



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Five Years Later, *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill Recovery Leaders United in Long-Term Commitment to Restore the Gulf

Gulf of Mexico, April 15, 2015 ----

Five years after the nation's largest off-shore oil spill, the leaders of three aspects of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill recovery effort, including the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council), the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), today expressed continued commitment to ensure the Gulf of Mexico fully recovers from this disaster.

Although involved in separate processes with different responsibilities, the leaders of these efforts emphasize they are coordinating with one another to ensure efforts fit together for the benefit of the Gulf environment and the people affected by the spill.

"Five years after the devastating *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, the Council's mission remains critical to restoring the ecosystem and economy for the people who live, work and play in the Gulf region," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, Chairperson of the Gulf Restoration Council. "We will continue doing everything we can in coordination with our partners and stakeholders in the region to make sure the Gulf Coast comes back stronger and more vibrant than before the disaster." The Council expects to publish an initial draft funded priorities list for public comment and then select projects for funding later this year.

"We recognize that the public is depending upon us to hold BP and others accountable," said current NRDA Trustee chair, Samuel W. Plauché, speaking on behalf of the Trustees, a coalition of state and federal agencies charged with identifying the harm to natural resources caused by the spill, developing a complete natural resource restoration plan, and recovering the costs of implementing the plan from responsible parties such as BP.

"Restoration of the Gulf's natural resources is by no means complete," continues Plauché. "A growing body of scientific evidence is helping the NRDA Trustees learn more about the injuries sustained. This evidence has guided early restoration, and as a result we have initiated 54 projects, totaling nearly \$700 million. While positive, this is just the beginning of restoration. We will continue to assess the full extent of the injury to our cherished natural resources to ensure restoration occurs."

"NFWF is committed to completing our activities under the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF) in accord with the work undertaken by the other *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill recovery and restoration leaders," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. "We look forward to continued coordination to ensure the projects funded through GEBF contribute to meaningful and lasting natural resource conservation for the communities of the Gulf Coast."

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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, the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, and dedicates 80 percent of the Clean Water Act penalties resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill to the trust fund for restoration in the Gulf Coast region. 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, Army, Homeland Security and the Interior, and the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Council is responsible for restoring the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region by developing and overseeing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and carrying out other responsibilities as they relate to revitalizing the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region. Read more about the Comprehensive Plan, RESTORE Act and the Council at Restorethegulf.gov.

The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill NRDA Trustees operating under the federal Oil Pollution Act and other laws include the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense (as applicable to DoD owned lands), and agencies representing the five Gulf states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. The Trustees are assessing injuries to natural resources, such as barrier islands, dunes, marshes, shorelines, habitat, and oyster beds, among other resources, and lost recreation resulting from the spill, undertaking early restoration, and planning for restoration to fully compensate for all resource losses. More information about NRDA can be found on the [Gulf Spill Restoration website](http://GulfSpillRestorationWebsite).

Chartered by Congress in 1984, NFWF protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats. In early 2013, a U.S. District Court approved plea agreements resolving certain criminal charges against BP and Transocean that arose from the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* explosion and oil spill. The agreements direct a total of \$2.544 billion to NFWF to fund projects benefiting the natural resources of the five Gulf Coast states that were impacted by the spill. The plea agreements require NFWF to consult with state resources agencies, and with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration when developing project ideas for funding consideration. NFWF also maintains active dialogues with key conservation organizations and other state and federal stakeholders. Learn more about the GEBF and each states' projects awarded to date at www.nfwf.org/gulf.

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