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Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council approves Funded Priorities List

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2015 - TCEQ Commissioner Toby Baker represents Texas at meeting

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council established under the federal RESTORE Act, meeting today in Biloxi, Miss., voted to approve a Funded Priorities List that includes environmental projects and activities, some of which will directly benefit the state of Texas. The projects and activities will be funded using civil penalties resulting from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon blowout and oil spill. This marks the first time the council has allocated project funds under the RESTORE Act.

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The FPL, developed to implement the council-selected Restoration Component of the RESTORE Act, includes support for projects that restore the long-term health of the valuable natural ecosystems and economy of the Gulf Coast region. These projects provide near-term, on-the-ground ecosystem benefits, and also include planning activities.

The projects and activities on the FPL were selected to begin building a foundation for future successes as additional funds become available to the RESTORE Council through penalties paid into the the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund.

TCEQ Commissioner Toby Baker is Governor Abbott's appointee to the RESTORE Council.

"The FPL allocates approximately \$140 million of project funding. This includes about \$26 million for six projects in Texas," said Baker. "Today's vote represents a significant milestone in our work to restore the Texas coast and the entire Gulf Coast in general. You can look at this first FPL as a down payment towards future projects that will build upon what we've started here."

The list of Texas projects includes land conservation in the Laguna Madre (Bahia Grande Coastal Corridor), Matagorda Bay, and the Bayou Greenways project area in Houston. It also includes marsh restoration in Galveston Bay, and the plugging of abandoned oil and gas wells in Padre Island National Seashore.

Specific information on all the projects is included in [the approved FPL](#) .

Also visit the [Texas RESTORE website](#). 

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 and the Gulf Coast Restoration 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. The TCEQ, for which Toby Baker serves as a commissioner, is also a trustee agency involved in the implementation of funding under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment program, as well as funding from criminal penalties related to the Deepwater Horizon spill that are administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Read more about the Comprehensive Plan, the RESTORE Act and the council at www.RestoreTheGulf.org. 