

EVALUATION OF NO MATERIAL CHANGE TO PROJECT ELEMENTS OF THE FINAL PROGRAMMATIC AND PHASE III EARLY RESTORATION PLAN AND EARLY RESTORATION PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT: RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER ELEMENT OF THE GULF STATE PARK ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

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I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the federal and state natural resource trustee agencies (Trustees) prepared a Programmatic and Phase III Early Restoration Plan and Early Restoration Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Phase III ERP/PEIS) in June 2014. The Phase III ERP/PEIS considers programmatic alternatives to restore natural resources, ecological services, and recreational use services injured or lost as a result of the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill and 44 specific early restoration projects that are consistent with the proposed early restoration program alternatives. The Trustees signed a Record of Decision (ROD) selecting these 44 projects for implementation on October 2, 2014.

One of the 44 projects selected is the Gulf State Park Enhancement Project. This multi-component project includes (1) rebuilding the Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center; (2) building an Interpretive Center; (3) building a Research and Education Center; (4) enhancing visitor amenities, including trail improvements and extensions, overlooks, interpretive kiosks and signage, rest areas, bike racks, bird watching blinds, or other visitor enhancements; and (5) restoring and enhancing degraded dune habitat.

Since the ROD for the Final Deepwater Horizon Programmatic and Phase III Early Restoration Plan and Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) was signed, a component of the Gulf State Park Enhancement Project, the Research and Education Facility (now called the Learning Campus), was refined. The remainder of this memo is focused only on the Learning Campus component of the project; all other project elements remain unchanged or were addressed in the Alabama Trustee Implementation Group Final Restoration Plan I/EIS, which was completed in early 2017.

Project planning for the Learning Campus resulted in changes to the project location and design. The Trustees are required to conduct a project review, as outlined in Section 9.2 of the ROD for the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and Section 9.5.2 of the Trustee Council Standard Operating Procedures for Implementation of the Natural Resource Restoration for the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) Oil Spill, if there are material changes to Phase III early restoration projects as a result of outstanding compliance requirements or changes in environmental conditions, design, or other reasons. The review is conducted to determine whether additional restoration planning and environmental reviews, including opportunities for public comment, are necessary. The Trustees first determine whether the change to the project is consistent with the environmental review in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS or if there are substantial changes that are relevant to environmental concerns. The Trustees then assess whether or not there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that were not addressed in the impact analysis of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS (40 C.F.R. § 1502.9 (c)). Finally, the Trustees evaluate whether changes to the project result in changes to the project description in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS that would affect their selection under the OPA.

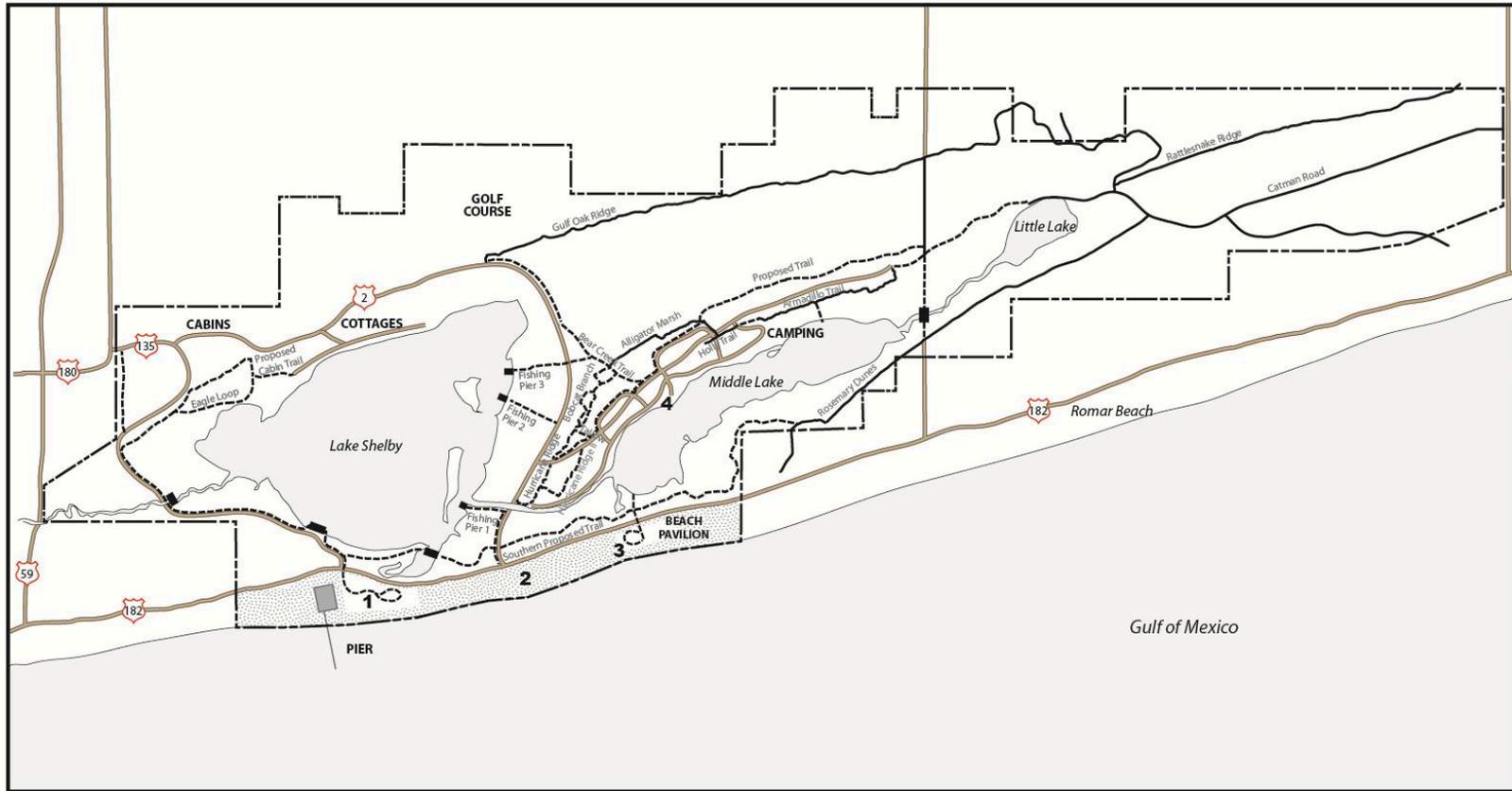
The Trustees conclude that the changes to the Learning Campus project elements are consistent with the environmental review in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and that there are no significant new circumstances that have not already been addressed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS document. Further, the Trustees conclude that the project with the design refinements is consistent with the selection of the project under OPA in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and does not require further evaluation. These conclusions are discussed further below.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT CHANGE

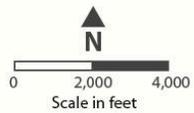
Since the completion of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, additional engineering and design studies have been conducted for the Learning Campus, including additional background studies to determine the most effective project design to provide interactive educational experiences to the public while reducing

long-term energy consumption and facilities maintenance expenses by reducing the square footage of space requiring air conditioning. During this process, it was determined that this goal would be best achieved by changing the design from a single multi-story building to a series of open air structures and enclosed buildings. This redesign, which would increase the area of disturbance at the project site (by approximately 0.82 acre), would have a number of benefits, including moving the facility away from the shoreline, allowing access to the facility without having to go through the camping check in, and providing more space for outdoor education and recreation associated with the facility.

The site evaluated in the Final Phase III ERP/EIS for the Research and Education Center is shown below as location 4 in Figure 1. When the redesigned Learning Campus was considered on the original conceptual location, a number of constraints were identified, including not enough area, possible development in wet areas with poor drainage, and concerns over how visitors would access the site. Based on these limitations, an alternative site was found in a more upland area with a connection to the park headquarters, where it could take advantage of existing infrastructure. Figure 2 illustrates the wet conditions on the original site and the upland location of the new site. An overview of the original and proposed locations are shown in Figure 3, with site plans in Figures 4 and 5.



Gulf State Park Project Locations



LEGEND

- Gulf State Park (6,150 acres)
- Existing Road
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail Improvement
- Proposed Pier/Bridge
- 1** Proposed Lodge
- 2** Proposed Dune Restoration Zone
- 3** Proposed Interpretive Center
- 4** Proposed Research/Education Facility

FIGURE 1. GULF STATE PARK PROJECT ELEMENT LOCATIONS FROM THE FINAL PHASE III ERP/EIS



FIGURE 2. WET CONDITIONS ON THE ORIGINAL PROPOSED LEARNING CAMPUS SITE (TOP PHOTO) AND DRY, UPLANDS CONDITIONS ON THE NEW PROPOSED SITE (MIDDLE AND BOTTOM PHOTO)



Learning Campus Location
Gulf State Park Enhancement Project



FIGURE 3. ORIGINAL AND NEW PROPOSED LOCATIONS OF THE LEARNING CAMPUS

Based on the engineering and design conducted for the Learning Campus, the following project changes are proposed:

- Move the location of the Learning Campus from near the existing Nature Center to the area just west of the existing park headquarters. (The original site location is shown on Figure 1. Figure 3 displays the new site location and design.) The new location would provide easier access because users would not have to check in through the campground entrance.
- Modify the design from the one multi-story building described in Chapter 11 of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS to include a series of unenclosed classrooms/labs and meeting spaces and a series of enclosed buildings that make up the dormitory.
- Modify the square footage of the enclosed area from the original design of 27,350 square feet to the new design, which would include 19,180 square feet of enclosed area with air conditioning.
- Use a smaller HVAC system than originally proposed because more of the facility would be open air, rather than enclosed, resulting in the need for less air conditioning.
- Increase the impervious area by 0.82 acre.
- Use the more wooded and vegetated environment of the new Learning Campus site to provide students with multiple opportunities to connect with the environment and reinforce the educational component of the Learning Campus by allowing the entire site to function as an outdoor classroom.



FIGURE 4. ORIGINAL SITE LOCATION AND DESIGN

Suggested Location

- Adjacent to park HQ, shared services and drives
- Adjacent to maintenance and woods cabins, shared services and drives
- Previously disturbed area
- Area Seemingly less likely to have sensitive cultural and ecological resources

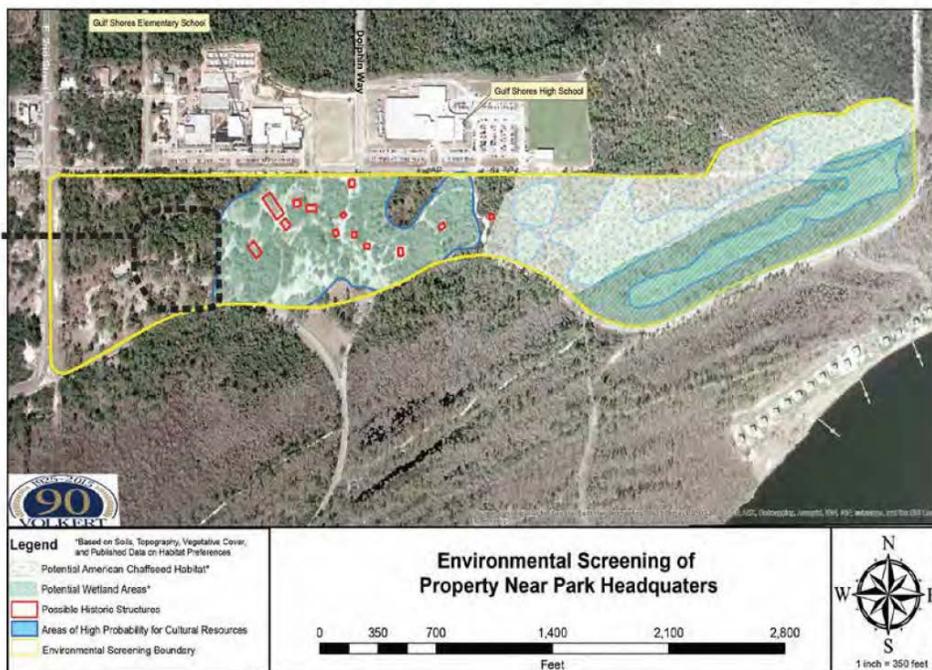


FIGURE 5. MODIFIED SITE LOCATION AND DESIGN

III. DETERMINATION OF NEED FOR ADDITIONAL NEPA ANALYSIS

A thorough environmental review, including review under applicable environmental laws and regulations, as described in Section 11.7 of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, indicates that minor, adverse impacts to some resource categories may occur; no major, adverse impacts are anticipated to result as a

result of the design and location change of the Learning Campus. The impact analysis from Section 11.7 remains true given the project's final design. Table 1 below details each resource area, the findings under the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, and how those findings change (or do not change) for the new location and design of the Learning Campus. In addition, best management practices (BMPs) and measures to avoid or minimize adverse impacts described in Section 11.7 of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS will still be implemented. The change in the project does not add to the cumulative effects beyond those evaluated in the original project to necessitate additional evaluation or a change in the previous finding.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED IMPACTS AND CONSIDERATION OF RESOURCES THAT WERE NOT GREATLY AFFECTED DUE TO THE RELOCATION

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
Geology and Substrates	<p>Geology: The proposed research and education facility is not located near sensitive geological areas. Construction of the proposed project would disturb soil (discussed below), but not geologic resources. Consequently, the research and education facility (less than an acre of disturbance) would have no anticipated effects on sensitive geological areas because there are no sensitive geologic resources present in the proposed project area.</p> <p>Soils: the proposed project would require moving soil. Any time soil is disturbed, there is an increased potential for erosion if the displaced soil is not properly secured using BMPs. Environmental permitting would require Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) plans to obtain building permits from the municipality. E&S plans ensure that erosion and sedimentation are minimized by using BMPs. Typical examples of BMPs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cordoning off the work area with silt fences. • Covering piles of removed soil with sod to keep it in place. • Salvaging and reusing topsoil either in place or in other project areas. • Revegetating the area so that the area of bare soil remaining after construction is eliminated. <p>Because E&S BMPs would be used during all aspects of construction and rehabilitation, impacts would be small and localized, and soil characteristics at project sites would not change. Therefore, it is anticipated that impacts to soil would be adverse but short-term and minor. Operation All Project Elements. After construction and final grading is completed, bare soils would be revegetated to prevent erosion. During operation there would be no adverse effect to soils because there would be no ground-disturbing activities.</p>	<p>Impacts on geology and soils would be similar to those noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Geological resources would not be disturbed because the proposed new site is not located near sensitive geological resources. While the amount of ground disturbance would increase by approximately 0.82 acre, the total area to be disturbed would be approximately 1.3 acres, over a 10-acre campus. The same permitting and BMP requirements as noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS would be put into place to minimize disturbance; impacts at the new site would be short term, minor, and adverse, as originally analyzed.</p>
Hydrology and Water Quality-Wetlands	<p>Construction: Although soil mapping indicates there are tidal marshes in the vicinity of the research and education facility, the nature of this area has changed since the 1964 mapping, and it does not appear that tidal</p>	<p>Construction and Operation: The proposed Learning Campus would be located in an upland area, next to the park headquarters building. No wetlands are present in this area;</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>marshes are currently present at the site. Consequently, there would be no anticipated impacts to wetlands from construction, because no wetlands are found in the vicinity of these proposed project.</p> <p>Operation: There would be no anticipated impacts to wetlands from operation of the research and education facility because the wetlands on site would not be impacted by the proposed development (Volkert 2003).</p>	<p>therefore, there would be no construction or operational impacts on wetlands at the new proposed site. These findings are the same as those for the original site in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>
Hydrology and Water Quality – Surface Water	<p>Construction: During construction of the proposed research and education facility, BMPs such as silt fencing, covering bare soils to prevent erosion, and reclaiming topsoil, would be employed to keep soil from entering into the lakes or the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, pollution discharge permits would be acquired to protect water quality. Construction of the proposed project elements would contain design elements and require permits to maintain water quality and prevent excess soil from entering the waters; however, failure of the measures implemented under BMPs is possible if they are not properly maintained and inspected. As such, impacts to the Gulf of Mexico or the park’s lakes from the construction of the research and education facility could be adverse but localized, short term, and minor. Any impacts would be small and localized, and would quickly become undetectable in the context of the larger water body, with the likelihood of failing BMPs minimized by regular inspection.</p> <p>Operation: The project would be constructed to include stormwater management plans to properly treat increased runoff so that excess pollutants do not enter surface waters as well as use pervious pavement where applicable, thus there would be nominal impacts to surface water.</p>	<p>Construction and Operation: Impacts on surface waters would be similar to those noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Although impervious cover would increase by 0.82 acre, the Learning Campus would be located in an upland area where the potential for surface water impacts would be lower than the original site analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. The same permitting requirements would apply, and all BMPs described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS would be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts on surface waters during construction and operation, including a stormwater management plan. Therefore, impacts on surface waters would remain short term, minor, and adverse and would likely be less than those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS because of the site’s upland location.</p>
Hydrology and Water Quality Water Quality	<p>Construction: Water quality would be affected slightly during construction of the proposed facilities. Prohibitions on the use of certain fill materials, such as red clay, and the highly permeable nature of the majority of the soils within Gulf State Park (GSP) would prevent pollutants and sediment-enriched stormwater from reaching the Gulf of Mexico through runoff or via groundwater infiltration. Percolation through the permeable soils would also filter pollutants, preventing them from reaching groundwater. E&S BMPs, as described above, would be installed during construction to control sedimentation, thus maintaining water quality. Elements</p>	<p>Construction and Operation: Similar to surface water, impacts on water quality would be similar to those noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Although impervious cover would increase by 0.82 acre, the Learning Campus would be located in an upland area where the potential for impacts on surface water and water quality would be lower than the original site analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. The same permitting requirements (such as NPDES) would apply, and all BMPs described in the Phase III ERP/PEIS would be implemented to</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>associated with the proposed projects would require an National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Although it is expected that small quantities of runoff would occur from construction activities associated with the proposed project elements, NPDES permits require establishment of BMPs during construction. These BMPs would ensure that measures are taken to maintain the quality of water discharged from a construction site so that adjacent waters such as lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies do not receive an excessive amount of pollution that would change their water quality status. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) requires incorporating the following components into an NPDES BMP plan (USEPA 2012):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal oversight • Construction site planning and management • Erosion control • Runoff control • Sediment control • Proper materials management <p>Additionally, the NPDES permit would require disposal of all construction waste and excavated material according to state and local requirements. The contractor would also be required to use legally operating landfills for the disposal of project-generated waste materials. Elements associated with the proposed projects would result in small, localized changes in water quality. Impacts would occur during construction activities, and would become undetectable quickly after construction is complete because minor runoff from construction activities would cease and erosion control measures would be established after final grading. State water quality standards would not be exceeded. Therefore, impacts to surface water and water quality from construction would be adverse but short term and minor.</p> <p>Operation: After construction and final grading, permanent erosion control</p>	<p>avoid or minimize impacts on surface waters during construction and operation, including a stormwater management plan. Therefore, impacts on water quality would remain short term, minor, and adverse and would likely be less than those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS because of the site's upland location.</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>measures, such as vegetating bare soil and sensitive areas, would be employed. Current waste disposal practices, which consist of utilizing public sewers for human waste, would continue, and dumping regulations would remain in place. Therefore, there would be no anticipated impacts on water quality during the operation phase of the proposed project.</p>	
Hydrology and Water Quality-floodplains	<p>Construction: Flooding in GSP and the areas adjacent to the park is not from rivers flowing over their banks; instead, the majority of flooding is from tidal surges produced by tropical storms and hurricanes. Because all of the structures constructed as part of the proposed project would be built on piles to allow flood waters to flow unobstructed beneath them, there would be no obstructions or encroachments on the current floodplain. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in an increase in flood levels within the park or the adjacent community during a 100-year flood discharge.</p> <p>Operation: The research and education facility would be built on piles so that flood waters would flow beneath it. Thus, this building would not raise base flood elevation. Therefore, operation of this element of the proposed project would not have impacts on the floodplain or coastal zone.</p>	<p>Construction and Operation: The Learning Campus would not be built on piles because it would be located in an upland area of GSP, where it would be removed from potential flood risks. This site is out of the floodplain. As a result, construction and operation of the Learning Center would not have any effect on the floodplain. The modified project design would comply with all required permits and would not result in changes to the coastal zone; therefore, impacts on the floodplain or the coastal zone are not anticipated and would be less than those analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<p>Construction: Construction of the research and education facility would require earth-moving activities and involve diesel-powered construction equipment. Exhaust from non-road construction equipment would result in emissions of air pollutants during various phases of the construction period. Construction activities associated with the proposed project are expected to be typical of other similar construction projects and would include mobilization of equipment, site preparation, delivery of construction materials using heavy-duty trucks, pile driving, placing foundations, pouring concrete and installing building components, and providing utility connections. During the various phases of construction, on-site equipment may include a hydraulic crane, front-end loaders, backhoes, concrete mixing and pumping trucks, generators and compressors, and welding machines. Because construction activities are expected to be temporary and the use and number of construction equipment would be limited, operation of the construction equipment</p>	<p>Construction: While the building footprint for the Learning Campus would be larger, the overall facility size is similar to that proposed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. The time required for construction and the mix of construction equipment required are expected to be the same as originally proposed; therefore, the modified project design is not anticipated to result in increased impacts on air quality and GHG emissions during construction.</p> <p>Operation: Similar to the research and education facility, the Learning Campus would consume fossil fuels for heating and hot water, and impacts would be similar to those found in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Additionally, the Learning Campus would be designed with LEED specifications to minimize GHG emissions during operation. The one level and open-air design of the Learning Center would reduce the need for HVAC and air</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>would be unlikely to result in high emissions. Construction activities such as excavation, grading, soil handling, and vehicles traveling on dirt road surfaces have the potential to create fugitive dust emissions. Fugitive dust can also be generated by and from wind erosion of stockpiled materials. If necessary to control dust emissions, contractors would be required to implement fugitive dust control measures, such as watering exposed areas, installing dust covers on trucks, and using tracking mats to reduce dust emissions from truck tires. Dust generated by construction on sandy soils consists of mostly relatively large particles that would settle within a short distance from the construction activities. Other emission reduction measures, if necessary, could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel in off-road construction equipment with engine horsepower (HP) rating of 60 HP and above. • Limiting unnecessary idling times on diesel-powered engines to 3 minutes. • Locating diesel-powered exhausts away from fresh air intakes. • Controlling dust related to construction site activities through a Soil Erosion Sediment Control Plan that includes spraying of a suppressing agent on dust piles (non-hazardous, biodegradable). • Covering trucks hauling loose materials. <p>Construction of the proposed project is expected to cause short-term minor adverse impacts on air quality. Impacts on air quality would be localized and temporary, such that the emissions would not exceed the USEPA's de minimis criteria for a general conformity determination (either for each construction project separately or in combination should construction schedules overlap); therefore, impacts would be adverse but short term and minor.</p> <p>Operation: The research and education facility would consume fossil fuels for heating and hot water. Electricity requirements would be met by local suppliers and would not be generated in GSP. Operation of all proposed</p>	<p>conditioning, resulting in smaller HVAC units than on the original proposed site. Therefore, impacts during operation would be the same or less than those evaluated in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>project elements would not increase fugitive dust, and no impacts to atmospheric concentrations of dust are anticipated. Impacts from stationary source emissions during operation would be long term and adverse but minor because the impact on air quality may be measurable. These would be localized and temporary, and emissions would not exceed the USEPA's de minimis criteria for a general conformity determination. Operation of the research and education facility is expected to draw visitors who might not otherwise visit the park and would therefore increase traffic to the park. However, due to the size and nature of the research and education facility, traffic is not expected to result in LOS deterioration at intersections in the park or along approaches to the intersections.</p>	
Noise	<p>Construction: Construction activities generate variable noise levels depending on the type, number, and operating schedules of equipment. Construction activities are usually executed in stages, each having its own combination of equipment and noise characteristics and magnitudes. Construction activities associated with the proposed project are expected to be similar to those of other similar construction projects and would include mobilization of equipment, site preparation, pile driving, placing foundations, pouring concrete and installing building components, and providing utility connections. The loudest noise sources expected from construction of the facilities is from driving foundation piles using a pile driver, earth-moving activities using front-end loaders, and concrete pouring using concrete mixing and pumping trucks. This construction work would occur during the early stages of project and would be short term and temporary. Other noise-generating construction activities could include using cranes to erect steel superstructure components and to install exterior building components, such as chillers, wall curtains, walls, and windows. Construction of the research and education facility would occur next to the Campground Pavilion, which includes the swimming pool and other recreation functions. Visitors in the pool would be approximately 250 feet from the nearest construction activity. Construction activities necessary to support the proposed project would result in temporary noise increases. Construction may be less than two years.</p>	<p>Construction: Nearby receptors at the proposed new location include park headquarters. However, unlike the original site, the Learning Campus would not be adjacent to the campground and nature center. This would result in less disturbance to park visitors during construction than was anticipated in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. The duration of construction and the noise impacts would be the same.</p> <p>Operation: Similar to the original site, the new site would result in minor, long-term impacts from noise. Increased noise generated by operation of the proposed project could attract attention, but its contribution to the soundscape would be localized and not of consequence, nor would it affect current user activities. Operation of this facility would be in character with the operations of park headquarters already occurring in the area. Impacts would be the same as noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	<p>Operation: A project could have a noise effect if it generates new sources of substantial noise, increases the intensity or duration of noise levels to sensitive receptors, or results in exposure of more people to unacceptable levels of noise. The research and education facility would not generate high levels of noise during operation and would not expose park visitors, employees, or receptors outside the park boundaries to high levels of ambient noise. Operation of the proposed project would result in minor, long-term impacts. Increased noise generated by operation of the proposed project could attract attention, but its contribution to the soundscape would be localized and not of consequence, nor would it affect current user activities.</p>	
Biological Environment - Vegetation	<p>Construction: Construction of the research and education facility would involve removing vegetation near the proposed project elements. Construction equipment would injure vegetation as it maneuvered through the work areas. However, after final grading is completed, bare areas would be replanted with native vegetation to stabilize soils. Near the research and education facility, only maintained lawn would be disturbed. Therefore, impacts to vegetation during construction would be adverse but localized, short term, and minor. Impacts would be detectable but localized; natural conditions would not measurably be altered; and natural processes in the area would be sustained.</p> <p>Operation: The research and education facility location, which currently consists of maintained lawn, would be, in part, replaced by native vegetation that would improve the plant biodiversity within GSP. Because native vegetation would replace maintained grass and would prevent soil erosion after construction, impacts from the operation of these proposed project elements would be long term and beneficial.</p>	<p>Construction: Construction of the Learning Campus would require the removal of an additional 0.82 acre of vegetation. Native vegetation including pines and oaks would be cleared at the new location, with attention being paid to legacy trees. The site design would ensure that these trees and other vegetation in the area that would be a component of the environmental education programs are preserved. Surveys have been completed in the area to inform the design of legacy and large caliper trees. The design would minimize the clearing of these trees, which would become focal areas in the Learning Campus location. Any areas of temporary disturbance would be replanted with native vegetation once construction is complete. Overall, impacts on vegetation would be similar to those noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and would be short term, minor, and adverse.</p> <p>Operation: The proposed new location is a vegetated area, and some of the vegetation would be permanently removed to accommodate the new facility. However, the site design would retain as much of the native vegetation as possible, including legacy trees, and include revegetation after construction. This would result in long-term, minor, adverse impacts on vegetation in the area, but these impacts would</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
		not be considered substantial. The more wooded and vegetated environment for this facility would provide students multiple opportunities to connect with the environment, reinforce the educational component of the Learning Campus, and allow the entire site to function as an outdoor classroom.
Biological Environment – Wildlife	<p>Construction: Construction of the research and education facility would occur in a maintained lawn area next to the existing visitor center, nature center, and Middle Lake. This type of habitat typically only supports species that are readily adapted to low habitat diversity and relatively urban settings. Mammals, such as squirrels and foxes, as well as urban birds and reptiles may pass through the area but are not likely to remain there for long. Waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, and wading birds, such as herons using Middle Lake, may venture onto the shore and into the proposed project site, but would likely only reside on the lawn for a short time. Alligators have been observed in the vicinity of the site as well, but this species would be avoided during construction to ensure safety of construction personnel. Construction activities would likely affect mobile wildlife and they would relocate to other nearby areas. Some individuals of burrowing species, such as moles, shrews, and ground-dwelling insects, may experience direct mortality, but there would be no impact to overall population levels. To the extent practicable, construction staging areas would be sited in previously disturbed areas, such as the existing parking area for the adjacent visitor center. Therefore, impacts to wildlife from construction of the research and education facility would primarily be adverse but temporary and minor. There could also be minor impacts at the individual level. These impacts would be detectable but localized, and would not measurably alter natural conditions.</p> <p>Operation: Impacts from operation of the research and education facility would be similar to those described for the re-establishment of the lodge. There would be a long-term and adverse but minor impact to wildlife near the research and education facility from increased human activity, but these impacts would not be expected to adversely affect overall wildlife populations at GSP due to availability of other habitat areas at the park, the fact that this site is already developed, and the fact that species in this</p>	<p>Construction: The proposed project location has changed from a mowed and maintained lawn to a more natural area. During construction, wildlife as described in Phase III ERP/PEIS would be displaced because of increased noise and the presence of work crews and equipment. While the area of disturbance would be larger than the site analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, it would still be relatively small and near areas already in operation (i.e., park headquarters) that wildlife are less likely to use because of human presence. As such, impacts are expected to be similar to those discussed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and would primarily be adverse but temporary and minor. There could also be minor impacts at the individual level. These impacts would be detectable but localized and would not measurably alter natural conditions.</p> <p>Operation: Operation of the area would be expected to have the same impacts as discussed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Impacts on wildlife near the Learning Campus would be long term and adverse but minor from increased human activity, but these impacts are not be expected to adversely affect overall wildlife populations at GSP because (1) habitat is available in other areas of the park; (2) this site is already developed; and (3) species in this area have adapted to development. Beneficial impacts would occur from the additional interpretation and educational materials available at the facility that would make visitors more aware of the park’s natural resources and more likely to avoid damage to those resources. Therefore, no change to impacts on wildlife is anticipated as a result of the proposed project change.</p>

Resource	Consequences for Learning Campus (Research and Education Center in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS) Excerpts from the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS	Learning Campus Analysis/Considerations
	area have adapted to development. Beneficial impacts would occur from the additional interpretation and educational materials available at the facility that would make visitors more aware of the park's natural resources and more likely to avoid damage to those resources.	
Biological Resources- Threatened and Endangered Species	<p><u>Species Covered in the Phase III DARP/EIS-ER:</u> Alabama Beach Mouse, Loggerhead sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Green sea turtle, Leatherback sea turtle, Piping plover, Red Knot and Gopher Tortoise and BMPs.</p> <p>Construction and Operation Impacts: There would be no effect to threatened or endangered species from construction of the proposed research and education facility because there is no suitable habitat for threatened or endangered species in this area. Should a threatened or endangered species be discovered, construction activities would stop, the GSP Natural Resources Program Manager would be alerted, and appropriate consultation with the USFWS would occur.</p>	The Learning Campus would be located in upland pine/oak habitat. Gopher tortoise and eastern indigo snake may use upland habitats within GSP, but they are not located in the area of the proposed Learning Campus. Therefore, the modified project is expected to have no effect on threatened and endangered species. However, if such species are discovered, construction activities would stop, the GSP Natural Resources Program Manager would be alerted, and appropriate consultation with the USFWS would occur as described in the Phase III ERP/PEIS. Therefore, no change to impacts on threatened and endangered species is anticipated from the proposed project change.
Socioeconomics and EJ	<p>Construction: Overall, construction activities would result in short-term, beneficial socioeconomic due to employment and wages, and increased economic activity in local markets. No adverse impacts to nearby communities in the form of neighborhood fragmentation or a change in access to resources would result.</p> <p>Operation: The research and education facility would also generate a small amount of new employment. This would result in increased wages and earnings for these individuals. The operation of the proposed project is anticipated to result in increased local and regional economic activity, increases in visitors. Operation of the proposed project would not increase risks to public health and safety.</p>	Construction and Operation: Changes in design and location of the Learning Campus would not result in changes to the expected employment or other associated spending from the facility. Therefore, impacts would be the same as those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.
Traffic and Transportation	Construction: The movement of construction equipment and materials has the potential to affect traffic volumes during specified periods. The construction of the proposed project may have short-term, localized, and minor adverse impacts on traffic patterns because the presence of heavy material haul trucks on affected roadways would likely slow the movement of other roadway users. Impacts would be adverse, but short term and	Construction: Similar to the analysis in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, the movement of construction equipment and materials has the potential to affect traffic during specified periods at the proposed new site. Impacts at this location are anticipated to be slightly reduced from the original location because the new site provides more access points for

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	<p>minor for all project elements.</p> <p>Operation: The Final Phase III ERP/EIS found that operation of the proposed project would increase traffic volumes and that impacts would be long term, moderate, and adverse. However, the majority of this increase was a result of another project element, not the education and resource center. The Final Phase III ERP/EIS stated that the education and resource center would not add to traffic from the other project element. The proposed research and education facility and trails would be located farther from the re-established lodge and along secondary roadways. It is assumed that there would be 50 children per day visiting the research and education facility. This visitation would introduce an additional one to two school buses per day and would not adversely affect traffic patterns.</p>	<p>construction and would minimize disruptions to existing facilities. The new site is also removed from visitor use areas such as the campground and nature center. Therefore, impacts would be the same, if not slightly reduced, from those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p> <p>Operation: Overall, the level of traffic generated from the Learning Campus is expected to be small as noted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, and this traffic is already accounted for with other project elements. In addition, the Learning Campus would be located away from camping sites and the nature center and therefore would not increase traffic in an area of existing visitor use (as the original site would have). Therefore, impacts would be the same as analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, if not slightly reduced because the new site would be located away from other areas of active visitor use.</p>
Cultural Resources	<p>The proposed site for the research and education facility is located on the west side of Middle Lake, near the existing visitor center and nature center. The site is currently an open, grassy area surrounded by Middle Lake, the existing visitor center, nature center, and associated amphitheater, and a campground further to the southwest. Based on the information available, the proposed facility was surveyed for archaeological sites in 2003 (Meyer and Meyer 2003). One previously recorded archaeological site was re-located during this survey. The site was covered by an asphalt parking lot at the time of the survey and could not be evaluated for listing in the National Register. Avoidance or monitoring of the site during construction was recommended. This recommendation was accepted by the SHPO. During construction, this area would not be disturbed and all previous SHPO recommendations would be followed. Consultation with the Alabama SHPO has been initiated, and would continue until construction is complete.</p>	<p>As part of planning for the proposed new site, the University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) was contracted by Volkert, Inc. to perform a Phase I cultural resources survey for proposed development within the boundaries of GSP in Gulf Shores, Baldwin County, Alabama. The proposed project's area of potential effect (APE) was approximately 10 acres. Field investigations for the project were undertaken on September 8–11, 2015. Joel H. Watkins, Cultural Resources Analyst, served as the Project Director. The Principal Investigator for the project was Matthew D. Gage RPA, Director of OAR.</p> <p>As a result of this cultural resources survey, no new archaeological sites or historic standing structures were identified or documented within the boundaries of the APE. The existing park headquarters building is within the western portion of the APE. Built in 2004, the structure does not meet the eligibility requirements for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.</p>

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		<p>The proposed project area, a lightly wooded tract with sandy soils, was found to be previously impacted by water and sewer line rights-of-way, a paved riding path, an entrance loop road/parking area for the existing park headquarters building, and extensive clearing/landscaping related to both park maintenance and storm damage. Several structures were shown on historic maps within the APE; however, no evidence of the structures was found as surface features or in subsurface testing. Based on the absence of any cultural resources discovered within the APE, the Phase I cultural resource survey concludes that the proposed development would not affect any cultural resources and a finding of no properties is recommended.</p>
Infrastructure - Utilities	<p>Construction: Construction would generate very little demand on utilities. No impacts to utilities due to construction of the proposed project are anticipated because of the minimal demand that would be generated during construction.</p> <p>Operation: Facilities would place minimal demands on utilities and would include wastewater treatment, fixtures that conserve water, such as low-flush toilets and low-flow showers, elevators that generate electricity when descending, high-efficiency HVAC systems, and lighting systems.</p>	<p>Construction: The impacts would be similar to those described in the analysis in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. While various underground utilities and easements are located in the area of the proposed new site, site design would ensure that structures are not placed on these areas, and utilities would not be relocated.</p> <p>Operation: Impacts of utility demand during operation are expected to be less because of the smaller area of enclosed air-conditioned space in the new design. This would decrease the need for electricity for HVAC and lighting and result in impacts that are slightly less than those analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>
Land and Marine Resources	<p>Construction: During construction, land use at the various sites would be temporarily changed from undeveloped recreational land to a construction zone: land formerly available for recreational use would no longer be available. As a result, construction of the proposed project would result in adverse but short-term and minor impacts to land use. After construction of the project, the construction equipment, building supplies, and construction workers would be removed, and the land would no longer be a construction zone. Changes in land use during construction would be</p>	<p>Construction: Because the level, type, and duration of construction would be the same, impacts on land and marine resources are expected to be similar to those analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Impacts may be slightly less because construction would occur in an area of less visitor use (away from the nature center and campground), and impacts on recreation lands would be reduced.</p>

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	<p>temporary and would not require a zoning change or amendment or affect overall use and management beyond the local area.</p> <p>Operation: Development of the research and education facility would change the existing land use, consisting of a grassy undeveloped parcel, to an educational use. However, it would be consistent with existing uses in the area such as the nature center and adjacent existing classroom. The Federal Trustees also reviewed this proposed project pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act for consistency with the enforceable policies of the ACAMP and submitted their determination of consistency to ADEM for review on December 12, 2013. ADEM responded on December 31, 2013 concurring with that determination. The project remains subject to further review for consistency as may be required through the permitting processes to be completed prior to project implementation.</p>	<p>Operation: Similar to the analysis in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS, development of the Learning Campus would change the existing land use (currently a vegetated undeveloped parcel) to an educational use. However, this use would be consistent with administrative operations occurring in the nearby park headquarters.</p> <p>The Federal Trustees also reviewed this proposed project pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act for consistency with the enforceable policies of the ACAMP. As there are no wetland or floodplain resources on this property, CZMA does not apply.</p>
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	<p>Construction: During construction, there would be adverse, but short-term and minor impacts to visual resources at all of the proposed project sites. The impacts would primarily be due to the presence of construction personnel, equipment (such as fences, stockpiles, etc.), and vehicles and from unfinished buildings or structures visible to the public, employees, and recreational users of GSP facilities. Construction activities at all sites could detract from the overall visual environment at the site, but would be temporary. As the construction of the project elements progresses, the potential impacts would increase in intensity, and additional receptors would be affected as identified in Table 11-21 for all sites (kayakers/boaters in Middle Lake, Visitors Center and Nature Center for this site). For all construction efforts, impacts could be minimized by a screening or visual barrier to obscure the construction site for the duration of construction. These screens could also be used to educate visitors of GSP and could include information (such as posters or banners) about the flora and fauna of GSP or other issues of interest. Impacts for all elements discussed below would be adverse but short term and minor during construction. Even though there would be some temporary impacts to the existing viewsheds, they would not dominate the view, or detract from current user activities or experiences.</p>	<p>Construction: Construction requirements for the relocated and redesigned Learning Campus would be the same as those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS; therefore, impacts on aesthetics and visual resources would be similar. Impacts could be less than those evaluated in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS because the relocated site would be farther away from other visitor use areas, such as the visitors center and nature center, that would be impacted during construction.</p> <p>Operation: Similar to the original location, the proposed relocation of the Learning Campus would result in a small change to the existing visual environment. The relocated facility would be near an existing trail and would be buffered by wooded habitat, reducing any visual impact on other uses in the area. The single-story buildings would be designed to work with the landscape and avoid legacy trees. A single story, with open air spaces, is expected to better blend into the landscape than a multi-story facility and would have less of a visual impact than the facility evaluated in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.</p>

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	<p>Operation: Implementation of the proposed project would result in a small change to the existing visual environment at the proposed site for the new research and education facility. The existing site, which is currently an undeveloped grassy area adjacent to other visitor use amenities, would change to a developed site containing a structure approximately 25 feet tall. While the actual proposed site for the new facility would change, the overall character of the area would not change greatly because the proposed site is already next to existing development, including the existing visitor center and nature center. The existing views in the proposed project vicinity are primarily trees and parts of Middle Lake; these views would still be visible from the new research and education facility once it is constructed but would likely be obstructed for the receptors on the ground near the visitor center and nature center and boaters/kayakers or swimmers in Middle Lake. While some people may be sensitive to the change in visual environment and consider these impacts adverse, others may find the potential impacts beneficial because the new building would be designed in an aesthetically pleasing manner. The proposed research center would be constructed using green design techniques and a muted color scheme that fits in with the overall ambience of the area. Impacts from the proposed new research center would be considered long-term minor, adverse, and beneficial because park users would notice the new facilities, slightly detracting from the experience of some while providing a positive element to others.</p>	
Tourism and Recreation	<p>Construction: The proposed research and education facility would be located within proximity to the existing nature center and pavilion. Potential visitor impacts would be the same as those described for the interpretive center except visitors to the nature center as well as the beach pavilion may be affected by increased noise and fugitive dust, a temporary reduction in available parking, and a decrease in the visual environment.</p> <p>Operation: The proposed project is anticipated to generate new visits, enhance existing visits, and increase visits by school children participating in the park's new environmental education program. Because of the variety of new and enhanced opportunities provided by each of the</p>	<p>Construction: Because the nature, duration, and timing of construction would be the same, impacts on tourism and recreation during construction would be similar to those analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. However, impacts may be somewhat reduced because no impacts would occur at the nature center and the park headquarters are not currently a high visitor use area.</p> <p>Operation: Beneficial impacts on tourism and recreation would be the same as analyzed in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. Additionally, visitors would not have to pass through the entry</p>

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	elements of the proposed project, it is anticipated that the proposed project would result in long-term beneficial impacts.	gate and pay the park fee that is associated with the campground at the proposed new site. Vehicular and pedestrian accessibility for public portions of the program would increase as a result of the new location near the main entry road, park headquarters, and nearby trails. Three outdoor play areas, an outdoor gathering area, a screened gathering area, and an outdoor classroom would also add to the recreational experience, which would provide additional beneficial impacts to those described in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.
Public Health and Safety and Shoreline Protection	<p>Construction: Hazardous Waste Generation or Disposal, or Human Exposure. During construction of the proposed project elements, workers would follow standard safety measures in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations; these measures are further outlined in the construction action plan. While there are no known hazardous or contaminated sites located within proximity to the proposed project, the construction action plan would identify measures to be followed should such sites be revealed during construction activities. The construction action plan would identify measures to contain and/or remove materials in a way that would not result in adverse impacts to construction workers, visitors, or resources present in the area, including water sources. Overall, construction of the proposed project elements is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts to public health and safety should identified safety protocols be enforced when such activities are ongoing.</p> <p>Disease Risk Factors. During construction activities, visitors would still be able to engage in recreational activities at various locations throughout GSP. Some trails would experience temporary closure while enhancements are ongoing; however, other trails within the existing network would be available to visitors. As a result, it is not anticipated that adverse effects would result.</p> <p>Impacts to Shoreline Erosion Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center, Interpretive Center, Research and Education Facility, and Trails. As mentioned in section 3.1.22, Construction (Water Quality), construction of the lodge, interpretive center, research and education facility, and trails would require a</p>	<p>Construction and Operation: There are no known public health or safety concerns related to the new Learning Campus site. The analysis included in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS for this project element would be the same with the new location and new facility design for all elements.</p>

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	<p>NPDES permit to ensure that measures are taken to maintain the quality of water discharged from the construction site. This would ensure that adjacent waters such as lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies do not receive an excessive amount of pollution thereby changing their water quality status. Additionally, during construction activities the contractor would prepare and E&S plan and employ BMPs to ensure that soil erosion does not occur. After final grading, bare areas would be replanted to further ensure that loose soil does not erode from the area. These elements of the proposed project would result in small, localized changes to water quality, but would become undetectable quickly after construction is complete. State water quality standards regarding drinking water and primary and secondary interactions would not be exceeded. There would be no increased risk of exposure to potential hazards from construction of these elements of the proposed project. Because construction of these elements of the proposed project would not cause soil, groundwater, and/or surface contamination; exceedances in state water quality standards; and erosion of soil material would be minimized, impacts from construction on public health would be short term minor and adverse.</p> <p>Operation: Hazardous Waste Generate or Disposal, or Human Exposure. Because there are no known hazardous or contaminated sites within GSP, the operation of the proposed project is not anticipated to result in adverse effects to public health and safety.</p> <p>Disease Risk Factors. Improvements at GSP, anticipated to result in an increase in park visitation, would provide opportunities for increased access to intact natural systems with moderate positive public health impacts associated with nature-based recreation activities. Enhancements associated with the proposed project would provide the benefits of nature-based recreation to those who lack daily opportunities for outdoor exercise, which has demonstrated to have positive effects on stress levels, aggression, and socialization. Lack of access is correlated with increased incidence of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. (Bedimo-Rung et al. 2005).</p> <p>Impacts to Shoreline Erosion Gulf State Park Lodge and Conference Center, Interpretive Center, Research and Education Facility, and Trails. Because each</p>	

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	of these operations would be maintained so that soil erosion is minimized through BMPs, there are no anticipated adverse impacts from erosion or soil degradation on public health and safety from these elements of the proposed project.	

IV. DETERMINATION OF NEED FOR ADDITIONAL OPA RESTORATION PLANNING

The following information provides the basis for the rationale used to determine that the final project design does not require further OPA restoration planning. The Final Phase III ERP/PEIS states that the Gulf State Park Enhancement Project in Baldwin County, Alabama, would include construction of a research and education facility at a location near the existing nature center. The research and education facility is now called the Learning Campus and has been relocated to an area just east of the park headquarters as seen on Figure 2. The design and layout have also changed to include an additional 0.82 acre of impervious surface. The new design would be LEED certified and would require less electricity for HVAC and lighting than the originally proposed design because a large portion of the buildings would be unenclosed space to bring the programming closer to nature.

The project refinements would not change the result of the analysis of this project under the OPA evaluation criteria in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS. In particular, the project as designed would still meet the evaluation criteria established for the OPA and the Framework Agreement. The project was proposed and selected to provide partial compensation for recreational services lost as a result of DWH injuries to the natural resources of coastal Alabama. The Gulf State Park Enhancement Project would still provide partial compensation for recreational services lost as a result of DWH injuries. Thus, the nexus to resources injured by the spill remains clear.

The new design elements and location are technically feasible and would use proven techniques with established methods and documented results. Further, the designed project could still be implemented with minimal delay. For these reasons, the final project design has the same high likelihood of success and does not result in any material net change to the project's estimated costs as identified in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS.

BMPs and measures to avoid or minimize adverse impacts described in Section 11 of the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS would still be implemented. As a result, collateral injury would be avoided and minimized during project implementation (construction and installation and operations and maintenance).

The final project design would not affect the determination of the project's environmental effects in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and is not anticipated to negatively affect regional ecological restoration. Therefore, the project is consistent with the long-term restoration needs of the State of Alabama.

The final project does not require or result in any change to the project's performance criteria, monitoring and maintenance, offsets or costs as provided in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS for the Gulf State Park Enhancement Project.

Therefore, the Trustees conclude that the project with the design refinements is consistent with the selection of the project under OPA in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS and does not require further evaluation.

V. SUMMARY

The Trustees are required to evaluate material changes to any selected early restoration project. They must also determine whether additional restoration planning and environmental review, including opportunity for public comment, is necessary. The Trustees have evaluated the changes to the final design based on the criteria established in the Section 9.2 of the Phase III ROD (http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/Final-Phase-III-ERP-PEIS-Record-of-Decision_FINAL.pdf). These criteria include (1) whether any change to the project is consistent with the environmental review conducted in the Final Phase III ERP/PEIS or if there are substantial changes that are relevant to environmental concerns, and (2) whether or not there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns not addressed in the impact analysis of the Final

Phase III ERP/PEIS that affects their selection under OPA. The Trustees conclude that the final design does not affect the overall project objectives and that the environmental consequences of the changes to the project components would not be substantial. The changes do not affect the selection of this project as an Early Restoration Project under OPA. The project is consistent with the environmental review conducted for Phase III (<http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration/early-restoration/phase-iii/>). No further analyses under OPA or NEPA are necessary, and the project may proceed.