects can be broadly grouped into two categories, Nature-driven and Success-driven. Included in the former are the inevitable tropical storms and hurricanes and the damage they wreak, and also beach erosion. Included in the latter are expansion of and improvements to the facilities should they prove popular.

As mentioned in Section 1, the beach facility has been heavily damaged once and destroyed twice in the 10-year period from October 1995 to September 2005. This is partially due to the beach erosion that has been taking place since the construction of the jetties protecting Destin Pass. The erosion has brought the high water line closer and closer to the facility over the years making the facility more and more vulnerable to storms.

4.0 Environmental Consequences

4.1 Protected Species:

4.1.1 The Action Alternatives: In accordance with the Endangered Species Act an informal Section 7 consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service was conducted for this project and is included in Appendix B. Eglin's Natural Resources Branch has determined that the actions will Not Likely Adversely Affect federally listed species. Eglin agrees to comply with the Avoidance and Minimization measures set forth in the Biological Assessment in Appendix B.

4.1.2 No Action Alternative: There will be no direct affect to threatened or endangered species if the beach facility is not constructed.

4.2 Socioeconomic:

4.2.1 The Action Alternatives: Under Alternative A, base personnel will enjoy a higher level of service from a money-losing venture. Under Alternative B, base personnel will enjoy a lower level of service. Under Alternative C (the preferred alternative) the level of service will rise as demand and funding warrant.

4.2.2 No Action Alternative: Base personnel will experience a small, but real degradation of service, and some will forgo the spartan facility in favor of other, better equipped public facilities, minimally adding to the congestion in these already overcrowded areas.

4.3 Coastal Zone Management Act:

Eglin has determined that all four alternatives are consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Act and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has concurred with this determination. See Appendices A and C.

4.4 Environmental Justice/Child Safety:

The nearest residential areas to the site are "Okaloosa Island" about four miles to the west and Destin one mile to the east across the Destin Pass. Neither of these areas contains a disproportionate quantity of minorities or low-income households. Therefore no disproportionately high populations of minorities or low-income households will be affected by the project under either the action or the no action alternatives.

During construction, safety/construction fence will encompass the work extending out into the public beach area from existing dunes east to west approximately 500 linear feet. This should prevent children or the general public from wandering into the construction area. Signs will also be posted clearly stating this is military property and no trespassing.

The more highly developed the facility, the more likely that it will be staffed by personnel trained in emergency procedures (lifeguards, first aid providers), thus would be more conducive to child safety.

4.5 Foreseeable Consequences/Cumulative Effects:

4.5.1 The Action Alternatives: Building the CBC behind the present primary dune line will provide protection from the waves generated by lesser storms and some protection from the waves from major storms. This is only a delaying tactic unless the beach erosion problem can be solved. If not, the beach will gradually erode away and again place the structure in peril. Some remedy is at hand, however, since the Army Corps of Engineers is

placing the spoils from its periodic dredging of Destin Pass in front of, and plans to place some on, the beach from 2,200 ft to 6000 ft west of the jetty, which includes the frontage of the CBC[5].

It is likely that additional amenities will be added to the site over the years. These might include additional parking, volleyball nets, additional deck, and connection to county utilities. These actions should have no significant impact on the environment but should be analyzed as separate studies when the need arises since the dynamic nature of the seashore may alter conditions considerably by that time.

4.5.2 No Action Alternative: It is possible that additional amenities will be added to the site over the years. These might include a fresh water shower, concession stands (food, umbrella rental), playground equipment, guard shack for checking IDs, additional parking, a surfboard rack, and volleyball nets. These actions should have no significant impact on the environment but should be analyzed as separate studies when the need arises since the dynamic nature of the seashore may alter conditions considerably by that time.

5.0 Conclusions, Leases & Permits

5.1 Conclusion:

None of the Action Alternatives nor the No-Action alternative will significantly impact the environment, so an Environmental Impact Statement need not be prepared.

5.2 Required Leases & Permits:

None. However, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recommends avoiding construction between May and August, not allowing construction equipment to access the site from the beach, parking equipment on the old parking lot rather than on the beach, installing sea turtle-friendly lighting and window tinting, and prohibiting pets on the beach.

6.0 List of Preparers

Paul R. Bolduc, Ph.D.	96 CEG/CEVSP	Physical Scientist

7.0 List of Agencies and Persons Contacted

E. Moorer, 96 CEG/CEOD
D. Sigur, 96 CEG/CEOP
H. Sykes, 96 SVS/SVB

8.0 References:

1. Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan, Inc., Draft Environmental Assessment, “Renovate and Reconstruct the Noncommissioned Officer’s Beach Club”, August 1996.

2. H. Sykes, Personal Communication, 1 Jun 05.

3. Frank Parauka, cited in Eglin AFB, “EA for Shoreline Restoration Experiment”, 27 Sep 00.

4. A.B. Shortelle, H.L. Thomas, G.H. Tourtellotte, W.T. Marsh, J.R. Maxwell, R.R. Lucas, & N.A. Vaseen, "Final Environmental Assessment for the Testing of MK5 Mine Clearance System at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida," QST Environmental (Gainesville, FL: January 1999), 3-13.

5. D. Slaterpryce, Letter from Okaloosa County Public Works to Eglin Real Estate Office, 17 Dec 04.

APPENDIX A

Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Determination

FEDERAL AGENCY COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

Introduction

This document provides the State of Florida with the U.S. Air Force's Consistency Determination under CZMA Section 307 and 15 C.F.R. Part 930 sub-part C. The information in this Consistency Determination is provided pursuant to 15 C.F.R. Section 930.39 and Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1456, as amended, and its implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 930.

Proposed Federal Agency Action:

The proposed action is to construct the new Eglin Community Beach Center on Santa Rosa Island, Eglin Air Force Base, FL (Figures 1). The previous Beach Center facility was destroyed during Hurricane Ivan in September 2004 (Figures 2 and 3). It will serve as a center of beach recreation for Department of Defense (DoD) personnel and will support retail sales, dining, restroom/dressing services as well as beach access for the entire local DoD community.

The debris (Figures 2 and 3) was removed, including everything below the primary dune line (Figure 4). In addition, the top three feet of sand was excavated, sifted, and placed back in the indentation from where it was taken. Figure 4 shows the area after the debris was removed. A significant amount of beach area has been added by the removal of the old buildings and pilings.

The reconstruction of the beach house will be a 10,000 square foot, single floor, wood frame structure elevated on pilings approximately 6 feet similar to local "beach-style" businesses and residences (Figure 5). It will include covered pavilions, elevated laminated timber deck walkways, and bathroom/dressing areas. The building will be constructed 160 feet north of the previous Beach Center and above the primary dune line (Figure 2). The septic system will be replaced; while electric, water, and gas utilities which remain within the immediate vicinity and will be reconnected for continued usage of these services. The main parking area remains and will require a portion to be repaired.

All debris, structures, and asphalt seaward of the new building site will be removed. A boardwalk from the facility to the beach will be constructed at a height to allow natural dune formation and growth to occur (about 3 feet above grade). The dune habitat will be restored by planting native dune vegetation. Appropriate habitat protection signage will be installed and all lighting associated with the facility will be turtle compatible.

Federal Consistency Review

Statutes addressed as part of the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program consistency review and considered in the analysis of the proposed action are discussed in the following table.

Pursuant to 15 C.F.R. § 930.41, the Florida State Clearinghouse has 60 days from receipt of this document in which to concur with or object to this Consistency Determination, or to request an extension, in writing, under 15 C.F.R. § 930.41(b). Florida's concurrence will be presumed if Eglin AFB does not receive its response on the 60th day from receipt of this determination.

Figure 1. Location Map of Eglin AFB and Community Beach Center Area

Figure 2. Pilings and Debris to be removed.

Figure 3. Building and pilings to be removed.

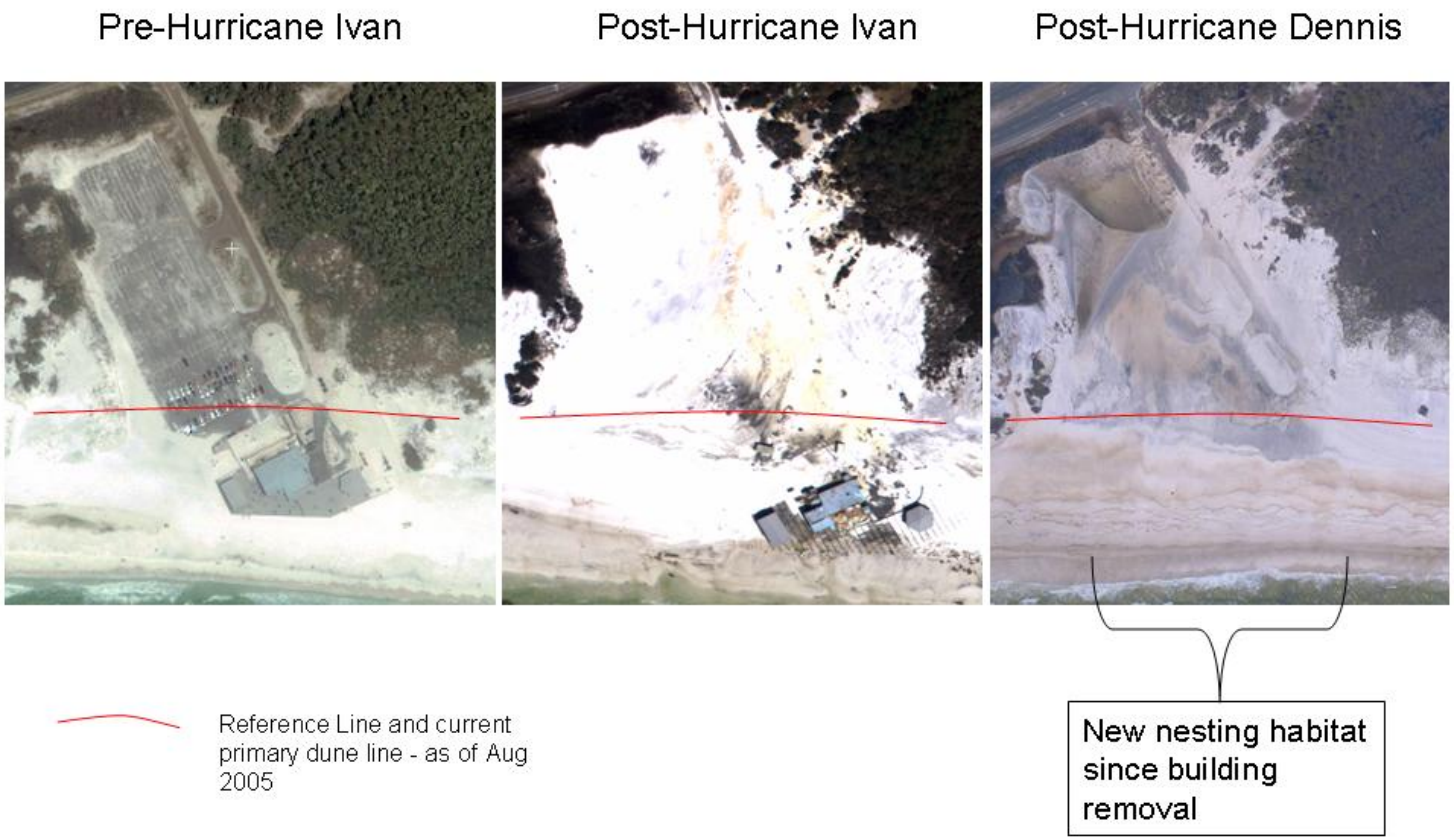

Figure 4. Aerial photos of area pre and post hurricane activity.

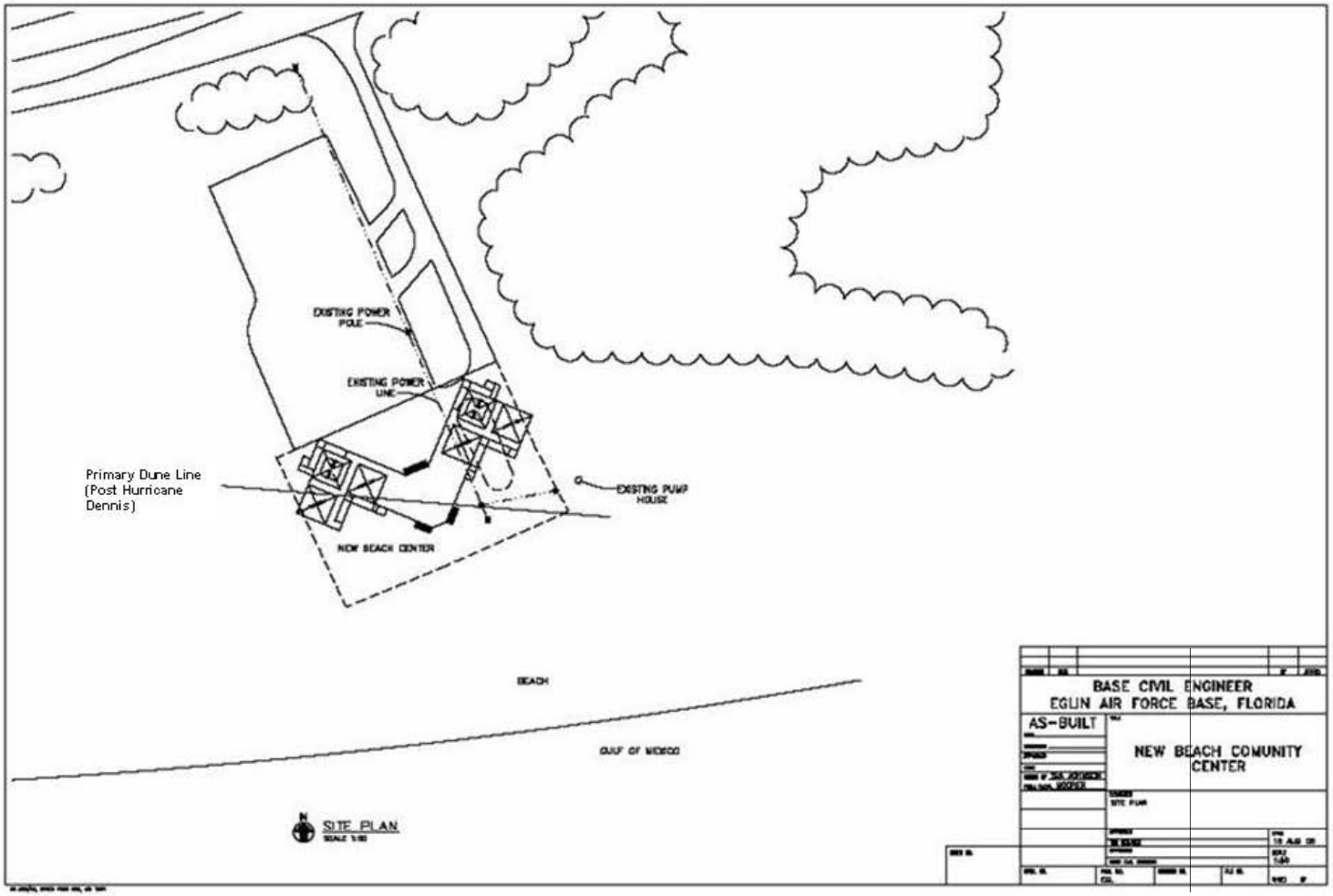

Figure 5. Site plan of the New Community Beach Center in relation to the old parking lot and new dune restoration line

Florida Coastal Management Program Consistency Review

Statute	Consistency	Scope
Chapter 161 *Beach and Shore Preservation*	While the proposed project will occur within a coastal environment, or along existing easements, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be implemented to ensure that actions will not adversely effect beach and shore management, specifically as it pertains to: -The Coastal Construction Permit Program. -The Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL) Permit Program. -The Coastal Zone Protection Program.	Authorizes the Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems within DEP to regulate construction on or seaward of the states' beaches.
Chapter 163, Part II *Growth Policy; County and Municipal Planning; Land Development Regulation*	The proposed action would not affect local government comprehensive plans.	Requires local governments to prepare, adopt, and implement comprehensive plans that encourage the most appropriate use of land and natural resources in a manner consistent with the public interest.
Chapter 186 *State and Regional Planning*	The proposed action would not have a negative affect on state plans for water use, land development or transportation.	Details state-level planning requirements. Requires the development of special statewide plans governing water use, land development, and transportation.
Chapter 252 *Emergency Management*	The proposed action would not increase the state's vulnerability to natural disasters. Emergency response and evacuation procedures would not be impacted by the proposed action.	Provides for planning and implementation of the state's response to, efforts to recover from, and the mitigation of natural and manmade disasters.
Chapter 253 *State Lands*	The proposed action is on Federal property and will not affect state lands or their acquisitions.	Addresses the state's administration of public lands and property of this state and provides direction regarding the acquisition, disposal, and management of all state lands.
Chapter 258 *State Parks and Preserves* Chapter 259 *Land Acquisition for Conservation or Recreation* Chapter 260 *Recreational Trails System*	State parks, recreational areas and aquatic preserves would not be affected by the proposed action. Tourism and outdoor recreation would not be affected. Opportunities for recreation on state lands would not be affected. Tourism and outdoor recreation may be temporarily affected by equipment during installation, however, as existing easements are	Addresses administration and management of state parks and preserves (Chapter 258). Authorizes acquisition of environmentally endangered lands and outdoor recreation lands (Chapter 259). Authorizes acquisition of land to create a recreational trails system and to facilitate

Chapter 375 *Multipurpose Outdoor Recreation; Land Acquisition, Management, and Conservation*	being utilized, no restrictions to beach access are anticipated. The proposed action would have no negative impacts to public recreation. This site will be closed to public access during the construction phase, however, there are five additional access points. The site is also restricted to DoD personnel only.	management of the system (Chapter 260). Develops comprehensive multipurpose outdoor recreation plan to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate need for additional recreational opportunities, and propose means to meet the identified needs (Chapter 375).
Chapter 267 *Historical Resources*	All known historical resource areas are fenced, marked, and will be avoided during installations and repairs; archaeological consultations will not be required. If during the installation phase a potential historical resource is uncovered, work will cease immediately and 96CEG/CEVH will be contacted. Consultation with the SHPO will be completed before project is reinitiated.	Addresses management and preservation of the state's archaeological and historical resources.
Chapter 288 *Commercial Development and Capital Improvements*	The proposed action is not anticipated to have any effect on future business opportunities on state lands, or the promotion of tourism in the region.	Provides the framework for promoting and developing the general business, trade, and tourism components of the state economy.
Chapter 334 *Transportation Administration* Chapter 339 *Transportation Finance and Planning*	The proposed project would not have an impact on transportation. The proposed project would have no effect on the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system.	Addresses the state's policy concerning transportation administration (Chapter 334). Addresses the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system (Chapter 339).
Chapter 370 *Saltwater Fisheries*	There would be no impact to saltwater fisheries as a result of the proposed action.	Addresses management and protection of the state's saltwater fisheries.
Chapter 372 *Wildlife*	A Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service will be completed prior to project initiation. The action agency will comply with all terms and conditions of the biological opinion and avoidance and minimization measures outlined within the section 7 consultation. The terms and conditions, as well as, avoidance and minimization measures will minimize any potential impacts to state and federally listed species.	Addresses the management of the wildlife resources of the state.
Chapter 373 *Water Resources*	Coordination with the Environmental Engineering Branch of the Environmental Management Directorate of Eglin (CEG/CEVCE) for structural, irrigation, backflow preventer, and storm water designs to ensure compliance and to determine the requirements for permitting under these projects is required prior to the implementation of the proposed action.	Addresses the state's policy concerning water resources.

	Construction activities must be performed in compliance with 62-550 F.A.C., 62-55 F.A.C., 62-604 F.A.C., American Water Works Association (AWWA) Standards, Ten State Standards, and Water Management District laws and permits.	
Chapter 376 *Pollutant Discharge Prevention and Removal*	The proposed action does not involve the transfer, storage, or transportation of pollutants.	Regulates transfer, storage, and transportation of pollutants, and cleanup of pollutant discharges.
Chapter 377 *Energy Resources*	Energy resource production, including oil and gas, and the transportation of oil and gas, would not be affected by the proposed action.	Addresses regulation, planning, and development of energy resources of the state.
Chapter 380 *Land and Water Management*	Under the proposed action, development of state lands with regional (i.e. more than one county) impacts would not occur. Areas of Critical State Concern or areas with approved state resource management plans such as the Northwest Florida Coast will not be affected. Changes to coastal infrastructure would not occur with construction along the Santa Rosa Barrier Island Coast. Capacity increases of existing coastal infrastructure, or use of state funds for infrastructure planning, designing or construction would not occur.	Establishes land and water management policies to guide and coordinate local decisions relating to growth and development.
Chapter 381 *Public Health, General Provisions*	Existing facilities will be utilized for the proposed action which will not require additional permitting for the new construction.	Establishes public policy concerning the state's public health system.
Chapter 388 *Mosquito Control*	The proposed action would not affect mosquito control efforts.	Addresses mosquito control effort in the state.
Chapter 403 *Environmental Control*	The proposed action would not affect ecological systems and water quality of state waters. Combustive emissions and fugitive dust from construction would be temporary. Air quality criteria would not be exceeded and the impacts would not be significant.	Establishes public policy concerning environmental control in the state.
Chapter 582 *Soil and Water Conservation*	Impacts to soils would not be significant. Erosion would be controlled through construction best management practices.	Provides for the control and prevention of soil erosion.

APPENDIX B

BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 96TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE FLORIDA

12 OCT 2005

Mr. Stephen M. Seiber
Chief, Eglin Natural Resources Section
501 De Leon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5133

Ms. Janet Mizzi
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1601 Balboa Avenue
Panama City FL 32405

Dear Ms. Mizzi

The following information is being submitted to fulfill requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Briefly, this report assesses potential impacts to three species of sea turtles, the piping plover and the Florida perforate lichen associated with the construction of the Eglin Community Beach Center, Santa Rosa Island (SRI), Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida (Figures 1 and 2). This informal Biological Assessment (BA) is a follow-on document from the BA written for demolition activities of the previous beach center and addresses the construction of the new facility. A separate Section 7 consultation was completed for demolition activities because design specifications and timeline for construction were not available and Eglin wanted to remove the debris before sea turtle and tourist season (May 2005).

Description of Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct the new Eglin Community Beach Center on SRI, Eglin AFB, Florida (Figures 1 and 2). The previous beach center facility was destroyed during Hurricane Ivan in September 2004 (Figures 3 and 4). Figure 5 identifies the site plan and Figure 6 depicts an award-winning design for such a facility. It will serve as a center of beach recreation for Department of Defense (DoD) personnel and will support retail sales, dining, restroom/dressing services as well as beach access for the entire local DoD community.

In accordance with a previous informal Beach Center Demolition BA, the debris (Figures 3 and 4) was removed, including everything below the primary dune line (Figure 2). In addition, the top three feet of sand was excavated, sifted and placed back in the indentation from where it was taken. Figure 7 shows an aerial photo of the area after the debris was removed. A significant amount of beach area has been added by the removal of the old buildings and pilings.

The reconstruction of the beach house will be a 10,000 square foot, single floor, wood frame structure elevated on pilings approximately 10 feet similar to local "beach-style" businesses and residences. It will include covered pavilions, elevated laminated timber deck walkways and bathroom/dressing areas. The building will be constructed 165 feet north of the previous beach center and above the primary dune line (Figure 2). The septic system will require repair along with electric, water and gas utilities which remain within the immediate vicinity and will be reconnected for continued usage of these services. The main parking area remains and will require a portion to be repaired.

All debris, structures and asphalt seaward of the new building site will be removed. A boardwalk from the facility to the beach will be constructed at a height to allow natural dune formation and growth to occur (about 3 feet above grade). The dune habitat will be restored by

planting native dune vegetation. Appropriate habitat protection signage will be installed and all lighting associated with the facility will be sea turtle compatible.

Biological Information

Five federally listed endangered (E) and threatened (T) species are known to occur within the project area. Additionally, several shorebird nesting areas and habitat for the Santa Rosa Beach Mouse are located on SRI. The following list indicates those federally listed species considered for this action.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status
Atlantic Green Sea Turtle	*Chelonia mydas*	E
Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle	*Caretta caretta*	T
Leatherback Sea Turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	E
Piping Plover	*Charadrius melodus*	T
Florida Perforate Lichen	*Cladonia perforata*	E

Of the five species of marine turtles found in the Gulf of Mexico, three species are known to nest on SRI beaches. These species are the Atlantic green turtle, Atlantic loggerhead turtle and the leatherback turtle. However, the majority of nests on SRI are from loggerhead sea turtles. The sea turtle nesting and hatching season in northwest Florida occurs from 1 May through 31 October, with most hatching between mid-August and mid-October.

Atlantic Green Sea Turtle

The green sea turtle was listed as federally threatened on 28 July 1978, in all its eastern range of North America, except in Florida where it is listed as endangered. It is also state-listed as endangered. In the United States, it nests on southern Florida beaches with a few exceptions in the northern Gulf of Mexico and North Carolina (USFWS, 2005). The officially recognized nesting and hatching season for the green sea turtle extends from 1 May through 31 October in Florida's Panhandle. Nesting in the Panhandle, however, has been consistently documented as an every other year event since 1990, with incubation periods ranging from 60 to 90 days. However, the 2004 sea turtle nesting season did not result in any green sea turtle nests as predicted, yet the 2005 season yielded seven Atlantic green sea turtle nest. Eglin AFB SRI property supports the highest number of green sea turtle nests in northwest Florida. Primarily a tropical herbivore, the juveniles are frequently found in the Gulf of Mexico in areas where there is an abundance of seagrass (USFWS, 2005).

Atlantic Loggerhead Sea Turtle

The loggerhead turtle, federally and state-listed as threatened, gained its status on 28 July 1978. Loggerhead nests in Florida account for 90 percent of all loggerhead nests in the United States. From March through June, adult loggerheads congregate in the nearshore and offshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico to mate. Their nesting sites are on the numerous barrier islands and beaches between the Florida Keys and northern Gulf of Mexico. Nesting females approach SRI in the spring and summer to dig their nests between the high tide mark and the dune line and sometimes between dunes. Thesea turtles are the most commonly seen sea turtles in the southeastern United States and may be found near underwater structures and reefs (USFWS, 2005). The diet of loggerheads consists of gastropods, mollusks, coelenterates and cephalopods.

Leatherback Sea Turtle

The leatherback sea turtle was originally listed as federally endangered on 2 June 1970 and is considered a state-listed endangered species. This species commonly nests along the shorelines of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Only infrequent nesting activity has been documented for the leatherback in northwest Florida. The officially recognized nesting and

hatching season for the leatherback extends from 1 March through 30 September, with nest incubation ranging from 60 to 75 days. Until the spring of 2000, the only confirmed leatherbacks nesting in northwest Florida were in Franklin and Gulf Counties. In May and June 2000, leatherback nesting activity was documented for the first time in Okaloosa County on Eglin's portion of SRI. The leatherback feeds primarily on jellyfish, but occasionally will eat sea urchins, squid, crustaceans, tunicates, fish, blue-green algae and floating seaweed (USFWS, 2005).

Piping Plover

The piping plover is state and federally listed as threatened. Piping plovers are found in wintering habitats as early as mid-July and leave by early May. This bird's primary winter range is along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts from North Carolina to Mexico and into the Bahamas and West Indies (USFWS, 2005). Piping plovers are commonly documented during winter in the Florida panhandle with highest numbers of birds occurring in Franklin, Gulf and Bay Counties. Even though Florida has not been considered a primary wintering area for piping plover, diminishing habitat along other Gulf coast areas may be affording the piping plover new wintering grounds in Florida. These wintering grounds are still considered less suitable, thus forcing the piping plover to utilize isolated patches. As a result, critical habitat has been designated for piping plovers along the Gulf coast of Florida, including a portion of SRI.

Florida Perforate Lichen

Cladonia perforata (Florida perforate lichen) is an endangered lichen with a very restricted population, mainly due to significant loss of its habitat. *C. perforata* is mainly found in white sand scrub habitat in Florida, dominated by sand pine rosemary and other scrub oaks such as sand live oak and myrtle oak. *C. perforata* usually occurs in open areas between patches of scrub vegetation. In addition to habitat loss, *C. perforata* is also threatened by trampling, storm surges, and is susceptible to fires (USFWS, 1999). Three of the known populations occur on Eglin AFB SRI property; one is depicted in Figure 2 and is across the road from the proposed action location.

Shorebirds

Shorebird nesting season at SRI runs from 1 April through 31 August. Prior to Hurricane Ivan, in an effort to protect nesting shorebirds, the area between the Community Beach Center and the Destin Pass jetties on SRI was closed to the public. However, impacts from Hurricane Ivan dramatically reduced the large shorebird nesting habitat in this area and topographically created a direct pathway from the public access points to the Gulf of Mexico shoreline. Although hurricane activity has changed the landscape of SRI, Eglin has re-posted areas for nesting shorebirds according to Natural Resources biologists. The reposting also allows limited public beach access without nest disturbance. Figure 2 shows the large historical shorebird nesting area near the location of the Community Beach Center prior to Hurricane Ivan. This area was greatly changed during the storm but negative impacts to nesting success are not anticipated. Typical shorebirds found on SRI include the snowy plover (*Charadruis alexandrinus*) state listed as threatened; little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*), a state species of special concern; snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), a state species of special concern; black skimmer (*Rhynchops niger),* a state species of special concern; the least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), state listed as threatened; the tricolor heron (*Egretta tricolor*), a state species of special concern; and the white ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), a state species of special concern.

Santa Rosa Beach Mouse

The Santa Rosa beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus leucocephalus*) is one of five beach mouse subspecies and is the only subspecies not currently listed by either the state or the federal government. The Santa Rosa beach mice are mostly nocturnal, and burrow nests in dunes. They prefer sand-covered dune slopes with patches of grasses and herbs, and their diet consists of

various plant seeds and insects. This population, which occurs only on SRI, was decimated after the storm surge from Hurricane Opal in 1995 destroyed dune habitat. Monthly track count surveys conducted by Eglin Natural Resources Section personnel indicated a 40 percent increase in population from 1996 to 2001 (U.S. Air Force, 2002). Hurricanes Ivan in 2004, Dennis and Katrina in 2005, also decimated a large percentage of dune habitats. Preliminary results indicated that beach mice are still present; however, it is too early to determine the severity of impacts to the populations. Monthly surveys will be conducted for the next several months to gain a better understanding of impacts to the population. Current threats to this population include predation by feral cats and loss of dune habitat from recreational foot traffic and storms.

Determination of Impacts

Sea Turtles

The main potential threats to sea turtle nests on Eglin beaches are from artificial lighting, vehicular driving, nest predation, and other activities that may disturb beach/dune habitats and destroy nests. Impacts to sea turtle hatchlings are known to occur from the creation of ruts or impediments on the beach. Turtle hatchlings can easily become trapped in tire tracks or depressions created by humans or other animals and cannot reach the water.

As of 2004, Eglin AFB has documented 362 loggerhead nests, 130 green nests and 3 leatherback nests on SRI (including the public portion of the island). SRI nesting data obtained from 1989-2004 was combined for all three species of turtles to determine the average distance of the nest from the mean high water line. This data was calculated for 347 of the 495 total nests because no measurements were recorded for the other 148 nests. On average, the three species of sea turtles traveled approximately 65 feet from the mean high water line before digging an egg chamber. Construction activities will occur at a minimum of 165 feet north of the previous beach center making the new construction well above the average turtle nest. Installation of the pilings and buildings will require heavy machinery near the beach; however, no activity is anticipated to be directly on the beach (Figure 2). Avoidance and minimization requirements to mitigate potential impacts to sea turtles are described below.

Eglin AFB property on SRI contains approximately 17 miles of shoreline, beginning at the western jetty at Destin East Pass and extending to Test Area A-18 in Santa Rosa County. Of those 17 miles of shoreline, approximately 1/4 mile of shoreline has the potential to be impacted from construction activities. Data was analyzed for the 495 total nests on SRI for all 17 miles of shoreline. Of the 495 nests, approximately 9 were laid within a 1/4 mile distance of the Community Beach Center location (Figure 2). Therefore, the probability of a sea turtle laying a nest within this area within the next 15 years is less than 2 percent.

Due to Hurricane Ivan relocating the primary dune line farther back, sea turtle nesting area actually has been increased. Furthermore, by removing the old pilings, building and debris from the sand, potential sea turtle nesting area will further be increased (Figure 7). The net effect of demolishing and rebuilding the Community Beach Center farther north will be positive for the species as more beach front area is available for nesting turtles.

The following avoidance and minimization measures have been agreed upon during construction of the Community Beach Center:

1. All work completed between 1 May and 31 October will be done during daylight hours only.

2. No daytime (sunrise to sunset) beach driving or equipment operation related to the construction operations will occur on Gulf beachfront before completion of daily sea turtle nest survey from 15 May to 31 October.

3. All ruts on the beach (if any) will be removed before sunset. All rut removal will be performed in the late afternoon or as soon as the operations are completed, whichever is before sunset. Rut removal may be completed by hand using a heavy-duty "garden" rake that penetrates no more than 3 inches deep into the sand or by towing a section of weighted chain-link fence behind a vehicle. Additional hand-raking may be required to fill in very deep ruts. At no time shall raking be conducted within marked nest areas.

4. All lighting associated with construction activities or night security lights will be turtle compatible.

5. Although unlikely, if a sea turtle nest is laid within the proposed action area, all operations will cease and Eglin Natural Resources Section will be contacted immediately. The marked nest will be protected from potential threats associated with construction operations.

6. If a turtle crawl is seen on the beach with no associated marked nest, Natural Resources staff or appropriate turtle monitoring personnel shall be contacted immediately. Care shall be taken not to disturb the crawl and/or nest site.

7. No dune habitat or vegetation will be impacted by construction activities.

8. Eglin Natural Resources must ensure personnel involved in construction operations understand sea turtle protection and the specific requirements contained herein.

9. No activity is allowed on the dunes, vegetated or unvegetated, that are 5 feet or higher.

10. No equipment or vehicles are allowed on or within dune habitat (north of the primary dune line).

11. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in termination of all construction activities.

Additionally, the following management requirements associated with the design and construction of the Community Beach Center will be implemented by the proponent.

1. The seaward extent of the building is not seaward of the toe of the primary dunes. This will minimize the disruption to the dune habitat and continuity. This entails moving the building back a minimum of 165 feet landward (Figure 2).

2. The building will be raised in elevation approximately 10 feet and the asphalt under it removed.

3. All debris, structures, and asphalt seaward of the new building site will be removed.

4. A boardwalk from the facility to the beach will be constructed. The boardwalk will be constructed at a height to allow natural dune formation and growth to occur (about 3 feet above grade).

5. The dune habitat will be restored by planting native dune vegetation.

6. Appropriate habitat protection signage will be installed.

7. All lighting associated with the facility will be turtle compatible.

The main potential threats to sea turtles associated with the construction activities are beach disturbance, lighting and impediments on the beach. Because Eglin has agreed to the avoidance and minimization measures, as well as, management requirements above and the proposed action is in a small confined area, Eglin Natural Resources has determined that the proposed action is **not likely to adversely affect** sea turtles.

Piping Plover

Piping plovers use Gulf coast beaches during the months (mid-July through mid-May). The primary potential threats to the piping plover and critical habitat are from noise and habitat disturbances by foot and vehicle traffic. Although the potential does exist for some plovers to be impacted from daytime noise associated with the use of equipment to construct the Community Beach Center, displacement would be temporary and localized. The highest potential concentration of piping plovers on SRI is near the muddy flats on the north side of the SRI access road, which is well outside the footprint of the proposed action. Therefore, Eglin Natural Resources has determined that the proposed action is **not likely to adversely affect** piping plovers.

Within property administered by Eglin, piping plover critical habitat is situated on the north shore of SRI approximately 17 miles west of the proposed construction site. Because construction activities would not occur in or near designated critical habitat, the proposed activities will have **no effect** to designated piping plover critical habitat on SRI.

Florida Perforate Lichen

Cladonia populations exist on SRI North of Highway 98 near the Coast Guard station (Figure 2) and south of Highway 98 west of Test Area A-2 as well as north of the SRI access road between Test Sites A-10 and A-11. The population closest to the proposed construction site exists across Highway 98 and is well outside of the footprint. Therefore, Eglin Natural Resources has determined that the proposed action will have **no effect** on the Florida perforate lichen.

Shorebirds and Shorebird Nesting Areas

The proposed construction site is near Test Area A-3 and within close proximity to a large shorebird nesting area at the eastern end of the island. Some shorebirds around the construction site may be temporarily displaced as a result of noise from equipment and personnel. However, since personnel and equipment will only be in the area for a short duration, the Natural Resources Branch has determined that the proposed action will have a minimal, if any, impact on shorebirds and their nesting areas.

Santa Rosa Beach Mouse

It is unlikely that the construction of the Community Beach Center on SRI will have impacts on the Santa Rosa beach mouse. They are primarily nocturnal creatures and all work will occur during daylight hours. The construction site will be within a previously disturb area and no construction or activities will take place within the established dune system. Additionally, dune systems in this area were severely impacted by Hurricanes Ivan, Dennis and Katrina, thereby reducing suitable habitat for the species in this area. Therefore, Eglin Natural Resources has determined that construction of the Community Beach Center will have a minimal, if any, impact on the Santa Rosa Beach Mouse or its dune habitat.

Conclusion

As a result of the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures, management requirements for the construction activities and the conservation of beach habitat in the project area, the proposed action is not expected to jeopardize the continued existence of the sea turtles, piping plovers, and *Cladonia* on SRI.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified immediately if any of the actions considered in this proposed action are modified or if additional information on listed species becomes available, as a re-initiation of consultation may be required. If impacts to listed species occur beyond what has been considered in this assessment, all operations will cease and the Service will be notified. Any modifications or conditions resulting from consultation with the Service will be implemented prior to commencement of activities. Eglin Natural Resources believes this fulfills all requirements of the ESA and no further action is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or any of the proposed activities, please do not hesitate to contact either Mr. Bob Miller (850) 883-1153 or myself at (850) 882-8391.

Sincerely

STEPHEN M. SEIBER, GS-13

7 Attachments:
1. Figure 1
2. Figure 2
3. Figure 3
4. Figure 4
5. Figure 5
6. Figure 6
7. Figure 7

cc:
796 CES/CC
796 CES/CEO
96 CEG/CEVSP

REFERENCES:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI), unpublished data. 1998.

National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (NMFS and USFWS), 1991. Recovery Plan for U.S. Population of Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*). NMFS, Washington, D.C. 64pp.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) Fisheries , 2005. Office of Protected Resources, World Wide Web. http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/. April, 2005.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 2005. Office of Protected Resources Home Page, World Wide Web. http://endangered.fws.gov/wildlife.html#Species. April, 2005.

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Wilhelm, G. S. and J. R. Burkhalter, 1990. *Cladonia perforata*, the Northwest Florida Population. The Bryologist 93(1), pp. 66-68.

INFORMAL CONSULTATION REGARDING

IMPACTS TO FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES
RESULTING FROM CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMMUNITY BEACH CENTER
SANTA ROSA ISLAND, EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FL

Reviewed by:

Bob Miller — 10-6-05
BOB MILLER, GS-11 — Date
Endangered Species Biologist
Eglin Natural Resources Section

Bruce Hagedorn — 10-6-05
BRUCE W. HAGEDORN, GS-12 — Date
Supervisory Wildlife Biologist
Eglin Natural Resources Section

10-11-05
STEPHEN M. SEIBER, GS-13 — Date
Chief, Eglin Natural Resources Section

for Lawrence D. Kozella, P.E. — 10/7/05
EUGENE MOORER, JR — Date
796th Civil Engineer Squadron

USFWS CONCURRENCE:

Karl A. Carmody — 12/12/05
Project Leader — Date
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Panama City FL

FWS Log No. 4-P-05-198

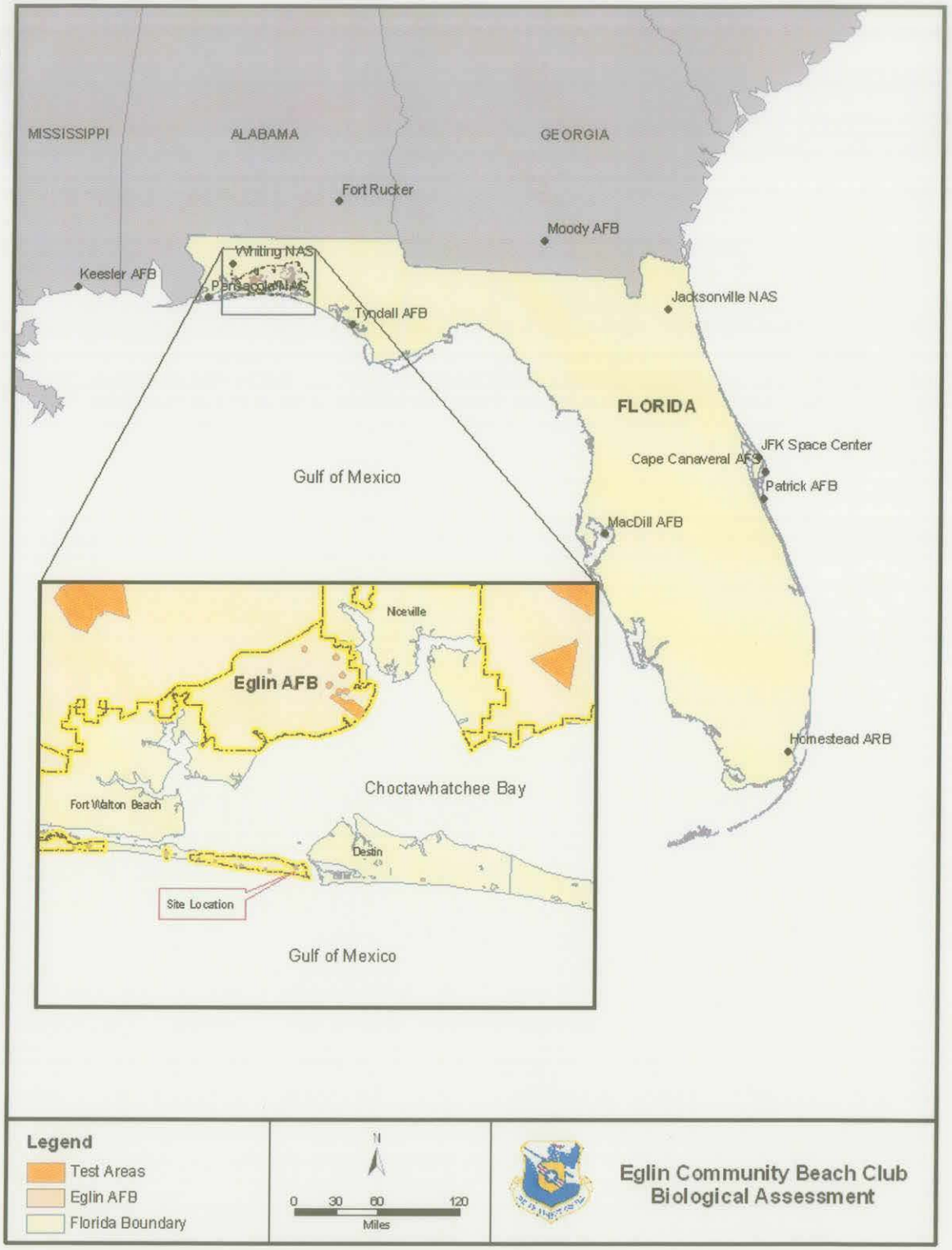

Figure 1. Location Map of Eglin AFB and Community Beach Center Area

Figure 2. Location Map of Eglin AFB and Community Beach Center Area

Figure 3. Pilings and Debris removed.

Figure 4. Building and pilings removed.

Figure 5. Site plan of the New Community Beach Center in relation to the old parking lot and new dune restoration line

Figure 6. Drawing of the New Community Beach Center.

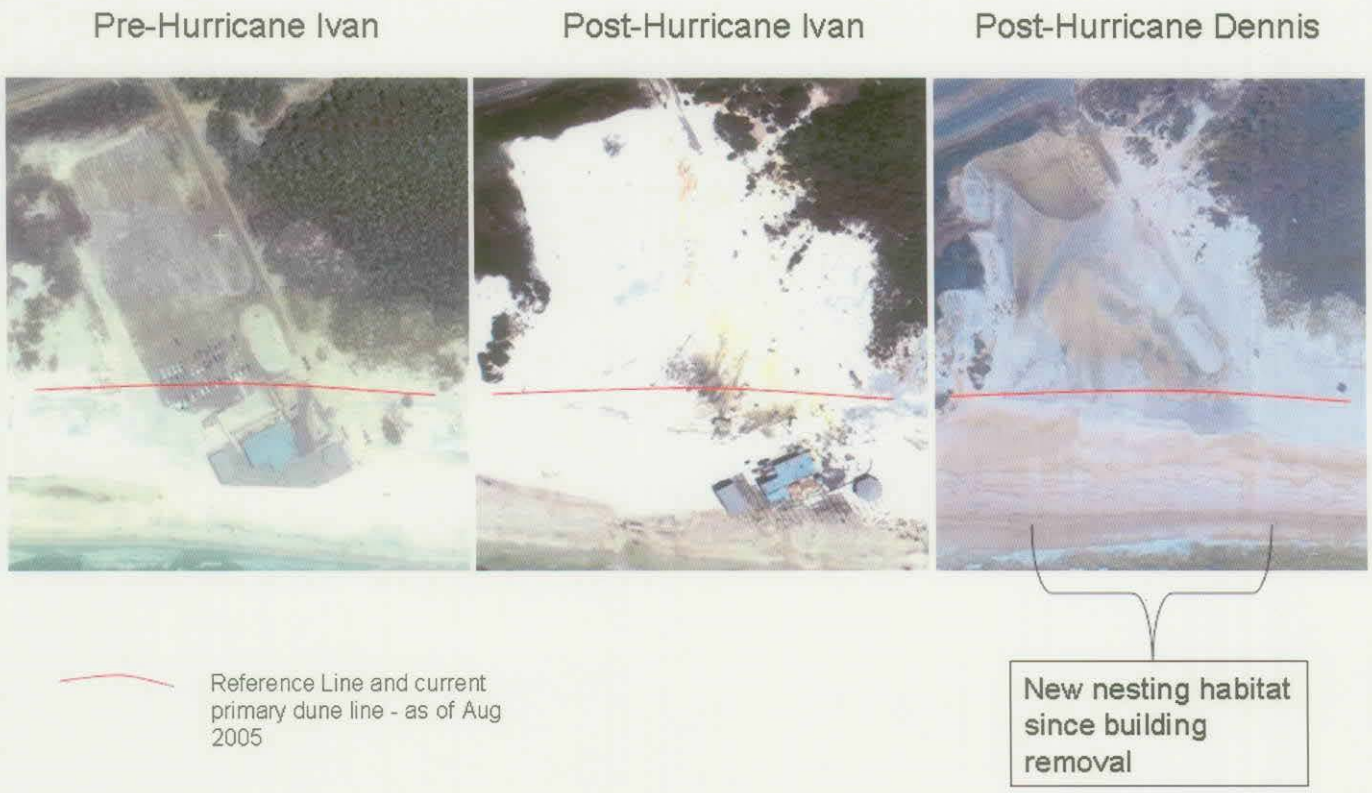

Figure 7. Aerial photos of area pre and post hurricane activity.

APPENDIX C

Public Comments

Public Notification

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Eglin Air Force Base announces the availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for RCS 04-899 & 05-350 Community Beach Center reconstruction for public review and comment.

The Proposed Action of RCS 04-899 & 05-350 Community Beach Center reconstruction," would be for the 796th Civil Engineer Squadron to reconstruct a Community Beach Center similar to, and 165 feet north of, the facility that was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan. The Center is to be located on the Gulf side of Santa Rosa Island, Okaloosa County, Florida, approximately 3,000 feet from the eastern tip of the island.

Your comments on this Draft EA are requested. Letters and other written or oral comments provided may be published in the Final EA. As required by law, comments will be addressed in the Final EA and made available to the public. Any personal information provided, including private addresses, will be used only to identify your desire to make a statement during the public comment period or to compile a mailing list to fulfill requests for copies of the Final EA or associated documents. However, only the names and respective comments of respondent individuals will be disclosed: personal home addresses and phone numbers will not be published in the Final EA.

Copies of the EA and FONSI may be reviewed at the Fort Walton Beach Public Library, 105 SE Miracle Strip Parkway, Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and Destin Public Library, 150 Sibert Avenue, Destin, Fla. Copies will be available for review from Oct. 31st, 2005 through Nov. 14th, 2005. Comments must be received by Nov. 17th, 2005.

For more information or to comment on these proposed actions, contact Mr. Mike Spaits, 96th Civil Engineer Group Environmental Public Affairs, 501 De Leon Street, Suite 101, Eglin AFB, Florida 32542-5133 or email: spaitsm@eglin.af.mil <mailto:spaitsm@eglin.af.mil> Tel: (850) 882-2878; Fax: (850) 882-3761

608930

NW FL DAILY NEWS, 31 Oct 05, p C3

MEMO

28 November 2005

FROM: 96th CEG/CEV-PA

TO: 96th CEG/CEVSP

SUBJECT: PUBLIC NOTICE "Community Beach Center reconstruction," Eglin AFB, Florida

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A public notice was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on Oct. 31st, 2005 to disclose completion of the Draft EA, selection of the preferred alternative, and request comments during the 15-day pre-decisional comment period.

The 15-day comment period ended on Nov. 14th, with the comments required to this office not later than Nov. 17th, 2005.

No comments were received during this period.

//SIGNED//
Mike Spaits
Public Information Specialist

Department of Environmental Protection

Jeb Bush
Governor

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Colleen M. Castille
Secretary

December 16, 2005

Mr. Dan Nichols, Chief
Environmental Stewardship Branch
Department of the Air Force
501 De Leon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB, FL 32542-5133

RE: Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment for Community Beach Center, Eglin Air Force Base – Okaloosa County, Florida
SAI #FL200510271628C

Dear Mr. Nichols:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated a review of the referenced federal activity.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) notes that any proposed development that results in the addition of permanent new impervious or semi-pervious material, such as gravel, will require stormwater quality treatment under Rule 62-25, *Florida Administrative Code* (*F.A.C.*). Please contact Mr. Cliff Street, P.E., in the DEP Northwest District Office in Pensacola at (850) 595-8300, ext. 1135, for additional information regarding stormwater permitting requirements. Additionally, the DEP advises that any activities with the potential to disturb one or more acres of land during construction will require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit pursuant to Rule 62-621, *F.A.C.* For NPDES permitting requirements, the applicant is advised to contact the DEP's NPDES Stormwater Section in Tallahassee at (850) 245-7522.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) notes that the proposed community beach center reconstruction project could impact 5.5 acres of coastal strand and beach habitat. Impacts to wildlife and their habitats will potentially occur, but can be minimized by avoiding construction between May and August; not allowing construction equipment to access the site from the beach; parking equipment on the old parking lot rather than on the beach; installing sea turtle-friendly lighting and window tinting; posting and restricting access to the portions of the beach when shorebirds and sea turtles are nesting; and prohibiting pets on the beach. If any gopher tortoises are found, the FWC should be contacted

for an appropriate permit before work proceeds. Please be advised that this federal consistency concurrence is conditioned upon compliance with the above minimization and avoidance recommendations and obtaining the appropriate permits required under Sections 372.072 – 372.0725, *Florida Statutes*. For further information and recommendations, please see the enclosed FWC letter.

The Florida Department of State (DOS) notes, based on the provided information, that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project. In the event that fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, such as prehistoric or historic artifacts, are encountered during construction activities, however, all ground-disturbing activities should cease and the applicant should contact the DOS Review and Compliance Section for further guidance. Please refer to the enclosed DOS comments for additional information.

Based on the information contained in the documentation submitted and the comments provided by our reviewing agencies, the state has determined that, at this stage, the proposed project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The applicant must, however, address the issues identified by DEP, FWC, and DOS staff prior to project implementation. The state's continued concurrence with the project will be based, in part, on the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews. The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during the environmental permitting stage.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed project. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Lori Cox at (850) 245-2187.

Sincerely,

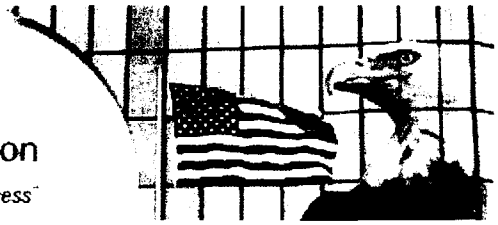
Sally B. Mann

Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/lec
Enclosures

cc: Darryl Boudreau, DEP, Northwest District
Mary Ann Poole, FWC
Scott Edwards, DOS

Florida
Department of Environmental Protection
"More Protection, Less Process"



Project Information	
Project:	FL200510271628C
Comments Due:	11/28/2005
Letter Due:	12/16/2005
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR COMMUNITY BEACH CENTER, EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE - OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - COMMUNITY BEACH CENTER, EGLIN AFB - OKALOOSA CO.
CFDA #:	12.200

Agency Comments:

WEST FLORIDA RPC - WEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

No Comment

OKALOOSA - OKALOOSA COUNTY

No Comment

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The proposed reconstruction of the community beach center could impact 5.5 acres of coastal strand and beach habitat. Impacts to wildlife and their habitat will potentially occur but can be minimized by avoiding construction between May and August, not allowing construction equipment to access the site from the beach, parking equipment on the old parking lot and not the beach, installing sea turtle-friendly lighting and window tinting, posting and restricting access to the portions of the beach when shorebirds and sea turtles are nesting, and prohibiting pets on the beach. If any gopher tortoises are found, the FWC should be contacted for an appropriate permit before work proceeds. The project is conditionally consistent with our authorities under the Florida Coastal Management Program if the applicant complies with the minimization or avoidance recommendations, as stated above, or obtains the necessary permits required under sections 372.072-372.0725, Florida Statutes.

STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Though DOS staff has determined that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed project, in the event that fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, such as prehistoric or historic artifacts, are encountered during construction activities, all ground-disturbing activities should cease and the applicant should contact the DOS Review and Compliance Section for further guidance.

TRANSPORTATION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Released Without Comment

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

DEP notes that any proposed development which results in the addition of permanent new impervious or semi-pervious material (such as gravel), will require stormwater quality treatment under Rule 62-25, F.A.C. Please contact Mr. Cliff Street, P.E., in the DEP Northwest District Office in Pensacola at 850-595-8300, ext. 1135 for additional information regarding stormwater permitting requirements. Additionally, the DEP advises that any activities with the potential to disturb one or more acres of land during construction will require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit pursuant to Chapter 62-621, F.A.C. For NPDES permitting requirements, the applicant is advised to contact the NPDES Stormwater Section in Tallahassee at (850) 245-7522.

NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD - NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

No Comment

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

December 15, 2005

Ms. Lauren Milligan, Clearinghouse Coordinator
Florida State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Mail Station 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Re: SAI #FL200510271628C, Okaloosa County, Department of the Air Force - Draft Environmental Assessment for Community Beach Center, Eglin Air Force Base

Dear Ms. Milligan,

The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Habitat Conservation Scientific Services Section, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has coordinated agency review of the Department of the Air Force Community Beach Center Draft Environmental Assessment and provides the following comments and recommendations in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Background

On November 4, 2005, the FWC received the Clearinghouse notice with a draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for this project. The proposed Community Beach Center was originally the NCO Beach Club, a military gathering facility on Okaloosa Island that was destroyed by Hurricane Opal on October 4, 1995. The structure was rebuilt and renamed the Community Beach Facility (CBF). The CBF was severely damaged by Hurricane Georges on September 28, 1998, and subsequently repaired. On September 19, 2004, Hurricane Ivan destroyed the CBF once again. The purpose of this project is to once again rebuild the CBF and rename it the Community Beach Center (CBC).

Project Description

The preferred alternative (Alternative C) for the currently proposed project would involve construction of a 10,000-square-foot, single-floor, wood frame structure elevated on pilings similar to local "beach-style" businesses and residences. It would include covered pavilions, elevated laminated timber deck walkways, and bathroom/dressing areas. The building would be constructed 165 feet north of the previous Beach Center and above the primary dune line. When funding permits, an additional 6,500-square-foot structure that would support retail and dining facilities would be added to the site.

Potentially Affected Resources

The proposed project is located in 8.5 acres of Coastal Strand and Beach habitat types. The particular site of the project is classified as High Impact Urban, due to previous construction. The habitat surrounding the site is dominated by sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), greenbriar (*Smilax* spp.), woody goldenrod (*Chrysoma pauciflosculosa*), rosemary (*Ceratiola ericoides*), and sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*).

State listed species potentially occurring on-site or within 1,000 feet as indicated by the FWC's GIS wildlife databases include gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*; Species of Special Concern; [SSC]), eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*; Threatened [T]), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*; Endangered [E]), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*; T), snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*; T), least tern (*Sterna antillarum*; T), and Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*; SSC).

Potential Effects of the Proposal

The proposed project has the potential for direct and indirect effects that could adversely impact any of the above species. The timing of project construction is a particular concern due to the potential disturbance to nesting shorebirds and sea turtles. Listed species of shorebirds (snowy plover and least tern) and sea turtles are known to nest on the beach directly in front and to the west and east of the proposed CBC site. The portion of Okaloosa Island where the CBC would be reconstructed is an important breeding site for least terns and snowy plovers in northwest Florida (Chase and Gore 1989). Snowy plovers are especially sensitive to human disturbance during the nesting season and will abandon beaches that are frequented by humans. This loss of nesting habitat has led to the apparent decline of snowy plovers breeding in the southeast (Chase and Gore 1989). Recent surveys by the FWC indicate a 66 percent decline in the number of breeding pairs at the East Pass site (OKAL-15), located between the proposed CBC site and East Pass (FWC unpublished data 2002). The critical nesting season for these birds occurs between the months of March and August.

At least four species of sea turtles have been documented nesting in this area (FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute unpublished data [2004]). To avoid impacts to nesting sea turtles, we recommend that no nighttime construction activity occur between May 1 and August 31 and that no vehicles access the site from the beach. Approved sea turtle lighting and window tinting on all windows should be applied to prevent disorientation of hatchlings. We recommend that bonfires, parties, and nest searching by untrained personnel be prohibited during the nesting season.

We also recommend that building activity be confined to as small a footprint as possible in the area of habitat already disturbed by past building and rebuilding. Vehicles, construction materials, and machinery should be stored on the old parking lot and access to the site should be from U.S. Highway 98 only. Beach access should be prohibited to prevent possible take of these species. We also recommend that, if possible, building activity should take place between September and February to avoid impacts to nesting sea turtles, least terns, and snowy plovers. Construction activities outside this timeframe may require an incidental take permit. If the project is expected to disturb, harm, result in capture, or take of state-listed species, their nests, or eggs, the applicant should visit http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/ for information on permit application requirements, and contact the Wildlife Permit Coordinator within the Division of Habitat and Species Conservation with specific permitting questions at (850) 488-3831. Once the center is built, we also recommend that the nesting areas for shorebirds be posted and fenced or roped during the breeding season. If possible, the entire tip of the island from the Community Beach Center to East Pass should be posted as "No Trespass" during the nesting season. We also

recommend that pets not be allowed on the beach at any time, and that an education campaign be initiated to inform military personnel of the importance of this site to threatened and endangered species.

Summary

The proposed reconstruction of the community beach center could impact 8.8 acres of coastal strand and beach habitat. Impacts to wildlife and their habitat will potentially occur but can be minimized by avoiding construction between May and August, not allowing construction equipment to access the site from the beach, parking equipment on the old parking lot and not the beach, installing sea turtle-friendly lighting and window tinting, posting and restricting access to the portions of the beach when shorebirds and sea turtles are nesting, and prohibiting pets on the beach. If any gopher tortoises are found, the FWC should be contacted for an appropriate permit before work proceeds. The project is conditionally consistent with our authorities under the Florida Coastal Management Program if the applicant complies with the minimization or avoidance recommendations, as stated above, or obtains the necessary permits required under sections 372.072-372.0725, Florida Statutes. If you or your staff would like to coordinate further on the recommendations contained in this report, please contact me at 850-488-6661, or email me at maryann.poole@MyFWC.com, and I will be glad to help make the necessary arrangements. If your staff has any specific questions regarding our comments, I encourage them to contact Mr. Arlo Kane at our office in Panama City (850-265-3677; email arlo.kane@myfwc.com).

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Poole, Director
Office of Policy and Stakeholder Coord.

map/ahk
ENV 1-3-2
FI200510271628CJSS.doc
CC: Mr. John Himes, FWC, Panama City
Mr. Arlo Kane, FWC, Panama City

References Cited

Chase, C.A. and J.A. Gore. 1989. Snowy Plover Breeding Distribution. Final Perf. Rep., Nongame Wildl. Sect., Fla Game and Fresh Water Fish Comm., Tallahassee. 23pp.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Glenda E. Hood
Secretary of State
DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Ms. Lauren Milligan
Director, Florida State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Mail Station 47
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

November 9, 2005

RE: DHR Project File Number: 2005-11482
Received by DHR October 31, 2005
SAI #: 200510271628C
Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment for Community Beach Center
Eglin Air Force Base, Okaloosa County

Dear Ms. Milligan:

Our office received and reviewed the above referenced project in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* (Public Law 89-665), as amended in 1992, and *36 C.F.R., Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties*, Chapter 267, *Florida Statutes*, Florida's Coastal Management Program, and implementing state regulations, for possible impact to historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value. The State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) is to advise and assist state and federal agencies when identifying historic properties, assessing effects upon them, and considering alternatives to avoid or minimize adverse effects.

Based on the information provided, it is the opinion of this office that no historic properties will be affected by this undertaking. However, if fortuitous finds or unexpected discoveries, such as prehistoric or historic artifacts, including pottery or ceramics, stone tools or metal implements, or other physical remains that could be associated with Native American cultures, or early colonial or American settlement are encountered at any time within the project site area, the project should cease all activities involving subsurface disturbance in the immediate vicinity of such discoveries. The grantee, or other designee, should contact the SHPO Review and Compliance Section at (850) 245-6333 or (800) 847-7278, as well as the appropriate permitting agency office. Project activities should not resume without verbal and/or written authorization from the SHPO. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities, all work shall stop immediately and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Section 872.05, *Florida Statutes*.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Scott Edwards, Historic Preservationist, by electronic mail *sedwards@dos.state.fl.us*, or at 850-245-6333 or 800-847-7278.

Sincerely,

Frederick P. Gaske, Director, and
State Historic Preservation Officer

AF Response to Clearinghouse comments:
Avoiding construction between May and August may not be practical as it would either mean delaying construction until September or having a four month hiatus in construction. Eglin intends to complete construction below the primary dune line, *i.e.*, the boardwalk portion of the project, before turtle nesting season begins in May. Construction activities thereafter would not, therefore, affect nesting turtles since they do not venture that far inland.

See also the avoidance and minimization requirements listed in the BA (Appendix B).