

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council releases a draft Initial Funded Priorities List

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015 - Public meeting to discuss the draft list and seek public input to be held Aug. 20, Texas A&M University, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, 6:00 p.m.

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The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) today released a draft Initial Funded Priorities List. Using funds from the settlement with Transocean Deepwater Inc., the Council is seeking to provide near-term, on-the-ground ecosystem benefits, while also conducting planning activities designed to build a foundation for future success as additional funds become available from other parties. The Council is proposing to focus on 10 key watersheds across the Gulf in order to concentrate and leverage funds to address critical ecosystem needs in high priority locations. The Council also proposes a suite of Gulf-wide investments designed to support holistic ecosystem restoration and lay the foundation for future success.

The draft FPL would fund approximately \$139.6 million in restoration activities such as hydrologic restoration, land conservation and planning for large-scale restoration projects. In addition, the Council is reserving approximately \$43.6 million for implementation of additional activities in the future, subject to further Council review.

"This initial draft of the FPL represents a significant milestone for coastal restoration in Texas and the Gulf Coast as a whole," said TCEQ Commissioner Toby Baker, who acts as Texas' representative on the RESTORE Council. "We've worked very hard as a Council to get to this point and we welcome the opportunity for the public to weigh in."

The draft FPL is available for public and tribal review and comment through Sept. 28, 2015.

"The Council is committed to working with Gulf communities and partners to invest in actions and projects that will ensure the long-term environmental health and economic prosperity of the Gulf Coast region," said U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker, Chairperson of the Gulf Restoration Council. "We look forward to hearing from the community on prioritizing the proposed \$183 million investment to restore the natural ecosystem, reinvigorate economies, create jobs, and rebuild the environment for generations to come."

The Council will host a series of public meetings across the Gulf Coast to discuss the draft FPL and seek public and tribal comments.

"This draft FPL focuses on key watersheds and estuaries across the Gulf, using foundational restoration techniques tailored to the needs of specific areas," said Justin R. Ehrenwerth, executive director of the Council. "We're fortunate to have a diverse and dedicated group of stakeholders who have helped to get us to this point. Once again, we ask for your feedback and assistance in ensuring that we do the right thing for the Gulf."

Full meeting details and the draft FPL can be found on the Council's website at

RestoreTheGulf.gov .

The public is encouraged to provide comments online at RestoreTheGulf.gov  (preferred method); by mail to Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, Attention: Draft FPL Comments, Hale Boggs Federal Building, 500 Poydras Street, Suite 1117, New Orleans, LA 70130; by e-mail to draftfplcomments@restorethegulf.gov; or in person during formal public comment periods at any of the public meetings.

Background

The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act) established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) and the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund), and dedicates 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Trust Fund, for restoration projects in the Gulf Coast region. The Council is responsible for administering 60 percent of the total

funding allocated from the Trust Fund: 30 percent (plus interest) under the Council-Selected Restoration Component and 30 percent under the Spill Impact Component. The Council is chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, and members include the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, as well as the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Homeland Security, the Army and the Interior, and the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Council is responsible for helping to restore the ecosystems and economies of the Gulf Coast region by developing and overseeing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and carrying out other responsibilities. Read more about the Comprehensive Plan, the RESTORE Act and the Council at www.RestoreTheGulf.gov .