

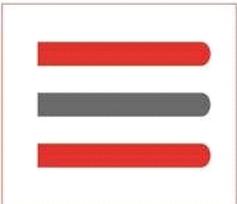
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1 DEEPWATER HORIZON NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND  
2 RESTORATION

**ORIGINAL**

3 OPEN OCEAN TRUSTEE IMPLEMENTATION GROUP DRAFT  
4 RESTORATION PLAN 2 AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

5 FISH, SEA TURTLES, MARINE MAMMALS, AND MESOPHOTIC AND  
6 DEEP BENTHIC COMMUNITIES

7 \_\_\_\_\_/

8 PUBLIC MEETING BEFORE THE OPEN OCEAN TRUSTEE  
9 IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

10 DATE: JUNE 4, 2019

11 REPORTER: MORGAN NIXON

12 PLACE: PENSACOLA CITY HALL

13 HAGLER/MASON ROOM

14 222 WEST MAIN STREET

15 PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32502

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**ALSO PRESENT:****PLATFORM PERSONNEL:**

MARK DEFLEY - USDA

TREDA GRAYSON - EPA

ASHLEY MILLS - DOI

LAURIE ROUNDS - NOAA

PERRY FRANKLIN - MEETING LEADER

**TOPIC SPEAKERS:**

JAMES REINHARDT - FISH SPEAKER

SARA WISSMAN - SEA TURTLES SPEAKER

ERIN FOUGERES - MARINE MAMMALS SPEAKER

KRIS BENSON - MESOPHOTIC DEEP BENTHIC COMMUNITIES  
SPEAKER**PUBLIC SPEAKERS:**

ALEXIS BALDERA - DIRECTOR OF GULF RESTORATION PROGRAM

PAUL MONTAGNA - TAMUCC, THAO VU - DIRECTOR OF MSCVAFF

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PROCEEDINGS

4

EXHIBITS

(NONE MARKED)



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**PROCEEDINGS**

**MR. FRANKLIN:** Hello, everyone. Can everyone hear me? Hello. Okay. I'll just project my voice a little bit louder. So thank you all for coming out tonight and to hear more about the Draft Restoration Plan and to provide your vital comments. The purpose of tonight's presentation is to provide information about the Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group's Restoration Plan 2 and Environmental Assessment. My name is Perry Franklin and I will serve as your facilitator for tonight's meeting related to the Open Ocean. I'd like to ask each of you to just make yourselves comfortable and silence your cell phones and prepare yourself to receive a tremendous amount of new information. As you can see, we have a court reporter with us tonight who will memorialize each and every word of tonight's proceedings. We also have sign language interpreters with us who will also be with us for the duration. If you missed it, the trustees would like for me to point out to you that there was a lot of very helpful information at the tables in the open meeting. Those individuals will be here at the conclusion of tonight's meeting and we invite you to visit and to pick up that information. There's also



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1 a CD ROM. I understand some may not have a CD ROM  
2 reader, but there are CD ROMs with the entire  
3 assessment here for you, as well. So please, we  
4 have that information for you. Tonight's meeting,  
5 while it is publicized at 8:30 p.m. as the backend  
6 time, we will not leave until each and every one of  
7 you presents your public comments in the second  
8 portion of tonight's meeting. The meeting is  
9 basically set up in two portions. There will be a  
10 Power Point presentation where four professionals  
11 will come forward and to present new information to  
12 you and then, you will have the opportunity to come  
13 forward and to give your vital information and your  
14 public comment. And so until that last person has  
15 made that public comment, we will stay here for you.  
16 And then, concluding that, if you want to also learn  
17 more about a particular topic from one of the  
18 presenters, they'll be in the rear of the room  
19 following tonight's presentation. So we are here  
20 for you and we'll be here until the very end. If  
21 you want to make public comment, please fill out a  
22 blue card and select "yes." That is the way in  
23 which the organizers will give me the card to  
24 present you and you come forward. If you did not do  
25 that at the beginning, that's no problem. At any



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1 time tonight, if you raise your hand, we know what  
2 that means and we'll get a blue card to you so that  
3 we can facilitate you coming forward at the  
4 appropriate point of tonight's meeting. So please,  
5 if there's something that triggers a thought from  
6 the Power Point presentations and you didn't do  
7 this, no worries. Please raise your hand and we'll  
8 get a card to you. I will call you forward. And  
9 for the record, if you would say your name and if  
10 you're representing an organization, please state  
11 the name of the organization prior to making your  
12 public comment. Are there any public officials with  
13 us this evening? Okay. So let's go ahead and get  
14 tonight's meeting under way. At this time, I'd like  
15 to introduce Ms. Laurie Rounds. She is NOAA's Open  
16 Ocean Restoration Lead. She will provide an  
17 overview of the Trustee Implementation Group's roles  
18 and responsibilities, as well as an overview of the  
19 Draft Restoration Plan 2 and Environmental  
20 Assessment for Open Oceans. Ms. Rounds.

21 **MS. ROUNDS:** Thank you very much, Perry. Can  
22 everyone hear me okay? Yes? Good. Excellent.  
23 Thank you. So I'll just reiterate, thank you very  
24 much for coming tonight to hear about the Open Ocean  
25 Draft Restoration Plan and provide comments and



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1 we're very much looking forward to hearing those  
2 comments. So tonight will provide an overview of,  
3 as Perry mentioned, the Deepwater Horizon Natural  
4 Resource Damage Assessment and Settlement -- excuse  
5 me -- Settlement with BP. We'll talk a little bit  
6 about the Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group  
7 and our Programmatic Restoration Plan and of course,  
8 provide an overview of the Draft Restoration Plan  
9 and the Proposed Restoration Projects that we have  
10 in the plan. Then, we'll take the public comments  
11 and -- and then close the meeting out with some of  
12 our next steps. So I'm looking forward to -- to  
13 talking with you more about these exciting projects.  
14 So you know, it's always important to take a look  
15 back and remember that the Deep Water Horizon was  
16 the largest off-shore marine oil spill in U.S.  
17 history. It spilled 12 times more oil by volume  
18 than the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill. Every day,  
19 starting on April 20th of 2010, for 87 days, BPs  
20 Macondo well released more than an average of 1.5  
21 million gallons into the Gulf of Mexico. Oil slicks  
22 were observed across an area greater than 43,000  
23 square miles and this is roughly the size of the  
24 State of Virginia. So a very large area affected in  
25 the Gulf. And you know, the -- the impact of this



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1 spill I think we all -- we all remember. So  
2 assessing the natural resource injuries caused by  
3 this spill required a massive effort. It required  
4 more than 20,000 trips to collect over 100,000  
5 environmental samples. All of this effort was  
6 conducted in accordance with the Oil Pollution Act  
7 and -- which really governs the way that the state  
8 and federal trustees respond to oil spills and  
9 assess natural resource injuries. So the open --  
10 the injury within the Open Ocean waters of the Gulf  
11 of Mexico -- well, the oil came into contact with  
12 several of our Open Ocean natural resources. So  
13 within the waters, the oil came into contact with  
14 deep sea corals, it came into contact with many  
15 species of fish, sea turtles -- endangered sea  
16 turtles, dolphins, and whales and other marine  
17 resources. It also, though, injured the less  
18 physical biological communities that live in the  
19 water column. So communities like our plankton  
20 communities, larval fish, and invertebrates like  
21 squid and shrimp that serve vital roles in the  
22 marine food web. So the Oil Pollution Act makes  
23 parties responsible for oil spills, liable for the  
24 cost of the response, the injury assessment, and the  
25 restoration to make the public whole for the damages



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1 to natural resources. Under the Oil Pollution Act, a  
2 counsel of federal and state trustees was formed  
3 soon after the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill to  
4 assess the injuries, to develop and implement plans  
5 to restore the damaged natural resources. And this  
6 process is referred to as Natural Resource Damage  
7 Assessment. The Deep Water Horizon Natural Resource  
8 Trustees are the Federal National Oceanic and  
9 Atmospheric Administration, the Department of the  
10 Interior, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and  
11 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and also  
12 state agencies for each of the five Gulf states. So  
13 as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment,  
14 the trustees developed a Programmatic Damage  
15 Assessment and Restoration Plan, which documented  
16 the injury to the natural resources and -- and also  
17 concluded that the scale of the injury was so  
18 massive that an ecosystem approach to restoration  
19 would be required. And the trustees plan is  
20 referred to as a programmatic restoration plan  
21 because rather than identify specific restoration  
22 projects, it identifies our restoration goals and  
23 restoration types and approaches that really set the  
24 course for a more project-specific restoration plans  
25 and achieving that goal of ecosystem restoration. So



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1 in addition, the plan also sets up a framework for  
2 how the trustees would implement restoration and how  
3 we'll work together to achieve our long-term  
4 restoration goals. So in 2016, the trustees reached  
5 a settlement of \$8.8 billion to resolve BP's  
6 liability for the natural resource damages caused by  
7 the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. And this amount  
8 includes the \$1 billion that was committed for early  
9 restoration by -- to be conducted by the trustees  
10 prior to settlement. The settlement provided for  
11 annual payments over the course of 15 years and the  
12 first payment was made in 2017. The settlement --  
13 based on the type and extent of the damages, the  
14 settlement was allocated across the trustees five  
15 programmatic restoration goals as indicated on this  
16 slide. In addition, up to \$700 million was set  
17 aside for currently unknown and changing conditions  
18 that may affect restoration. So the Trustees to  
19 Implement Restoration created an Implementation  
20 Group for each of the eight restoration areas that  
21 were established in the programmatic restoration  
22 plan. There is one Implementation Group for each of  
23 the five Gulf states restoration areas, for the Open  
24 Ocean, and for the Region-wide. And there's also a  
25 group set aside for the unknown conditions and



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1 adaptive management group that may be formed in the  
2 future. So each Trustee Implementation Group is  
3 responsible for engaging with the public to develop  
4 restoration plans that allocate funding to specific  
5 restoration projects for their restoration area.  
6 Trustee Implementation Groups are also responsible  
7 for implementation of the restoration and for  
8 monitoring and tracking their progress towards  
9 achieving our restoration goals. So the Open Ocean  
10 Trustees -- Trustee Implementation Group is  
11 responsible for Open Ocean restoration planning and  
12 it consists of the four federal trustees which are  
13 represented by Chris Stole and myself who are the  
14 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
15 Homer Wilkes, Ron Howard, and Mark Defley for the US  
16 Department of Agriculture. Gale Bonanno and Treda  
17 Grayson for the US Environmental Protection Agency,  
18 and Deborah McClain and Ashley Mills for the  
19 Department of the Interior. Together, the Open  
20 Ocean Trustees worked to restore the wide-ranging  
21 and migratory species that were injured by the oil  
22 spill and we also coordinate with the state  
23 trustees, especially when restoration may overlap  
24 their jurisdictions. So the term Open Ocean can  
25 sometimes be a little bit confusing, but Open Ocean



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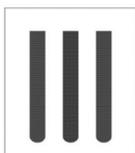
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1 Restoration will focus on the most effective  
2 restoration for the highly migratory species that  
3 were injured by the spill and sometimes this may  
4 include conducting restoration outside of the Gulf  
5 of Mexico region. And so this chart shows the  
6 funding allocated to the Open Ocean Restoration  
7 area. There was a total allocation of \$1.2 billion  
8 with a little over \$868 million set aside for the  
9 restoration of living, coastal, and marine resources  
10 that were injured by the spill. So the Draft  
11 Restoration Plan 2 focuses on the restoration types  
12 that are highlighted on the slide. These include  
13 the fish and water column invertebrates restoration  
14 type which was allocated \$400 million for  
15 restoration. This includes \$20 million that was  
16 allocated for the Oceanic Fish and Restoration  
17 Project approved during early restoration. Part of  
18 the allocation is \$55 million to restore sea  
19 turtles, \$55 million to restore marine mammals, and  
20 a little over \$273 million to restore mesophotic and  
21 deep benthic communities. In addition to these four  
22 restoration types, the Open Ocean Restoration area  
23 is also responsible for restoring birds, which was  
24 allocated \$70 million and Gulf Sturgeon allocated  
25 \$15 million. So the Open Ocean Trustees began our

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1 restoration planning process with the project  
2 identification stage at the top left of our -- of  
3 this graphic. And then, towards the end of March of  
4 2017, we issued our call for project ideas for all  
5 six of the Open Ocean Restoration types. We reviewed  
6 those projects and completed screening to identify  
7 projects that best met our restoration goals and  
8 priorities. Then, in February of 2018, the trustees  
9 announced that we would develop two restoration  
10 plans and our first restoration plan focused on  
11 birds and sturgeon. That was finalized in March of  
12 this year. And on May 15th, we released our second  
13 restoration plan, which we're sharing with you today  
14 for your comments. So after considering the public  
15 comments that we receive on the plan today, we --  
16 the trust -- Open Ocean Trustees will review those  
17 comments and consider them to finalize the  
18 restoration plan and then we will move towards  
19 implementation and monitoring and reporting as part  
20 of our restoration planning cycle. So in developing  
21 the Open Ocean Draft Restoration Plan, the Open  
22 Ocean Trustees had a robust screening process that  
23 helped us identify restoration alternatives for  
24 fish, sea turtles, marine mammals, and mesophotic  
25 and deep benthic communities. And I'd like to note



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1 here that the -- in this presentation and in the  
2 Draft Restoration Plan, the terms "project" and  
3 "alternative" are used interchangeably. So in the  
4 Draft Plan, we evaluated 23 restoration alternatives  
5 using factors from the Oil Pollution Act to help us  
6 identify those projects that would best restore for  
7 the natural resource injuries and also, looking at  
8 the -- the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA  
9 to look at potential environmental effects  
10 associated with the restoration activities being  
11 proposed. So based on these evaluations, the  
12 trustees proposed 18 preferred projects in the plan  
13 and these are across the four Restoration Types with  
14 an estimated total budget of about \$225.6 million.  
15 So the public comment period began when we released  
16 the plan on May 15th and will continue through July  
17 1st. So the next two slides provide an overview of  
18 the Open Ocean Screening Criteria that we used. So  
19 there's more information and more detailed  
20 information in the Restoration Plan about our  
21 screening process in chapter 2. But the Open Ocean  
22 Trustees Screening Process included Restoration Type  
23 experts that were representing the Open Ocean  
24 Trustee Agencies. And in total, we reviewed more  
25 than 1600 project ideas that were submitted to our



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1 Deep Water Horizon Rest -- Project Portal. So  
2 initially, project ideas were removed if they  
3 duplicated other projects, if they were already  
4 required by law, or if they had already been funded.  
5 Also, projects were removed if there was  
6 insufficient information available to evaluate that  
7 project. And then, with the projects that remained  
8 from that, we applied additional criteria to look at  
9 its consistency with the Trustee's Programmatic  
10 Restoration Goals and the Restoration Goals for each  
11 Restoration Type. In addition, we looked at the  
12 consistency with the Trustee's Strategic Frameworks  
13 for restoration activities for sea turtles and  
14 marine mammals. So after the first two steps in our  
15 screening process, we also began to look at the  
16 remaining projects and apply some additional Open  
17 Ocean criteria including consistency with the  
18 priorities that we identified in our public notice,  
19 whether or not there was an innovative approach or  
20 restoration technique proposed that would help  
21 achieve our restoration goals, and of course,  
22 looking at compliance with applicable laws and  
23 regulations and also in support of long-term  
24 management plans. And then, for the projects  
25 remaining, we next looked at screening criteria



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1 related to the Oil Pollution Act. So factors such  
2 as cost-effectiveness based on the anticipated  
3 restoration benefit, the likelihood of success, and  
4 whether or not more than one resource would benefit  
5 from the restoration. So the trustees screening  
6 process helped us to review all of the projects that  
7 were received and to develop the reasonable range of  
8 alternatives that we described in the Restoration  
9 Plan. This slide shows a summary of the number of  
10 projects that went through our screening process and  
11 as an example, the fish restoration screening team,  
12 after the initial screening steps, reviewed about  
13 189 projects through the remaining screening  
14 criteria. And this included activities, such as  
15 potentially modifying or combing project ideas and  
16 activities from across multiple projects to be able  
17 to make sure that we develop project concepts that  
18 had a high likelihood of success and would result in  
19 the greatest restoration benefit for the available  
20 funding. The -- for the Fish Restoration Team, this  
21 resulted in five fish restoration alternatives that  
22 were described in the Plan and further evaluated  
23 under the Oil Pollution Act and the National  
24 Environmental Policy Act and then, resulting in the  
25 four preferred restoration projects for Fish that



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1 are described in the plan and that you'll hear a  
2 little bit more about tonight. So the -- there's a  
3 much more detailed description of this process for  
4 all of the restoration types in the Restoration  
5 Plan. So next, we will have our Restoration Type  
6 experts come and talk with you a little bit more  
7 about the preferred alternatives in the plan and  
8 we'll start off with the Fish and Water Column  
9 Invertebrates with Jamie Reinhardt.

10 **MR. REINHARDT:** Thank you, Laurie. I'm Jamie  
11 Reinhardt with the NOAA Restoration Center. I serve  
12 as the Fish Restoration Coordinator. And I think  
13 Laurie gave a pretty good overview on the scale of  
14 injury that occurred in the Gulf of Mexico and to  
15 provide just a little bit more information about  
16 that injury as it relates to fish. We all know that  
17 there are hundreds of species that occupy the water  
18 column in the Gulf of Mexico. Species from our  
19 coastal estuaries all the way out to our deep  
20 benthic habitats and mesophotic zones, as well. And  
21 these -- these species include things like tunas,  
22 snappers, drums, and many invertebrate species as  
23 well. All levels of the food chain were impacted  
24 during the spill and on the order of trillions of  
25 individuals were injured. So the restoration goals



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1 for the Fish and Water Column Invertebrate are to  
2 restore injured species across these range of coast  
3 and oceanic zones by reducing direct sources of  
4 mortality and to increase the health of fisheries by  
5 providing fishing communities with methods and  
6 incentives to reduce impact. So I'll now get into  
7 the four alternatives -- the four preferred  
8 alternatives in this restoration plan, which are --  
9 which include about \$57.7 million in restoration-  
10 type funding. The first project is the reduction of  
11 post- release mortality from barotrauma in Gulf of  
12 Mexico reef fish recreational fisheries. Bit of a  
13 mouthful. This project intends to reduce mortality  
14 from barotrauma and to restore recreational --  
15 recreationally important re- fish population such as  
16 red snapper and groupers. This project would seek  
17 to distribute fish descending devices to charter  
18 boats, head boats, and private boat anglers and  
19 ensure that anglers know how to use best release  
20 practices by providing education and outreach to  
21 that group. This project would also include  
22 activities that would monitor and determine changes  
23 in the prevalence of use of these descender devices  
24 across the recreation and fishing community, as well  
25 as provide additional information on how these



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1 descending devices affect release mortality. So as  
2 we know, barotrauma in reef fish is known to reduce  
3 post-release survival and by working to reduce the  
4 impacts of barotrauma we can help restore these  
5 populations of reef fish. This project would  
6 initially focus on areas of the Gulf with high  
7 recreational fishing effort, such as coastal Alabama  
8 and the Florida Panhandle and the project would  
9 later expand to additional areas of the Gulf of  
10 Mexico. Second project is the Better Bycatch  
11 Reduction Devices for the Gulf of Mexico Commercial  
12 Shrimp Trawl Fishery. So this -- this restoration  
13 project would seek to reduce finfish bycatch within  
14 the commercial shrimp trawl fishery. The shrimp  
15 trawl fishery targets brown, white, and pink shrimp,  
16 however sometimes these trawls can catch other  
17 species unintentionally and this unintentional catch  
18 can include juvenile red snapper, grouper, porgie,  
19 pinfish, and engulfment (phonetic) as well. To  
20 reduce this finfish bycatch, the project proposes to  
21 identify and implement a project that would use  
22 better bycatch reduction devices. The bycatch  
23 reduction devices also - - are often referred to as  
24 BRDs, B-R-Ds. And this project would be implemented  
25 throughout the northern Gulf. These BRD devices are



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1 inserted into the -- the trawl net of the fish and  
2 they allow some of this unintentional catch to  
3 escape the trawl -- trawl net while the trawl can  
4 retain shrimp. Initially, this project would --  
5 would conduct surveys across the -- across the Gulf  
6 and also seek to engage with both national and  
7 international entities that are actively involved in  
8 shrimp trawl bycatch reduction development and use  
9 this survey to help identify BRDs for further  
10 testing within the Gulf. The project would then  
11 seek to promote the use of these BRDs and provide  
12 the appropriate mechanisms and training for  
13 fishermen to install and use them correctly through  
14 outreach workshops, training, and incentives that  
15 would be made available. Experts on gear  
16 modification, including fishermen, would be engaged  
17 to help develop the details of this broke. Next  
18 project is the Communication Networks and Mapping  
19 Tools to Reduce Bycatch Phase One. This project  
20 would implement feasibility studies to help identify  
21 fisheries in areas where bycatch is relatively high.  
22 These are often referred to as hotspots. And  
23 develop tools to help fishermen avoid these  
24 hotspots. Phase one would focus on identifying the  
25 requirements of a system to create near real-time,



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1 detailed maps of bycatch hotspots for fisheries  
2 selected for this project. Phase one would identify  
3 the elements required to develop communication tools  
4 that would inform the fishermen of these high  
5 bycatch areas so that they could be avoided.  
6 Specific project activities would include scoping --  
7 scoping meetings to identify the particular  
8 fisheries, regions, and fjords that would most  
9 benefit from a bycatch identification system and  
10 also include activities, such as developing these  
11 maps -- developing the maps to identify these areas  
12 of high fish densities in bycatch. And hold  
13 workshops to discuss the use of these voluntary  
14 communication network tools. This project would  
15 ultimately identify the requirements for developing  
16 these specific bycatch communication networks to  
17 inform the potential implementation of this project  
18 - - future implementation of this project. Lastly,  
19 I'll speak to the final project -- preferred project  
20 is Restoring for bluefin tuna via Fishing Depth  
21 Optimization. Data has shown that pelagic longline  
22 gear deployed at depths greater than 360 feet may  
23 have the potential to reduce bluefin tuna  
24 interaction with longline gear and decrease bluefin  
25 tuna bycatch mortality while still allowing the



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1 catch of yellowfin tuna, which is the primary target  
2 for the pelagic longline fishery in the Gulf. This  
3 project would conduct a pilot study to better define  
4 an optimal pelagic longline depth to reduce the  
5 bycatch of bluefin tuna. Data would also be  
6 collected on the possible effects of other species  
7 from fishing in a slightly different way. And  
8 fisheries observers could be used to collect this  
9 information. This study would take place over four  
10 years in cooperation with voluntarily participating  
11 commercial pelagic longline vessels in the norther  
12 Gulf of Mexico and outreach workshops would be held  
13 along the US Gulf Coast and Mexico to increase the  
14 awareness of the benefits of these techniques and to  
15 encourage voluntary adaptation by commercial  
16 fishermen. So thank you for the opportunity to  
17 present on those preferred alternatives and now,  
18 I'll turn it over to Sara Wissman to continue.

19 **MS. WISSMAN:** Thanks, Jamie. So I'm Sara  
20 Wissman and I work for NOAA. I'm in our National  
21 Sea Turtle Program and today I'm going to be talking  
22 to you about the Sea Turtle Projects. The first --  
23 I'll go through a little bit of background for you.  
24 So there are five species of sea turtles in the Gulf  
25 of Mexico. All five are listed as threatened or



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1 endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and all  
2 are federally managed by NOAA and DOI. All turtles  
3 are highly migratory and they have a wide geographic  
4 range. So in the Gulf of Mexico, sea turtles are  
5 also a shared resource and they cross state,  
6 federal, and international boundaries. The trustees  
7 found that all species of sea turtles were injured  
8 by the Deep Water Horizon spill. Injuries were  
9 quantified for loggerhead, Kemp's ridley, green, and  
10 hawksbill sea turtles, but not for leatherback  
11 turtles. The injury couldn't be quantified to a  
12 specific number of animals for leatherbacks. So the  
13 trustees have also established four restoration  
14 goals for sea turtles. The first one is to  
15 implement a -- an integrated portfolio of  
16 restoration approaches to address all the injured  
17 species and life stages. Second goal is to restore  
18 injuries by addressing primary threats to sea  
19 turtles, such as bycatch and commercial fisheries,  
20 loss or degradation of nesting beach habitat, and  
21 other human- caused threats. Third goal is to  
22 restore sea turtles in areas -- in geographic and  
23 temporal areas in the Gulf of Mexico and the  
24 Atlantic Ocean that are important for the injured  
25 species and life stages. And fourth, we want to



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1 support existing conservation efforts by insuring  
2 consistency with existing sea turtle recovery plans  
3 and other efforts. Okay. So there are six  
4 preferred alternatives for sea turtles. So six  
5 projects that I'll go through one-by-one. The first  
6 one is the Gulf of Mexico Sea Turtle Atlas. This  
7 project is expected to last about 15 years and has a  
8 total budget of \$5.7 million. So this project would  
9 develop a central platform to access and view sea  
10 turtle data that are currently dispersed across  
11 areas, agencies, academic organizations, and other  
12 agencies. The project would provide a public, web-  
13 based interface that would be available to  
14 stakeholders, restoration planners, restoration  
15 managers, all to inform restoration planning and  
16 help prioritize our needs and activities. The  
17 second project is Identifying Methods to Reduce Sea  
18 Turtle Bycatch in the Reef Fish Bottom Longline  
19 Fisheries. This project is anticipated to last two  
20 years with a budget of \$290,000. Sea turtle bycatch  
21 in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Bottom Longline  
22 Fishery has been documented by NOAA's Observer  
23 Program since about 2005. Bycatch in this fishery  
24 occurs when sea turtles become either hooked in the  
25 gear or entangled in the line causing serious



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1 injuries and mortalities. This project would work  
2 to identify factors contributing to sea turtle  
3 bycatch in the bottom longline fishery and it would  
4 work by looking at existing observer data and  
5 thoroughly analyzing and comparing the observer data  
6 to other data sets to try to identify environmental  
7 factors or fishing practices that might be  
8 associated with that turtle bycatch. This project  
9 would potentially inform future restoration efforts.  
10 All right. The third project is titled Developing a  
11 Gulf-line Comprehensive Plan for In-water Sea Turtle  
12 Data Collection. And this one would last about two  
13 years with an estimated budget of \$655,000. The  
14 project would develop a comprehensive plan for  
15 coordinated data collection for sea turtles in the  
16 marine environment across the Gulf of Mexico. So  
17 assessing the status of sea turtle populations  
18 across broad areas and multiple life stages is very  
19 difficult and as a result, there are data gaps with  
20 regard to turtle distribution, abundance, and vital  
21 rates. This project would focus on the development  
22 of a systematic approach for sea turtle data  
23 collection that could be utilized by multiple  
24 researchers to standardize data collection  
25 strategies, identify protocols that can be used, and



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1 coordinate across various stakeholders. The fourth  
2 project is Developing Methods to Observe Sea Turtle  
3 Interactions in the Gulf of Mexico Menhaden Purse  
4 Seine Fishery. This one has an estimated duration  
5 of four years and a budget of about \$3 million.  
6 Fisheries observers help characterize bycatch by  
7 observing when, where, and how many protected  
8 species become entrapped in gear. We also utilize  
9 new tools, such as video monitoring to determine if  
10 bycatch is occurring. The Gulf of Mexico Menhaden  
11 Purse Seine Fishery currently lacks an effective  
12 observer program to assess sea turtle bycatch. So  
13 this project would work with the Menhaden industry  
14 to identify the most viable methods to document sea  
15 turtle bycatch and to attempt to fill some of those  
16 data gaps that we have in this fishery and this  
17 project would inform future restoration efforts,  
18 potentially as well. All right. Our fifth project  
19 is Reducing Juvenile Sea Turtle Bycatch Through  
20 Development of Reduced Bar Spacing in TEDS. And  
21 this would be a four- year project with an estimated  
22 budget of about \$2.15 million. Sea turtle mortality  
23 in the Shrimp Outer Trawl Fishery has been greatly  
24 reduced with the use of turtle excluder devices,  
25 generally referred to as TEDS. The TED is a metal



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1 grid that fits into the cod end of a trawl net with  
2 a top or bottom escape opening that is covered by a  
3 flap. So when the turtle encounters the TED, it  
4 would hit the bars and go out through the opening  
5 while the target catch, or the shrimp, or small  
6 organisms would go through the bars and be caught in  
7 the net. So current TEDS are successful at  
8 excluding larger turtles, but they're not able to  
9 effectively reduced the bycatch of or exclude small,  
10 juvenile turtles because the smaller turtles can  
11 either pass through the bars or they're not strong  
12 enough to get out of that escape opening. So this  
13 project would work to test different TED designs to  
14 see if we can develop something that would work a  
15 little bit better for those smaller turtles and if  
16 it can be effective in excluding that. And then,  
17 any new designs would also be evaluated for shrimp  
18 catch retention as well in commercial vessels. The  
19 last project I'll talk to you about today is the  
20 Long-Term Nesting Beach Habitat Protection for Sea  
21 Turtles Project. And this one has an estimated  
22 duration of three years and an estimated budget of  
23 \$7 million. Sea turtles face a variety of threats  
24 on nesting beaches and this project would protect  
25 valuable high density sea turtle nesting habitat



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1 through acquisition of habitat near the Archie Carr  
2 National Wildlife Refuge in the Atlantic Coast of  
3 Florida. Through acquisition from willing sellers,  
4 the project would protect essential nesting habitat  
5 into perpetuity and reduce threats of future  
6 development and enhance hatchling productivity. So  
7 next, Erin Fougères will provide an overview of the  
8 Mammal Alternatives.

9 **MS. FOUGERES:** Thanks, Sara. I'm Erin  
10 Fougères, a marine mammal biologist with NOAA  
11 Fisheries Southeast Region. So there's 21 species  
12 of cetaceans or the whales and dolphins that are  
13 found across a broad range of habitats in the  
14 northern Gulf of Mexico, including offshore, coastal  
15 waters, and the bays, sounds, and estuaries. All  
16 marine mammals are federally protected under the  
17 Marine Mammal Protection Act and some are also  
18 protected under the Endangered Species Act, such as  
19 the Gulf of Mexico Bryde's Whale and the sperm  
20 whale. The trustees determine that as a result of  
21 the Deep Water Horizon oil spill, exposure to  
22 chemical contaminants had resulted in death,  
23 reproductive failure, and adverse health effects,  
24 such as lung and adrenal disease in northern Gulf of  
25 Mexico cetacean populations. Marine mammals are



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1 long-lived species and so it may take decades to  
2 recover without active restoration. The Open Ocean  
3 TIG has placed an initial restoration focus on  
4 Continental Shelf and Oceanic Stocks of marine  
5 mammals. The trustee's restoration goals are to  
6 implement an integrated portfolio of restoration  
7 approaches, to restore injured marine mammal species  
8 across their diverse habitats in geographic ranges,  
9 to identify and implement restoration activities  
10 that mitigate key stressors in order to support  
11 resilient populations, to collect and use monitoring  
12 information such as population and health  
13 assessments and distribution information, and the  
14 trustees will also identify and implement actions  
15 that support ecological needs of the stocks, improve  
16 resilience to natural stressors, and address direct  
17 threats caused by human activity, such as bycatch  
18 and commercial fisheries, vessel collisions, noise,  
19 and industrial activities, illegal feeding and  
20 harassment, and hook and line fishery interactions.  
21 After careful consideration, the trustees are  
22 recommending four preferred alternatives for marine  
23 mammals in this Draft Restoration Plan. These  
24 include Reducing Impacts to Cetaceans During  
25 Disasters By Improving Response Activities. One of



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1 the more direct opportunities to benefit cetaceans  
2 is through improving and enhancing response and  
3 assessment activities during anthropogenic and  
4 natural disasters in the Gulf of Mexico when large  
5 numbers of animals are threatened. Specific  
6 activities proposed in this project would include  
7 conducting a Gulf-wide gap analysis and risk  
8 assessment of the current disaster response  
9 capacity. Activities would also include improving  
10 planning and developing protocols for marine mammal  
11 disaster response and investigation, and developing  
12 new tools and techniques to minimize or reduce  
13 cetacean injury and mortality. Overall restoration  
14 goals would be met by the eventual implementation of  
15 marine mammal disaster response and preparedness  
16 measures that would improve the survival and health  
17 outcomes of cetacean populations in the Gulf of  
18 Mexico. The estimated duration for this project is  
19 ten years and the estimated budget is \$4.287  
20 million. The second recommended alternative is to  
21 Reduce Impacts of Anthropogenic Noise on Cetaceans.  
22 The acoustic environment in the Gulf of Mexico  
23 includes a spectrum of noise sources, including a  
24 variety of human-made sounds. For example, seismic  
25 air guns, explosives, pile driving, and vessel



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1 noise. Cetaceans rely on sound for vital life  
2 functions and increased anthropogenic noise levels  
3 may mask important biological sounds, disturb or  
4 displace vital behaviors, and cause direct  
5 physiological harm. Many strategies and  
6 technologies for reducing noise impact to cetaceans  
7 have been developed. However, further development  
8 and effective implementation are still needed. This  
9 project would leverage existing recommendations and  
10 studies to identify activities to reduce noise  
11 levels in the Gulf of Mexico. Convene experts to  
12 learn more about the status of new technologies, and  
13 identify mechanisms for applying new and existing  
14 techniques in the Gulf of Mexico and work with  
15 groups to identify partnership opportunities to  
16 advance noise-reducing technologies for testing and  
17 implementation. A noise risk assessment would be  
18 conducted to identify the highest risk areas in the  
19 northern Gulf of Mexico where restoration actions  
20 could most effectively prevent or reduce the  
21 negative effects of anthropogenic noise on  
22 cetaceans. The project would also use passive  
23 acoustic monitoring arrays to continue baseline data  
24 collection, to inform restoration, and monitor noise  
25 reduction outcomes. The estimated duration of this



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1 project is six years with an estimated budget of  
2 \$8.99 million. Woo, we're jumping ahead. The third  
3 recommended alternative is the Compilation of  
4 Environmental Threats and Animal Data for Cetacean  
5 Population Health Analyses Platform or the Cetacean  
6 Platform. Currently, information on cetaceans in  
7 the Gulf of Mexico is collected by a variety of  
8 organizations and stored using different databases.  
9 To coordinate critical data for restoration, this  
10 project proposes to develop a platform that would  
11 provide user- friendly web-based access to data sets  
12 that would assist the trustees, restoration  
13 planners, responders, and conservation managers in  
14 the restoration and protection of marine mammals.  
15 It would also develop protocols to better integrate  
16 data collected across multiple partners. Technical  
17 experts would identify key data sets, perimeters,  
18 analyses, and partners for the project. The  
19 cetacean platform would be released over the first  
20 three years of the project and include training to  
21 inform users and data collectors of standardized  
22 data collection protocols. The Cetacean Platform  
23 would support restoration planning, prioritization,  
24 and implementation by making key data available to  
25 decision-makers in a centralized platform. This



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1 project has an estimated duration of five years and  
2 an estimated budget of \$5.8 million. The fourth and  
3 final recommended alternative I'll be talking about  
4 is Reducing and Mitigating Vessel Strike Mortality  
5 of Cetaceans. Vessel collisions are one of the main  
6 anthropogenic sources of mortality for large whales  
7 around the world and are a threat to cetaceans in  
8 the Gulf of Mexico, particularly large whales, such  
9 as the Gulf of Mexico Bryde's Whale. While there  
10 are a number of potential actions to reduce the risk  
11 of vessel whale interactions, there is insufficient  
12 information to implement one set of measures across  
13 the Gulf of Mexico and to know what measures would  
14 be the most effective. In order to appropriately  
15 focus vessel strike risk reduction activities, this  
16 proposed project would first conduct analyses to  
17 evaluate vessel activity in the Gulf, consolidate  
18 data for characterizing off-shore cetacean  
19 distribution, and then, combine vessel and cetacean  
20 data to identify areas of relative concern for  
21 collision risk. Once the project establishes and  
22 prioritizes high risk areas, the project would  
23 identify and develop partnerships, cultivate buy-in  
24 from other stakeholders, and implement the most  
25 effective and efficient activities to reduce and



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1 mitigate vessel strike mortality for each high risk  
2 area. This project has an estimated duration of six  
3 years and an estimated budget of \$3.834 million.  
4 Next, you'll hear from Kris Benson who will talk  
5 about recommended alternatives for the mesophotic  
6 and deep benthic communities.

7 **MR. BENSON:** Okay. Thanks, Erin. My name is  
8 Kristopher Benson and I work for NOAA's Restoration  
9 Center and I coordinate the restoration for  
10 mesophotic and deep benthic communities. I think  
11 understanding the context of the injury to these  
12 communities is important for understanding the scope  
13 and scale of the restoration that I'll talk to you  
14 about momentarily, but this -- this geographic  
15 extent is quite large and the -- it's probably hard  
16 to see on the screen here, but these red and yellow  
17 polygons describe the areas that I'll describe to  
18 you here now. There was a quantified injury  
19 described in the -- in the programmatic damage  
20 assessment and restoration plan to over 2,000 square  
21 kilometers of a footprint of injured benthic habitat  
22 around the well head and an additional -- that's in  
23 deep -- deep water and then, an additional 10-square  
24 kilometers of mesophotic habitat impact up on the --  
25 on the continental shelf. Substantial losses to



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1 resident corals and fish in that area, as well.  
2 There was also documented hydrocarbon exposure, not  
3 quantified injury, but exposure to an additional  
4 7,500 to 12,000 square kilometers estimated of  
5 benthic habitats that extended up the continental  
6 slope from that area around the well head and onto  
7 the continental shelf. And in addition to all of  
8 that, there was a deep water plume of hydrocarbons  
9 that extended some 250 miles to the southwest of the  
10 well head, with a -- it was trapped in the water  
11 column between 975 and 1,280 meters depth and in it  
12 -- combined with the cumulative surface oiling area  
13 that Laurie described to you earlier of over 43,000  
14 square miles of surface oiling, all contributed to a  
15 marine snow event that was observed throughout that  
16 -- that area. So the final restoration type that we  
17 will talk about is for mesophotic and deep benthic  
18 communities. These include soft and hard ground  
19 habitats, as well as associated fish and  
20 invertebrates. Rare corals, fish, crabs, and other  
21 small animals and microbes live in these habits on  
22 the sea floor and they're part of the foundation of  
23 life and of food webs in the northern Gulf of  
24 Mexico. In addition, mesophotic reef habitats are  
25 important for a variety of fish species that are



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1 commercially and recreationally important, such as  
2 snappers, groupers, and amberjack. The Deep Water  
3 Horizon Oil Spill severely affected mesophotic and  
4 deep benthic communities. These species that make  
5 up these communities can be very long-lived and slow  
6 growing. Some living for hundreds or even thousands  
7 of years and as a result, their recovery is also  
8 expected to be slow. Restoration is also  
9 complicated by a number of factors including a  
10 limited understanding of the key biological  
11 functions of these species, limited experience with  
12 restoration at these depths or with these species,  
13 and remote locations that limit accessibility.  
14 Therefore, the trustee's restoration goals are to  
15 restore invertebrate and fish abundance and biomass  
16 for injured species, focusing on high density  
17 mesophotic and deep water coral sites and other  
18 priority hard ground areas to provide a continuum of  
19 healthy habitats from the coast to the offshore, to  
20 actively manage valuable deep sea communities, to  
21 protect against multiple threats, and to provide a  
22 framework for monitoring education and outreach and  
23 to improve our understanding of these communities to  
24 better inform management and ensure resiliency. So  
25 the preferred alternatives for restoration of



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1 mesophotic and deep benthic communities comprise a  
2 portfolio that would be implemented over a seven to  
3 eight year period and as you can see, it comes with  
4 an estimated cost of about \$125.5 million. That  
5 seven to eight year period would include an initial  
6 one to two year implementation planning period that  
7 would allow for strategic planning, development of  
8 detailed adaptive management and public engagement  
9 plans, coordinated management of cross-cutting  
10 project requirements, and implementation planning  
11 would be followed by five years of implementation in  
12 the field and in the lab and a final year of project  
13 evaluation and reporting. Again, the total  
14 estimated budget is about \$125.5 million. The  
15 Mapping, Ground Truthing, and Predictive Habit  
16 Modeling Project would document abundance and  
17 distribution of deep benthic communities and provide  
18 fundamental information to prioritize and support  
19 protection and management activities and to target  
20 locations for direct restoration. The Habitat  
21 Assessment and Evaluation Project would fill  
22 critical data gaps and evaluate sites for potential  
23 direct restoration and protection activities,  
24 including both injured and referenced sites. It  
25 would document ongoing injury to mesophotic and deep



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1 benthic communities from both natural and  
2 anthropogenic threats, and it would provide  
3 background data needed to detect and quantify  
4 potential future impacts in other locations and to  
5 assess the success of our restoration efforts with  
6 respect to recovery, natural mortality, and growth  
7 rates. And finally, it would establish a baseline  
8 for health and condition to guide direct restoration  
9 and protection. And these projects are estimated to  
10 cost \$35.9 million and \$52.6 million respectively  
11 for the Mapping and Ground Truthing and Habitat  
12 Assessment Evaluation Projects. Okay. The Coral  
13 Propagation Technique Development Project would be a  
14 pilot scale project that would develop methods and  
15 techniques for effective enhancement of coral  
16 recruitment and growth and the application of  
17 successful methods at large scale for restoration,  
18 or at least the identification of methods that could  
19 be applied at large scale for restoration. It would  
20 directly compensate the loss of mesophotic and deep  
21 benthic community corals and associated benthic and  
22 water column communities that were injured by the  
23 spill. And finally, the Active Management and  
24 Protection Project would manage and protect  
25 mesophotic and deep benthic communities from known



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1 threats, would contribute to management activities  
2 to achieve restoration goals that were identified in  
3 the Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration  
4 Plan, to maintain ecological integrity and increase  
5 ecosystem resilience through outreach, education,  
6 and engagement, and through direct threat reduction  
7 efforts, such as mooring buoy installations, removal  
8 of marine debris, derelict fishing gear, and  
9 invasive species. The project would also provide  
10 information to management entities, such as the Gulf  
11 of Mexico Fishery Management Council, NOAA's Office  
12 of National Marine Sanctuaries, and DOIs, the  
13 Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy  
14 Management. And there's a good deal more specific  
15 information in the plan about specific activities  
16 that are entailed in each of these projects and I  
17 encourage you to look at the plan, ask questions if  
18 you have them about those activities. It's just too  
19 much detail to go into tonight. And so with that, I  
20 will pass it back to Perry for the next step in our  
21 meeting.

22 **MR. FRANKLIN:** Thank you, Kris. That was a  
23 tremendous amount of information and the public  
24 comment period has been open since May 15th and it  
25 will go on through July 1st. There are multiple



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1 modes to deliver your public comments. You can go  
2 online and to type in your public comment. You can  
3 bring with you tonight a hard copy of your public  
4 comments. You can mail in a hard copy of your  
5 public comments. Or you can come forward at this  
6 point to give your verbal comments and that is what  
7 this portion of tonight's program is set out to do.  
8 In order to do that, we have four individuals who  
9 will come forward and be a part of the listening  
10 table to formally receive your public comments. At  
11 this time, I would like to invite Ms. Laurie Rounds  
12 with NOAA to come forward, Ms. Ashley Mills with  
13 DOI, Ms. Treda Grayson with the EPA, and Mark Defley  
14 with USDA. These individuals will formally receive  
15 your verbal comment. Again, there's a process to  
16 this. If you'd like to be called forward, we first  
17 just need to receive a blue card with your name on  
18 it and that will allow me to formally bring you  
19 forward, at which time, you'll be given basically  
20 three minutes to do so. Seeing that we do not have  
21 a large stack of blue cards, we'll be a little bit  
22 more liberal with that timing tonight. I will not  
23 set up the laptop with the yellow, green, and red  
24 timer, but I'll maintain some time to ensure that  
25 everyone has an adequate amount of time to do so.



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1 So at this time, I'd like to call forward Alexis  
2 Baldera with the Ocean Conservancy. And again, if  
3 you'll state your name and your organization for the  
4 record.

5 **MS. BALDERA:** Hi. I'm Alexis Baldera. I'm  
6 Director of Ocean Conservancy's Gulf Restoration  
7 Program and on behalf of the Ocean Conservancy, I  
8 thank you for your work to restore the Gulf of  
9 Mexico ecosystem. We're excited to see the release  
10 of the Draft Open Ocean Restoration Plan 2. Since  
11 the BP Deep Water Horizon Oil disaster began, Ocean  
12 Conservancy has set out to identify what it means to  
13 restore the Open Ocean and the wildlife that lived  
14 there. We have long advocated for projects rooted  
15 in science that will help further our understanding  
16 of the understudy ecosystem, reduce stressors, and  
17 fill critical gaps in knowledge. We're very  
18 encouraged to see that our vision for these  
19 resources aligns with yours. In order to improve  
20 the long-term success of your efforts, we offer the  
21 following three suggestions which we'll expand upon  
22 in more detail in our written comments. First, for  
23 those projects that depend on voluntary use of  
24 bycatch reduction techniques, we suggest developing  
25 financial or market incentives to encourage



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1 participation. Second, we ask that you include  
2 targeted stakeholder engagement when developing and  
3 implementing bycatch reduction techniques. This  
4 will help meet the needs of the Gulf's fishing  
5 communities and ensure that stakeholder input is  
6 incorporated earlier in project development. Third,  
7 due to the size of the injury and the complexity of  
8 the ecosystem, Open Ocean Restoration is a challenge  
9 and yet, this plan shows it's also an opportunity to  
10 better understand the Gulf's resources. In order to  
11 maximize the benefits of restoration dollars, we ask  
12 that you coordinate with other planning bodies, such  
13 as the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council who  
14 are also working to ensure the long-term health of  
15 the Gulf's resources. This will prevent duplication  
16 of effort and will help improve knowledge  
17 transferred between research managers. Lastly, we  
18 look forward to your continued work on Open Ocean  
19 Restoration and ask that as projects move from  
20 planning to implementation, you openly report on  
21 your specific resource management goals, how  
22 projects are performing, and what sort of progress  
23 you're making towards your goals. So lastly, thanks  
24 again for this plan. We think it's a great win for  
25 the Gulf of Mexico.



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1           **MR. FRANKLIN:** Thank you, Ms. Baldera. The  
2 second individual to make verbal public comment is  
3 Mr. Paul Montagna with TAMUCC.

4           **MR. MONTAGNA:** Hello. I'm Paul Montagna. I'm  
5 a professor at the Harte Research Institute of Texas  
6 A&M University Corpus Christi. I -- by way of  
7 introduction, I also performed some of the  
8 assessment studies for the deep benthic communities  
9 for the NOAA and I helped prepare a short section on  
10 the injuries to the deep sea soft bottom sediments.  
11 The majority of the injury to the soft bottom  
12 benthos was actually a 30 to 50 percent loss of  
13 biodiversity and analysis of our samples from the  
14 very last cruise we took in 2014, we discovered that  
15 there had been zero recovery of biodiversity in the  
16 impacted areas. Nearly all of the focus of  
17 mesophotic and deep benthic community restoration  
18 habitats is on hard bottom communities, particularly  
19 deep sea corals. The deep sea corals are certainly a  
20 unique and important habitat in the Gulf of Mexico.  
21 However, I simply want to remind you that 95 percent  
22 of the area of the Gulf deep sea is soft bottom  
23 sediment and this habitat is vital to providing  
24 ecosystem surfaces with nutrient cycling, carbon  
25 sequestration, which by the way, helps regulate the



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1 climate, and also for linkages with pelagic fish  
2 through food web relationships and interactions.  
3 Thus, I think it's very important that we answer the  
4 question: Has there been any recovery at all of the  
5 deep sea benthos diversity that you've seen? So  
6 thank you for your work and that's all I have to  
7 say.

8 **MR. FRANKLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Montagna. Those  
9 are the two cards that were given to me to make  
10 verbal public comment. Are there others? At this  
11 time, I'd like to ask Ms. Thao Vu to come forward  
12 and to state her name and organization and give your  
13 public comment.

14 **MS. VU:** Good evening. My name's Thao Vu. I'm  
15 the director of Mississippi Coalition for  
16 Vietnamese-American Fisher Folks and Families.  
17 Thank you for the City of Pensacola for hosting  
18 this. We weren't too far away. Just two Fisher  
19 Folks with me. We're only an hour-and-a-half away so  
20 we decided to try and remain as engaged as possible.  
21 Restoration is critically important for our Gulf.  
22 Not only for Mississippi, but our entire Gulf, you  
23 know, and particularly for the fishing communities  
24 who really and honestly helped build the Gulf, you  
25 know. It's not only, you know, a means, you know,



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1 to provide their economic, their livelihood. It's a  
2 cultural tradition, right? And for the past almost  
3 ten years since Deep Water Horizon, many of the  
4 fishing communities have been, you know, greatly  
5 struggling, you know. And part of the reason is  
6 because we've had so much challenges in restoring  
7 our key natural resources, our fish reefs, their  
8 habitats, including water quality. So this is  
9 really, critically important. However, this is a  
10 massive document and right now they're really busy  
11 shrimping right now across the Gulf and for many of  
12 us who work at local organizations, we really  
13 haven't had sufficient time to do any initial  
14 outreach. We need additional time, really great  
15 additional time. Many of these projects will affect  
16 many of the fishing communities across the Gulf, so  
17 we're asking for at least one-month extension.  
18 That's critically important. You can tell because  
19 I'm the only one who brought two fish folks. The  
20 majority of the fishermen are shrimping and they  
21 wouldn't have been -- they wouldn't know about this  
22 and the vast majority don't have e-mail, so they  
23 wouldn't keep -- get this kind of critical  
24 information in time, right? So please, give us the  
25 one-month extension. The other thing is that



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1 particularly for the Vietnamese community, we have  
2 great language access needs and thank you for taking  
3 the steps to translate some of these fact sheets.  
4 However, I think that if we had more on hand  
5 engagement with some of the communities, we could  
6 help you identify certain parts of the document that  
7 would really give some context why you're proposing  
8 certain projects. You know, your restorational  
9 approaches and goals, right? Some of those chapters  
10 probably should've been translated, but we'd  
11 probably do better on the front-end in terms of  
12 those processes if we had maybe more, like, small  
13 focus groups on the front-end when you're preparing,  
14 like, some kind of planning document, or little  
15 projects, or adaptive management strategies. I  
16 think that would be helpful because a six-page  
17 translation of the executive summary isn't going to  
18 do justice for a document that's almost 500 pages,  
19 you know? And so those were the key things that we  
20 definitely need more time to get this out to the  
21 fish community. That's probably the key thing  
22 that's critically important that would need some  
23 additional time. Thank you for the opportunity to  
24 comment.

25 **MR. FRANKLIN:** Thank you, Ms. Vu. Are there



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1 any others who would like to come forward to make  
2 verbal public comment at this time? Okay. Seeing  
3 none, I think Ms. Round's next slide will give you  
4 more information and more detail on how to submit  
5 those comments after you have given this greater  
6 consideration. So at this time, I'd like to bring  
7 Ms. Laurie Rounds back up with NOAA.

8 **MS. ROUNDS:** Okay. Thank you very much for  
9 your comments. I appreciate that and as Perry said,  
10 we just wanted to provide a little bit more  
11 information about the next steps. So as we've  
12 mentioned and is available on the materials at the  
13 back of the room and, you know, on our website as  
14 well, there are multiple ways that you can submit  
15 your public comments. So we do have the online  
16 portal in which you can enter your comments. You  
17 can always mail them in as a hard copy, as well, to  
18 the address shown the screen. And of course, we  
19 appreciate the comments that were received tonight  
20 and those will be entered into the official public  
21 comments and the next steps are that the comment  
22 deadline is July 1st, so we will accept comments  
23 through July 1st. The trustees will review and  
24 consider all the comments received to finalize the  
25 restoration plan. We will summarize those -- the



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1 comments that are received and the trustee's  
2 responses in the Final Restoration Plan. And our  
3 gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov website of course has  
4 all of this information, as well. There are a  
5 couple other opportunities where you can get more  
6 information and provide comments, as well. So the  
7 Open Ocean Trustees are going to hold two public  
8 webinars. The first one will be on June 11th at noon  
9 Central Time and the second one will be June 13th at  
10 6:00 p.m. Central Time. So we hope these will help  
11 facilitate public comment on the Draft Restoration  
12 Plan. The webinars will include the same  
13 presentation that we did tonight. We'll also have a  
14 portion of the webinar for us to take questions and  
15 provide responses. And then, we'll also have an  
16 opportunity for formal public comments to be  
17 submitted using the webinar tools. So registration  
18 is needed to get all of the information to be able  
19 to participate on these webinars and again, all of  
20 that is available on our  
21 gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov. So again, thank you  
22 very much for coming here tonight to learn about the  
23 plan. We really appreciate the comments. We're  
24 looking forward to getting additional comments and  
25 continuing to work with everybody for Open Ocean



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Restoration. Thank you.

(PUBLIC MEETING CONCLUDED AT 7:36 P.M.)



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