

Deepwater Horizon Open Ocean 2020 Annual Meeting

November 5, 2020 Webinar – Question and Answer Summary

Question: I was told there will be a call for proposals soon for bird projects. Is that true, and if so, is there a date the proposals are due?

Response [Ashley Mills, DOI]: We have been busy implementing all these projects listed in restoration plans, working on MAM planning, and implementing the three approved MAM activities, all the things we've been talking about today. However, we are soon going to turn our attention towards planning for our third restoration plan. When we're ready to collect project ideas, we'll post a notice online, on the Trustee's Gulf Spill Website. The notice will provide more information about the restoration types we'll be considering for the next restoration plan. We anticipate posting this notice, or this call for project ideas, sometime this winter, but the Trustee project submission portal is always open, so you can submit a project idea at any time, and we'll see it once we start looking through ideas. So, thanks for that great question and please stay tuned.

Question: Could you add working on making the Marine Mammal Protection Act a proactive conservation statute like the Endangered Species Act, with a section seven federal agency compliance mandate?

Response [Christy Fellas, NOAA]: Hi everyone this is Christy Fellas with NOAA Restoration Center. This is an interesting question, but actually the program we're presenting on here for Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) is purely set up to restore the injury caused by the spill, so that is separate from something like the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) or the Endangered Species Act, which really are regulatory programs. So we don't have the ability within NRDA to make changes to existing acts or statutes. That is something that would have to be done through congressional action. So, we do seek opportunities to work within existing programs where we can leverage our overlap, but that is not something that can be done or changed under our NRDA program. Thanks for the question.

Question: Can you post the link for new project ideas in the chat, or in the email with today's slides?

Response [Stephen Heverly, NOAA]: Yes, we can go ahead and send that link into the GoToWebinar control panel (<https://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration/give-us-your-ideas/suggest-a-restoration-project?>). And then, the other way to get the updates related to us soliciting project ideas is to sign up for the email subscriber lists, that Gale is going to

mention a little bit later. But, that'll give you an idea, especially of when Trustees are soliciting project ideas and they have specific asks. You can find that link on the home page of the gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov website.

Questions [moderator read two questions, due to their similar nature]: Could you study how to authorize incidental harassment authorization to be required for lobster fisherman who do not use sink line? Could you change government statutes to require sink line for all fishermen throughout the U.S. to prevent right whale entanglement?

Response [Christy Fellas, NOAA]: These are similar to a previous question I answered, but in response to both of those questions, again, NRDA is not set up to be a regulatory type program, so again there isn't a way in this settlement to change anything that's related to existing regulatory statutes or laws related to MMPA or any of those existing laws that protect marine mammals here. So, there are other venues for that, but they do not take place in this program. Thanks for your question.

Comment: I do hope the plans work with other NWRs in the Gulf and the new Texas A&M center for sea turtle research.

Response [Dan Van-Nostrand, NOAA]: Thanks for this comment. As I mentioned, NWR stands for National Wildlife Refuge. In the presentation, we mentioned a National Wildlife Refuge for one of our projects, which involves nesting sea turtles. We're still in the early planning phases of all the sea turtle projects. Some of them, like the Sea Turtle Atlas project, haven't even started yet. So, I would expect at the beginning, as that project kicks off and as other projects continue to move through the early implementation phases, that we will continue to evaluate the appropriate partners and stakeholders, and seek to figure out what the role is for some of these groups like National Wildlife Refuges or Texas A&M. So, I think it's too soon to say whether we will work specifically with any other National Wildlife Refuges or Texas A&M. We have a lot of experts working on these projects involved in steering committees and really helping to identify the right group of partners and stakeholders involved in the project. I appreciate the comment and hopefully we'll be able to provide more information later in the year.

Question: How will the Monitoring and Adaptive Management (MAM) cumulative stressors on marine mammal activity relate to specific NRDA Open Ocean projects, like the CETACEAN marine mammal platform?

Response [Christy Fellas, NOAA]: Thanks to whoever put in this question. Part of our vision here, sort of across marine mammal projects, is that many of our projects will provide data to CETACEAN, which is the data platform that we are looking to bring data together. And also, that

CETACEAN will be used by the cumulative impacts of stressors projects to predict population level impacts of the program as a whole. So, in turn, the cumulative impacts of stressors project will help us plan more effective restoration projects in the future for marine mammals. Thanks for your question.

Question: Can you tell us who was in charge of those steering committees?

Response [Dan Van-Nostrand, NOAA]: Yes, I talked about a huge group of projects, so in a general sense each project has Implementing Trustees. I think the sea turtle projects might be what the question was referring to. Most of the sea turtle projects are being co-implemented by DOI and NOAA. And, each of those Trustee agencies would assign project managers to work together. It's really those project teams that are then broadening out to the group of experts on steering committees who could best kind of guide the roadmap to implementing projects. Like I said, I think this one was specific to sea turtles, but similar to the other suites of projects where the Implementing Trustees assign project managers and develop project teams, which a lot of times include these broader steering committees to help guide the projects.