

# Proposed Critical Habitat Designation for the Endangered Smalltooth Sawfish



- **Shelley Norton, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division**

# Smalltooth Sawfish Listing Timeline

- **April 1, 2003, the U.S. Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of smalltooth sawfish was listed as endangered**
- **November 20, 2008, proposed critical habitat for the endangered smalltooth sawfish**
- **February 13, 2009, proposed critical habitat public comment period closes**
- **September 1, 2009, submit final critical habitat rule for publication in the Federal Register**

# **Designating Critical Habitat A Step-wise Approach**

- **The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that we designate critical habitat for listed species to the maximum extent prudent and determinable, and that the designation be based on the best scientific and commercial data available**
- **We analyzed the best scientific and commercial data on the species to determine the specific area and its essential features**

## **Range of the Species at the Time of Listing (2003)**

- **Encounter data collected between 1999 and April 1, 2003, indicate the species range is peninsular Florida**
- **Historically, the species range was from Texas to North Carolina with a few encounters noted as far north as New York**

# **Analysis of Smalltooth Sawfish Encounter Data within the Species Range-Florida**

- **Adult and juvenile smalltooth sawfish  $> 79$  in or (200 cm) in length are encounter in various habitats, water depths, and salinity ranges. No known breeding or aggregation sites are known**
- **Juvenile smalltooth sawfish  $< 79$  in or (200 cm) in length are encountered near red mangroves and shallow estuarine habitats**

# Protection of Juvenile Nursery Areas

- **Identified nursery areas**
  - Juveniles are more common in the area
  - Juveniles remain in the area for extended periods of time
  - Juveniles use these areas repeatedly over years
- **Identified the function of the nursery areas**
  - Avoid predation
  - Foraging

# Identification of the Essential Features Utilized by Juveniles

- **Using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping tools we mapped the location of all juvenile encounters and analyzed the habitat data associated with the encounters**

**Two essential features were most commonly associated with juvenile encounters**

- **Red mangroves**
  - **Shallow euryhaline habitats characterized by water depths less than 3 ft or 0.9 m in depth**
- **These features are considered necessary to facilitate recruitment into the population**

# The Specific Areas

- **Using GIS we mapped the juvenile nursery areas and the essential habitat features.**
- **Using existing landmarks we defined the boundaries of two specific areas**
  - **Charlotte Harbor Estuary Unit**
  - **Ten Thousand Islands/ Everglades Unit**

# Special Management

- **The specific areas require special management**
  - **Dredging**
  - **Coastal construction**
  - **Water control structures**

# Economic Impacts?

- The economic impacts of the proposed rule are analyzed in our Draft 4(b)(2) Economic Impacts Report located (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/SmalltoothSawfish.htm>)
  - Administrative costs
  - Project modification costs are not determinable

# **National Security Impacts?**

- **No impacts to national security were identified based on comments from all branches of the armed forces**

# What Does Critical Habitat Do?

- **Requires federal agencies that fund, carry-out, or permit activities that could affect the critical habitat to consult with NOAA Fisheries under section 7 of the ESA to ensure their activities do not destroy or adversely modify critical habitat**
- **Critical habitat does not create refuges or affect land ownership**

# Public Comments?

- **Data used**
- **Analysis**
- **Additional information**

# **Public Comment Period for Proposed Critical Habitat Ends February 13, 2009**

**MAIL:**

**National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Regional Office  
Protected Resources Division  
263 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33704**

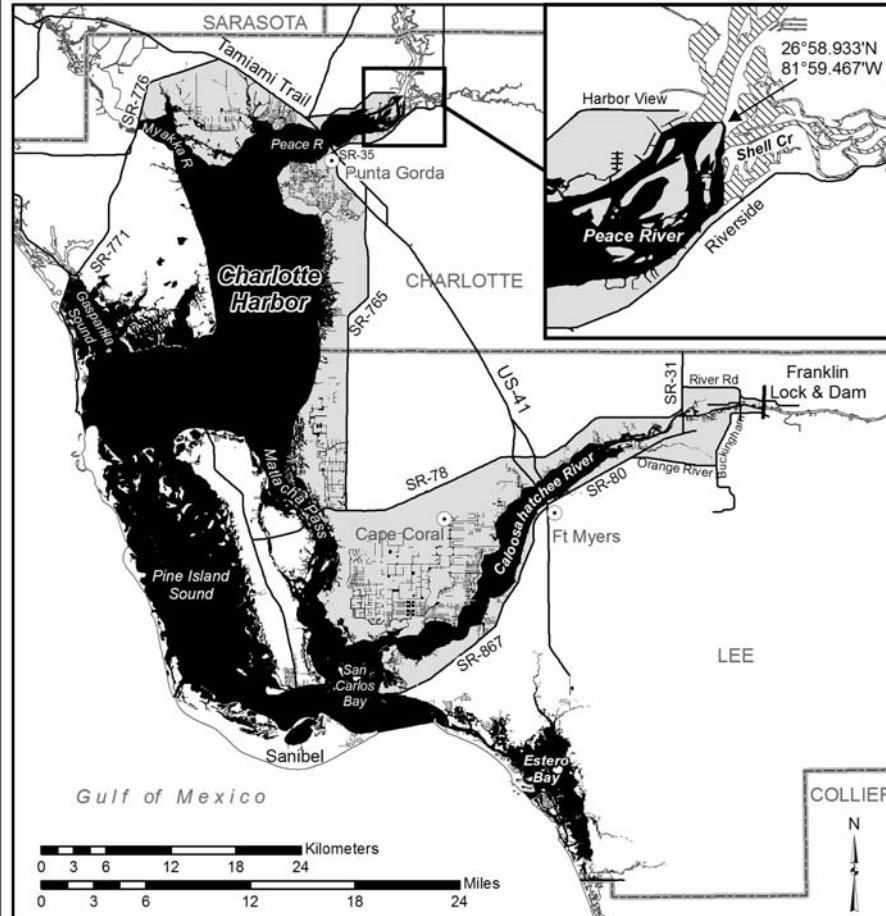
**FAX:**

**(727) 824-5309**

**FEDERAL  
eRULEMAKING  
PORTAL**

**<http://www.regulations.gov>  
Follow instructions for submitting comments.**

### Smalltooth Sawfish Critical Habitat - Charlotte Harbor Estuary Unit



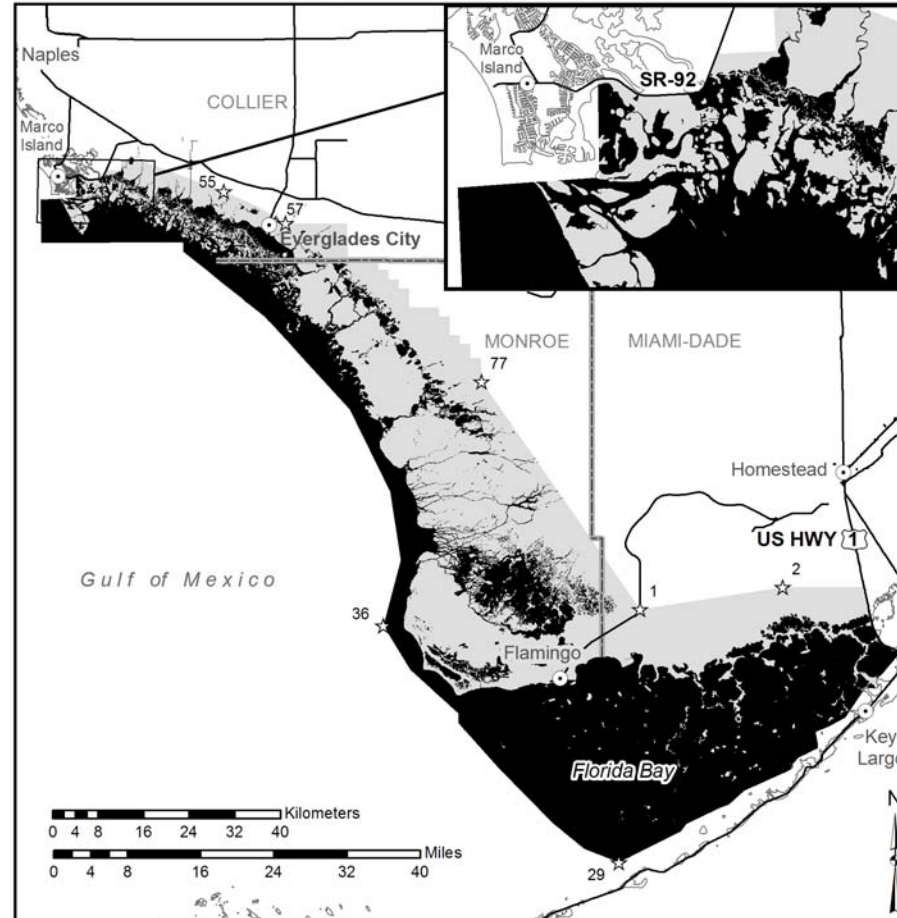
#### Legend

- Cities/Towns
- Major Roads
- County Boundary
- Open Water Critical Habitat
- Inland Water Critical Habitat



This map is provided only for illustrative purposes of Smalltooth Sawfish critical habitat. For the precise legal definition of critical habitat, please refer to the narrative description.

**Smalltooth Sawfish Critical Habitat  
Ten Thousand Islands/Everglades Unit**



**Legend**

- ☆ Critical Habitat Boundary Points
- Cities/Towns
- Major Roads
- County Boundary
- Open Water Critical Habitat
- Inland Water Critical Habitat



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