



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees Announce Major Progress in Gulf Restoration Effort

For Immediate Release: April 18, 2012

An estimated \$60 million in early restoration projects soon will begin along the Gulf Coast following the nation's largest oil spill, the *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustee Council announced today.

With finalization of the "*Deepwater Horizon* Phase I Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Assessment" (ERP/EA), eight restoration projects will be implemented. The projects provide for marsh creation, coastal dune habitat improvements, nearshore artificial reef creation, and oyster cultch restoration, as well as the construction and enhancement of boat ramps to compensate for lost human use of resources.

The ERP/EA is the first early restoration plan under the unprecedented April 2011 agreement with BP to fund \$1 billion in early restoration projects. The funding enables the trustees to begin restoration before the completion of damage assessment activities.

The trustees are working to move the next phase of early restoration forward. The selection process for future early restoration projects will proceed along the same lines as the first. After reaching preliminary agreement with BP on proposed projects, the trustees will seek public comments before finalizing any future plan.

"Having carefully planned the projects in Phase I and extensively discussed them with the public, we are confident that the projects will achieve our goal of beginning to heal the Gulf's ecosystem and people's enjoyment of it," said Alabama representative Cooper Shattuck, chair of the NRDA Trustee Council's Executive Committee.

The Phase I projects, including two each in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, were the focus of 12 public meetings held throughout the Gulf states and in Washington, D.C., during the months of January and February 2012.

In addition to speaking at meetings, hundreds of citizens filed comments by mail and online. Following the meetings, more than 500 people and organizations submitted comments, which were gathered and carefully evaluated. The comments, as well as trustee responses to them, are included in the Phase I plan, which can be reviewed at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov and www.doi.gov/deepwaterhorizon. The NOAA Gulf Spill Restoration site also provides additional information about restoration planning and a [status update](#) on the ongoing damage assessment.

“We are deeply grateful to everyone who took the time to participate in the process and hope for their continued engagement as we move ahead,” said Department of the Interior trustee Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks. “The public’s comments strengthen our belief in these projects, and offer some great ideas for the future.”

“The early restoration projects will drive both ecological and economic renewal,” said NOAA trustee Monica Medina, Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere. “Through these and future projects, the trustees intend to build a regional restoration economy.”

“These projects allow us to begin implementing restoration of Louisiana’s natural resources quickly, rather than waiting years for the completion of the full assessment,” said Louisiana trustee Garret Graves, chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana. “But we continue to be focused on pursuing additional projects with BP. Nearly two years after the start of the oil spill, we hope that BP moves quickly to approve future restoration for the Gulf Coast.”

“The Phase I projects mark an important first step in assuring Mississippi’s recovery from the Deepwater Horizon spill, but they are only a first step. We will continue to press for additional projects to restore coastal marshes, damaged shorelines and sensitive areas of ocean habitat and estuaries vital to the sustainability of marine ecosystems,” said Mississippi trustee Trudy D. Fisher, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. “The health and sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico are vital links to a strong economy and the livelihood of our coastal residents.”

"Florida's focus on early restoration has been to ensure environmental impacts are addressed as well as to make up for the loss of access to our natural resources by residents and visitors alike," said Florida trustee representative Mimi A. Drew, special advisor to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. "Public confidence in a healthy, high-quality environment in Florida is vital to ensuring a healthy economy."

“Natural systems are interconnected, and these Phase I projects will contribute to making the Gulf system whole,” said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director, representing the Texas trustees. “As we mark this milestone, we’re looking forward to advancing Texas-specific project proposals for the next early restoration phase.”

– 30 –

MEDIA CONTACTS

Department of the Interior: Nanciann Regalado, 678.296.6805, nanciann_regalado@fws.gov

NOAA: Tim Zink, 206.402.2059, tim.zink@noaa.gov

Alabama: Patti Powell, 334.242.3484, patti.powell@dcnr.alabama.gov

Florida: Kendra Parson, 850.245.2089 kendra.parson@dep.state.fl.us

Louisiana: Olivia Watkins, 225.241.5707, olivia.watkins@la.gov

Mississippi: Donna Lum, 601.948.3071, donna.lum@neel-schaffer.com

Texas: Tom Harvey, 512.389.4453, tom.harvey@tpwd.state.tx.us

