

DEEPWATER BP OIL SPILL:

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

March 2011

Summary of Events

On April 20, 2010, an explosion and fire on BP's Deepwater Horizon off-shore drilling rig killed 11 men. The rig sank and left the oil well leaking millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA), those responsible for an oil spill incur liability to clean up the oil and to restore injured public natural resources.

In what has become the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history, natural resources have been exposed to and impacted by oil and response activities. These resources include recreationally, ecologically, and commercially important species and their habitat in, and along the coast of, the Gulf of Mexico, as well as human uses of these resources. Natural resource Trustees, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of the Interior (DOI), and Trustee agencies from the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, are leading efforts to assess and restore affected Gulf resources.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) is the process to evaluate the impacts to natural resources and lost human use of those resources. The Trustees continue to collect information on natural resources to assess potential impacts to fish, shellfish, marine mammals, turtles, birds, and other sensitive resources, as well as their habitat (e.g., wetlands, beaches, and coral). Lost recreational human uses, such as fishing, hunting, and beach enjoyment also are being assessed.



The purpose of NRDA is to quantify injuries to our nation's natural resources, the subsequent loss of resource services, and the time required for natural resources to recover. The outcome of the NRDA is a restoration plan or series of plans that will compensate the public for natural resource injuries and lost use of those resources. There are likely to be many recommendations for specific actions to be undertaken as part of a comprehensive restoration plan, such as habitat restoration or species protection to help restore ecosystems. In some cases, however, the best action may be to allow the habitat to heal itself without human intervention (natural recovery), while still compensating the public for the losses that will occur during that recovery period.

What is a PEIS?

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Trustees are initiating the NEPA process through the development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for restoration from all the impacts of the Deepwater BP oil spill. The Trustees will provide opportunities for the public to participate in this process in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA regulations at 40 CFR 1502.9 (c).

A public notice was issued on **February 17, 2011**, to initiate the PEIS process.





What is a PEIS? (con't)

The Trustees are preparing a PEIS to look at a range of restoration types that could be used to compensate the public for the resources exposed to oil and ultimately determined to have been injured. The final PEIS will serve as a comprehensive scientific planning and organizational tool for fulfilling legal mandates and **developing and evaluating the impacts of specific restoration activities.**

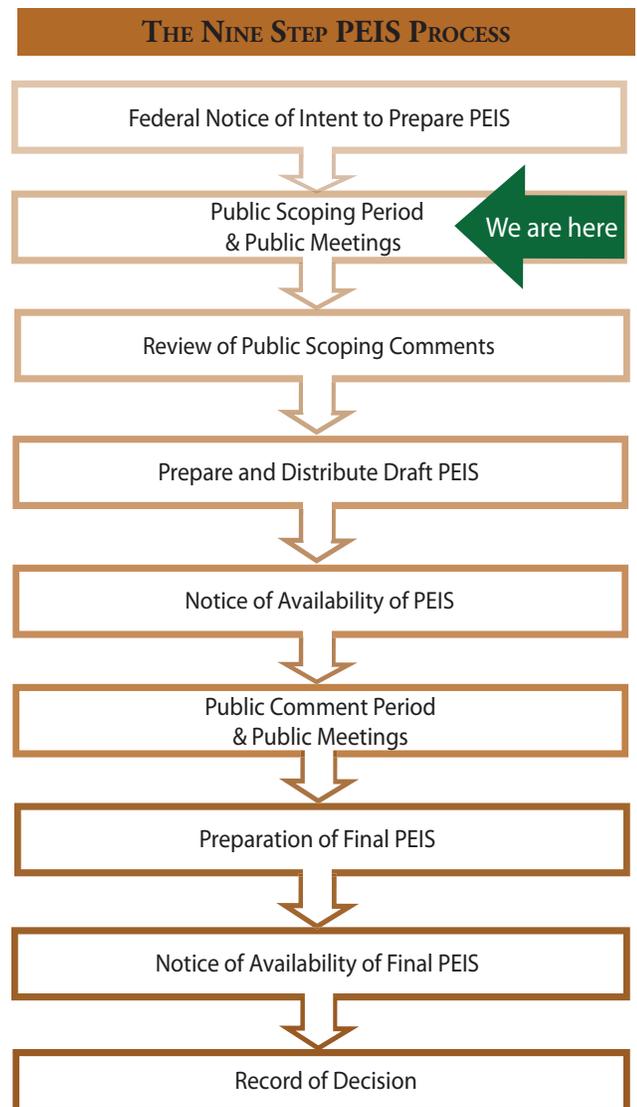
A PEIS is an Environmental Impact Statement that is broad in scope and context. This PEIS will be regional in scope and may cover a variety of ecosystems and activities. The emphasis is on developing a programmatic framework that would apply to future restoration projects, the details and locations of which are currently unknown.

The Benefits of this PEIS:

- Facilitate ongoing, open, public dialogue to conceptualize reasonable restoration options before a restoration plan is developed
- Encourage public participation in the identification of issues and concerns
- Draw focus to complex restoration needs across the impacted region to help generate more effective restoration projects
- Provide a foundation for subsequent project-specific NEPA analyses, which can expedite project implementation
- Analyze the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of implementing restoration
- Establish a more efficient and cost-effective process

How is the Public Involved?

Public involvement is important throughout the PEIS process. By attending public meetings and/or submitting comments during the public scoping period, the public can assist in identifying restoration categories or restoration types that could restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of resources or services that may be determined to have been injured by the spill. These comments will be read and evaluated by the Trustees and then incorporated into a draft PEIS. The draft PEIS will document the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts of restoration implementation. There will be another series of meetings and comment period that will allow the public the opportunity to review and provide additional input on the draft document. Comments on the draft PEIS will then be considered and incorporated, as applicable, into the final PEIS. The PEIS is currently scheduled for completion in 2012.





What is Scoping?

Scoping is the first opportunity for public engagement in the PEIS process. CEQ, under the National Environmental Policy Act, defines scoping as an “early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action.”

The objectives of the scoping process:

- Identify and engage interested parties
- Identify public and agency concerns
- Identify reasonable restoration types and significant environmental issues regarding implementation
- Establish a public record of the decision making process

The scoping period will last for 90 days and incorporates a series of meetings held during that time to collect input from the public. The meeting schedule can be found on page four.

Make Your Comments Count

Scientists representing the Trustees have collected data and evidence that proves direct and indirect oil exposure to the Gulf of Mexico, fish, wildlife, and habitat. These same experts will be quantifying resulting impacts from this exposure.

The PEIS will summarize restoration types to help facilitate restoration planning once injury has been assessed. The desire is to focus on **restoration types** that are general in scope, rather than specific projects, to ensure the greatest applicability to the resources known to have been impacted by the spill.

We encourage you to submit a comment on the potential restoration types you feel are important to include in the PEIS (for example, the creation of wetlands).

We are not scoping for specific restoration projects at this time, however it is possible to submit a specific project using the Project Information Sheet. The PEIS will not be a project-specific restoration plan. However, project-specific information may be used to evaluate the environmental and socio-economic impacts of restoration types. In addition, project information will be retained for use during development of a project-specific restoration plan.

Consider the following when making comments:

- What types of restoration are most effective at bringing back natural resource services quickly?
- What restoration types are the most effective at bringing back the services of multiple resources at the same time?

Submitting Comments

We strongly encourage you to submit your comments electronically at

www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/give-us-your-ideas.

Please be advised that your comment--including your name and contact information, if included--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold this information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Comments must be received by **May 18, 2011**, and may be submitted in person at scoping meetings or by mail to:

NOAA Restoration Center

Attn: DWH PEIS Comments

263 13th Avenue South

Suite 166

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

More Information

For more information please visit our website:

www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov, or call

1-888-547-0174.

We also maintain an online mailing list to distribute informational materials. To join our mailing list, please visit:

www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/mailing-list.



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Schedule of Public Restoration Scoping Meetings

FLORIDA

March 16

Bayview Community Center
2001 Lloyd Street
Pensacola, FL
6:30 PM

March 17

Bay County
Government Center
840 West 11th Street
Panama City, FL
6:30 PM

ALABAMA

March 23

The Battle House Renaissance
Mobile Hotel & Spa
26 North Royal Street
Mobile, AL
6:30 PM

WASHINGTON, DC

April 6

Department of Commerce
Herbert Hoover Building
Auditorium
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC
6:30 PM

MISSISSIPPI

March 21

Donal Snyder
Community Center
2520 Pass Road
Biloxi, MS
6:30 PM

TEXAS

March 30

Port Arthur Civic Center
3401 Cultural Center Drive
Port Arthur, TX
6:30 PM

March 31

Texas A&M University
at Galveston
Ocean & Coastal
Studies Building
Galveston, TX
6:30 PM

LOUISIANA

March 22

Belle Chasse
Public Library
8442 Highway 23
Belle Chasse, LA
6:30 PM

March 24

Holiday Inn
1800 Martin Luther
King Blvd.
Houma, Louisiana
5:30 PM

March 28

Grand Isle
Community Center
3811 Highway 1
Grand Isle, LA
5:30 PM

March 29

Bayou Vista
Community Center
1333 Bellevue Street
Morgan City, LA
5:30 PM

