



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees Call for Public Input on Next Round of Gulf Restoration

Trustees ask public to consider \$9 million in new projects focused on bird and turtle nesting habitat; comment period includes Nov. 13 public meeting in Pensacola, Florida.

Gulf Coast (Nov. 8, 2012)--The *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees (Trustees) have released the *Deepwater Horizon Phase II Draft Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Review* (DERP/ER) for public review and comment. The plan includes two proposed projects totaling about \$9 million that focus on restoring nesting habitat for birds and sea turtles. Response efforts resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill caused injuries to this natural habitat.

"This draft plan includes two Early Restoration projects which represent a near-term opportunity to improve the nesting habitats of birds and turtles, two species that are integral to the Gulf Coast wildlife community," said Cynthia Dohner, Natural Resource Trustee for the Department of the Interior. "Our desire is to provide these benefits during the next nesting season, but we'd first like to hear from the public. We encourage the public to attend the November 13 meeting in Pensacola and to give us their comments."

The DERP/ER describes the second round of projects proposed to receive funding from the \$1 billion BP committed to Early Restoration on April 21, 2011.

The trustees will hold a public meeting to solicit comment on the DERP/ER at the Escambia County Central Complex Building in Room 104, 3363 West Park Place Pensacola, Fla. 32505:

Nov. 13, 2012	6:00 – 7:00 PM	Open House
	7:00 – 9:00 PM	Meeting and Public Comment

The DERP/ER and a list of public repositories are available at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov and www.doi.gov/deepwaterhorizon.

Comments will be taken until Dec. 10, 2012. Comments may be submitted in the following ways:

- Via the Web: <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov>.
- For electronic submission of comments containing attachments, email: fw4coastalDERPcomments@fws.gov
- U.S. Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 2099, Fairhope, AL 36533

"We are pleased to be able to move forward with these important projects that restore key nesting and wintering habitats for Florida's coastal wildlife, and we will continue to work with our fellow Trustees to address the full injury the *Deepwater Horizon* explosion and resulting oil spill created," said Nick Wiley, Florida's Co-Trustee with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. "Restoring these damages to the Gulf Coast is vital to the families and businesses that depend on healthy and diverse fish and wildlife resources, and we look forward to working closely with our coastal communities as these projects take shape."

The DERP/ER describes two proposed projects for the second round of Early Restoration. These projects address coastal conservation for the purpose of restoring bird (avian) and sea turtle nesting habitats, which were injured by oil spill response operations. These projects are timed to enhance the bird and turtle nesting ground as the spring 2013 nesting season begins. Below is a brief description of each project:

- **A Comprehensive Program for Enhanced Management of Avian Breeding Habitat Injuries by Response in the Florida Panhandle, Alabama and Mississippi.** This project proposes to protect nesting habitat for beach-nesting birds from disturbance in order to restore habitat impaired by disturbance from oil spill response activities. It is to be conducted on sandy beaches in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin counties, Florida; Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Baldwin and Mobile counties, Alabama, and the Gulf Islands National Seashore (GUIS) – Mississippi District.
- **Improving Habitat Injured by Spill Response: Restoring the Night Sky.** This project proposes to reduce artificial lighting impacts on nesting habitat for sea turtles, specifically loggerhead turtles, to restore habitat impaired by disturbance from oil spill response activities. It is to be conducted on sandy beach public properties in Baldwin County, Alabama; and Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin counties, Florida.

NRDA is the process used by the Trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for a spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and the services provided by those resources. For early restoration projects, the *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA trustees include the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture and state agencies from the five Gulf States --Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Early Restoration projects represent an initial step toward fulfilling the responsible parties' obligation to fund the complete restoration of injured natural resources. Early Restoration provides an opportunity to implement restoration projects agreed upon by the Trustees and BP under the Framework Agreement prior to the completion of the NRDA. The damage assessment will continue while Early Restoration planning is under way. BP and other responsible parties are obligated to compensate the public for the full scope of the natural resource injury caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, including the cost of assessing such injury and planning for restoration.

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