Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Texas Trustee Implementation Group
Final Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #3: Restoration of Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats

July 2025

NEPA UIN EAXX-006-48-1HC-1729121448

Suggested citation: Texas Trustee Implementation Group (Texas TIG). 2025. *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill Texas Trustee Implementation Group. *Final Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #3: Restoration of Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats*.

This National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document has been assigned the NEPA Unique Identification Number (UIN) EAXX-006-48-1HC-1729121448.

Photo caption: A completed marsh restoration project that beneficially used dredged material in Pierce Marsh. Photo courtesy of Philip Smith, Galveston Bay Foundation.

Executive Summary

On April 20, 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) mobile drilling unit exploded, caught fire, and eventually sank in the Gulf of America (formerly the Gulf of Mexico),[1] resulting in a massive release of oil and other substances from BP Exploration and Production's (BP's) Macondo well and causing loss of life and extensive natural resources injuries. Initial efforts to cap the well following the explosion were unsuccessful, and for 87 days after the explosion, the well continuously and uncontrollably discharged oil and natural gas into the northern Gulf of America. Approximately 3.19 million barrels (134 million gallons) of oil were released into the ocean (U.S. Department of Justice 2016). Oil spread from the deep ocean to the ocean surface and nearshore environment from Texas to Florida. Extensive response actions, including cleanup activities and actions to prevent the oil from reaching sensitive resources, were undertaken to reduce harm to people and the environment. However, many of the response actions had collateral impacts on the environment and on natural resource services.

As part of a 2016 settlement, BP agreed to pay a total of $8.1 billion in natural resource damages (inclusive of Early Restoration funding) over a 15-year period and up to an additional $700 million for adaptive management and to address natural resources injuries that are presently unknown but may become apparent in the future. The settlement allocated a specific sum for restoration within specific Restoration Areas and across Restoration Types (described in more detail below).

The Texas Trustee Implementation Group (Texas TIG) is responsible for restoring natural resources and their services that were injured by the DWH oil spill within the Texas Restoration Area. The purpose of restoration, as discussed in the *Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (Final PDARP/PEIS; DWH NRDA Trustees 2016), is to make the environment and the public whole for injuries resulting from the spill. This will be achieved by implementing restoration actions that return injured natural resources and services to baseline conditions and compensate for interim losses in accordance with the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and associated Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) regulations. The Final PDARP/PEIS and Record of Decision are available at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan/.

The Texas TIG has prepared this *Final Restoration Plan/Environmental Assessment #3: Restoration of Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats* (RP/EA #3) to address injury to a subset of natural resources and natural resource services in the Texas Restoration Area resulting from the DWH oil spill, focusing on the beneficial use of dredged material (BUDM) to restore and conserve wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats. This RP/EA #3 includes a description and evaluation of eight restoration projects, also called restoration alternatives,[2] which compensate for the natural resource injury described in the Final PDARP/PEIS. Table ES-1 lists the reasonable range of alternatives evaluated by the Texas TIG.

[1] The waterbody was renamed per Executive Order 14172 "Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness" (January 20, 2025).

[2] The terms "project" and "alternative" are used interchangeably throughout this RP/EA #3.

Table ES-1 Reasonable Range of Restoration Alternatives Proposed in RP/EA #3

Alternative	Potential Acres	Preferred or Not Preferred
Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge Roberts Mueller Tract Wetland Restoration	550	Preferred
Goose Island Wetland Restoration	40	Preferred
Guadalupe River Old Delta Wetland Restoration	1,140	Not preferred
Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area Old River Unit Wetland Restoration	224	Preferred
McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge Willow Lake Terraces Wetland Restoration	218	Preferred
San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge Sargent Oil Field Wetland Restoration	200	Preferred
Schicke Point Wetland Restoration	72	Not preferred
Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge Wetland Restoration	623	Preferred

Many maintenance projects along the Texas coast involve dredging and disposing of sediment, which could be repurposed to ecologically benefit coastal habitats. The projects would restore and conserve wetlands and coastal habitats by using suitable material dredged from nearby maintenance projects to create vegetated wetland habitat. The placement of dredged material, construction of containment levees, and associated plantings for the preferred alternatives would restore up to 1,855 acres of intertidal marsh as indicated in Table ES-1.

The Draft RP/EA #3 was released for public review and comment on January 16, 2025, and public comments were accepted through February 18, 2025. The Texas TIG held a public meeting on January 28, 2025, to provide information about the Draft RP/EA #3 and to answer questions and receive public comment. The Texas TIG considered the comments received, which informed the analysis of alternatives in this Final RP/EA #3. A summary of public comments received and the Texas TIG's responses to those comments are included in Appendix F of this document. Edits made between the Draft and Final RP/EA #3 were primarily editorial changes; minor technical revisions to improve clarity; edits made in compliance with Executive Orders 14154, 14172, 14229; and edits made in compliance with other environmental laws and regulations. In addition to these minor revisions, the Texas TIG made two substantive changes. The *Schicke Point Wetland Restoration* project was preferred in the Draft RP/EA #3 but was removed by the Texas TIG from the list of preferred projects in this Final RP/EA #3. The Texas TIG reviewed new aerial photography following publication of the Draft RP/EA #3 and concluded the project would not provide as many natural resource benefits as initially anticipated, given the accretion of marsh and presence of submerged aquatic vegetation at the site. Sections 1.6.1.2 and 3.5.7 provide additional information regarding this change. The TIG also reduced the total amount of Wetlands, Coastal and Nearshore Habitats Restoration Type funding allocated to the projects from $40 million in the Draft RP/EA #3 to $36 million proposed in this Final RP/EA #3.

The Texas TIG is selecting the six project alternatives listed as "preferred" in Table ES-1 for funding and implementation. As opposed to identifying the cost of each alternative, the Texas TIG would use up to $36 million to implement the selected alternatives. This funding would be divided among the selected projects to provide the incremental cost for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or to fund other viable

sources to beneficially use dredged sediments to construct the preferred restoration alternatives, as well as for Trustee implementation costs, planning, and monitoring. Table ES-2 provides a summary of the anticipated environmental consequences of the eight projects (six preferred; two non-preferred) and the no action alternative evaluated in this RP/EA #3.

Table ES-2 Summary of the Reasonably Foreseeable Impacts of the Reasonable Range of Restoration Alternatives

Project	Geology and Substrates	Hydrology and Water Quality	Air Quality	Noise	Habitats	Wildlife Species	Marine and Estuarine Fauna	Protected Species	Socioeconomics	Cultural Resources	Infrastructure	Land and Marine Management	Tourism and Recreational Use	Fisheries and Aquaculture	Marine Transportation	Aesthetics and Visual Resources	Public Health and Safety
No Action	L	L	NE	NE	L	L	L	L	NE	NE	l	l	l	l	NE	l	l
Jocelyn Nungaray National Wildlife Refuge Roberts Mueller Tract Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
Goose Island Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
Guadalupe River Old Delta Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area Old River Unit Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge Willow Lake Terraces Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge Sargent Oil Field Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
Schicke Point Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE
Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge Wetland Restoration	s, l, +	s, l, +	s, +	s	s*, +	s*, +	s*, +	s, l, +	NE, +	NE	NE	NE	s, +	s, +	NE	s*, +	NE

Notes:
+: beneficial effect
l: long-term, minor adverse effect
L: long-term, moderate-to-major adverse effect
NE: no adverse effect
s: short-term, minor adverse effect