



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees Call for Public Input on Early Restoration of the Gulf

Sixty-day public comment period for Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan

For Immediate Release: Dec. 14, 2011

The *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees (Trustees) today released the **Deepwater Horizon Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Assessment (DERP/EA)** for formal public comment. It is the first in an anticipated series of plans to begin restoration of the Gulf of Mexico to compensate for natural resource injuries, including the loss of human use of Gulf resources, from the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill.

The DERP/EA describes the initial projects proposed to receive funding from the \$1 billion Early Restoration agreement announced by the Trustees and BP on April 21, 2011, called the Framework Agreement. The Trustees will hold 12 public meetings in January and February 2012 throughout Gulf Coast communities and in Washington, D.C. to solicit formal public comment on the DERP/EA.

“Public feedback is of the utmost importance, and we encourage people to submit comments and attend the upcoming public meetings,” said Cooper Shattuck, chair of the Trustee Council Executive Committee, speaking on behalf of the Trustees. “This is the first step in beginning restoration of injuries caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill. While continuing to accept project ideas, we will move forward with additional phases of Early Restoration until the entire \$1 billion is committed to Gulf Coast restoration.”

The DERP/EA describes eight proposed projects for the initial round of Early Restoration, two each in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi. These projects reflect the ideas and input received by the Trustees through project solicitation and outreach efforts. The proposed projects include shoreline marsh creation, coastal dune habitat restoration, nearshore artificial reef creation, oyster cultch restoration and construction of boat ramp facilities. The total estimated cost of the proposed initial suite of projects is more than \$57 million. The projects included in the *Deepwater Horizon* DERP/EA are:

- **Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation - NRDA Early Restoration.** Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana; approximately 104 acres of marsh creation; benefitting brackish marsh in the Barataria Hydrologic Basin; estimated cost: \$13,200,000.
- **Louisiana Oyster Cultch Project** - St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Lafourche, Jefferson, and Terrebonne Parishes, Louisiana; approximately 850 acres of cultch placement on public oyster seed grounds; construction of improvements to an existing oyster hatchery; benefitting oysters in coastal Louisiana; estimated cost: \$14,874,300.

- **Mississippi Oyster Cultch Restoration** - Hancock and Harrison Counties, Mississippi; 1,430 acres of cultch restoration; benefitting oysters in Mississippi Sound; estimated cost: \$11,000,000.
- **Mississippi Artificial Reef Habitat.** Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties, Mississippi; 100 acres of nearshore artificial reef; benefitting nearshore habitat; estimated cost: \$2,600,000.
- **Marsh Island (Portersville Bay) Marsh Creation** - Mobile County, Alabama; protecting 24 existing acres of salt marsh; creating 50 acres of salt marsh; 5,000 linear feet of tidal creeks; benefitting coastal salt marsh in Alabama; estimated cost: \$9,400,000.
- **Alabama Dune Cooperative Restoration Project** - Baldwin County, Alabama; 55 acres of primary dune habitat; benefitting coastal dune and beach mouse habitat in Alabama; estimated cost: \$1,145,976.
- **Florida Boat Ramp Enhancement and Construction** - Escambia County, Florida; four boat ramp facilities; benefitting human use in Escambia County, Florida; estimated cost: \$4,406,309.
- **Florida (Pensacola Beach) Dune Restoration** - Escambia County, Florida; 20 acres of coastal dune habitat; benefitting coastal dune habitat in Escambia County, Florida; estimated cost: \$585,898.

Visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov to view the DERP/EA, access public meeting details, and view additional details of the proposed Early Restoration projects and ways to submit public comment. The public comment period will end Feb. 14, 2012.

The following public meetings are scheduled for early 2012 (additional details will be made public as they become available):

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| Florida: | Wednesday, Jan. 11 and Thursday, Jan. 12 |
| Mississippi: | Tuesday, Jan. 17; Wednesday, Jan. 18; and Thursday, Jan. 19 |
| Alabama: | Monday, Jan. 23 and Tuesday, Jan. 24 |
| Texas: | Thursday, Jan. 26 |
| Louisiana: | Tuesday, Jan. 31; Wednesday, Feb. 1; and Thursday, Feb. 2 |
| Washington, D.C.: | Tuesday, Feb. 7 |

NRDA is the process used by natural resource trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for a spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and the services provided by those resources. The *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA Trustees include NOAA, the U.S. Department of Interior and state agencies from the five Gulf States - Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

Early Restoration provides an opportunity to implement restoration projects agreed upon by the Trustees and BP under the Framework Agreement prior to the completion of the NRDA. The damage assessment will continue while Early Restoration planning is under way. BP and other responsible parties are obligated to compensate the public for the full scope of the natural resource injury caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill, including the cost of assessing such injury and planning for restoration.

Note to Media: Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustee Comments

Department of the Interior

“The projects proposed in the DERP/EA are intended to begin the process of returning the Gulf of Mexico to its pre-spill condition and making the public whole,” said Rachel Jacobson, Acting Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and Trustee Council member. “The Trustees crafted this combination of projects based on many criteria, including suggestions from the public, and we encourage the public to continue to participate as we take this major step toward meaningful restoration to bring health and strength back to this region.”

NOAA

“NOAA will continue to pay close attention to comments submitted by the public as the Early Restoration process unfolds,” said Monica Medina, Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Trustee Council member. “We also will be working closely with our fellow trustees to help maximize the effectiveness of the projects they have identified for public consideration in the first round of Early Restoration.”

Alabama

“We look forward to hearing feedback on these proposed initial projects and invite the public to join us for the meetings scheduled in Alabama,” said N. Gunter Guy, Jr., Commissioner for Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, representing the Alabama trustees. “As this Early Restoration process seeks to further efforts to restore our Gulf’s vital natural resources and the public’s opportunity to enjoy those resources, we also encourage the public to submit written comments in addition to attending the upcoming meetings.”

Florida

“This is an important first step in the process of starting restoration of the damage caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill,” said Mimi A. Drew, Special Advisor to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard, Jr. and member of the Trustee Council speaking on behalf of the Florida trustees. “We appreciate the hard work and input of our fellow trustees, local governments and stakeholders that helped us to identify these projects, and look forward to the continued collaboration with these groups both at our upcoming public meetings and throughout the restoration process.”

Louisiana

“Today’s release of the first round of proposed early restoration projects is a first step in restoring our coastline, our resources and our communities along the Gulf Coast from the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster,” said Garret Graves, Chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. “Louisiana is grateful for the input provided by members of the public in this process to date, and welcomes and encourages additional comments regarding the projects proposed in the DERP/EA. We are pleased to have worked through this initial round and look forward to expediting future projects and expenditure of the remainder of early restoration funds.”

Mississippi

“Public participation is a critical factor in developing plans for restoring the Gulf following the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill. We understand that the people who make their living from the Gulf and those who choose to live or vacation there offer insightful and important perspectives that will help determine the types of restoration needed,” said Trudy D. Fisher, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Executive Director and Mississippi’s Trustee. “As a member of the Trustee

Council, I strongly urge everyone to become involved by attending the public meetings that have been scheduled throughout the Gulf in order to ensure their thoughts are heard.”

Texas

“We are pleased to see the first restoration proposals that will contribute to restoring the entire Gulf,” said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director, representing the Texas trustees. “We look forward to advancing Texas-specific project proposals for the next phase. With more than 140 possible restoration projects in Texas so far, we have a wealth of important coastal restoration and enhancement opportunities to review and consider, and we want to get it right. We urge all interested Texans to get informed and engaged during this public comment period.”

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