

# *Deepwater Horizon* Open Ocean Monitoring and Adaptive Management (MAM) Priorities

July 22, 2020 Webinar – Summary of Questions and Answers

**Question:** There is some time-space study of the behavior of the hydrocarbon that precipitated on the seabed from the BP oil spill.

Summary Response [Melissa Carle, NOAA]: The Open Ocean TIG is not currently conducting any work related specifically to a space or time study on the behavior of hydrocarbons that precipitated onto the seabed in the Gulf of Mexico. However, the *Deepwater Horizon* Trustees did evaluate the impact of the oil spill on the Gulf of Mexico, including the deep benthic environment in the Gulf. The results of that extensive injury assessment are included in our Programmatic Damage Assessment Restoration Plan, which was released in spring of 2016. That Programmatic Damage Assessment Restoration Plan can be downloaded from the Trustees' website, which is [gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov](http://gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov). In addition to the restoration plan itself, all of the data from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill damage assessment are available from the Trustees' database (DIVER), and there is a link to that database on the Trustee's website as well.

**Question:** Are there plans for habitat mapping of the mesophotic reefs in the deep-sea areas of the Gulf?

Summary Response [Eric Weissberger, NOAA]: Restoration Plan 2, released last year, contains a project focused on habitat mapping for mesophotic and deep benthic communities. That project is currently in the planning phase.

**Question:** Are monitoring and adaptive management plans open for public comment?

Summary Response [Eric Weissberger, NOAA]: MAM plans are included as part of restoration plans. People may comment on the MAM plans when the restoration plans go out for public comment.

**Question:** Will there be projects that are purely monitoring oriented? Or will monitoring occur as part of other restoration projects?

Summary Response [Eric Weissberger, NOAA]: There will be MAM projects that occur outside of restoration projects. They will be focused on collecting information that can be used for planning, implementing, or evaluating restoration. These MAM projects will likely be focused on a bigger scale, such as collecting information that might be needed to plan or evaluate restoration for several resources.

**Comment:** I greatly appreciate you having this forum for question-and-answer exchange with the Open Ocean Trustees. It would have been great if the same opportunity had been available during the NRDA Trustee Annual Meeting.

**Question:** Are there plans for long-term monitoring of any of the potential population-level effects of PAH bioaccumulation in particular fish and invertebrate species in which baselines have been developed since the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill?

Summary Response [Melissa Carle, NOAA]: The Open Ocean TIG does not currently have any projects under way that are specifically focused on evaluating potential population-level effects of PAH bioaccumulation in any particular fish or invertebrate species. We're, at this point, focused on those types of monitoring and data collection activities that can directly inform our restoration efforts for the injured fish and invertebrate species and help us effectively plan and implement restoration projects to restore for those injuries as effectively as possible. We're also interested in data collection and monitoring efforts that could help us evaluate the outcomes of that restoration over time. Looking at things like PAH bioaccumulation could help inform the evaluation of restoration outcomes over time is an option, but at this point we're much more focused on understanding what we can do to restore injured resources and how we evaluate that restoration effort, as opposed to tracking long-term impacts of the injury itself.

**Question:** What is the timeframe for determining priorities, and will there be an official call for proposals?

Summary Response [Treda Grayson, U.S. EPA]: In the coming year the Open Ocean TIG plans to identify some of the activities where we can gather data quickly and efficiently, and the first activities will likely involve synthesizing existing information and identifying additional data that are needed. The NRDA program is not a granting program; in general, you cannot apply to get money. However, RFPs and grants are one way that the TIG may choose to get some of its work done. Other ways the TIG may fund work include cooperative agreements and a contract bidding process. When the TIG has opportunities to collect ideas for MAM activities, a call for ideas will be posted on the Gulf Spill Restoration website.

**Question:** Recognizing *Deepwater Horizon* and our NRDA restoration efforts are being coordinated with other restoration science efforts, did the Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group coordinate with the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary on their proposed expansion effort (and this question would like specifically to focus on mesophotic and deep benthic communities)?

Summary Response [Laurie Rounds, NOAA]: We plan to continue to coordinate with other restoration and science efforts for our MAM priorities. The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is a great resource that works with scientists, research groups, and managers, including their advisory group. We coordinated closely with staff from the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary as we developed mesophotic and deep benthic community restoration projects for Open Ocean Restoration Plan 2. The work for those restoration projects will also inform our monitoring and adaptive management needs for mesophotic communities. We will continue to coordinate closely with the Sanctuary and take advantage of their networks. We also hope to work in a similar way with other groups in the Gulf.