Deepwater Horizon Trustees Announce Agreement in Principle for Next 10 Early Restoration Projects

Proposed projects to benefit sea turtles, birds and fish; increase recreational opportunities; improve nearshore and reef habitats

GULF COAST (April 20, 2015) ------- The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees (Trustees) today announced another milestone in Gulf of Mexico early restoration.

The Trustees and BP have identified approximately $134 million in proposed early restoration projects for inclusion in a draft Phase IV Early Restoration Plan. Two of the projects would enhance bird nesting habitat, one project would provide protection to sea turtles and enhance sea turtle nesting, four projects would improve nearshore and reef habitats, two projects would increase recreation opportunities on federal lands, and one project would restore fish. The project names are listed here with additional information provided at the end of this document:

- Osprey Restoration in Coastal Alabama – Baldwin and Mobile Counties, Alabama
- Point aux Pins Living Shoreline – Mobile County, Alabama
- Shell Belt and Coden Belt Roads Living Shoreline – Mobile County, Alabama
- Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Trail Enhancement – Alabama
- Seagrass Recovery Project at Gulf Islands National Seashore – Florida District
- Bike and Pedestrian Use Enhancements at Davis Bayou, Gulf Islands National Seashore – Mississippi District
- Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries – Coastal Mississippi
- Texas Bird Rookery Islands Project – Galveston Bay and East Matagorda Bay, Texas
- Sea Turtle Early Restoration Project – Gulf of Mexico
- Pelagic Longline Bycatch Reduction Project – Gulf of Mexico

Early restoration allows the Trustees to jump-start restoration using up to $1 billion BP has agreed to make available for projects jointly agreed to by BP and the Trustees. In return, BP's liability is reduced.

The Trustees anticipate including these 10 projects in a draft Phase IV Early Restoration Plan that will be made available for public review and comment. Thus far, the Trustees have approved three phases of early restoration, with a combined total of 54 projects and an estimated cost of $698 million. If the latest round of identified projects are approved and funded, approximately $832 million of the $1 billion will be obligated. More information about the first three phases of early restoration can be found at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov.

Notification about a draft plan, the public comment period, and public meeting dates and locations will also be posted when the information becomes available.

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Early restoration is not intended to provide the full extent of restoration needed to satisfy the Trustees' claims against BP. The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment and restoration will continue until the public is fully compensated for the natural resources and services that were lost as a result of the spill.

The proposed projects are described below:

Osprey Restoration Project in Coastal Alabama – Baldwin and Mobile Counties, Alabama

The proposed Osprey Restoration in Coastal Alabama project would improve osprey nesting success by establishing five osprey nesting platforms, with predator guards on each. The specific locations and design of these nesting platforms would be developed to maximize project success and meet regulatory requirements. Five general areas have been identified for the location of these platforms: the vicinities of Portersville Bay, Dauphin Island, Fort Morgan, the Little Lagoon area in Gulf Shores and in Gulf State Park. The estimated cost for this project is $45,000.

Point aux Pins Living Shoreline – Mobile County, Alabama

The proposed Point aux Pins Living Shoreline project would reduce shoreline erosion, promote colonization of marsh vegetation, and create habitat for oysters, shrimp, crabs, fish, and other marine animals in coastal Alabama. The living shoreline would be constructed by placing structures designed to reduce wave energy parallel to the shore near Bayou la Batre, at Point aux Pins. The living shoreline would be located adjacent to an existing living shoreline project implemented by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The estimated cost for this project is $2,300,000.

Shell Belt and Coden Belt Roads Living Shoreline – Mobile County, Alabama

The proposed Shell Belt and Coden Belt Roads Living Shoreline project would promote colonization of marsh vegetation and create habitat for oysters, shrimp, crabs, fish, and other marine animals in coastal Alabama. The living shoreline would be constructed by placing structures designed to reduce wave energy parallel to shore near Shell Belt and Coden Belt roads in south Mobile County. Marsh grasses would be planted between the constructed breakwaters and the shoreline. The breakwaters, while providing habitat themselves, would also reduce wave energy and support the establishment of the planted grasses. The estimated cost for this project is $8,050,000.

Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Trail Enhancement Project – Alabama

The proposed Jeff Friend Trail renovation project at Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge would address lost recreational use on Department of Interior lands in Alabama. This trail has been a popular destination with winter visitors and local schools since it was built 10 years ago. The project would rebuild the rapidly-aging boardwalk and gravel trail and improve access from the existing parking area. The trail provides convenient access to mature maritime forest and the shores of Little Lagoon. The estimated cost for this project is $545,110.

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Seagrass Recovery Project at Gulf Islands National Seashore – Florida District

The proposed seagrass recovery project at Gulf Islands National Seashore's Florida District would restore shallow seagrass beds in the Florida panhandle. It would restore .02 acres of propeller scars and/or blow holes, primarily in turtle grass *(Thalassia testudinum)* habitats. Seagrass communities are essential breeding, rearing, and feeding grounds for many important recreational and commercial fisheries as well as wildlife, including the endangered West Indian manatee and various species of sea turtles. The project would be located on the south side of the Naval Live Oaks Preserve in Santa Rosa Sound, Santa Rosa County. The estimated cost for this project is $136,700.

Bike and Pedestrian Use Enhancements at Davis Bayou, Gulf Islands National Seashore – Mississippi District

This proposed project would address lost recreational use on Department of Interior lands in Mississippi by enhancing visitor recreational experiences at Davis Bayou Unit of the National Park Service's Gulf Island National Seashore in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. This park has been surrounded by residential development for decades, and its interior road system is used daily as a shortcut by neighboring residents. There is limited space along the park's roadway for use by pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists. The roadway would be enhanced for such use within the park. The estimated cost for this project is $6,967,000.

Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries – Coastal Mississippi

The proposed Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries project would restore intertidal and subtidal reefs and use living shoreline techniques in four bays. Projects are proposed in Grand Bay, Graveline Bay, Back Bay of Biloxi and vicinity, and St. Louis Bay, all located in Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock counties. The proposed project would provide for the construction of more than four miles of breakwaters, five acres of intertidal reef habitat and 267 acres of subtidal reef habitat at eight locations across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The estimated cost for this project is $30,000,000.

Texas Bird Rookery Islands Project – Galveston Bay and East Matagorda Bay, Texas

The proposed Texas Rookery Islands project would restore and protect three islands in Galveston Bay and one island in East Matagorda Bay within Big Boggy National Wildlife Refuge using coastal engineering techniques to construct protective features like rock breakwaters or armoring, which would increase nesting habitat on the islands. The goal is to enhance nesting of colonial waterbirds by increasing the quantity, quality, and longevity of available nesting habitat. This would benefit brown pelicans, gulls, royal and sandwich terns, and wading birds such as great blue herons, roseate spoonbills, reddish egrets, great egrets, snowy egrets, tricolored herons, and black-crowned night herons. The estimated cost for this project is $20,603,770.

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Sea Turtle Early Restoration Project – Gulf of Mexico

This proposed 10-year project includes: increasing Kemp's ridley sea turtle nest detection and nesting success through additional staff, training, and equipment in Texas and Mexico; adding two cabins and two nesting corrals at the National Park Service's Padre Island National Seashore; enhancing the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network and developing a formal Emergency Response Program; expanding Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawl bycatch reduction efforts by adding observer sea-days to increase monitoring of sea turtle bycatch in commercial shrimp trawls and expanding education and outreach efforts to encourage fisher compliance with existing federal turtle excluder device regulations; and enhancing Texas Parks and Wildlife Department fisheries bycatch enforcement in Texas state waters during the Gulf shrimp season. The total estimated cost for this project is $45,000,000.

Pelagic Longline Bycatch Reduction Project – Gulf of Mexico

The goal of the proposed Pelagic Longline Bycatch Reduction Project is to restore open-ocean (pelagic) fish that were affected by the spill. The Gulf pelagic longline (PLL) fishery primarily targets yellowfin tuna and swordfish, but incidental catches and discards of other fish, including marlin, sharks, bluefin tuna, and smaller individuals of the target species. The project aims to reduce the number of fish accidentally caught and killed in fishing gear by compensating PLL fishermen who agree to voluntarily refrain from PLL fishing in the Gulf during an annual six- month repose period that coincides with the bluefin tuna spawning season. The project would also provide participating fishermen with two alternative gear types to allow for the continued harvest of yellowfin tuna and swordfish during the repose period when PLL gear is not used. The estimated cost for this project is $20,000,000.

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