UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
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Tampa Regulatory Office

January 25, 2012 F/SER46:DR/mt

Colonel Alfred A. Pantano, Jr.
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
10117 Princess Palm Drive, Suite 120
Tampa, Florida 33610-8300

Dear Colonel Pantano:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the public notice dated November 28, 2011, regarding permit application number SAJ-2011-00511 (IP-TEH). The Pasco County Board of County Commissioners and the Florida Department of Transportation propose the construction of an extension of Ridge Road from the intersection of Ridge Road and Decubellis/Moon Lake Road (CR 587) to the intersection of Land O'Lakes Boulevard (US 41) and Connerton Boulevard in Pasco County, Florida. The extension would consist of a 4.21 mile-long, four-lane segment and a 3.44 mile-long, two-lane segment.

NMFS staff conducted a site inspection of the project area on December 2, 2011, to assess potential concerns related to living aquatic resources within the Pithlachascotee River, the Anclote River, and the Gulf of Mexico. The areas adjacent to the proposed project are principally forested palustrine wetlands, and residential properties. It does not appear that the project will directly impact any NMFS trust resources. However, the road extension would cross upstream portions of the Pithlachascotee and Anclote Rivers, which drain to the Gulf of Mexico. The road extension could result in an increase in the amount of sediment, metals, oil and grease, and other pollutants reaching estuarine and marine habitats utilized by marine fishery resources at the mouth of the Pithlachascotee and Anclote Rivers and in the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, NMFS recommends that stormwater treatment systems be designed to prevent degraded water from reaching estuarine and marine habitats. In addition, best management practices should be employed during road construction to prevent siltation of these aquatic habitats.

Additionally, NMFS is concerned that the new road may alter the local hydrology with potential downstream effects to estuarine habitats. It is NMFS' understanding that the only compensatory mitigation proposed at present is preservation. Preservation would not offset the project's proposed wetland impacts and would result in a net loss of wetland functions in the area.

If you have questions regarding our views on this project, please contact Dr. Dave Rydene in our St. Petersburg, Florida office. Dr. Rydene may be reached at the letterhead address or by calling (727) 824-5379.

Sincerely,

Virginia M. Fay

Virginia M. Fay
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division

cc:
F/SER4
F/SER46 - Rydene

cc: email
EPA (Madolyn Dominy)
FL DEP (Lauren Milligan)
FL FWCC (FWCC Conservation Planning Services)
USFWS (Jane Monaghan)
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