

TCEQ Commissioner Announces Gulf Coast Centers of Excellence Consortia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TCEQ Commissioner Toby Baker today announced the selection of two consortia to establish Centers of Excellence in Texas as part of the ongoing implementation of the federal RESTORE Act, which requires that the five Gulf States affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill establish them for conducting research on the Gulf Coast region.

Commissioner Baker, Texas member of the RESTORE Council, manages the implementation of the RESTORE Act in Texas.

"I am pleased that the first resources allocated from the RESTORE Trust Fund will enrich our state's economy through research and development, while also highlighting Texas' commitment to the health of our coastlines," said Commissioner Baker.

The first selected consortium will be led by the University of Houston and will include Rice University, the NASA Johnson Space Center, Texas Southern University, Houston Community College, and Lone Star Community College. This consortium will study offshore energy development, including research and technology to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico.

The second consortium will be led by Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi and will include the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, the Center for Translational Environmental Health Research, Texas A&M University–College Station, Texas A&M University–Galveston, the University of Texas at Brownsville, Texas State University, the University of Houston Law Center, the Gulf of Mexico

Coastal Ocean Observing System Regional Association, and the University of Texas Medical Branch–Galveston.

This consortium will study on sustainability, restoration, and protection of the coast and deltas; research and monitoring related to coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystems in the Gulf Coast region; offshore energy development, including research and technology to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico and its comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the gulf; and sustainable and resilient growth and economic and commercial development in the region.

Some \$4.1 million in financial support will be available in March for the Centers of Excellence from 2.5 percent of the RESTORE Trust Fund, derived from administrative and civil penalties paid by those responsible for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The role of these centers could expand as more financial resources are devoted to the fund.

As required by the U.S. Treasury, the federal agency responsible for oversight of the Centers, the two consortia were selected through a competitive process that is based on state statute and regulations used by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for awarding grants.