FY 2020 Annual Report to Congress

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

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Fiscal Year 2020

Submitted February 2021

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1. Letter from the Executive Director

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) hereby submits its Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020) Annual Report to Congress. The Council was created by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) in 2012 as an independent federal agency charged with administering a portion of the civil settlements associated with the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Consisting of the five Gulf Coast states and six federal agencies, the Council's mission is to implement a comprehensive plan for the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast.

The Council has oversight over the expenditure of 60% of the funds made available from the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund established by the RESTORE Act (Trust Fund). Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the RESTORE Act, 30% of available funding is administered for Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration and protection according to the Comprehensive Plan developed by the Council through Funded Priorities Lists (FPLs). Another 30% is allocated to the States under the Spill Impact Component according to a formula established by the Council through a regulation, and spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) to contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf. In fiscal year 2020 (FY20), the Council obligated $144.4 million through grants and interagency agreements) to carry out projects and programs under the RESTORE Act, bringing the total amount awarded to $398.75 million: $184.39 million from the Council-Selected Restoration Component, or "Bucket 2" and $214.37 million from the Spill Impact Component, or "Bucket 3."

The Council approves funding for Council-Selected Restoration Component projects and programs using "Funded Priorities Lists" (FPLs). The Council develops FPLs through collaboration among its members and with feedback from stakeholders across the Gulf. Two FPLs were previously approved by the Council in 2015 and 2018. The Council was initially planning on developing FPL 3 as a single action, consisting of a list of restoration projects and programs addressing ecosystem needs across the Gulf coast. As a result of the collaborative process, the Council decided to develop FPL 3 in two phases. On February 12, 2020, the Council approved the first phase, referred to as FPL 3a which included two components: River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp as a priority for potential future funding, and budgeting $130,000,000 in implementation funds for this project; and $26,880,000 in planning and implementation funds for the Perdido River Land Conservation and Habitat Enhancements project, which involves the acquisition, conservation, management, and restoration of approximately 10,000-12,000 acres of coastal habitat in Alabama.

In March 2020, the Council solicited proposals for potential funding under Bucket 2 in the second phase of the Council's Funded Priority List 3, referred to as FPL 3b. In developing FPL 3b, the Council is adhering to the FPL development processes committed to by the Council, particularly as they relate to the use of the best available science (BAS), public engagement and transparency, and the Council's 2019 Planning Framework. The Council is considering proposals that address ecosystem needs in Texas, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama, along with Gulfwide (covering two or more states) proposals. The Council has submitted proposed projects and programs (collectively referred to as 'activities'; posted on the Council's website) that would address land conservation, quality improvement, habitat conservation and restoration, and other ecosystem restoration activities across the Gulf coast. Many of these activities would continue to strategically leverage investments with other restoration efforts, including building upon successes of past FPL activities. It is anticipated that FPL 3b will be finalized during the Spring of 2021.

The RESTORE Council 10-Year Commemorative Report was completed in April 2020, highlighting the

accomplishments of the five state and six federal RESTORE Council members. The 10th year milestone serves as a time to reflect on the eleven lost lives lost during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the history of the RESTORE Council, its accomplishments, and the path forward for the projects and programs across the Gulf of Mexico. It is not a legal document or a statutorily required report.

On behalf of the Council, I am pleased to submit the FY2020 Annual Report to Congress outlining our progress over the past twelve months. The Council remains committed to maintaining active communication with Congress. Please contact us at any time with your thoughts, suggestions or questions. Thank you for your continued leadership and support in restoring the Gulf Coast region.

Mary Walker
Executive Director

2. Mission and Organization

The Council is charged by the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act* (RESTORE Act or Act) with helping to restore the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region by developing and overseeing Trust Fund expenditures in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and approval of State Expenditure Plans (SEPs), and carrying out other responsibilities.

The Council includes the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, and the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Army, Commerce, Agriculture, Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, who currently serves as the chair of the Council.

FY 2020 Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Members

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Chair)
Andrew Wheeler
Administrator

State of Alabama
Kay Ivey
Governor

State of Florida
Ron DeSantis
Governor

State of Louisiana
John Bel Edwards
Governor

State of Mississippi
Tate Reeves
Governor

State of Texas
Greg Abbott
Governor

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Sonny Perdue
Secretary

U.S. Department of the Army
Ryan D. McCarthy
Secretary

U.S. Department of Commerce
Wilbur Ross
Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary

U.S. Department of the Interior
David Bernhardt
Secretary

3. Background on the RESTORE Act

The Gulf Coast environment was significantly injured by the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill as well as by past and ongoing human actions. Restoring an area as large and complex as the Gulf Coast region is a costly, multi-generational undertaking. Gulf habitats are also continually degraded and lost due to development, infrastructure, sea-level rise, altered riverine processes, ocean acidification, salinity changes and other human-caused factors. Water quality in the coastal and marine environments is degraded by upstream pollution and hydrologic alterations spanning multiple States and involving the watersheds of large and small rivers alike. Stocks of marine and estuarine species are depleted by over-utilization and conflicting resource use. Some of the region's environmental problems such as wetland loss and hypoxia span areas the size of some U.S. states. This degradation represents a serious risk to the cultural, social, and economic benefits derived from the Gulf ecosystem.

On October 5, 2010, the President issued Executive Order 13554, which established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (Task Force) "to coordinate intergovernmental responsibilities, planning, and exchange of information to better implement Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration and to facilitate appropriate accountability and support throughout the restoration process." The Task Force was an advisory body composed of senior officials from the five Gulf Coast states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, and eleven federal agencies and White House offices. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's former Administrator, Lisa P. Jackson, served as Chair of the Task Force, and the former Chair of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, Garret Graves, served as Vice-chair.

The primary charge of the Task Force was to create a unified, strategic approach to restore the region's ecosystem. In December 2011, the Task Force members published the Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy (Strategy) and the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Science Assessment and Needs that articulated an overarching vision for restoration.

Signed into law in July 2012 the RESTORE Act (Act) (33 U.S.C §1321(t) and *note*) enacted as an amendment to the federal *Clean Water Act (*or *Federal Water Pollution Control Act)*, created the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund) in the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The Act established the Council and the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund); the latter receives 80 percent of the civil and administrative penalties assessed under the Clean Water Act (CWA) resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. The Council is comprised of the Governors of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, the Army, Commerce, and Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In 2012, the Secretary of Commerce became the Council's first Chairperson. In March 2016, the Secretary of Agriculture became the Council Chairperson, and in January 2018, the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency became the current Council Chairperson.

The Act imposed a one-year timeline for development of the Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy (2013 Initial Comprehensive Plan) to describe how the Council would restore the ecosystem and the economy of the Gulf Coast region. The RESTORE Act directs the Council to use the best available science and give highest priority to ecosystem projects and programs that meet one or more of the following four Priority Criteria. The Council will use these criteria to evaluate proposals and select the best projects and programs to achieve comprehensive ecosystem restoration.

1. Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal

wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.

2. Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.
3. Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
4. Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

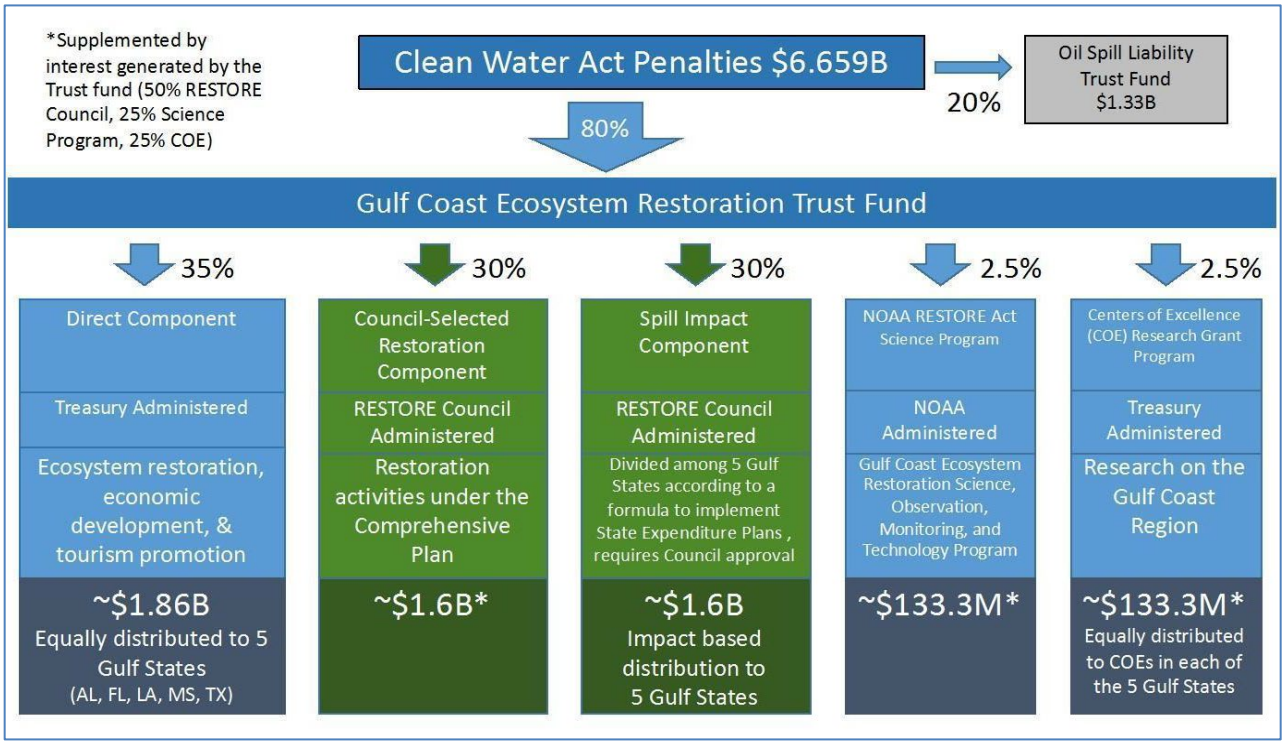
The funds supporting the Council's efforts are defined by the RESTORE Act, which divides funds made available from the Trust Fund into five components, colloquially referred to as "buckets," and sets parameters for how these funds will be spent.

On January 3, 2013, the United States announced that Transocean Deepwater Inc. and related entities had agreed to pay $1 billion (plus interest) in civil penalties for violating the Clean Water Act in relation to their conduct in the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. In accordance with the consent decree, Transocean has paid all three of its installments of civil penalties plus interest to the U.S. Department of Justice. The U.S. Department of Justice has transferred 80 percent of these funds to the Treasury Department for deposit into the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, totaling $816 million. On November 20, 2015, the federal court for the Eastern District Court of Louisiana ordered Anadarko Petroleum Corp. to pay a $159.5 million civil fine; of this amount, $128 million, including interest, has been deposited in the Trust Fund. Anadarko was the last defendant in the *Deepwater Horizon* spill Clean Water Act litigation.

In 2015, the Council approved the 2015 Initial Funded Priority List (2015 Initial FPL) for approximately $156.6 million in restoration activities such as hydrologic restoration, land conservation, and planning for large-scale restoration projects. The funding for the Initial FPL came from the settlement of CWA civil penalties against *Transocean Deepwater* Inc. and related entities. When it approved the Initial FPL, the Council did not know the amount and timing of additional funding that could be obtained from the then-ongoing litigation with British Petroleum (BP).

On April 4, 2016, a federal court in New Orleans entered a consent decree resolving civil claims against BP arising from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill (United States vs. BPXP et al.). The resolution of civil claim totals for entities held responsible for the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill will yield more than $20 billion, the largest civil penalties ever awarded under any environmental statute, and the largest recovery of damages for injuries to natural resources of The United States. Of these penalties, the RESTORE Act will provide $5.33 billion (80 percent of $6.659 billion) to the Trust Fund, based on the following: $1 billion (plus interest) in civil penalties from Transocean Deepwater Inc. and related entities for violating the Clean Water Act in relation to their conduct in the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill; $159.5 million from a civil fine paid by Anadarko Petroleum Corporation; and $5.5 billion (plus interest) from BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP) for a Clean Water Act civil penalty under the April 4, 2016 consent decree, payable over a fifteen-year period at approximately $91 million per year through 2031 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Allocation of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund based on settlements with BP, Transocean and Anadarko; RESTORE Council oversight components are highlighted in green



3.1. Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

The 2013 Initial Comprehensive Plan provided a framework to implement a coordinated, Gulf Coast region-wide restoration effort in a way that restores, protects, and revitalizes the Gulf Coast. This first Comprehensive Plan guided the Council's actions to restore the Gulf Coast ecosystem and economy and it continues to evolve. The 2013 Initial Comprehensive Plan established the Council's goals and objectives for the region and provides a process to fund restoration projects and programs as funds become available. The RESTORE Act requires the Council to update the Comprehensive Plan every 5 years. Accordingly, the Council updated its Initial Comprehensive Plan in 2016

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy (2016 Comprehensive Plan Update) provides a Ten-Year Funding Strategy which includes an overarching vision statement: *A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs*. Other elements of the Ten-Year Funding Strategy include the three-year FPL development process and a strategy for the support of large-scale projects and programs. The Council also refined and amplified its foundational commitments, with a strong emphasis on collaboration (among Council members and with other *Deepwater Horizon* funding streams), and on improving transparency and application of best available science in support of its decision-making processes. Further, given the 15-year payment schedule, the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update proposes developing FPLs on approximately three-year cycles. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update also commits to enhancing public engagement and the use of best available science to support a holistic approach to Gulf restoration. These commitments are intended to ensure that future Council investments provide the greatest possible ecological return.

Goals
To provide the overarching framework for an integrated and coordinated approach for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration and to help guide the collective actions at the local, state, tribal, and federal levels, the Council has adopted five goals.

1. ***Restore and Conserve Habitat*** – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats.
2. ***Restore Water Quality and Quantity*** – Restore and protect the water quality and quantity of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine waters.
3. ***Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources*** – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources.
4. ***Enhance Community Resilience*** – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes.
5. ***Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy*** – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

The fifth goal focuses on reviving and supporting a sustainable Gulf economy. This goal pertains to expenditures by the Gulf Coast States authorized in the RESTORE Act under the Direct Component (administered by the Department of the Treasury) and the Spill Impact Component, and ensures that these investments can be considered in the context of comprehensive restoration. This goal does not apply to the Council-Selected Restoration Component.

To achieve all five goals, the Council will support ecosystem restoration that can enhance local communities by giving people desirable places to live, work, and play, while creating opportunities for new and existing businesses of all sizes, especially those dependent on natural resources. In addition, the Council will support ecosystem restoration that builds local workforce capacity.

The Council coordinates restoration activities under the Council-Selected Restoration Component and the Spill Impact Component to further the goals. While the Council does not have direct involvement in the activities undertaken by the States or local governments through the Direct Component, the Council will strive, as appropriate, to coordinate its work with those activities. In addition, the Council actively coordinates with the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program (administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program (administered by the Treasury Department).

Objectives
The Council will select and fund projects and programs that restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region. Projects and programs that are not aligned with the scope of the following Objectives for ecosystem restoration will not be funded under the Council-Selected Restoration Component.

1. **Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats** – Restore, enhance and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats.
2. **Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources** – Restore, improve, and protect the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by reducing or treating nutrient and pollutant loading; and improving the management of freshwater flows, discharges to and withdrawals from critical systems.

3. **Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources** – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources including finfish, shellfish, birds, mammals, reptiles, coral, and deep benthic communities.
4. **Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines** – Restore and enhance ecosystem resilience, sustainability, and natural defenses through the restoration of natural coastal, estuarine, and riverine processes, and/or the restoration of natural shorelines.
5. **Promote Community Resilience** – Build and sustain Gulf Coast communities' capacity to adapt to short- and long-term natural and man-made hazards, particularly increased flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors. Promote ecosystem restoration that enhances community resilience through the re-establishment of non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding.
6. **Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education** – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship through environmental education efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities, professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.
7. **Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes** – Improve science-based decision-making processes used by the Council.

3.2. Fiscal Year 2020 Significant Council Actions

The RESTORE Act (33 U.S.C. § 1321(t) and *note)* requires a Council vote for the following types of actions (referred to as "Significant Actions") (33 U.S.C § 1321(t)(2)(C)(vi)):

1. Approval of the Comprehensive Plan and revisions and updates thereto;
2. Approval of State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) and revisions and updates thereto;
3. Approval of reports to Congress required by the Act;
4. Approval of transfers pursuant to 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(2)(E)(ii)(II); and
5. Other Significant Actions as determined by the Council (e.g., approval of the Council regulation establishing the formula required under 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)).

All Significant Actions of the Council, except approval of SEPs, require the affirmative vote of the Chairperson and three State members to be effective. Approval of a SEP or a revision requires only the affirmative vote of the Chairperson together with certification that the SEP satisfies all applicable requirements of the RESTORE Act by the submitting State member. Following is a list of the Council's Significant Actions for FY2020:

Council-Selected Restoration Component

- Gulf of Mexico Conservation Enhancement Grant Program Initial FPL amendment, January 22, 2020
- Funded Priorities List 3a, February 12, 2020
- Gulf Coast Conservation Corps Initial FPL amendment (including the NOAA and DOI/BIA components), March 4, 2020
- Alabama Living Shoreline Monitoring Program Initial FPL amendment, May 13, 2020
- 2017 Funded Priorities List: Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support amendment, July 22, 2020

Spill Impact Component

- 2019 Mississippi State Expenditure Plan (SEP) Amendment, Chair approval April 22, 2020
- Florida State Expenditure Plan Amendment #2, Chair approval May 20, 2020
- Texas State Expenditure Plan Amendment #1, Chair approval July 30, 2020

Other

- 2019 Annual Report to Congress, March 4, 2020

4. Council-Selected Restoration Component Accomplishments

4.1. Background

The Council-Selected Restoration Component, or Bucket 2, funding decisions are guided by criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act, the Council's 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update, and other policies, including the Council's 2019 Planning Framework. Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, Council approval of Bucket 2 funding requires an affirmative vote from at least three state members and the Chair. The Federal Chair casts the vote on behalf of all of the federal members. Following is a brief overview of the Bucket 2 criteria and policies, with links to additional information.

RESTORE Act Priority Criteria

In selecting projects and programs under Bucket 2, the RESTORE Act requires that the Council give the highest priority to activities that address one or more of the following criteria:

1. **Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting** the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.
2. **Large-scale projects and programs** that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.
3. **Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans** for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
4. **Projects that restore long-term resiliency** of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

FPL Proposal Submission Guidelines and Review Process

In 2019, the Council developed updated guidance for its members on the content and review process for Bucket 2 funding proposals. This updated guidance is called the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council: Council-Selected Restoration Component Funded Priorities List 3 Proposal Submission Guidelines and Review Process (2019 Submission Guidelines).The primary purpose of the Guidelines is to help Council members develop effective proposals for potential funding in FPL 3. The Council implemented FPL 3 in two phases; therefore, the 2019 Submission Guidelines pertained to submission of proposals for both FPL 3a

and FPL 3b. Only Council members are eligible to submit proposals for potential funding under Bucket 2. Federally recognized Tribes may submit proposals via a federal Council member sponsor. The 2019 Submission Guidelines is divided into three sections:

- **Section 1- Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Related Information -** discusses the statutory criteria that FPL 3 proposals must address to be considered for funding under Bucket 2, along with other legal requirements pertaining to best available science (BAS) and environmental compliance. This section also discusses the FPL categories and Planning Framework that will help guide the selection of projects and programs for inclusion in FPL 3.
- **Section 2 - Guidance for FPL Proposal Content -** describes the information to be included in FPL 3 proposals.
- **Section 3 - FPL Proposal Review Process and Public Engagement -** outlines how the Council would review and consider FPL 3 proposals to ensure compliance with the RESTORE Act, BAS, and consistency with the goals, objectives, and commitments set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. It also describes the opportunities for the public to engage in the FPL 3 development process.

FPL Categories

FPLs include activities in two categories. Category 1 activities are approved for Bucket 2 funding. Such approval requires a Council vote as set forth in the RESTORE Act. To be approved in Category 1, a project or program must have documentation demonstrating that all applicable environmental laws have been addressed. For example, a construction project would need documentation demonstrating compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws.

Category 2 activities are Council priorities for potential future funding, but are not approved for funding. These are projects and/or programs that are not yet in a position to be approved by the Council, but are considered worthy of potential future funding by the Council. As appropriate, the Council will review the activities in Category 2 to determine whether to: (1) move an activity to Category 1 and approve it for funding, (2) remove it from Category 2 and any further consideration, or (3) continue to include it in Category 2. In these reviews, the Council can consider feasibility, environmental compliance and scientific, technical, policy and/or other related issues. A Council vote and FPL amendment are required to move an activity from Category 2 to Category 1, or to remove an activity from Category 2 and any further consideration.

4.2. Building on a Foundation of Collaboration

Building on the strong foundation established in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy and other local, regional, state, and federal plans, the Council is taking an integrated and coordinated approach to Gulf Coast restoration. This approach strives to both restore the Gulf Coast region's environment and simultaneously revitalize the region's economy, because the Council recognizes that ecosystem restoration investments may also improve economic prosperity and quality of life. In addition, this approach acknowledges that coordinated action with other partners is crucial to successfully restore and sustain the health of the Gulf Coast region.

The RESTORE Council is using a collaborative process to help ensure that Bucket 2 funded projects and programs complement restoration being accomplished through other funding streams. The funding available through the Council, as well as the other DWH-related funding sources (including other components of the RESTORE Act, Natural Resource and Damage Assessment (DWH NRDA), and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (NFWF GEBF)), presents an unprecedented

opportunity to restore Gulf ecosystem conditions and functions, representing one of the most substantial investments in landscape-level restoration in U.S. history. However, these funds will not fully address all the ecosystem restoration needs of the Gulf given the multiple stressors impacting the region, ranging from man-made sources like the DWH oil spill disaster, water quality/quantity issues and the annual offshore hypoxic zone, as well as naturally-occurring impacts including hurricanes. Due to these large-scale stressors and ever-changing conditions of these coastal environments, it is infeasible to restore the Gulf to conditions that were present at a specific time in the past. By working collaboratively among the Council members and with other DWH-related funding sources, as well as working with other federal, state, and philanthropic funds, great progress can be made to increase the resiliency of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem against these stressors.

Commitment and Planning Support FPL (FPL 2)

The Council recognized that meeting its Comprehensive Plan commitments requires resources to support personnel, travel, and logistics necessary for more effective collaboration and planning. A major challenge to Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration is coordinating efforts within each state, among Council members, stakeholders, and across the Gulf restoration efforts. In 2018, funding was approved in a second FPL "Funded Priorities List: Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support" (CPS FPL) to address this challenge. Prior to FPL 2, there was no designated funding to support Council member efforts to plan and coordinate restoration activities under Bucket 2. Council members had to rely upon general, tax-generated or appropriated funds to support such work. The CPS FPL funding provides the necessary resources for Council members to stimulate and encourage the coordination and collaboration necessary to achieve the commitments of the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the funding will provide funds necessary for members to:

- Strengthen ecosystem restoration proposals for future FPL(s) under the Council-Selected Restoration Component;
- Enhance the efficiency of future FPL development processes; and
- Facilitate long-term planning and leveraging efforts across funding streams.

Under FPL 2, each of the eleven Council members may apply for up to $500,000 per year for up to three years and up to $300,000 per year for two years thereafter. This equals up to $23.1 million, or 1.44% of the total funds available (not including interest) in Bucket 2.

The Council believes that investing a relatively small amount of resources in planning can ensure that restoration projects selected for funding will yield greater ecosystem benefits in the future. The Council will review the effectiveness of this funding at year four and consider whether extending planning and commitment support efforts beyond the five-year period is needed to continue to meet the Comprehensive Plan commitments.

In approving the CPS FPL, the Council provided an opportunity for its members to receive the necessary funds to enhance collaboration, coordination, public engagement and use of best available science in developing and selecting restoration projects. Council members began using these CPS FPL funds to support the collaboration and other planning activities needed to develop effective project and program proposals for the next round of funding decisions in FPL 3. The Council was initially planning on developing FPL 3 as a single action, consisting of a list of restoration projects and programs addressing ecosystem needs across the Gulf coast. As a result of the collaborative process, the Council determined that developing FPL 3 in two phases would enable the Council to respond to ecosystem needs and take advantage of cost savings and important partnership opportunities to advance large-scale ecosystem restoration in the first phase. FPL 3a

contained two projects, one in Louisiana and one in Alabama. In the second phase of FPL 3, the Council is considering restoration projects and programs that address additional ecosystem needs across the Gulf.

Planning Framework

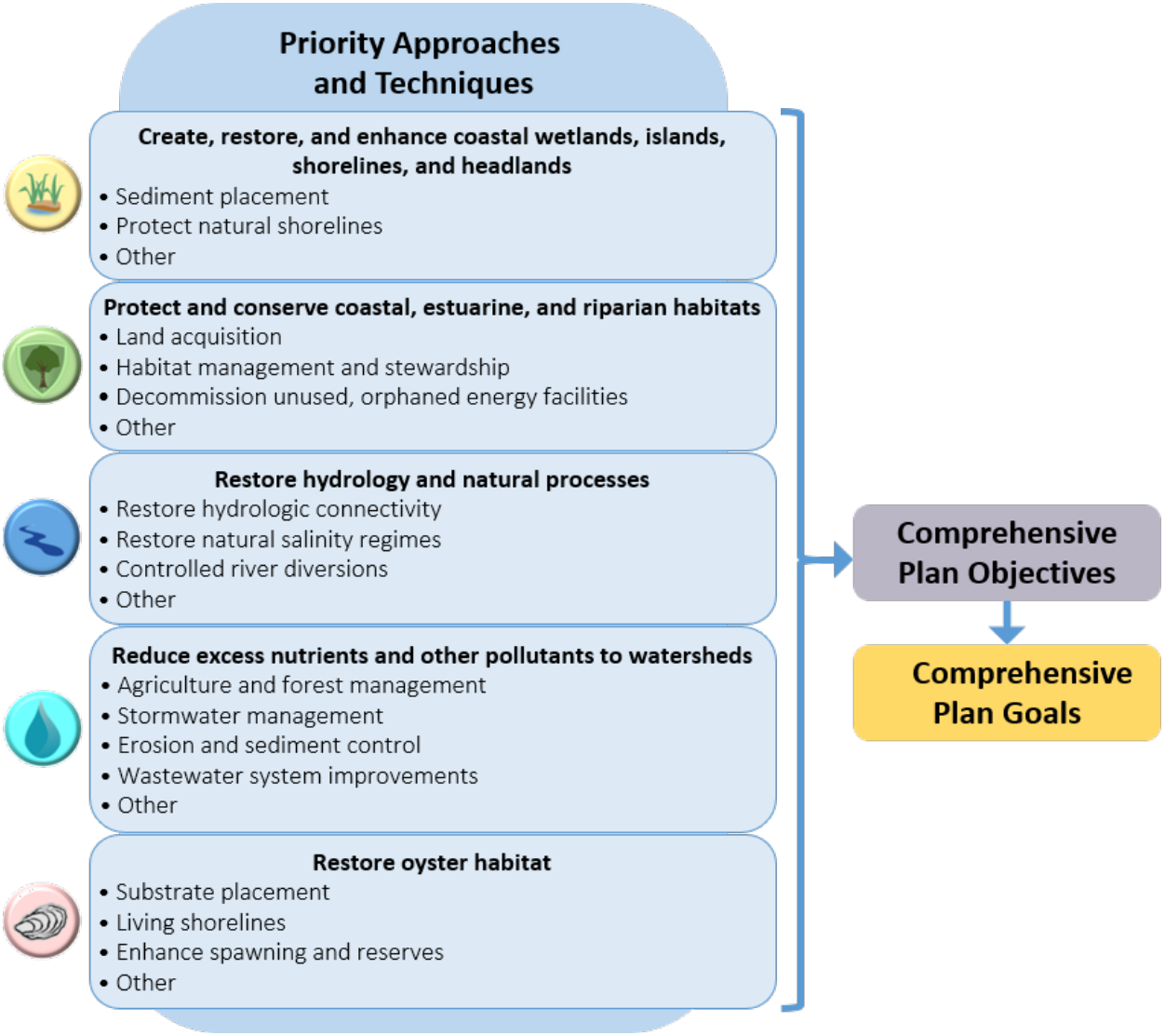
As the Council turned its attention to laying the foundation for the next FPL members used CPS FPL funds to work with other Council members, potential funding partners (including other DWH funding sources), stakeholders, and the public to generate project ideas that address known environmental challenges and stressors across the Gulf. Members held meetings throughout the Gulf to discuss ecosystem restoration concepts and potential techniques to address environmental challenges and stressors in various watersheds, estuaries and broader geographic regions. An outcome of these collaborative efforts resulted in the Council's development of the 2019 Planning Framework (Planning Framework).

The Planning Framework is a new element of the FPL process and was used for the first time in the development of FPL 3. The Planning Framework is intended to serve as a "bridge" between the Comprehensive Plan and FPLs, and from one FPL to the next. The Planning Framework strategically links past and future restoration funding decisions to the overarching goals and objectives outlined in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. As the 2015 Initial FPL focused on Comprehensive Plan goals related to habitat and water quality, the Planning Framework draft provides an indication of the types of resources, habitats, and geographic areas where the RESTORE Council would focus in FPL 3 in advance of selecting projects and programs (Figure 2). The Planning Framework indicates priorities designed to continue building on previous investments in habitat and water quality, while expanding opportunities to meet all Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives in the future.

For the RESTORE Council, the Planning Framework represents another step toward meeting the commitments of improved, transparent, and collaborative planning and decision-making to achieve the vision of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update for "*A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs*". The priority approaches and associated techniques discussed in this document and their application within certain geographic areas are intended to provide the public and potential funding partners with a better understanding of the context under which projects will be developed as part of FPL 3. The Council views the Planning Framework as a "living document" that will support the Council's continued efforts to build upon prior restoration investments during the project or program selection process.

The Planning Framework lists priority restoration approaches and techniques (Figure 2) their relationship to the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, and associated geographic areas. The purpose of this document is to provide the public and potential funding partners with an indication of the kinds of projects that were anticipated to be developed for FPL 3 funding consideration. As part of the process of developing future FPLs, the Planning Framework will be reviewed and revised as needed to incorporate outcomes and lessons learned from previously implemented projects, scientific and technical developments, changing policy, public input, and other planning considerations. In addition to RESTORE Act activities, the Council will consider restoration activities funded by DWH NRDA, NFWF GEBF, and other restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico region as it determines future funding priorities.

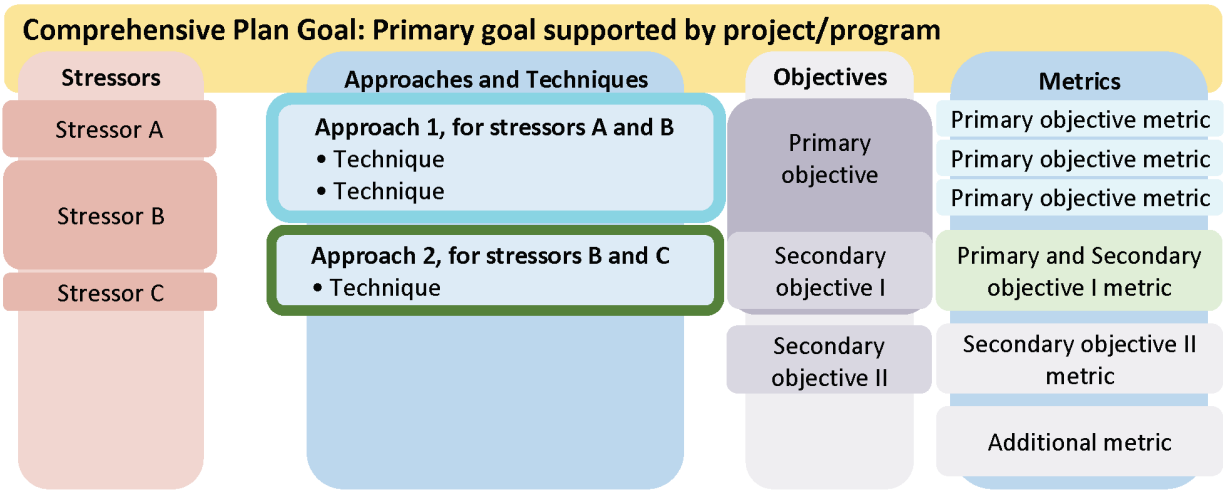
Figure 2. The 2019 Planning Framework priority approaches and techniques can be applied to support the Comprehensive Plan objectives and goals.



The Planning Framework also provides a framework to help describe how projects and programs selected for funding under Bucket 2 relate to the Council's Goals and Objectives, Figure 3 shows how the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives of an activity will be supported and tracked. The primary goal supported by the activity is shown at the top; any secondary goals are not depicted. All other information is organized into rows to provide a simplified depiction of how each column relates to the 2019 Planning Framework approaches. Each approach box (second column) lists the corresponding techniques that will be implemented, and aligns with the stressors it will be used to address (first column), the objective(s) it will support (third column), and metrics that may be used to track its benefits to the supported objective(s) (fourth column). For activities with one or more secondary objectives, an approach may support both the primary objective (uppermost row) and a secondary objective, as shown for 'Approach 2'. Objectives that are placed below the row(s) aligned to approaches, as shown for 'Secondary objective II', are supported by all of the approaches to be implemented by the activity. Additional metrics may be proposed which do not align with selected approaches and/or objectives (bottom row). Note that techniques are not meant to

align on particular rows, and that stressors only align with approaches. Similar Planning Framework graphical illustrations were developed for all FPL 3a funded projects and FPL 3b proposed projects and programs.

Figure 3. Stylized Planning Framework illustrating how the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives of an activity will be supported and tracked.



Enhancing Environmental Compliance Efficiency through Interagency Collaboration

The RESTORE Council is an active member of the Gulf Coast Interagency Environmental Restoration Working Group (GCIERWG), which was formed to help achieve more effective and efficient environmental reviews of Gulf ecosystem restoration projects. Improved environmental reviews should then result in more timely restoration implementation. Formed in recognition of the critical need for increased regulatory collaboration through early and consistent interagency coordination and prioritization of restoration work across funding streams, GCIERWG coordinates through standing monthly interagency conference calls and is currently led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) assisted by Council staff. Further, in FY2020 the GCIERWG was expanded to include state participation from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida.

In FY2020 the GCIERWG advanced ongoing implementation of two regulatory coordination efforts to improve regulatory efficiency. The Pensacola Living Shoreline project held a third interagency meeting to discuss Escambia County's completed Basis of Design report. Escambia County and Florida Department of Environmental Protection have incorporated agency feedback into project design and appreciates the GCIERWG for engaging in advance of the formal permitting process. In the Golden Triangle Marsh Creation project in Louisiana, additional funding was provided by the Louisiana Technical Implementation Group (TIG) as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process to collaboratively expand this project.

During FY2020, consultations to support compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) resulted in support for over $71M in land acquisition work approved in FPL 3a and proposed in FPL 3b. Further, ESA consultations in support of Alabama's Comprehensive Living Shoreline Project were successfully completed by working extensively with Alabama project investigators, federal regulators from the Department of Commerce, NOAA to develop documentation supporting consultation. An innovative "expedited" ESA consultation was successfully pilot-tested significantly reducing the consultation timelines and avoided a

"formal" ESA consultation which would have increased the length and complexity of the process, requiring a full ESA Biological Opinion and possibly precluding the ability to fund critical scientific monitoring applicable to this Planning Framework approach.

4.3. Actions and Results from FPL 1

The Council made significant progress during 2020 towards funding and implementing the 2015 Initial FPL. In fiscal year 2020 one grant and two IAAs totaling $7.44 million) were awarded from the 2015 Initial FPL (**Appendix A)**. Over the four fiscal years of 2016 through 2019, the Council had previously awarded 24 grants and 22 IAAs under the 2015 Initial FPL providing $123.7 million in funding over this time period for restoration activities in the Gulf.

The Initial FPL purposely focused on the first two Council Goals resulting in $136.07 million to support the Restore and Conserve Habitat Goal ($89.91 million in grants to states and $46.16 million in IAAs), and $26.833 million in support of the Council goal to Restore Water Quality and Quantity ($15.77 million in grants and $11.06 million in IAA's (Table 1). A similar trend is found for the Council objectives (Table 2).

Table 1. RESTORE Council-Selected Component funding by Goals and Fiscal Year (F-IAA; S-Grant).

	GOAL	**GOAL**	**GOAL**	
Year	Restore and Conserve Habitat	Restore Water Quality and Quantity	All Goals	**Totals**
2016	F- $0.45 S-$7.26	F-$0 S-$0	F-$0 S-$0	**F-$0.45** **S- $7.26**
2017	F-$22.93 S-$39.99	F-$7.36 S-$11.43	F-$0 S-$0	**F-$30.29** **S-$51.42**
2018	F-$8.56 S-$19.11	F-$2.20 S-$4.34	F-$8.23 S-$10.49	**F-$18.99** **S-$33.94**
2019	F-$11.02 S-$21.47	F-$0 S-$0	F-$2.1 S-$0	**F-$13.12** **S-$21.47**
2020	F- $3.2 S- $2.08	F-$1.50 S-$0	F-$0 S-$0	**F- $4.70** **S- $2.08**
Total to Date	**F-$46.16** **S-$89.91**	**F-$11.06** **S-$15.77**	**F-$10.33** **S-$10.49**	**F-$67.87** **S-$ 116.52** **T-$184.39**

Table 2. RESTORE Council-Selected Component funding by Objective and Fiscal Year (F-IAA; S-Grant)

OBJECTIVE	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**Total to Date**
Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats	F-$0 S-7.26	F-$1.71 S-$46.74	F-$18.21 S-$12.30	F-$7.45 S- $25.04	F-$3.44 S-$2.5	**F-$39.81** **S-$93.84**
Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources		F-$7.36 S-$11.43	F-$3.7		F-$1.5	**F-$12.53** **S-$11,43**
Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources						**$0**
Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines						**$0**

Promote Community Resilience						**$0**
Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education	F-$4.5	S-$0.75				**F-$4.5 S-$0.75**
Improve Science-based Decision-Making Processes		F-$4.72				**F-$4.72 S-$0**
All Objectives			F-$8.23 S-$10.49	F-$2.1		**F-$10.33 S-$10.49**
Other Objective						**$0**
TOTALS	**F-$4.5 S-$7.26**	**F-$22.79 S-$58.92**	**F-$30.14 S-$22.80**	**F-$9.55 S-24.83**	**F-$4.94 S-2,500,000**	**F-$67.87 S-$116.52 T-$184.39**

Making Projects "Shovel-Ready"

In addition to approving funds for specific projects and programs, the 2015 Initial FPL lists activities the Council has identified as priorities for potential future funding. This category of activities, referred to as Category 2 activities, are projects and programs the Council believes have merit, but are not ready for implementation funding because the requisite environmental compliance has not been completed. The Council set aside a pool of available funds for potential use on Category 2 activities, pending Council approval. The Council also approved planning funds to address the environmental laws applicable to these Category 2 activities. Once these laws have been addressed for a Category 2 activity, the Council can vote to approve funding for that activity through an amendment to the Initial FPL. Such a vote only occurs after public comments have been considered by the Council. In FY2020 the Council amended the Initial FPL to approve implementation funding for the following restoration projects that were originally in Category 2:

- Gulf of Mexico Conservation Enhancement Grant Program Initial FPL amendment, January 22, 2020.
- Alabama Living Shoreline Monitoring Program Initial FPL amendment, May 13, 2020.
- 2017 Funded Priorities List: Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support amendment, July 22, 2020.

Sub-Awards to Non-Governmental Organizations

The RESTORE Act requires that, for purposes of awards made under the Council-Selected Restoration Component, a State or federal award recipient may make a grant or subaward to, or enter into a cooperative agreement with, a non-governmental entity that equals or exceeds 10 percent of the total amount of the award provided to the State or federal award recipient, only if certain notice requirements are met. The Council has provided advance notice of each proposed subaward through the *Federal Register* and to specified Congressional Committees. In addition, the Council must include the name, purpose, and amount of each qualifying subaward in its Annual Report to Congress. There were no awards made during FY2020 that met these criteria.

4.4. Actions and Results from FPL 3a

The Council was initially planning on developing FPL 3 as a single action, consisting of a list of restoration projects and programs (collectively referred to as 'activities') addressing ecosystem needs across the Gulf coast. As a result of the collaborative process, the Council has determined that developing FPL 3 in two

phases enables the Council to respond to ecosystem needs, save money, and take advantage of important partnership opportunities to advance large-scale ecosystem restoration in the first phase. In the second phase of FPL 3, the Council has considered restoration activities that address additional ecosystem needs across the Gulf.

The first phase, entitled FPL 3a, adheres to the FPL development process committed to by the Council as outlined in the 2019 Submission Guidelines. This includes conducting internal and external reviews of the submitted proposals, and engaging in a public comment period prior to finalizing the FPL. FPL 3a consists of two projects: River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp, in Louisiana; and, Perdido River Land Conservation and Habitat Enhancements, in Alabama. Where applicable, the final project descriptions, as well as the FPL, were modified based upon internal and external reviews and public comments. The Council voted to approve the final FPL 3a on February 12, 2020.

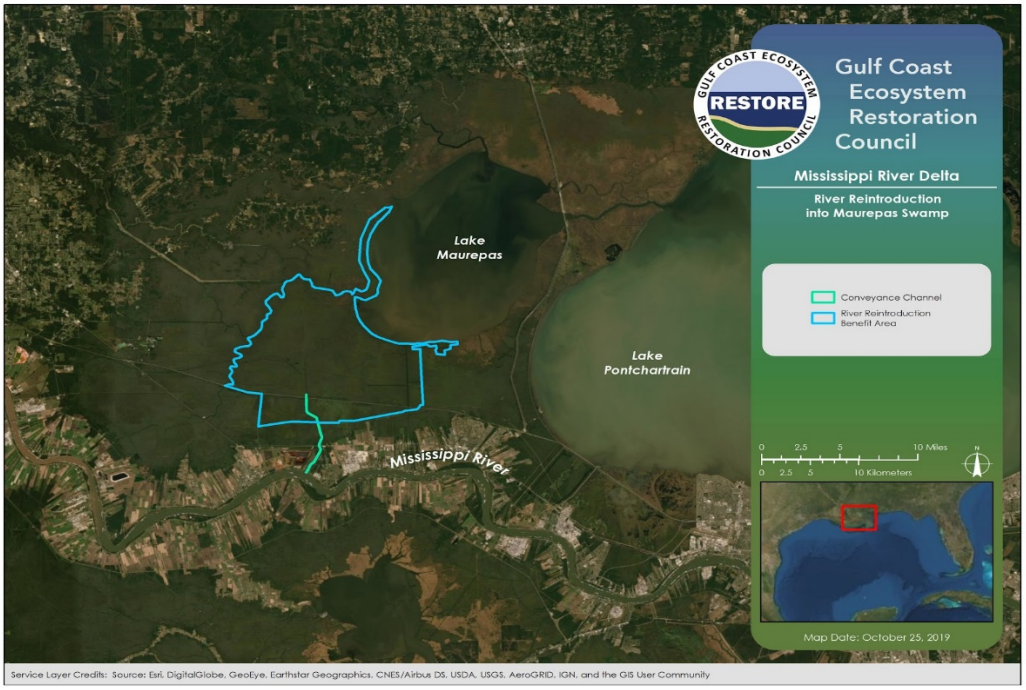
River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp

In the Initial FPL, the Council approved approximately $14.2 million for planning, engineering and design, and permitting for the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp (Maurepas project). This project is being designed to restore processes that will enhance ecosystem health and reduce or minimize future loss of approximately 45,000 acres of bald cypress-water tupelo forest in coastal Louisiana by reintroducing Mississippi River water into the Maurepas Swamp. There are many ecological problems in this area, but probably the most significant is the current hydrologic regime, which is no longer conducive to sustain swamp forest habitat. Historically, the swamp received oxygenated water, sediment, and nutrient inputs from the Mississippi River during seasonal river flooding and via a smaller distributary, Bayou Manchac. That process was interrupted by the construction of local and eventually federal levees along the Mississippi River for flood control as well as the blockage of its connection with Bayou Manchac. This altered hydrologic regime has prevented natural connection of the swamp to the river's life-sustaining waters and resulted in oxygen-poor, stagnant water conditions that impair forest health and associated aquatic habitats. The reintroduction of river water would help revitalize the Maurepas Swamp by providing freshwater, nutrients, and sediments needed for healthy trees and long-term sustainability. This river reintroduction project (also known as a river "diversion") involves an intake and control structure on the Mississippi River, a channel to convey the river water to the swamp, and "guide levees" along the channel to ensure the water gets to the intended location and to prevent flooding (Figure 4).

The total estimated implementation cost of the Maurepas project is $190 million. In finalizing FPL 3a, the Council budgeted $130 million for this project, and Louisiana is planning to use approximately $60 million from Bucket 3 and/or another source to cover the remaining cost. The State and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are currently considering whether a portion of the environmental benefits that will be derived from implementation of the Maurepas project could be used to mitigate for swamp habitat impacts that will occur from the implementation of the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain (WSLP) levee project. The Council has no role in determining how to mitigate for the WSLP levee impacts, and defers fully to the State and USACE on that matter. The Council's budgeting of $130 million of Bucket 2 funds and Louisiana's plan to use approximately $60 million from Bucket 3 and/or another source for the Maurepas project do not depend on whether the levee mitigation concept advances.

The Maurepas final project description, developed by Louisiana, provides additional details on the project, including information regarding compliance with the RESTORE Act, background, methods, risk and uncertainties, and budget. This project description has been revised in response to internal and external reviews.

Figure 4. Area map of the River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp project. The green line from the Mississippi River into Maurepas Swamp depicts the conveyance channel. The area outline depicts the anticipated benefit area.



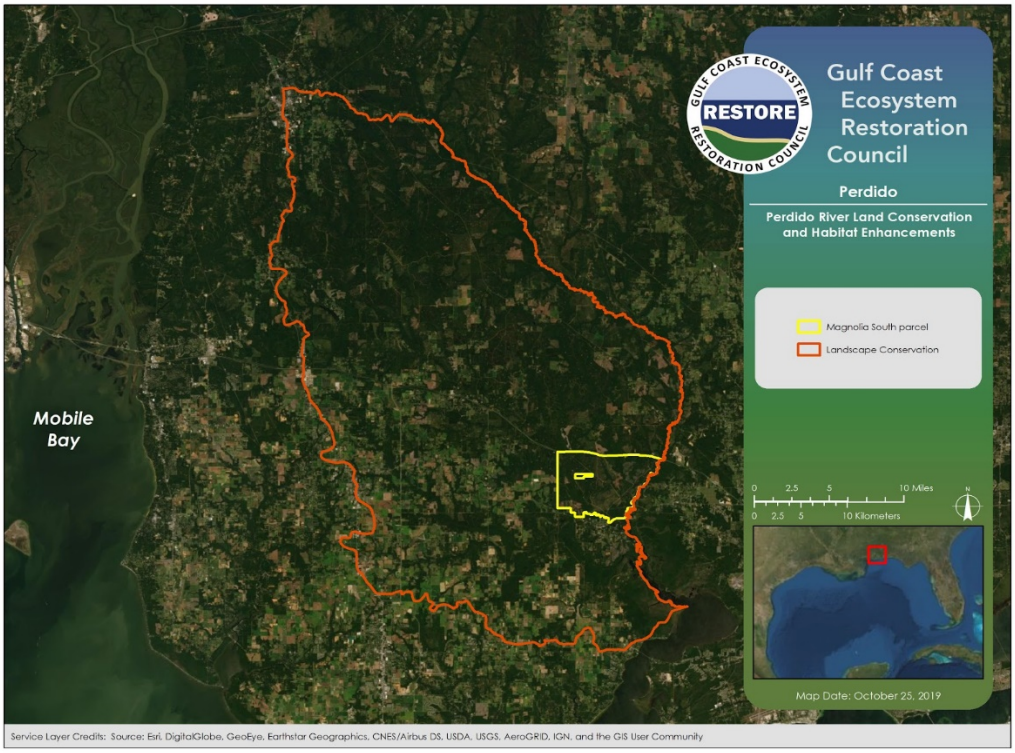
Perdido River Land Conservation and Habitat Enhancements

Through the FPL collaborative planning process, Alabama identified an opportunity for a large-scale, multi-member, multi-project, coordinated program in the Perdido Watershed. The States of Alabama (70%) and Florida (30%) share the watershed and the Perdido River as a border. This watershed includes floodplain forests, hydric pine forests, longleaf pine forests, and freshwater wetlands. Water quality and quantity protections are derived through its floodplains, which store and disperse runoff from storms and floods and recharge aquifers. Undeveloped areas act as natural filters, protecting water quality and sustaining wildlife such as recreationally and commercially important fish and oyster resources. Land use conversion and urbanization have contributed to habitat loss and water quality degradation in this watershed. Much of the forested land in this area is in silviculture which impacts water quality via runoff to area water bodies; and contributes to habitat fragmentation, loss, and degradation. This area of Baldwin County also is rapidly urbanizing, with significant development pressures.

In FPL 3a, the Council approved $26,880,000 in planning and implementation funds, and budgeted $1,120,000 in additional implementation funds, pending a Council vote. This project involves the acquisition and placement into state conservation management of approximately 10,000 - 12,000 acres of habitat that will serve as a cornerstone for advancing the vision of a large-scale, coordinated program in the Perdido watershed. The State is seeking parcel(s) that would supplement an existing 17,337 acres in public ownership in Alabama, and roughly 12,400 acres in public ownership in Florida. Alabama has identified a potential parcel for acquisition, referred to as Magnolia South, and is engaged in conversations with the owner. This property has extensive frontage along the Perdido River and is located adjacent to existing publicly-owned conservation lands (Figure 5). The property is currently in silviculture (timber management)

and contains inland forested wetlands, riparian buffers (stream buffers), and tributaries of both the Styx and Perdido Rivers.

Figure 5. Region of the Perdido watershed where the State of Alabama will acquire, conserve, and manage approximately 10,000 - 12,000 acres of habitat. The smaller area outlined in yellow, the Magnolia South parcel, may be suitable to meet project goals.



In addition to acquisition, the State will conduct habitat management and stewardship on the tract which could include prescribed burning, invasive species removal, longleaf pine restoration, and protection and habitat enhancements for species including the gopher tortoise. Education and outreach activities, including installation of signage and an educational display about the Perdido watershed, will be conducted. Acquired land will also be available for recreational use by the public and become part of the Perdido Wildlife Management Area.

Acquiring this property in the Perdido watershed can reduce the amount of land available for development and the associated ecosystem stressors that are the inevitable result of urbanization. Additionally, this action will serve as a cornerstone for a broader ecosystem conservation and restoration effort where stressors affecting water quality and habitat quality and function could be addressed synergistically. By acting now, the Council will protect this valuable habitat while also facilitating future watershed restoration efforts in this area.

The Perdido final project description, developed by Alabama, provides additional detail on the project, including updated information regarding compliance with the RESTORE Act, environmental laws, background, methods, risk and uncertainties, and budget. This project description has been further revised in response to internal and external reviews of the original proposal and public comments.

4.5. Process and Status for FPL 3b

Upon approving FPL 3a in February 2020, the Council renewed its focus on identifying projects and programs to address other Gulf Coast ecosystem needs through FPL 3b funding. Using 2017 CPS FPL resources, Council members (members) continued to collaborate among themselves and with stakeholders to identify and shape project and program concepts for potential inclusion in FPL 3b. In the early stages of collaboration, members identified and discussed potential priorities, which ranged from broad programmatic goals to specific project concepts. Throughout this process, project and program concepts were reviewed and discussed by all members, further refined, and in some cases, dropped from further consideration based on feedback and other factors (e.g., availability of alternative funding sources). These discussions helped members further shape their respective project and program concepts as they developed FPL 3b proposals.

The process for developing FPL 3b adheres to the same process used for the development of FPL 3a development process. To manage resources and time, the Council chose to limit each member to no more than five proposals for FPL 3b funding (as was done in the 2015 Initial FPL). Federally recognized tribes also were able to submit proposals via federal Council member sponsors. Proposals submitted by a federal member on behalf of a Federally recognized tribe did not count toward this limit. Members could submit fewer than five proposals or none at all during the submission period. The Council then reviewed all proposals for compliance with the RESTORE Act, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and 2019 Planning Framework, and compliance with all applicable environmental laws.

Additionally, the Council refined the process that was used in the 2015 Initial FPL to review all proposals for the use of best available science (BAS). The RESTORE Act requires the Council to "undertake projects and programs, using the best available science that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast." To meet the intent of the RESTORE Act, and to support the Council's 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update commitment to science-based decision-making, all FPL 3b proposals underwent a BAS review process that included three anonymous external science reviews (including reviews by experts from within and outside the Gulf Coast region) and an Internal BAS Review Panel. The purpose of this internal panel was to use Council member-agency technical expertise to consider external reviews, identify ways to further strengthen the scientific -basis of each proposal and, as applicable, identify potential project/program synergies not identified prior to proposal submission.

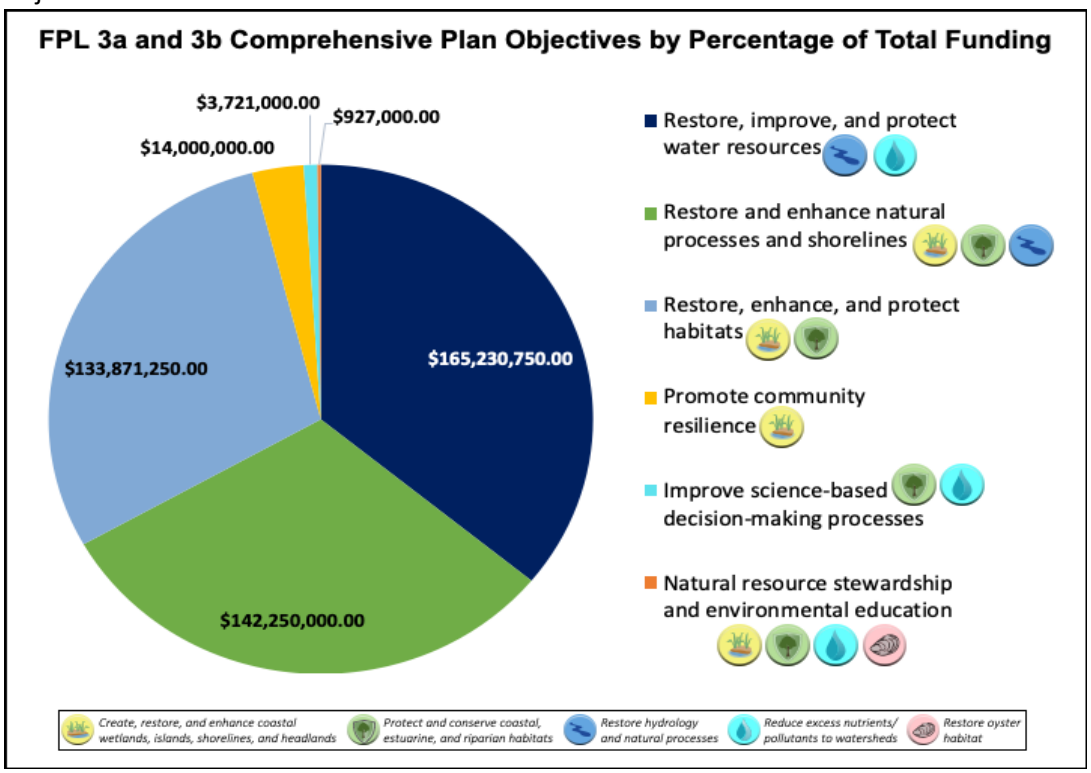
After all proposal reviews were completed, members responded to all review comments pertaining to their respective proposals. This included revising their proposals, as warranted. These responses and revised proposals were resubmitted to the Council. The revised proposals, as well as the proposal "packages" containing the reviews, responses, Internal BAS Review Panel discussions, and original proposals, were then made available to the public on the Council's website.

At the time the revised proposals were re-submitted, the combined cost of the proposals exceeded the funding available for FPL 3b. As the collaborative process among the members continued, some proposals were modified (e.g., scaled down), while others were eliminated from further consideration. The remaining proposals were then assembled into draft FPL 3b. Draft FPL 3b is designed to address ecosystem needs across the Gulf while also maintaining consistency with the 2019 Planning Framework and taking into account the FPL 3a investments. To complement investments made in FPL 3a, in FPL 3b the Council considered proposals that address ecosystem needs in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida along with regional and Gulf-wide proposals. To approve an FPL, the RESTORE Act requires the affirmative vote of

three of the five state members and the Council Chair. Consistent with its commitment to collaboration, the Council is proposing an FPL 3b funding allocation that is supported by all members.

The activities proposed in draft FPL 3b build upon investments made in FPL 3a, as well as the 2015 Initial FPL. In the 2015 Initial FPL, the Council focused on activities that primarily addressed the Comprehensive Plan goals *Restore and Conserve Habitat* and *Restore Water Quality and Quantity*. In FPL 3a, the Council included two restoration projects that primarily address the goal *Restore and Conserve Habitat*. In draft FPL 3b, the Council proposes to continue to invest in these goals, as well as the *Enhance Community Resilience* goal (Figure 6). Combined, FPL 3a and draft FPL 3b activities would directly address six of the seven Comprehensive Plan objectives throughout the Gulf (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Percentage of total FPL 3a and proposed FPL 3b funding by project/program primary Comprehensive Plan objective. Note: While only the primary objectives for FPL 3a and draft FPL 3b activities are summarized here, projects/programs may address multiple Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. Icons indicate the 2019 Planning Framework approaches to be implemented in support of each objective.



The Council will release the draft FPL 3b for public comment on November 16, 2020. The public comment period is scheduled to end at 11:59 pm Mountain Time January 5, 2020, and the Council anticipates voting whether to approve the FPL in the first half of 2021.

Regional Ecosystem-Based Approach to Restoration

Draft FPL 3b reflects lessons learned from the 2015 Initial FPL process and commitments made in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update, most notably, enhanced collaboration and strategic planning to achieve large-scale ecosystem benefits. The 2015 Initial FPL contains activities described as "foundational" in that they will contribute to comprehensive Gulf restoration by complementing other projects in order to produce environmental benefits greater than the sum of the individual activities. This approach to identifying priority restoration activities acknowledges the interconnected nature of coastal and marine ecosystems. It

also recognizes the importance of addressing system-wide stressors that reduce ecosystem health. Draft FPL 3b advances this concept by proposing to invest in programmatic approaches to address the ecosystem needs in certain geographic areas.

Ecosystems are subjected to both natural and human alterations that act together as "stressors" and affect natural ecosystem structure and function. The more ecosystems are stressed, the less resilient they may be to even larger, global challenges such as climate change. The programs proposed for FPL 3b are intended to address large-scale ecosystem stressors that result in water quality impairment, coastal habitat loss and degradation, and coastal resilience challenges.

In the 2015 Initial FPL, the Council focused in part on key watersheds and estuaries to concentrate its resources for the greatest ecosystem benefit. The Council further committed to using a watershed/estuary-based approach to restoration in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. Geographic areas described in the 2019 Planning Framework are a step toward identifying priority watersheds or estuaries for investment in order to meet Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives.

These geographic areas vary in size from specific watersheds to coverage of an entire coastal area of one or more states. To some extent, this range reflects the extent to which individual projects have or have not been identified within the broader proposed programs. the status of restoration planning across the Gulf. In some geographic areas, the planning process may be advanced sufficiently to have identified specific restoration activities within a watershed. In other geographic areas, restoration programs may still require additional planning and review of restoration options before identifying specific actions. In addition, these geographic areas reflect the anticipated collaboration — between members, among funding partners, and across states — needed to address broader ecosystem stressors. Members will continue to identify priority watersheds or estuaries as they identify specific projects for implementation within the proposed programs.

The Council recognizes that ensuring the use of the best available science (BAS) is critical to working at geographic scales of watersheds or larger geographic areas. The Council's 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update committed to measuring and delivering results, acknowledging that identifying science-based targets for restoration and monitoring improves restoration outcomes and assists in addressing critical uncertainties. Draft FPL 3b supports this commitment by proposing to fund activities that have identified metrics of success and also by allocating a percentage of funding to monitoring and data management (for implementation projects).

While Council members were not required to submit detailed monitoring plans with each proposal, they will be required to do so in order to receive funding. Monitoring plans will describe the metrics and ecological parameters that will be monitored to track the performance of draft FPL 3b activities. Working in coordination with its Gulf restoration funding partners, including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the NRDA trustees, the Council has identified a suite of RESTORE Council Project Metrics. These metrics are used as a foundation to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of funded activities in meeting the Council's goals and objectives and to track annual performance. Using these consistent metrics, the benefits of FPL projects may be synthesized and described within their respective watersheds.

Similarly, using consistent metrics across activities implementing the same restoration techniques in different geographic areas may allow the Council to evaluate the impact of its investments across the Gulf. For example, the draft FPL 3b Internal BAS Review Panel discussions highlighted similarities in the water quality improvement programs proposed by Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. Panelists agreed that

synergies could be fostered across these states by adopting shared metrics, measures, and monitoring methodologies.

Coordinating, Collaborating, and Connecting Gulf Restoration Activities

Consistent with its Comprehensive Plan commitment, the Council recognizes that coordination and collaboration among members and our restoration partners is critical to the success of Gulf restoration. To maximize ecosystem benefits, the Council continues to pursue opportunities to align and leverage activities funded from Bucket 2 with investments made by other coastal restoration programs, as well as its own work in Buckets 2 and 3. As implementation of activities continues, the Council will continue to consider the synergistic benefits of its investments with those of other programs, including NRDA and NFWF. The Council remains committed to leveraging resources with funding partners to maximize the impact of Bucket 2 investments. Through its collaborative process for developing FPL 3b, the Council identified several opportunities to leverage other funding streams. In addition to generally aligning draft FPL 3b investments with the 2015 Initial FPL and FPL 3a, the Council proposes to extend or directly build upon some of the activities it previously approved for funding. In addition to leveraging on-the-ground restoration activities, draft FPL 3b activities continue to build upon the science-based decision-support tools funded by the Council in the 2015 Initial FPL.

Addressing Risk, Sustainability, and Resilience

The Council's Comprehensive Plan recognizes that healthy ecosystems are essential for thriving and resilient coastal communities. Across the Gulf coast, cultures, economies, and societies are built upon and sustained by natural ecosystems that provide clean water, abundant fisheries, storm protection, and other critical benefits. By restoring and protecting the Gulf environment through investments made in FPL 3b and other funding decisions, the Council can help communities enhance their ability to recover from natural and man-made disasters and thrive in the face of changing environmental conditions.

Draft FPL 3b Projects and Programs

The activities proposed in draft FPL 3b (Table 4) build upon investments made in FPL 3a, as well as the 2015 Initial FPL.

Table 4. The activities proposed for inclusion in draft FPL 3b are listed, along with their location and the types of work that is proposed to be funded.

Activity	Geographic Area	Type	Amount Category 1	Amount Category 2*
Shoreline Protection Through Living Shorelines	Texas	Planning	$1,286,250	-----
		Implementation	-----	$10,963,750
Texas Coastal Water Quality Program	Texas	Planning	$3,262,500	-----
		Implementation	-----	$19,237,500

Activity	Geographic Area	Type	Amount Category 1	Amount Category 2*
Texas Land Acquisition Program for Coastal Conservation	Texas	Planning	$1,579,500	-----
		Implementation	-----	$22,720,500
Wind-Tidal Flat Restoration Pilot	Texas	Planning & Implementation	$321,000	-----
Chenier Plain Ecosystem Restoration Program	Texas	Planning	$1,700,000	-----
		Implementation	-----	$18,300,000
Coastal Nearshore Habitat Restoration and Development Program in Mississippi	Mississippi Sound	Planning	$6,920,000	-----
		Implementation	-----	$27,680,000
Water Quality Improvement Program for Coastal Mississippi Waters	Mississippi Sound	Planning	$6,850,000	-----
		Implementation	-----	$27,400,000
Enhancing Hydrologic Connectivity in Justin's Bay (Mobile Bay)	Mobile Bay and Mobile-Tensaw Delta, AL	Planning	$1,000,000	-----
Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program	Mobile Bay and Mobile-Tensaw Delta, AL; Perdido Bay and River, AL-FL	Planning	$16,130,750	-----
		Implementation	-----	$19,000,000
Develop Ecological Flow Decision-Support for Mobile River and Perdido River Basins	Mobile Bay and Mobile-Tensaw Delta, AL; Perdido Bay and River, AL-FL	Planning & Implementation	$3,400,000	-----
Perdido Watershed Water Quality Improvements and Restoration Assessment Program	Perdido Bay and River, AL-FL	Planning	$1,500,000	-----
The Apalachicola Regional Restoration Initiative: Strategies 2 & 3	Florida	Planning & Implementation	$5,000,000	-----

Activity	Geographic Area	Type	Amount Category 1	Amount Category 2*
Florida Gulf Coast Resiliency Program	Florida	Planning	$5,600,000	-----
		Implementation	-----	$8,400,000
Florida Gulf Coast Tributaries Hydrologic Restoration Program	Florida	Planning	$3,437,500	-----
		Implementation	-----	$10,312,500
Florida Water Quality Improvement Program	Florida	Planning	$6,750,000	------
		Implementation	-----	$20,250,000
Florida Strategic Gulf Coast Land Acquisition Program	Florida	Planning	$1,400,000	-----
		Implementation	-----	$12,600,000
Gulf Coast Conservation Reserve Program	Gulfwide (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi)	Planning & Implementation	$3,100,000	-----
Enhancing Gulf Waters through Forested Watershed Restoration	Gulfwide (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi)	Planning & Implementation	$23,000,000	-----
Gulf of Mexico Conservation Corps Program	Gulfwide (All five states)	Implementation	$11,971,250	-----
Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program	Gulfwide (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana)	Planning & Implementation	$927,000	-----

* Council members will continue to collaborate on environmental compliance in an effort to move implementation components listed in draft FPL 3b as FPL Category 2 into FPL Category 1 status prior to a Council vote on the final FPL.

5. Spill Impact Component Accomplishments

5.1. Background

In addition to the Bucket 2 funding, the remaining 30 percent of the Trust Fund under the Council's purview is allocated to the States under the Spill Impact Component, or Bucket 3, according to a formula established by the Council and implemented through the RESTORE Act Spill Impact Component Allocation regulation. These funds are spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) that contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf. The SEPs must adhere to four basic criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act and are subject to approval by the Council in accordance with those criteria. On December 15, 2015, the Council published the Spill Impact Component regulation, which set forth allocation for each State. These allocations became effective on April 12, 2016, following entry of the Consent Decree.

5.2. Approving State Expenditure Plans

A SEP is approved by the Council Chair following a submittal by the respective State and a review process to verify adherence to the four basic criteria established in the RESTORE Act. Once a SEP is approved, funding for activities in the SEP is disbursed to the respective State via Council grants when the requisite funds become available in the Trust Fund and upon application by the State. As needed, SEPS are amended using the same review and approval process used for the original SEP. Spill Impact Component funds are disbursed to the Gulf States via grants after the Council Chair has approved of the given state's SEP. As part of the grant process, all activities for which funding is sought are carefully reviewed to ensure consistency with the approved SEP and compliance with the RESTORE Act and all other applicable requirements. Funding for implementation activities is granted to the State after verification of compliance with all applicable federal environmental and other laws. Funding for planning activities in the SEP will be granted after verification of a direct relationship to the Spill Impact Component criteria.

During FY 2020, 39 SEP awards totaling $136.96 million were awarded (**Appendix B**). To date, 52 SEP programs/projects totaling $214.37 million have been awarded by the Council. The five Gulf states have now received $94.87 million through Spill Impact grants to support the Restore and Conserve Habit Goal (Table 5), and $84.43 million to support the goal to Restore Water Quality and Quantity. The SEP funding is going to support a number of the Council's objectives (Table 6), including Improving Science-based Decision-making Processes ($39.26 million), Restoring, Improving, and Protecting Water Resources ($64.93 million), Restoring, Enhancing and Protecting Habitats ($58.38 million) and Promoting Community Resilience ($24.44 million).

Table 5. Spill Impact Component Funding by Council Goal and Fiscal Year

GOAL	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Restore and Conserve Habitat	$4.64	$19.47	$18.50		$52.26	**$94.87**
Restore Water Quality and Quantity	$0.85	$0.29	$17.08	$30.40	$52.81	**$84.43**
Enhance Community Resilience				$2.83	$3.93	**$6.76**

GOAL	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources					$2.08	**$2.08**
Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy				$0.33	$25.88	**$26.22**
TOTALS	**$5.49**	**$19.76**	**$35.58**	**$16.56**	**$136.96**	**$214.35**

Table 6. RESTORE Spill Impact Component funding by Objective and Fiscal Year

OBJECTIVE	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats			$18.52	$14.29	$25.57	**$58.38**
Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources		$0.18	$15.78	$21.57	$27.43	**$64.93**
Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources	$0.85	$1.59		$9.30	$4.71	**$16.45**
Promote Community Resilience				$2.83	$21.61	**$24.44**
Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education				$4.57	$0.58	**$5.15**
Improve Science-based Decision-Making Processes	$4.64		$19.47			**$39.26**
Other Objective		$0.22		$4.83	$0.70	**$5.73**
TOTALS	**$5.49**	**$19.76**	**$35.57**	**$16.56**	**$136.93**	**$214.35**

6. Best Available Science and Data System Accomplishments

6.1. Background

Under the RESTORE Act, the Council is required to "undertake projects and programs, using the best available science (BAS) that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast." The RESTORE Act defines BAS as science that "maximizes the quality, objectivity, and integrity of information, including statistical information; uses peer-reviewed and publicly available data; and clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis for such projects." In FY 2020, the Council engaged in a variety of activities that promote enhanced application of BAS at all stages of project/program development.

6.2. Best Available Science Reviews

The Council's Initial Funded Priorities List utilized voluntary, confidential and external mail-in reviews to ensure all proposals were developed using Best Available Science. To follow through with the Council's 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update's commitment to revise this process for FPL 3, Council staff developed an updated BAS Review Process that incorporates an internal BAS Proposal Review Panel in addition to external reviews.

In FY2020, the Council implemented this updated review process for FPL 3a and 3b. A diverse group of expert reviewers was solicited from within the five Gulf States and across the country to review FPL 3a and 3b proposals. Each proposal was reviewed by 3 reviewers: In general, one from the Gulf State most directly linked to the proposal; one from the Gulf of Mexico region, and one from outside of the Gulf of Mexico. Once external reviews were completed and summarized, an internal BAS review panel was convened via webinar with representatives from each of the Council's eleven member agencies present. During the panel, proposal sponsors provided a brief synopsis of their proposal to the panel, a summary of comments made in external reviews, and discussed their proposed response to the external reviews. Council staff then solicited feedback from the panel on the proposal sponsor's presentation of comments and responses to those comments, and any additional BAS concerns. Council staff also solicited feedback on any existing or future synergies with other Gulf restoration activities. The internal science review panel's collaborative review of all proposals offers increased opportunity to identify project interactions, synergies, benefits, and risks. This can assist the Council in selecting projects that will maximize benefits and support a holistic approach to Gulf restoration.

6.3. Monitoring Progress, Success, & Performance

In its Comprehensive Plans, the Council has committed to delivering results, measuring impacts, and implementing/improving adaptive management. Ongoing coordination around science and monitoring has already reaped tangible benefits such as alignment of overlapping tasks across entities, shared work products, and plans for future leveraging of shared resources.

In FY2020, the Council approved the Council Monitoring and Adaptive Management Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to broadly describe the roles, responsibilities, communication and authorization pathways, and broad activities that may be needed for the Council to fulfill its monitoring and adaptive management responsibilities.

In approving the Council Monitoring and Adaptive Management Guidelines the Council committed to support of the Council Monitoring and Assessment Work Group (CMAWG). This workgroup was established to help the Council in meeting its commitments to monitoring and adaptive management (MAM), and the use of BAS. As described in the CMAWG 2020-2021 Annual Work Plan this group will continue to encourage compatibility of monitoring and data management procedures and serve as a forum for the Council to collectively address MAM topics relevant to multiple Council member agencies. The group will support the individual Council member agencies, upon request, in meeting their MAM responsibilities. The CMAWG will provide recommendations to the Council regarding MAM commitments, procedures, and guidelines.

In FY2020, with the assistance of the CMAWG, Council staff began the process of updating the Council's Observational Data Plan Guidance to assist projects and programs in providing the Council with a plan for data collection and compilation. Data will be used to evaluate if funded projects are meeting or exceeding project goals and restoration targets. The Council anticipates completion and approval of the updated Observational Data Plan Guidance in FY2021.

6.4. Enhanced Access to Information through Data Systems

Data collected for Council-funded activities can only be useful for reporting and evaluation if users are able to find the data, assess its utility, and understand how it was generated. To support this work, in FY2020, the Council went live with two new grant management solutions that were selected in fiscal year 2018 to replace the Council's previous electronic grants management system, the Restoration Assistance and Award Management System (RAAMS), which was losing vendor software support (see Section 9.2 for details). To manage award data, the Council implemented the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) GrantSolutions system (GrantSolutions). To address the need to house scientific programmatic data, the Council deployed the Program Information Platform for Ecosystem Restoration (PIPER) developed in partnership with the United States Geological Survey. PIPER will support the Council staff with the review of project/program proposals and applications, and track their continued progress toward meeting project/program goals and objectives.

To enhance current and future use of data, Council staff and partners developed the Council Metadata Records Library and Information Network (MERLIN) in 2018. MERLIN is an online metadata records tool developed in partnership with the US Geological Survey and NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information. MERLIN houses metadata-- records that describe information about data. The development of this tool supports the Council's 2018 approval of the use of the ISO 19115 metadata standard for all Council funded projects to promote consistency in the data collection for Council-funded activities. In FY2020 the Council continued to support the build-out of MERLIN, including the publication of metadata records for the first award activities to be closed-out by the Council.

7. Cumulative Results of Bucket 2 and 3

Over the five fiscal years of 2016 through 2020, the following awards have been made: 25 grants and 24 IAAs under the 2015 Initial FPL, 5 grants and 5 IAA's under CPS FPL, and 52 SEP awards (Table 7). The Council Selected Restoration Component has provided $184.39 million (FPL 1 - $163.55 million and FPL 2 - $20.83 million; Table 8). The Spill Impact component provides grant funds to the state Council members, with a total of $214.37 million awarded over this five-year period.

Table 7. Number of awards (grants and IAA) by program and fiscal year.

	FPL 1	FPL 1	CPS FPL	CPS FPL	SEP	
Fiscal Year	Grants	IAA	Grants	IAA	Grants	**Totals**
2016	1	1			2	**4**
2017	13	8			2	**23**
2018	6	9	5	4	4	**28**
2019	4	4		1	5	**14**
2020	1	2			39	**42**
Totals	**25**	**24**	**5**	**5**	**52**	**111**

Table 8: Funds Awarded (dollars in millions) for Buckets 2 and 3 by fiscal year.

Projects And Programs	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
FPL1	$7.71	$81.65	$34.26	$32.49	$7.44	**$163.55**
FPL2	0	0	$18.73	$2.10	0	**$20.83**
FPL 3a	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
SEP	$5.49	$19.76	$35.60	$16.56	$136.96	**$214.37**
TOTALS	**$13.20**	**$101.41**	**$88.59**	**$51.15**	**$144.40**	**$398.75**

Meeting Council Goals

The Council purposely focused FPL 1 on the first two Council Goals resulting in $136.73 million to support the Restore and Conserve Habitat Goal and $26.83 million in support of the Council goal to Restore Water Quality and Quantity as shown in Table 9. In addition, the states have received $94.87 million through Spill Impact grants to support the Restore and Conserve Habit Goal, and $84.43 million to support the goal to Restore Water Quality and Quantity. The states also received Spill Impact funds to support the goals to

Enhance Community Resilience ($6.76 million), Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy ($26.22 million) and Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources ($2.08 million).

Table 9. RESTORE Funding by Council Goal and Fiscal Year in millions of dollars (FPL – Council-Selected Restoration Component (Bucket 2), SEP – Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3)).

GOAL	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Restore and Conserve Habitat	FPL: $7.71 SEP: $4.64	FPL: $62.92 SEP: $19.47	FPL: $27.67 SEP: $18.5	FPL: $32.49 SEP: $0	FPL: $5.94 SEP: $52.26	**FPL: $136.73** **SEP: $94.87**
Restore Water Quality and Quantity	FPL: $0 SEP: $0.8	FPL: $18.79 SEP: $0.29	FPL: $6.54 SEP: $17.08	FPL: $0 SEP: $13.4	FPL: $1.5 SEP: $52.81	**FPL: $26.83** **SEP: $84.43**
Enhance Community Resilience				FPL: $0 SEP: $2.83	FPL: $0 SEP: $3.93	**FPL: $0** **SEP: $6.76**
Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy				FPL: $0 SEP: $0.33	FPL: $0 SEP: $25.88	**FPL: $0** **SEP: $26.22**
Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources					FPL: $0 SEP: $2.0	**FPL: $0** **SEP: $2.08**
Awards that Support All Goals			FPL: $18.73 SEP: $0	FPL: $2.1 SEP: $0		**FPL: $20.83** **SEP: $0**
TOTALS	**FPL: $7.71** **SEP: $5.49**	**FPL: $81.66** **SEP: $19.76**	**FPL: $52.94** **SEP: $35.60**	**FPL: $34.59** **SEP: $16.56**	**FPL: $7.44** **SEP: $136.96**	**FPL: $184.39** **SEP: $214.37** **TOTAL: $398.7**

Funding trends by fiscal year are shown in Figure 7 for all funding sources (Buckets 2 and 3) in support of the Council's goal to Restore and Conserve Habitat, while the trends for the Restore Water Quantity and Quality goal are provided in Figure 8 which shows the strength of state support for these goals over the five-year funding timeframe. The cumulative funding for all Council goals (Figure 9) indicates nearly 86% of the funding from the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact Components have supported Restore and Conserve Habitat ($231.6 million / 58.1%) and Restore Water Quality and Quantity ($111.26 million / 27.9%); the remaining funds have been used to support Enhance Community Resilience (1.7%), Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy (6.6%), and support for all of the Council goals through the CPS FPL (5.2%).

Figure 7. Funding trends for grants and IAA's from FPL 1 and SEPs in support of the Restore and Conserve Habitat Goal by fiscal year.

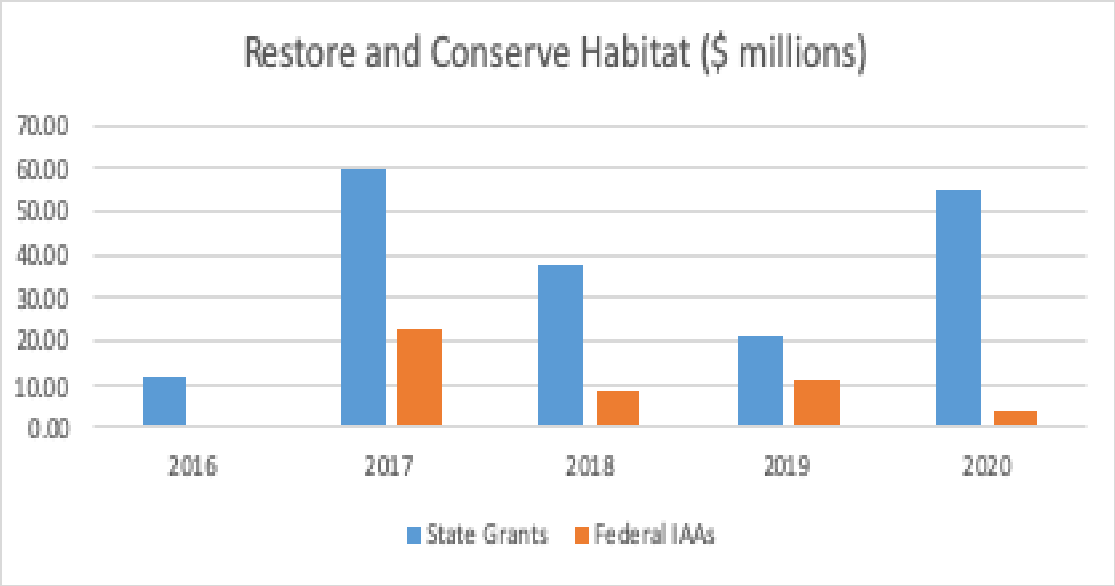


Figure 8. Funding trends for grants and IAA's from FPL 1 and SEPs in support of the Restore and Conserve Water Quality and Quantity Goal by fiscal year.

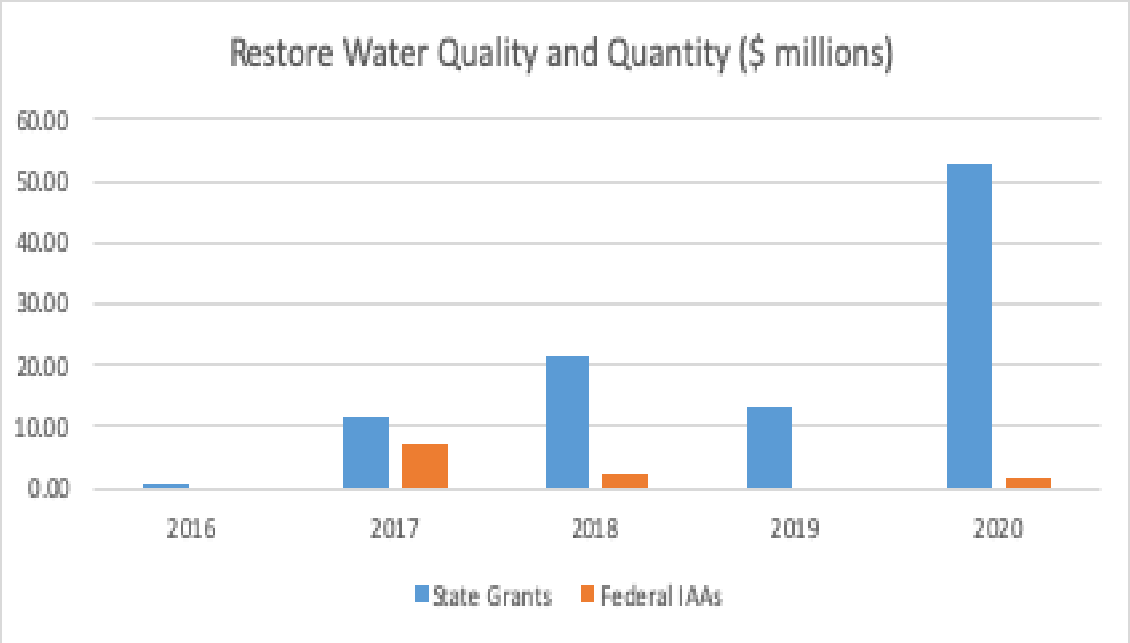
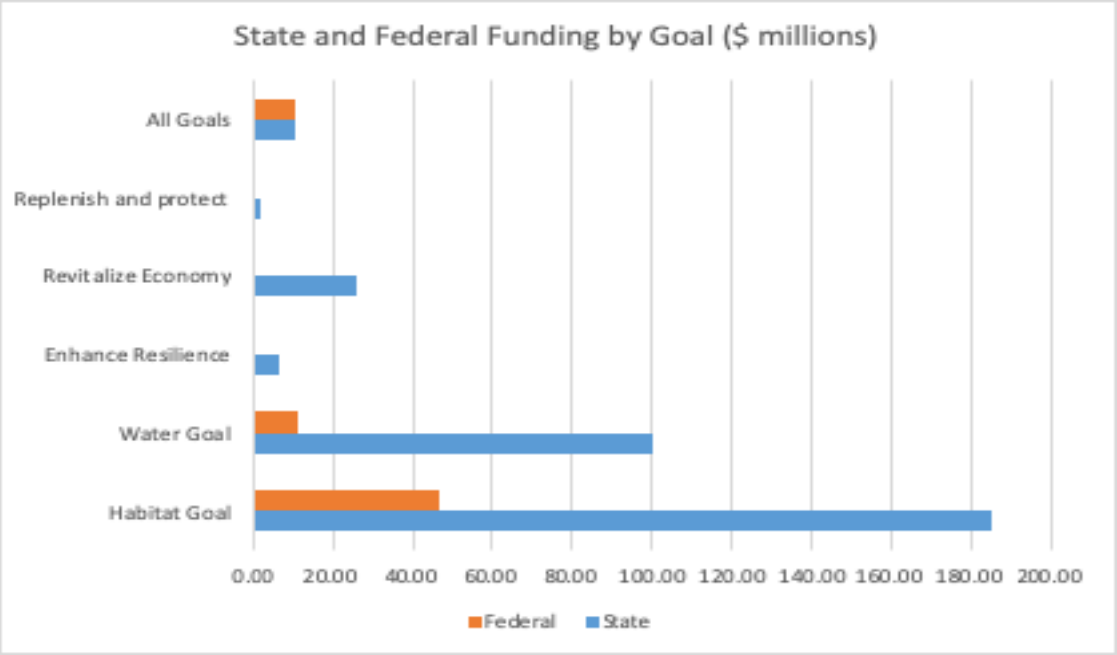


Figure 9. Funding trends for state and federal members (all sources) by fiscal year in support of Council's Goals.



Meeting Council Objectives

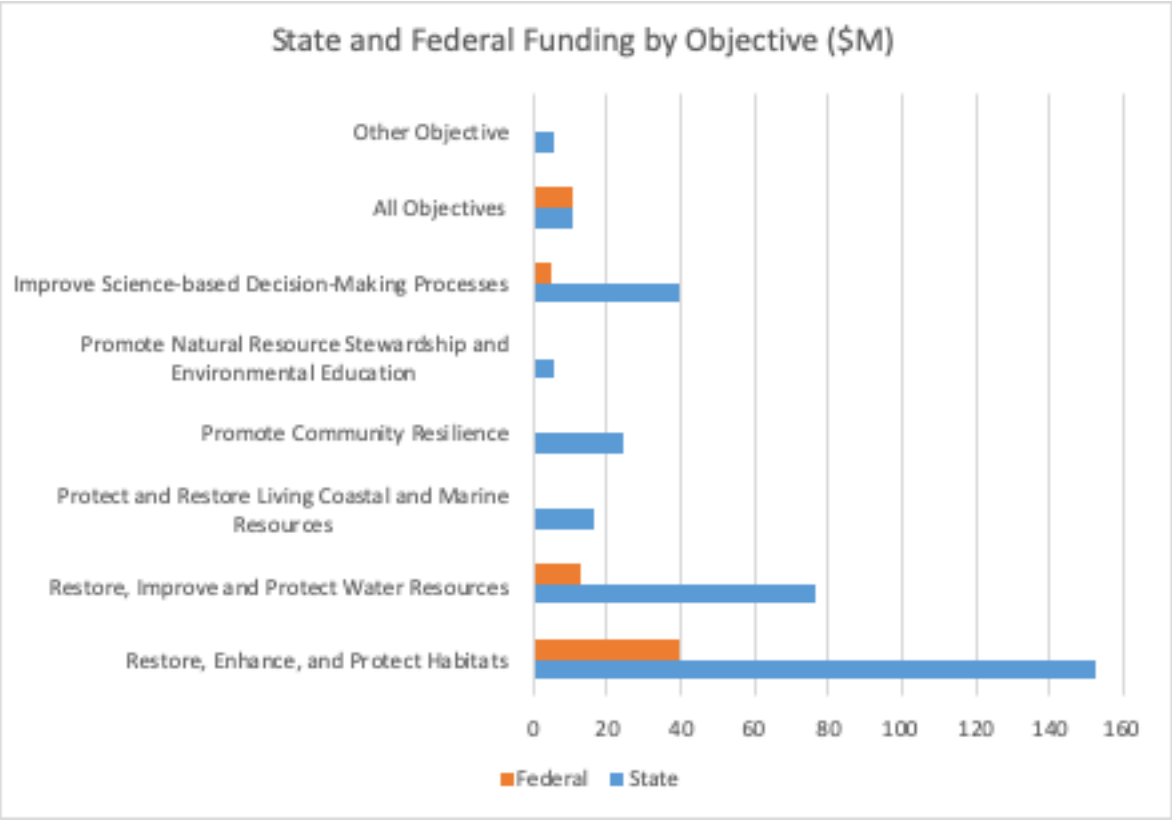
The Council identified seven (7) objectives in its Comprehensive Plan to support the Council's Goals. The Council uses these objectives to select and fund projects and programs that restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region. The initial Council focus on restoring and conserving habitat and restoring water quality and quantity goals are reflected in the level of funding supporting the associated objectives to Restore, Enhance and Protect Habitats ($192.03 million from all funding sources) and Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources ($88.95 million from all funding sources), which represents 48.2% and 22.3%, respectively, of all Bucket 2 and 3 funds (grants and IAAs) as shown in Table 10. This funding trend is clearly shown, particularly for the state investments, in Figure 10.

Table 10. Total funding by Objective and Fiscal Year for FPL 1 and SEP through FY20

GOALS	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats	$7.26	$57.45	$49.03	$32.49	$45.80	**$19.203**
Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources		$18.79	$19.48	$4.10	$46.58	**$88.95**
Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources	$0.85	$0.29	$1.23	$9.3	$4.71	**$16.38**

GOALS	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
Promote Community Resilience				$2.83	$21.61	**$24.44**
Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education	$0.45	$0.75			$5.14	**$6.34**
Improve Science-based Decision-Making Processes	$4.64	$24.16			$15.15	**$43.95**
All Objectives			$18.73	$2.1		**$20.83**
Other Objective				$0.21	$5.40	**$5.52**
TOTALS	**$13.20**	**$101.44**	**$88.47**	**$50.94**	**$144.39**	**$398.75**

Figure 10. Distribution of funding for state and federal Council members from the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact components by Council Objective.



Funding by Gulf of Mexico Watershed

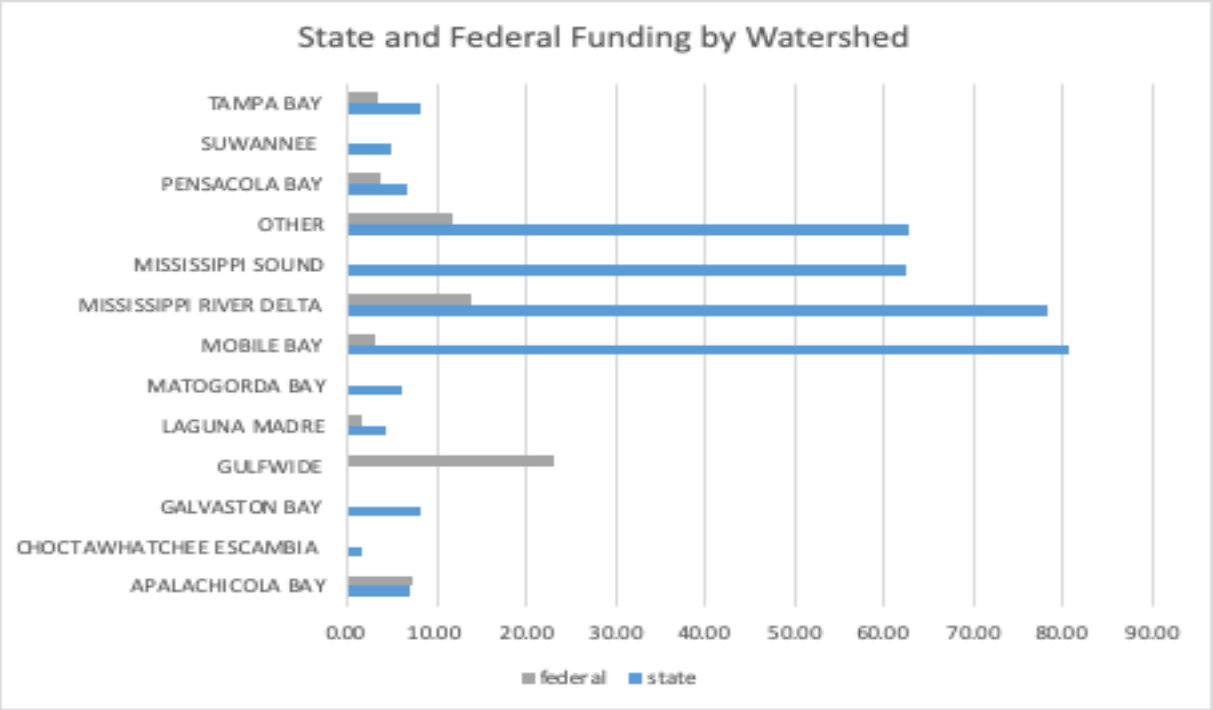
The use of a watershed/estuary-based approach for comprehensive ecological restoration was captured as a fundamental component of the Comprehensive Plan Update following completion of FPL 1 which included funding in 10 key watersheds. Linking projects to environmental stressors by watershed or estuary is scientifically sound and offers operational advantages which assist in leveraging ecosystem restoration program resources. While the use of a watershed/estuary-based approach is a good framework, it is important to note that there are features of the Gulf system that extend beyond coastal watershed boundaries, including private lands in upper watersheds, and marine and offshore habitats.

The watersheds that have received the most funding as a total of all funding sources (Table 11) are the Mississippi River Delta ($92.02 million), Mobile Bay ($83.67 million) and Mississippi Sound ($62.52 million), representing 24.49%, 22.2% and 20.5% of 16.7% total funds. The federal IAA's (Figure 6) have primarily been in support of a Gulf-wide focus ($22.92 million; 33.8% of federal project funds); the "Other" category ($74.3 million) includes funds to support the CPS FPL ($10.3 million,) and other non-watershed focused efforts like the Louisiana's Adaptive Management Program funded under Bucket 3 ($19.47 million in FY17 and $15.15 million in FY20). The states have funded work in several watersheds through both the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact as shown in Figure 11.

Table 11. Total funding by Watershed and Fiscal Year.

Watershed	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total to Date
APALACHICOLA BAY		$13.9		$0.39	$0.19	**$14.48**
CHOCTAWHATCHEE ESCAMBIA					$1.67	**$1.67**
GALVESTON			$ 8.08			**$ 8.08**
GULFWIDE	$0.45	$17.77	$ 3.0	$0.22	$1.70	**$ 23.14**
LAGUNA MADRE		$ 4.38	$1.32	$ 0.40		**$ 6.10**
MATAGORDA BAY		$ 6.01				**$6.01**
MOBILE BAY		$0.36	$6.13	$3.91	$73.27	**$83.67**
MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA	$7.26	$26.92	$27.82	$11.56	$18.46	**$92.02**
MISSISSIPPI SOUND	$0.85	$2.93	$17.08	$30.96	$10.70	**$62.52**
OTHER	$4.64	$19.76	$18.73	$3.72	$27.45	**$74.30**
PENSACOLA BAY		$6.56	$2.20		$1.50	**$10.26**
SUWANNEE WATERSHED		$2.88			$2.08	**$4.96**
TAMPA BAY			$4.19		$7.37	**$11.56**
TOTALS	**$13.20**	**$101.47**	**$88.55**	**$51.16**	**$144.39**	**$398.75**

Figure 11. Distribution of funding for state and federal Council members from the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact Components by watershed.



The FPL and SEP projects funded during fiscal years, 2016 through 2020 are already achieving results (Table 12). To date, Council funds have been used to acquire 7,957.95 acres of land and restore 2,091.25 acres of wetlands and 6,586 acres of non-wetland areas, primarily in support of the Council's goal to Restore and Conserve Habitat. It should be noted that most land acquisition and improved management practices also have direct connection to improving water quality and quantity. Council funds under Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact Components are being used to restore land, marine habitat, wetlands and remove invasive species (1,255 acres) which support the Council's goal to Restore and Conserve Habitat. Funds invested through the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact Components are also providing support for research and planning, monitoring activities, outreach and education, and providing economic benefits in support of the Council's goal to Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy.

Outreach through promoting natural resource stewardship and environmental education is an important component of the Council's efforts as shown by 713 people being reached by outreach, training or technical assistance activities, while 1,734 users are engaged with online activities. While much of this work is ongoing, thus far these metrics demonstrated improvement of management practices on 20,680.33 acres through Best Management Practices (BMPs) and 98 people have enrolled to implement BMPs. The Council is also improving science-based decision-making processes by completing nearly 19 studies to inform management and monitoring nearly 3,500 acres of habitat.

Table 12. Performance-level metrics results from projects funded under the Comprehensive Plan Component and Spill-Impact Component Funding. The information in the table summarizes the accomplishments (for FY18 – FY2020) resulting from funding under the 2015 Initial FPL and SEPs awarded to date. For each metric measure, the associated primary Comprehensive Plan Goal, Objective, and Planning Framework Restoration Technique are provided.

Goal	Objective	Technique	Metric Measure	2018	2019	2020	Total
Restore and Conserve Habitat	Restore, Enhance and Protect Habitats	Land acquisition	Acres acquired in fee	7243	215	499.95	7,957.95 acres
			Miles of shoreline acquired	8	0	1.5	9.5 miles
		Habitat Management and Stewardship	Agricultural best management practices (BMPs) - Acres under contracts/agreements	0	827	19853.33	20,680.33 acres
			Habitat restoration (non-wetland) - Acres restored	1,483	0	5,103	6,586 acres
			Acres restored - Oysters habitat	317	0	0	317 acres
			Removal of invasives - Acres restored	57	176	1022	1255 acres
			Wetland restoration - Acres restored	398	51	1642.25	2,091.25 acres
Restore Water Quality and Quantity	Restore, Improve and Protect Water Resources	Agriculture and forest management	Erosion Control – acres restored to reduce surface and/or stream channel erosion	0	0	40	40 acres
Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy	Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy	Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy	Number of temporary jobs created	75	91	0	166 jobs
			Number of local contracts	1	1	4	6
			Percentage of program funding to existing local organization(s)	17.5%*	48%*	76%*	No total on percentages

Goal	Objective	Technique	Metric Measure	2018	2019	2020	Total
All	All	Planning	Number of management plans developed	0	4	2.25	6.25 plans
All	Improve Science-based Decision-Making Processes	Develop tools for planning and evaluation	Number of studies used to inform management	6 studies	6	6.75	18.75 studies
		Develop tools for planning and evaluation	Number of decision-support tools developed	0	2	2.25	4.25 tools
		Increase monitoring capacities	Number of streams/sites being monitored	0	130	0	130 sites
			Acres being monitored	0	2202	1245.87	3,447.87 acres
All	Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education	Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education	Number of individuals reached by outreach, training, or technical assistance activities	263	450	1083	713 individuals
			Number of people enrolled to implement best management practices	0	4	94	98 individuals
			Number of users engaged online	345	1389		1,734 users
			Number of subgrants/agreements to disseminate education and outreach materials	5	0	0	5 subgrants/ agreements
			Number of participants that successfully completed training	258	123	85	381 participants

8. Council Public Engagement and Tribal Relations Accomplishments

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy (2016 Comprehensive Plan Update) outlined the RESTORE Council's (Council) intent to improve its decisions by "improving the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of Council actions." The Council staff hired to focus on external affairs, public engagement and tribal relations assessed the past practices and tools available. This assessment was used to create a strategy to begin implementing the Council's two overarching commitments to "engagement, inclusion and transparency" and to "maintain and enhance public engagement and transparency".

The Council distributes information about their activities via automatic email updates referred to as eBlasts. As of late FY2020, the Council's eBlast distribution network had 1041 unique subscribers, distributed as follows (some subscribe to more than one category):

- **Press- Media:** 893
- **Gulf-wide:** 870
- **Texas:** 320
- **Louisiana:** 361
- **Mississippi:** 310
- **Alabama:** 303
- **Florida:** 398
- **Tribal:** 327
- **Public Meetings or Public Comments Periods:** 643

FPL 3a

The draft FPL 3a was available for a public review and comment period that began on December 9, 2019, and ended on January 10, 2020. The Council received a total of 286 unique comments from 3,262 private citizens, businesses, governmental entities (such as state, parish/county, and local governments), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other Gulf stakeholders. The total number of submissions included 2,976 form letters. Most comments were received digitally or by mail. The total number of unique comments also includes those collected from 10 stakeholders who attended and provided comments at the two public meetings and two webinars. These comments were compiled and released as the Response to Comments document. In support of FPL 3a, both a public webinar and two state meetings were held to inform the Louisiana and Alabama stakeholders of current Council activities. Updates were provided to the public through eBlasts and the Council website.

FPL 3b

The draft FPL 3b will be available for public review and comment beginning November 16, 2020 to 11:59 MT January 5, 2021. In addition to the draft FPL 3b document, 20 fact sheets will be developed for each draft FPL 3b 7 public webinars explaining the FPL 3b process and summarizing the proposed activities proposed projects and programs were prepared in anticipation of a November 2020 release of the draft FPL 3b. All documents will also be provided in both English and Vietnamese, with public presentations also providing American Sign Language services for hearing impaired stakeholders through online webinars due to the COVID pandemic. All documents will be 508 compliant to assist visually impaired stakeholders.

A 10-Year Commemorative report was completed in April 2020, that highlighted the accomplishments of the five state and six federal RESTORE Council members. This effort provided valuable communication to the Council's stakeholders and public *writ large*.

Council staff successfully coordinated with tribal experts from agencies within DOI (USFWS, BIA) and other federal agencies in developing a cogent process to effectively communicate with federally recognized tribes with historical lands of interest along the Gulf of Mexico.

9. Administrative Accomplishments

9.1. Financial Summary

Apportionments
The Council is funded in its entirety by the RESTORE Trust Fund and it serves as an expenditure fund to the Trust Fund. It does not receive appropriated funds, and all funding is Category B mandatory funding. The Council's financial statements reflect the amount of the funds available to and used by the Council. Table 13 below shows the status of the trust fund components that are managed by the Council: Council-Selected Restoration Component, and the Oil Spill Impact Component at the end of FY 2020. The Council-Selected Administrative Funds and Council-Selected Program Expense Funds are subcategories of the Council-Selected Restoration Funds and are used by the Council to carry out its operations. The apportionments received by the Council are used to develop programs, carry out operations and fund projects through grants and IAAs.

The Department of the Treasury issued an Interim Final Rule regarding the investment and use of amounts deposited in the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. Upon issuance of this Rule, the Council was able to request apportionments for the Council-Selected Restoration Component Funds. The Spill Impact Interim Final Rule published on August 22, 2014 made available an amount of funds less than or equal to the statutory minimum allocation (5% of funds available under the Spill Impact Component) that would be available to a Gulf Coast State or eligible entity for a SEP that funds planning activities only. On December 15, 2015, the Council published the RESTORE Act Spill Impact Component Allocation Final Rule which became effective on April 4, 2016 when the United States Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana entered the Consent Decree. This Rule established the formula for the allocation of Spill Impact Component funds to the States making these funds available for apportionment.

Table 13 shows the Council's trust fund apportionments received in fiscal years 2013-2020. An apportionment is an Office of Management and Budget approved plan on how to spend resources provided by a mandatory appropriation, an annual or supplemental appropriation act, or a continuing resolution as well as other sources of funding such as a Trust Fund. An apportionment contains the amounts available for obligation and expenditure. It also specifies and limits what obligations can be done and what expenditures can be made during specified timeframes, for programs, projects, and activities or any combination of these**.**

In fiscal year 2020, $221 million in new apportionment funding was approved. Of this amount, $35M was used in support of Council Selected Administrative and Program Expenses and $185.7 million was used to fund projects included in State Expenditure Plans as follows: Alabama $79.5 million, Florida 31.7 million, Louisiana $46.0 million and Mississippi $28.5 million.

Table 13: Trust Fund Apportionments Received Summary

Trust Fund Balance (After Sequestration)	Council Selected Administrative Funds	Council Selected Program Funds			Spill Impact Funds
		Council Selected Program Expense Fund	Council Selected Projects and Programs Funds	Total	
TRUST FUND DEPOSITS	**$18,594,421**	**$601,219,611**			**$596,402,240**
Apportionment FY13-14	(1,256,214)	(1,067,950)	(-)	(1,067,950)	(-)
Apportionment FY15	(1,241,229)	(2,307,158)	(-)	(2,307,158)	(-)
Apportionment FY16	(1,107,649)	(3,157,558)	(156,553,618)	(159,711,176)	(6,400,000)
Apportionment FY17	(1,375,568)	(4,078,906)	(-)	(4,078,906)	(70,800,000)
Apportionment FY18	(1,417,740)	(4,544,671)	(30,611,276)	(35,155,947)	(22,300,001)
Apportionment FY19	(1,445,181)	(4,317,211)	(5,717,000)	(10,034,211)	(94,310,000)
Apportionment FY20	(1,109,447)	(5,272,021)	(29,005,000)	(34,277,021)	(185,726,643)
Total Apportioned to the Council	**(8,953,028)**	(24,745,475)	(221,886,894)	**(246,632,369)**	**(379,536,644)**
Balance Available in Trust Fund	**$9,641,393**	**$354,587,242**			**$216,865,596**

Operational Costs

In fiscal year 2015 the Council established its New Orleans headquarters office; developed its administrative and programmatic infrastructure; developed and deployed its core administrative systems; implemented its grants, science, and environmental compliance programs; acquired and published its website; and designed its automated grants management system thus establishing its administrative infrastructure. Operations costs for the Council (Figure 12) have consistently increased each year with primary cost drivers (Figure 13) including, salaries and benefits costs, travel, and contracts, and agreements for services, to include costs associated with the automated grant system. However, the Council follows an incremental approach to financial management and requests funds for only immediate operational needs.

Figure 12. Schedule of Spending by Year (in millions)

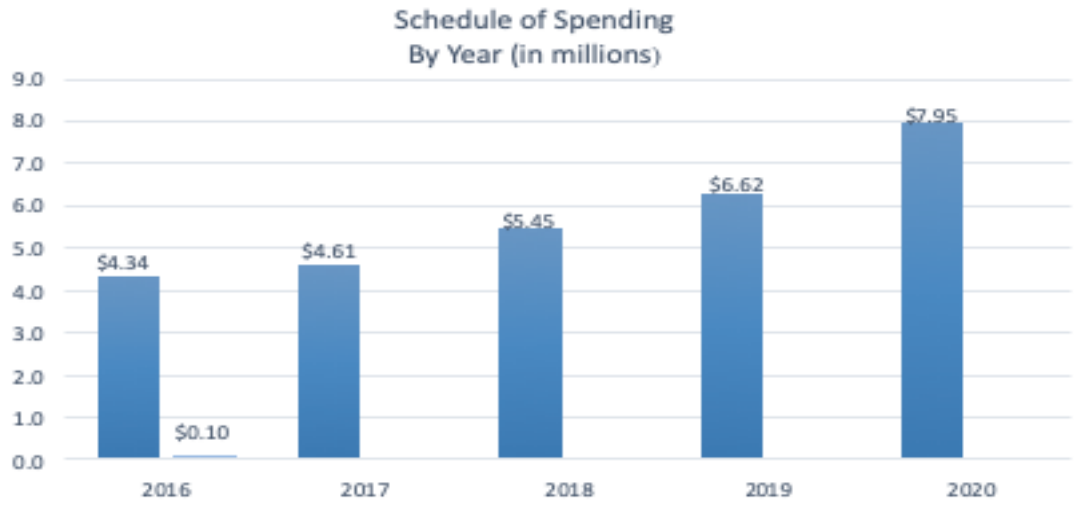
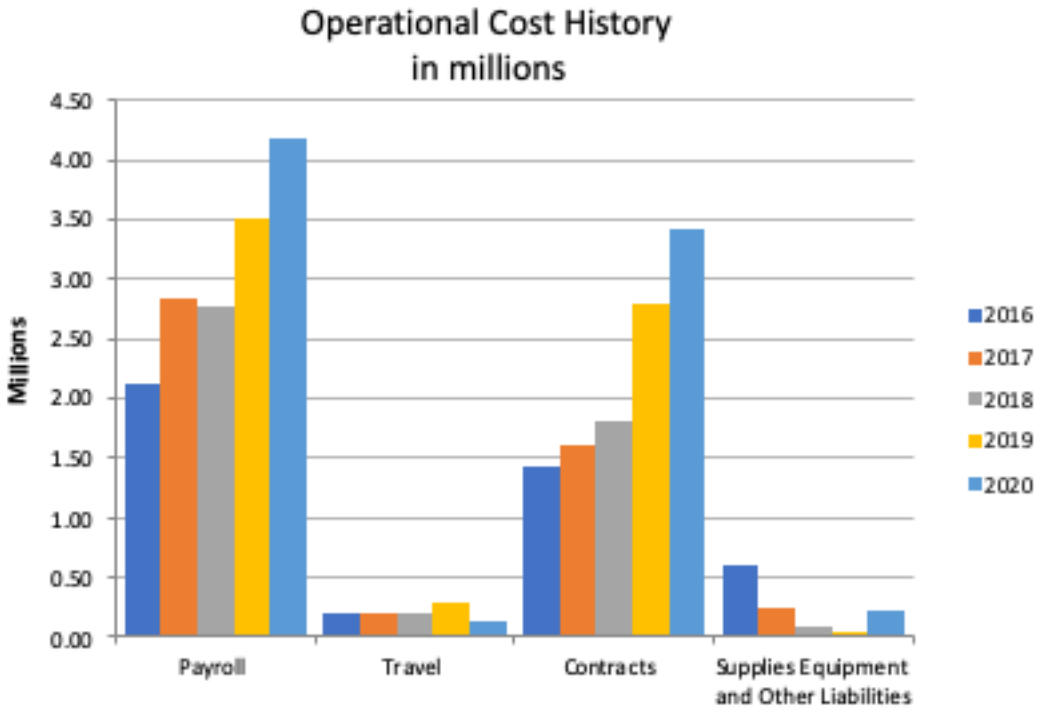


Figure 13. The Council's operating expenses (obligations) incurred for fiscal year 2016 – 2020 by cost category.



The Council increases staff commensurate with the maturation of operations. The number of full-time equivalents (FTE) in fiscal year 2016 was 17.7, and by the end of fiscal year 2019, Council staff positions had increased to 23.5 FTE. Higher operating expenses in fiscal year 2020 were the result of a 17% increase in salaries and benefits due to hiring 2 new Grant Specialists and a Program Specialist. Travel costs increased from fiscal years 2016-2019 commensurate with the increase in staff. However, in fiscal year

2020, travel significantly decreased by 58% due to the Coronavirus epidemic and mandatory travel restrictions for the health and safety of the staff.

Contracts and IAA expenses increased by 13% from $1.4M in fiscal year 2016 to $2.8M in fiscal year 2019. Increased costs were incurred to complete Council's IT infrastructure including remote access to VPN/MTIPS, cyber security, and 508 compliance support. Other expenses included contracts for best available science reviews, the GOMA Cross-Agency Tracker, and costs for RAAMS hosting, system support and helpdesk support services. In fiscal year 2019, the 33% increase in interagency agreements and contracts was attributable to the development of PIPER and GrantSolutions; the two systems that would replace RAAMS in fiscal year 2020. Contractual services increased by 23% to $3.4M in fiscal year 2020, largely due to increased personnel and contractor support costs and the transition and implementation of GrantSolutions and PIPER and grant program helpdesk support. Other contractual increases included the biannually funded Senior Environmental Employment Program (SEE) support agreement, and a system upgrade and migration for Web-Based Time and Attendance (WEB TA).

The Council's equipment costs from fiscal years 2016- 2019 decreased by 93% in comparison to the initial cost incurred for the grant management system, RAAMS, in fiscal year 2016. The substantial increase in fiscal year 2020 is primarily attributable to PIPER software necessary for the transition from RAAMs to the new unified system.

The Council's equipment costs from fiscal years 2016- 2019 decreased by 93% in comparison to the initial cost incurred for the grant management system, RAAMS, in fiscal year 2016. The substantial increase in fiscal year 2020 is primarily attributable to PIPER software necessary for the transition from RAAMs to the unified system.

Administrative Expenses

The RESTORE Act specifies that of the Council-Selected Restoration Component amounts received by the Council, not more than 3% of the funds may be used for administrative expenses, including staff. This is further detailed in the Treasury regulation implementing the Act at 31 CFR §34.204(b), "Limitations on administrative costs and administrative expenses" (as amended September 28, 2016), which provides that "Of the amounts received by the Council under the Comprehensive Plan [Council-Selected Restoration] Component, not more than three percent may be used for administrative expenses. The three percent limit is applied to the amounts it receives under the Comprehensive Plan [Council-Selected Restoration] Component before the termination of the Trust Fund. Amounts used for administrative expenses may not at any time exceed three percent of the total of the amounts received by the Council and the amounts in the Trust Fund that are allocated to, but not yet received by the Council under § 34.103."

The Council worked with OMB to segregate administrative expense funds through the apportionment process. The Treasury regulation implementing the Act at 34 CFR § 34.2 provides the definition of administrative expenses that guides the Council in properly classifying certain expenses as administrative and the remaining categories of expenses as programmatic.

The Council oversees projects and programs during the post-award period. Since the Council will cease operations upon the expenditure of all funds available from the Trust Fund, a long-term forecast for its administrative and operational expenses is developed based on the projected closeout date of all grants. Based on the Consent Decree payment schedule and the projected closeout timeframe for grants

awarded, Council operations have been projected through 2042 to ensure that operational costs are fiscally prudent and well managed through the life of the program. This analysis projects that the cumulative administrative expense will be approximately $48.7 million which is less than the $49.1 million that will be available for such expenses from the aggregate current and future deposits into the Trust Fund (not including accrued interest).

Table 14 shows the funds deposited as of September 30, 2020 for the Council-Selected Restoration component, and the amount of funds available for administrative expenses. The amount apportioned for administrative expenses is well below the amount of administrative funds available in the Trust Fund and is equal to 3% of the total funds apportioned for the Council-Selected Restoration Component. Of the $625.2 million, including interest, deposited into the Trust Fund for the Comprehensive Plan component, $619.8 million was made available. Due to sequestration, $5.4 million was withheld in fiscal year 2020, but these funds will be returned at the start of fiscal year 2021. Of the $18.6 million available for administrative expenses, $9.6 million still remains in the trust fund. Overall, 48% of the available administrative funds have been apportioned which equates to 1.4% of the total available trust funds.

Table 14: Three Percent Analysis

STATUS OF 3% ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE FUNDS (*as of 09/30/2020)*	
Trust Funds-Comprehensive Plan	
Amount Available	$625,185,067
Sequestration for 2020	(5,371,035)
Total Amount Available	619,814,032
Administrative Expense Funds Available (Total Amount Available x 3%)	18,594,421
Total Administrative Funds Apportioned through 2020	(8,953,028)
Balance of Administrative Funds Remaining in the Trust Fund	**$9,641,393**

9.2. Grant System Replacement and Upgrades

Grant System Replacement and Upgrades

In December 2015, the Council deployed its automated grants management system, the Restoration Assistance and Awards Management System (RAAMS), and began implementing its grants and IAA program concurrent with the approval of the Initial FPL. The Council is committed to ensuring that the process used for awarding and disbursing funds is as efficient as possible, while also providing the oversight needed for sound fiscal management. As it did with the Initial FPL, after a year of experience the Council initiated a thorough review of its application, disbursement and post-award oversight processes to identify and implement system changes that will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

In September 2017, the commercial owner of Easygrants (the commercial off-the-shelf software underlying RAAMS) announced they wouldl no longer support the program beyond a reasonable transition period to select and move to a new system. In response, the Council established a Task Force to develop system requirements and explore replacement options. The Task Force considered both federal shared service and commercial off-the-shelf grants management systems and recommended the Council's

needs would best be met by a federal shared service provider. Upon the Task Force's recommendation, the Council approved entering into an Interagency Agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to conduct an analysis of GrantSolutions, a federal shared service provider, to determine key data and components of Council programs and processes that fit within Grant Solutions and gaps needing solutions. HHS Grant Solutions completed the Fit/Gap Analysis Summary and Transition Plan in August 2018.

On March 16, 2020, the Council went live with two new grant management solutions that were selected in fiscal year 2018 to replace RAAMs. To manage award data, the Council implemented the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) GrantSolutions system. To address the need to house scientific programmatic data, the Council deployed its *Program Information Platform for Ecosystem Restoration* (PIPER) developed through an inter-agency agreement with the United States Geological Survey. During fiscal year 2020, Council staff intensified and accelerated efforts to complete all the work necessary for migrating to these systems and to minimize and mitigate identified risks associated with the transition. Implementation of the new systems was relatively smooth, and FPL proposals, grant and IAA applications and awards are now being managed in GrantSolutions and PIPER.

9.3. Enterprise Risk Management

Audits of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Audits are a significant review of how well the Council's internal controls and processes are performing. The following Audits were planned by Treasury OIG for FY20. Results of the audits will be reviewed and applied to internal controls as required.

- Data Act Quality Reporting Audit of the Council-Phase II;
- Risk Assessment of the GCERC of the Councils Charge Card and Convenience Check Program;
- Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA)
- FY2019/2020 Audit of Financial Statements;
- FY2019/2020 FISMA Evaluation;
- GCERC's Progress in Implementing Card Recommendations;
- Implementation of Council's Grants Management System

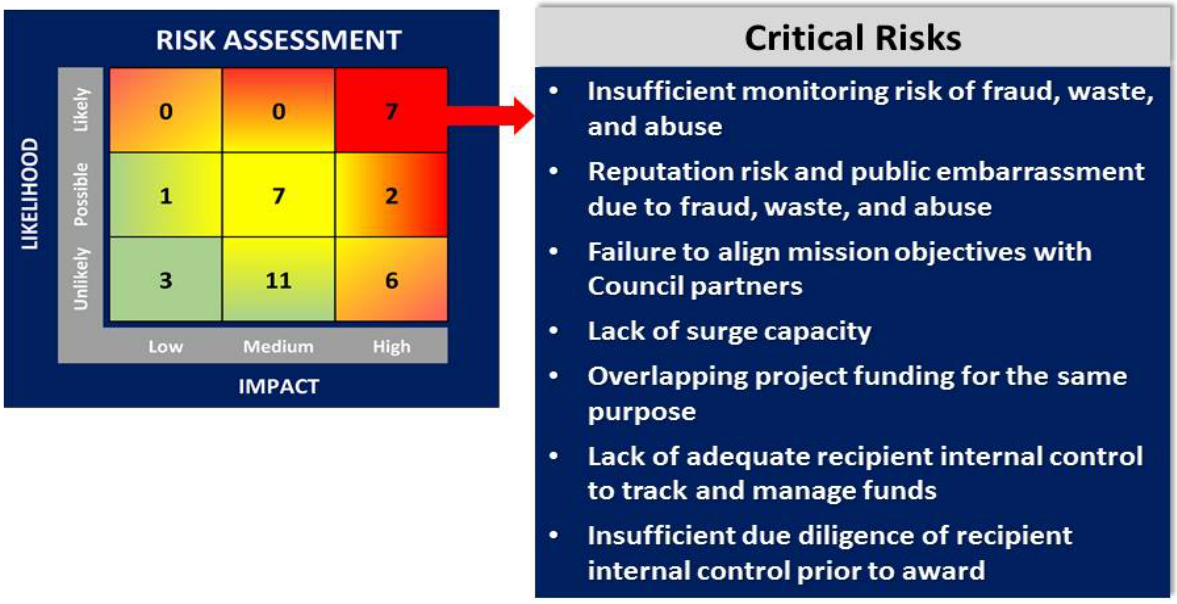
The Council's mission is to effectively manage and execute the Council's RESTORE Act responsibilities with a primary focus of overseeing Trust Fund expenditures in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and State Expenditure Plans. To provide proper oversight, the U.S. Treasury and other Federal entities audit the Council's programs, financial management and administrative functions to ensure compliance with federal regulatory requirements.

Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)
The Council complies with the requirements of OMB Circular A-123, Management's Responsibility for Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) and Internal Controls, as well as Improper Payments and Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA), the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards), the President's Management Agenda, etc., as well as internally generated ERM requirements. The Council has established an ERM governance structure that begins with the Council with specific oversight responsibility assigned to the Audit Committee. The Executive Director is delegated responsibility for implementation and oversight of the ERM program and in turn, has assigned program development and execution responsibilities to the Director of

Administration. The Executive Director has designated the Director of Administration as the agency Chief Risk Officer who is supported directly by a risk management specialist. Risk management and internal controls are managed by staff within finance, budget, IT and grants and compliance, although risk and internal controls are integrated into all elements of the organization.

The Council completed an Enterprise Risk Assessment in May 2016, and developed a risk profile that has identified strategic, operational, compliance, financial and reporting risks, assessed their likelihood and impact, and determined an overall risk rating with a categorization of critical, high, medium and low. The risk assessment identified 37 Program risks that the Council needs to mitigate, 7 of which are considered critical (Figure 14).

Figure 14. The following graphic provides a Summary Risk Matrix of the 37 Program Risks categorized by High, Medium and Low Impact and Likely, Possible, and Unlikely Likelihood.



The Council has implemented and integrated internal control framework to govern its operations, reporting and compliance and is currently developing its risk mitigation strategies, metrics, performance indicators, monitoring, analytics, communication, and remediation.

The following actions were completed during FY2020 in support of programmatic and compliance review of grant and interagency agreements.

- The Grants staff developed a Risk Rating Tool to analyze each grant award for utilization in the selection of grants for compliance monitoring through financial drawdown desk reviews and/or site visits.
- Council staff migrated from RAAMS to PIPER and Grants Solutions in FY2020. Programs and Grants teams have devoted a substantial amount of time and effort working on the transition from RAAMS to PIPER and Grants Solutions This has required careful consideration of workflows and other processes to ensure that Grants and Program staff maintain the needed coordination and collaboration on reviews of applications and awards. This includes coordinating all aspects of program staff reviews of applications (general program reviews, risk

reviews, environmental compliance, ODP/DMP, Best Available Science, and GIS).

- The Grants staff review financial reports to ensure financial and eligibility compliance requirements of the grant award and other Federal regulations. The transition in FY20 to a new Grants Management System resulted in submission and review of some financial reports in RAAMS, and some in GrantSolutions. Financial reports are now submitted via Grants Solutions and reviews are documented there.
- The Program staff reviews performance reports and conducts site visits to evaluate ongoing progress, award project outcome/results, and compliance with requirements of the grant award and other applicable Federal regulations. Performance report submitted prior to March of 2020 were submitted and reviewed in RAAMS. For performance reports that were due in April 2020 grant/IAA recipients were provided with a performance report form specific for their award, which were completed and sent to program staff via email. Beginning in July 2020, performance reports were submitted via PIPER, and reviews are documented in this system.
- The Risk Management Analyst reviewed applicable updated Organizational Self-Assessments (OSA) of all Council member States, the Florida Consortium and the Alabama Port Authority. All entities have received a risk rating letter.
- Organizational Internal Controls Review (OICR) site visits continued from last year. Visits were conducted at the Alabama Port Authority and
  Florida Gulf Consortium to review project and financial systems, organizational policies and procedures, associated audits/management reports, and overall general organizational structure. These documents were reviewed to help determine risk mitigation in place.

Significant improvements of the Agencies Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Program were implemented during FY 2020, including development and execution of an Internal Controls Testing & Risk Mitigation Policy. This Policy follows the guidance set forth in the OMB Circular A-123 and the GAO Green Book's 17 Principles and plan provides the Agency the ability to test Agency policies and internal controls in Grants, Purchase Card, Travel, Contracts, Program, Financial, and Administrative functional areas to document if the Agency Policies/Controls were followed and if they provided the desired results. Further, the Deputy Executive Director led the development and implementation of an External Audit Strategic Coordination Policy which ensures ERM is involved with all Agency audits to understand the findings and work with process owners to track and ensure corrections are made for any noted deficiencies for all Agency external audits

In the FY2020 Risk Profile update, the main focus for ERM was the top seven critical risks. Each risk was reviewed and it was determined that effective controls were in place. To assist Program, Grants and Finance to mitigate surge capacity risk, which is one of the top seven risks, four new GS employees have been hired thus far in the past 12 months. The Council approved and hired two new grants specialists, one program staff intern, one financial analyst. The Council also approved two new GS15 supervisory positions that have been filled. The Ecosystem Restoration Program Director position and the Supervisory Grants Management Officer position have been filled with internal hires. The GS 14 Senior Scientist vacancy was backfilled internally. This new staffing will help with the refinement of policies and procedures, processing efficiencies, and compliance monitoring. The Council continues to closely monitor the top seven risks and implement mitigation activities with the continued refinement and development of the Council Post-Award Grant/Interagency Agreement (IAA) Monitoring process and continued internal controls testing. The Council's "17 Principles of Internal Control Checklist" was updated in FY2020. This annual checklist update is critical to demonstrate how the Council meets the requirements outlined in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) Green Book and Office of

Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A123.

Highlights for the Agency's Enterprise Risk Management during FY 2020 include the following:

- Risk Management published an Internal Control Testing and Risk Mitigation Policy and the Annual Risk Testing Schedule. This document enables the staff to know what controls will be tested in the next fiscal year. This gives visibility to the staff on upcoming tests.
- The ERM staff follows a testing schedule for reviews of GCERC's charge card procurement process, MOU approval process, contract approval process, travel card cash advance, travel vouchers, time and attendance, semi-annual grants financial reports, annual programs performance reports and financial obligations to assess compliance with existing internal controls.
- ERM conducted compliance reviews of the processes and documentation of financial drawdown desk reviews/site visits conducted by the grant's team.
- ERM conducted compliance reviews of the processes and documentation of project desk reviews/ site visits conducted by the program's team.
- IT Security Testing is conducted on a regular basis by the GCERC CIO and is reviewed quarterly by ERM staff.
- The 17 Principles of Internal Control Checklist has been updated.

9.4. Other Administrative Updates

Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA)
The *Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014* (FISMA) requires federal agencies to have an annual independent evaluation performed of their information security program and practices to determine the effectiveness of such program and practices, and to report the results of the evaluations to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB delegated its responsibility to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the collection of annual FISMA responses. DHS prepared the FISMA questionnaire to collect these responses (FISMA Reporting Metrics). Applicable OMB policy and guidelines, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) standards and guidelines were also considered.

In FY2020, the Council sustained an effective Information Assurance (IA) program as required by the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (FISMA). The Council's IA program uses the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Risk Management Framework (RMF); which is an effective methodology for managing IA risk to ensure FISMA compliance. The Council implemented NIST RMF security controls and performed periodic testing to validate the selected controls effectiveness. This action resulted in the Council having an effective Information Assurance (IA) program and shows the Council is managing IA risk to acceptable levels. The FY 20- OIG FISMA audit identified no issues. This audit requires required each Federal agency to develop, document, and implement an agency-wide program to provide information security for the information and systems that support the operations and assets of the agency, including those provided or managed by another agency, contractor, or other sources.

Freedom of Information Act Requests (FOIA)

During FY 2020, Council staff received four Freedom of Information Requests (FOIA). The average number of days needed to respond to these requests was 2.5 days. No funds were collected from the requesters.

10. Centers of Excellence Accomplishments

10.1. Background

The RESTORE Act dedicates 2.5 percent of the Trust Fund to the Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program, administered by the Department of Treasury. These funds may be used to establish Centers of Excellence and by those Centers of Excellence for science, technology, and monitoring in one or more of the following disciplines:

- Coastal and deltaic sustainability, restoration, and protection, including solutions and technology that allow citizens to live in a safe and sustainable manner in a coastal delta in the Gulf Coast Region;
- Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring in the Gulf Coast Region;
- Offshore energy development, including research and technology to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico;
- Sustainable and resilient growth, economic and commercial development in the Gulf Coast Region; and
- Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico.

The RESTORE Act specifies who may apply to receive funds under the Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program. The following are the Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program eligible applicants for each State:

- In Alabama, the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council or such administrative agent as it may designate;
- In Florida, the Florida Institute of Oceanography;
- In Louisiana, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board of Louisiana through the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana;
- In Mississippi, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; and
- In Texas, the Office of the Governor or an appointee of the Office of the Governor.

Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, each Center of Excellence provides an annual report to the RESTORE Council with information regarding all grants, including the amount, discipline or disciplines, and recipients of the grants, and in the case of any grant awarded to a consortium, the membership of the consortium. This information is to be included in the Council's Annual Report to Congress. As of the date of this report, five Centers of Excellence have been established. Following are summaries of the activities from each program; Full annual reports for 2020 from each Center of Excellence are provided on the Council's website.

10.2. Alabama's RESTORE Act Center of Excellence

In December 2014, the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) made available for public comment for 45 days draft Competitive Process documents. After consideration of meaningful input from the public, a final RFP was published in May 2015. As a result of the Final RFP, AGCRC received one proposal. After reviewing the proposal according to the qualifications and criteria described in the Final RFP, the AGCRC made a motion to accept the proposal submitted by the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC). MESC was founded to reduce redundancy in Marine Sciences in higher education while serving as a vehicle for collaborative coastal studies. Member institutions include the following 23 public and private colleges and universities: Alabama A&M, Alabama State, Athens State, Auburn, Auburn University at Montgomery, Birmingham Southern, Huntingdon, Jacksonville State, Judson, Samford, Spring Hill, Stillman, Talladega, Troy, Tuskegee, Alabama, Alabama at Birmingham, Alabama in Huntsville, University of Mobile, Montevallo, North Alabama, South Alabama, and West Alabama.

The focus of MESC, a consortium of Alabama universities, is to provide local, state, and federal officials, and interested citizens access to the findings of innovative research performed on the following priority areas: (1) Coastal and deltaic sustainability, restoration and protection, including solutions and technology that allow citizens to live in a safe and sustainable manner in a coastal delta in the Gulf Coast Region; (2) Coastal fisheries and wildlife ecosystem research and monitoring in the Gulf Coast Region; (4) Sustainable and resilient growth, economic and commercial development in the Gulf of Mexico; and (5) Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf of Mexico. MESC will capitalize on the diverse expertise of the scientists employed by the 23-member MESC colleges and universities, and bringing the state's best science talent to bear on these four focal areas.

MESC executed a sub-award agreement with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the administrative agent for the AGCRC, in February 2020. An Introductory Workshop was conducted via webinar in June 2020 to inform interested investigators about the Center of Excellence, it's scientific goals, and to solicit input prior to the preparation of the RFP. An in-person workshop was initially planned but changed to a virtual meeting due to COVID-19 restrictions. Work began on the development of RFP #1 which is anticipated to fund large, multi-investigator research projects. Upgrades to the ARCOS monitoring stations began, as well as improvements to the wetlab facility. Work also began on the Alabama Center of Excellence website which is anticipated to be launched in early 2021.

10.3. Florida's RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence

Although in 2020, the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program (FLRACEP) was challenged with COVID-19 pandemic and personnel changes, it was still able to continue working with Treasury to receive the second Centers of Excellence Research Grant award from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Gulf Coast Restoration (Treasury). This award enabled FLRACEP to renew the University of South Florida's long-term fisheries monitoring project for an additional three years and run its third and fourth Request for Proposals (RFPIII and RFPIII.5) process. In spring of 2020, Treasury approved FLRACEP's second amendment for additional funding ($2,156,577) to support RFP III proposals.

The FLRACEP re-issued an RFPIII.5 late December 2019, to focus on Facilitating Development of a Standardized Mapping Framework. An existing Center of Excellence, the University of Florida was granted funds under RFPIII.5 in May 2020. FIO applied for a third amendment for additional funds with Treasury and received additional funds to execute the subagreement and implement the RFPIII.5 new Centers of Excellence. The COVID-19 pandemic posed some challenges as many of the Centers of Excellence

institutions needed to adjust to a remote platform just as the FLRACEP Program office. Even though COVID-19 created some administrative challenges for the Program office, the FLRACEP was still able to hold its All-Hands meeting in late summer through a virtual face-to-face platform

10.4. Louisiana's RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence

On April 8, 2014, the Louisiana Coastal and Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) named The Water Institute of the Gulf as the State of Louisiana's Center of Excellence. On November 1, 2015, the U.S. Department of the Treasury awarded CPRA a grant to begin its research program. The mission of the RESTORE Act Center of Excellence for Louisiana (LA-COE) is to support research directly relevant to implementation of Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan by administering a competitive grants program and providing the appropriate coordination and oversight support to ensure that success metrics are tracked and achieved.

The LA-COE has been managing research subrecipients that were executed in March 2018 under the first request for proposals (RFP1). A total of 13 awards were granted including six graduate studentship awards, two collaborative awards, and five research awards, one of which was terminated in the fall 2018. The LA-COE has been continuously reviewing the quarterly performance progress reports and their final deliverables for technical content (via the Technical Point of Contact (TPOC)) and to ensure research results will help implement the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan (via CPRA Liaisons). During this reporting period, eight out of 12 subawardees completed their research projects before September 2020 (Q11); their final reports and other deliverables have all been compiled and provided to CPRA. The four remaining subawardees requested no cost extensions (due to COVID-related challenges at virtual learning and impacts from Tropical Storm Marco and Hurricane Laura), and completed their projects before September 18, 2020.

A Technical Memorandum (Tech Memo) for tracking RFP1 success metrics and federal reporting requirements, including reports to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, is being developed. LA-COE has been working on the Tech Memo for tracking the success metrics defined in Standard Operation Procedure Version 1 (SOP V1) to assess RFP1 project progress and performance based on information collected from proposals, final reports, and other deliverables. Success metrics were categorized into the following: (1) Competitive Grants Process, (2) Research Progress, (3) Research Accomplishments, and (4) Outcomes, and have been comprehensively evaluated using the methodology developed at the start of RFP1 grant. Further, key accomplishments and milestones (publications, presentations, and data published) from RPF1 projects are also summarized in this Tech Memo and are being prepared to be posted on LA-COE website. A table of accomplishments and outcomes from RFP1 projects during this reporting period is included in the next section. RFP1 survey questions were designed and sent to principle investigators (PIs), TPOCs, and CPRA liaisons on September 18, 2020 to evaluate the performance of LA-COE operation during CEA1/RFP1, and their responses are also included in the Tech Memo.

The grant for CEA2/RFP2 was approved by the U.S. Department of the Treasury on May 4, 2020, and was executed on October 13, 2020. Correspondingly, the SOP V3 was revised, finalized, and posted online on June 12, 2020 (SOP V3) to prepare for the release of RFP2. Meanwhile, rotating off RFP1 Executive Committee members and inviting new members of the Executive Committee for RFP2 is in process.

LA-COE has had regular meetings with CPRA (monthly and/or bi-monthly depending on schedules and quarantine), and phone calls as needed, and continues to be operated according to the standard

operating procedures (SOPs) including website maintenance, data management, coordination with other Centers of Excellence, and federal reporting requirements, including reports to the U.S. Department of the Treasury and other dissemination of information.

LA-COE is working on disseminating or publicizing results of the program: 1) the LA-COE website is being revamped by designing new pages for the dissemination of RFP1 results (e.g., final reports, publications, success metrics Tech Memo, and link for dataset) and for the upcoming RFP2; 2) as papers continue to emerge from the research, these are posted on social media (Twitter) and on the LA-COE website.

Key highlights in 2020 include 1) Managing and closing 12 research subawards. A summary of key accomplishments and outcomes for the 12 RFP1 projects is provided in the following section "Programmatic Elements". 2) SOP V3 has been finalized and released. 3) A Tech Memo for tracking RFP1 success metrics and federal reporting requirements, including reports to the U.S. Department of the Treasury was developed. 4) The LA-COE collaborated with several other RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence and the Sea Grant Oil Spill Science Outreach Program on a conference session entitled "New insights in the Gulf of Mexico nine years after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill". This session was accepted for the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) conference in November 2019 in Mobile, Alabama and the LA-COE Director served as a panelist. 5) A conference session entitled, "RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Research Grant Programs – Filling Gaps in Gulf Research to Inform Policy and Management" was conducted with the Centers of Excellence Research Grant Program at the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill and Ecosystem Science Conference (GoMOSES) conference held on February 05, 2020 in Tampa, Florida. LA-COE presented about the progress of the program and how applied research conducted helps to inform policy and management decisions that are important to the state and the region. 6) LA-COE submitted a session proposal entitled, "RESTORE Act Center of Excellence for Louisiana: Research to support Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan" with the Coastal and Protection Restoration Authority and was accepted for the State of the Coast conference to be held in New Orleans, LA in September 2020, which has been postponed to June 2021, with six of the research subrecipients agreeing to present their research; 7) potential co-host of a science workshop with NOAA RESTORE Science Program.

10.5. Mississippi's RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence

In February 2015, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) made available for public comment for 45 days a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) describing the competitive selection process, rules, and policies. MDEQ prepared the draft RFP in accordance with state law and in compliance with 31 C.F.R. §34.700-708. Notice of the public comment and review period for the draft RFP was published in the Sun Herald and Clarion Ledger newspapers as well as online at www.restore.ms. After consideration of meaningful input from the public, a final RFP was published in April 2015. Notice of availability of the final RFP was published in the Sun Herald and Clarion Ledger newspapers on April 6, 2015 and April 13, 2015, as well as online at https://www.mdeq.ms.gov/restoration/. The deadline to submit proposals was May 7, 2015. As a result of the Final RFP, MDEQ received two proposals. After reviewing the proposals according to the qualifications and criteria described above, the Mississippi Based Restore Act Center of Excellence (MBRACE) was selected. MBRACE is a consortium of four Mississippi universities - Jackson State University, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi and University of Southern Mississippi. The University of Southern Mississippi serves as the lead university for the consortium.

The focus of MBRACE, a consortium of Mississippi's research universities, is a sound, comprehensive science- and technology-based understanding of the chronic and acute stressors, both anthropogenic and natural, on the dynamic and productive waters and ecosystems of the northern Gulf. The goals of MBRACE are: (1) serve as a focal point for new, long-term research and socioeconomic initiatives along the northern Gulf with relevance to Mississippi's resources; (2) serve the people of Mississippi and the northern Gulf region with a scientifically based understanding of ecosystem status and trends (past to present, predictive) with special emphasis on improved forecasting abilities to ensure sustainable coastal and ocean ecosystems of the Gulf; and (3) work within a consortium of stakeholders including Mississippi's research universities under the Mississippi Research Consortium, state and federal agencies, local communities, private industry, and non-governmental organizations.

MBRACE continues to move the Center of Excellence program forward. The five-person Executive Steering Committee (ESC) comprised of leadership from the four MBRACE universities continues to work with the administrative team to execute the program. A Call for Proposals to fund research under the next Core Research Program (Core-2) as well as the first round of Competitive Research Proposals was developed. The Core-2 proposal, a proposal submitted by the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and Jackson State University jointly was approved, and three competitive research projects were awarded. Sub-awards were executed; however, research activities were impacted by statewide university COVID restrictions.

10.6. Texas' RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence

In January 2015, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) competitively selected two consortia, the Texas A&M University Corpus Christi- Texas OneGulf **Consortium and University of Houston (UofH) – Subsea Systems Institute.**

OneGulf

The mission of the Texas OneGulf (OG) Center of Excellence is to gather and improve knowledge about the Gulf of Mexico to inform decision-making around the challenges to environmental and economic sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico and its impact on the health and well-being of Texans and the nation. Texas OneGulf is designed with the capacity and flexibility to address all five disciplines denoted in Section 1605 of RESTORE. This Center has been awarded funding and has begun or completed activities on eight projects, with three currently active. Highlights for this reporting period include: The Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan being completed, and the Hurricane Harvey Decision Support and Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring projects having commenced and made significant progress.

Subsea Systems Institute

The Subsea Systems Institute (SSI) is a Center of Excellence formed under the Restore Act and represents a collaboration between the University of Houston, Rice University and NASA/Johnson Space Center. This Center was awarded funding and has begun or completed activities on ten projects, with three currently active. The SSI focuses on Offshore energy development, including research and technology to improve the sustainable and safe development of energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico. The key outcomes from the work of the SSI for this reporting period include:

- Providing unbiased third-party validation to build public trust in the safety and operation of offshore drilling and production;

- Economically developing and assisting in the deployment of advantaged safest technologies for offshore energy development, and the elevation and ensuring of the energy industry's safety and operational excellence in offshore applications and;
- Becoming the repository for best practices and policies for deployment.

An Advisory Board and a Technical Advisory Committee have been established to support the governance and technical supervision of the SSI. The membership for both committees is on a volunteer basis drawn primarily from industry. These committees support both the strategic planning and the scope of technical work for SSI.

Appendices

Appendix A – FPL 1 Projects Funded During FY20

Project Title: Upper Mobile Bay Beneficial Use Wetland Creation Site (Planning)

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – Alabama State Port Authority

Award Amount: $2,500,000 Federal Award ID Number: GNTCP20AP0104

Start Date: 1/27/2020 End Date: 8/1/2021

Project Description: Establishing a beneficial use (BU) program and strategy for Mobile Bay will contribute to much-needed conservation of various ecological resources that exist in the Bay system. The intent of this project is to establish a large scale semi-contained dredged material placement area to create approximately 1,200 acres of brackish tidal marsh and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) habitats in northern Mobile Bay. This project is a significant step toward enhancing the ecosystem diversity of a region containing extensive open water estuarine habitats and limited tidal marsh. The project will maximize use of dredge material for effective and sustainable coastal restoration. The project will be done in two phases. This award implements Phase I, which will support the necessary investigations, studies and engineering design work to meet all NEPA requirements, delineate the exact location of the marsh creation site, identify sources of material for construction of the containment structure, obtain a Department of the Army permit for construction of the project and to prepare the engineering plans and specifications necessary for procurement of the services necessary to construct the project (Phase II).

Project Title: Gulf Coast Conservation Reserve Program (GCCRP) (Planning & Implementation) - Florida

Council Member: U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS

Award Amount: $1,500,000 Federal Award ID Number: IAACP20DA0023

Start Date: 1/10/2020 End Date: 1/15/2024

Project Description: USDA will complete site specific conservation plans, engineering designs, environmental evaluations, and engineering practices on agricultural and forested lands within the Black River Watershed to restore gullies. The Blackwater River flows to the Pensacola Bay Estuary and on to the Gulf of Mexico. The Blackwater River is designated as an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW). Coldwater Creek is a principal tributary to the Blackwater River. The conservation efforts associated with this project will have direct positive environmental benefits on Coldwater Creek, thus the Blackwater River.

The combination of heavy rains, swift water, and sandy soils that occur in the Blackwater River watershed make this area ideal for severe erosion. Until erosion is slowed or stopped the gully will continue to grow, negatively impacting water quality and wildlife habitat. Addressing classic gully erosion on lands draining into Coldwater Creek will result in a reduction in sediment and nutrient run-off to creek. NRCS will implement measures to repair severe gully erosion on multiple farms. NRCS has calculated that approximately 116,200 tons of soil have been eroded from one site (Gully 1) and 57,000 tons from the other (Gully 2) from two targeted locations (preliminary target scoping).

A combination of NRCS conservation practices will be utilized as needed to repair the gullies to prevent excessive erosion and restore the surrounding landscape and downstream waters. Conservation practices will be implemented according to NRCS practice standards. Conservation planning and practice implementation will be completed on approximately 11 acres. Conservation implementation (repairing gully erosion) on the 11 acres will have a direct impact on aquatic habitat/water quality downstream.

This award will fund conservation outreach; conservation planning and environmental evaluations; engineering and design plans; and project implementation. Florida NRCS will be responsible for administering and implementing this project.

Project Title: Mobile Bay National Estuary Program - Implementation

Council Member: Environmental Protection Agency

Award Amount: $1,742,000 Federal Award ID Number: IAACP20EP0099

Start Date: 2/1/2020 End Date: 1/31/2026

Project Description: The Mobile Bay Estuary Program (MBNEP) – RESTORE Project for Implementation will restore approximately 1,800 linear feet of stream on the headwaters of Twelve Mile Creek, a tributary of Three Mile Creek, and implement an extensive Invasive Species Control Plan in priority areas identified in the Three Mile Creek watershed. MBNEP will be responsible for ensuring timely initiation and completion of the project elements, including planning, compliance, pre- and post-implementation monitoring, and reporting requirements. This project will address stressors affecting water quality and habitat in the Three Mile Creek watershed, contributing to a healthier and sustainable ecosystem service delivery through streambank stabilization and restoration on Twelve Mile Creek and implementation of a comprehensive invasive plant and animal management plan. Crossing and draining largely suburban and urban landscapes, Three Mile Creek drains a total area of approximately 48.3 square kilometers (30 square miles) within the City of Mobile, which represents nearly 20% of the total city land area and suffers from the negative effects of stormwater runoff and decaying infrastructure, including trash, invasive species, and erosion and sedimentation. Twelve Mile Creek is one of six main tributaries of Three Mile Creek and originates in the extreme southwestern portion of the watershed where it drains a total area of approximately 4.7 square kilometers (2.9 square miles), or approximately 10% of the entire Three Mile Creek watershed. The restoration of Twelve Mile Creek includes re-grading and vegetating streambanks, floodplain connectivity, construction of in-stream riffle and pool features, and the installation of energy dissipating log vane structures to redirect flow to the center of the channel. The overall goal of this stream restoration project is to reduce sediments loads in Twelve Mile Creek and downstream in Langan Park Lakes through stabilizing riparian areas. Island Apple snails (*Pomacea insularum*) were discovered in Langan Park Lakes around 2003 and have been attributed to aquarium releases. Currently, the Island Apple snail population is mostly contained in Langan Park Lakes and it is a top priority to maintain this due to the potential of the migration of snail eggs and subsequent colonization downstream into Three Mile Creek.

Appendix B - SEP Projects Funded During FY20

Project Title: State of Alabama State Expenditure Plan (PSEP)

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $182,243 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20AL0079

Start Date: 7/1/2017 End Date: 3/30/2020

Project Description: The purpose of the Planning State Expenditure Plan (PSEP) is to develop a Full SEP that prioritizes eligible activities for the Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3) funds and to obtain broad-based participation from individuals, businesses, and organizations in the Gulf Coast region of Alabama. The planning activities included in the Planning SEP are limited to those related to the development of a Full SEP. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) uses a website portal to solicit project suggestions from the public and a selection process designed to assure a consistent review of all projects submitted. ADCNR will also engage a consultant to serve as technical expert and complete detailed evaluations of each supported project. Finally, using information obtained in the technical review, the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (Alabama Council) will approve a slate of projects for inclusion in the SEP, and publish the plan for public review and comment for at least 45 days through the website, email distribution, and a public meeting. ADCNR proposes preparation and completion of the SEP in one phase.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #17: Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $669,500 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0001

Start Date: 9/1/2019 End Date: 3/31/2024

Project Description: The proposed Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use Plan project will develop a community-based comprehensive land use plan that recognizes all community concerns and issues and translates this information into a clear framework, plan and course of actions supporting community growth in a responsible, sustainable and resilient manner. A Fairhope area community-based comprehensive land use plan will recognize the interconnectivity of all community concerns and issues to guide future land use activities and code updates for the purpose of protecting and preserving the culture, heritage and natural resources within the planning jurisdiction of the City of Fairhope and broader Mobile Bay watershed.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #15: Mobile Area Storm Water Mapping & Resiliency Planning

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $3,089,593 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0002

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 4/30/2023

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project will provide better understanding of the extent, location, and function of the existing stormwater drainage system within the City of Mobile, through collection of field data.

Strategies to address areas within the City which have experienced repetitive flood loss will also be developed. Additionally, a design manual will be developed as a supplement to the City of Mobile's Flood Plain Management Plan, last revised in 1984.

- Field surveys will be conducted to collect and manage accurate digital geographic information describing the existing storm water infrastructure within the City.
- Completion of a GPS digital inventory will provide for development of a comprehensive GIS map of the City's stormwater drainage system.
- Information will be compiled to support updates to the City's Flood Plain Management program, including development of recommendations addressing repetitive loss properties and a design manual to supplement the Flood Plain Management Plan.

The project scope will include acquisition of digital inventory of existing stormwater structures occurring within the City, and within portions of the Three Mile Creek watershed located within the City of Pritchard.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #9: Extension of Effluent Force Main from Bayou La Batre WWTF

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $16,067,770 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0003

Start Date: 11/1/2019 End Date: 10/15/2022

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This project will design, permit, and construct an extension of the Bayou La Batre Wastewater Treatment Facility's (WWTF) outfall line to promote better mixing and to reduce shellfish closures when flow rates are exceeded. Implementation of this project to prevent shellfish closures will benefit water quality in the Mississippi Sound. Activities also include the comprehensive administration of this grant, including, but not limited to, project development and oversight, contracting, and sub-recipient monitoring. The present effluent force main from the Bayou La Batre Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) extends approximately one mile into Portersville Bay, in the Mississippi Sound.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #23: Orange Beach North Sewer Force Main Upgrade

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $5,350,117 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0004

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 9/30/2023

Project Description: This project consists of the construction of approximately 8 miles of sewer force main from a point on Highway 180 in Orange Beach to an existing lift station on County Road 12. This project will serve current development that is served by the main to be replaced and will provide the ability to serve large areas of undeveloped property and low-density development adjacent to Wolf Bay. An AL.com article posted on April 18, 2019, "Rural No More: Baldwin County Now Fifth in Population" states that Baldwin County experienced a 20% population growth in the 8 years between 2010 and 2018. The article sources data from the US Census. The area served by this project is considered to have good development potential along the Baldwin Beach Express corridor and surrounding areas. The current system is not

capable of supporting any significant new development. Without this project, septic systems would be the only current option to serve these undeveloped areas.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #25: Fairhope Sewer Upgrade Phase I

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $10,300,000 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0005

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 10/31/2024

Project Description: From 2010-2018 the City of Fairhope has experienced a 41% increase in population growth affecting an already taxed infrastructure and necessitating capital improvements to ensure the safety of citizens and the environment. The current rate of growth is expected to continue, or even increase. The City leadership wants to provide a system and deliver a quality of service where citizens don't have to worry about sewage and wastewater, understanding they also have to manage the growth and the growing pains that come with it. System rehabilitation and capacity improvements are major goals, with $8 million of the proposed Five-Year Fairhope Utilities Capital Improvement Plan committed to the sewer system.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #22: Canal Road Improvements E. of SR-161

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $1,903,668 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0006

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 4/30/2022

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to construct the planned traffic safety and capacity improvements on Canal Road between SR-161 and Wilson Boulevard, thereby encouraging economic growth and development benefiting the local economy.

- Increase traffic capacity and efficiency on Canal Road between SR-161 and Wilson Boulevard by providing safer and more efficient turning movements to and from Canal Road from adjacent businesses, residences and public amenities.
- Sustain and create short-term jobs and revenue for local companies needed to construct the project.
- The infrastructure improvements shall consist of asphalt pavement widening, concrete curb and gutter, concrete sidewalk, pavement striping and markings, roadside signs, drainage improvements, earthwork, and soil stabilization including grass cover over all disturbed soil areas.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #11: Lillian Park Beach Habitat and Shoreline Protection

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $645,231 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0007

Start Date: 5/1/2020 End Date: 4/30/2022

Project Description: The Lillian Park Beach Habitat and Shoreline Protection Project's principal purpose is to improve the shoreline at Lillian Park that is currently experiencing impacts due to open, un-attenuated wave action, and to reduce overall maintenance costs due to rapid sand and debris build up on the ramp itself due to unknown patterns of transport and deposit. Project objectives also include creating a more stable and useable public beach, and to protect adjacent properties from beach erosion.

Bay shorelines are subject to a variety of impacts resulting from human development, loss of natural sand replenishment, and storm events. This section of bay shoreline has been significantly modified over time to facilitate greater public access to and enjoyment of the natural resources of the Perdido watershed and the Gulf of Mexico. Sand beach shoreline and associated littoral habitat are a preferred feature for public use, as well as the typically occurring habitat. Investments made for public use are being negatively impacted by abnormally high maintenance. Economic resilience for the area is impacted when the boat ramp is unusable due to excess sand deposits or un-at

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #12: Perch Creek Area Sanitary Sewer Trunk Line CIPP

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $3,665,048 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0008

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 3/31/2022

Project Description: The Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners of the City of Mobile (Mobile Area Water and Sewer System or MAWSS), under a subagreement from the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, will conduct engineering and design to implement sealing of sanitary sewer leaks in the wastewater system of the "Dauphin Island Parkway" Community along Perch Creek in Mobile County, Alabama. The purpose of this project is to improve water quality by preventing sanitary sewer overflows into Dog River and Mobile Bay. This project will address wastewater treatment efficiency by sealing 20,814 linear feet of original sewer trunk lines that have long outlived their useful life. An assessment of the pipes in this area determined lining the upstream pipe with "Cured In Place Pipe" and seal 55 manholes is necessary to prevent future sanitary sewer overflows.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #18: Fort Morgan Parkway Trail Extension

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $4,566,608 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0009

Start Date: 8/1/2019 End Date: 5/31/2022

Project Description: The Fort Morgan Parkway Trail Extension project will extend, and ultimately complete the Fort Morgan Parkway Trail from Fort Morgan Historical Park in the west to Gulf State Park and the Hugh Branyon Backcountry Trail in the east. Scope of work for this project includes engineering and construction of a 15-mile segment of trail and "mid-zone" trailhead facilities. The "midzone" trailhead facilities will include parking, restrooms, vending machines, interpretive signage, and kiosks. Completion of the 15-mile segment will enable Alabama's citizens and guests to travel approximately 30 miles, from Fort Morgan Historical Park (the western most terminus); eastward to the existing parkway trail within the boundaries of the City of Gulf Shores; continuing eastward into Gulf State Park and connecting with the Back Country Trail, providing trail users with a route all the way to Perdido Bay via the Alabama Coastal

Connection, a designated Alabama Scenic Byway. Work will be conducted by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Parks Division

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #16: Three Mile Creek Watershed Restoration

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $12,081,884 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20AL0011

Start Date: 9/9/2019 End Date: 7/31/2023

Project Description: The City of Mobile, Alabama will complete the engineering and construction for the restoration and protection of water quality of the area's fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by providing bank and stream stabilization along Twelve Mile Creek and the dredging and restoration of Langan Park Lake, both of which drain into Three Mile Creek and Mobile Bay. Additionally, existing sanitary sewer crossings will be protected from damage caused by widening of the stream. Dredging of Langan Park Lake will increase the capacity of the lake, support flood control and aid apple snail control efforts. Additional invasive species control measures will be undertaken. The project begins along Twelve Mile Creek at East Drive and ends at the outlet control structure of Langan Park Lake in Langan Municipal Park near Zeigler Boulevard in Mobile, Alabama. Increased velocities due to stormwater conveyance systems have contributed to degradation of the banks, destabilization of the creek, undercutting of sanitary sewer crossings and sedimentation in the creek and Langan Park Lake. The engineering and construction of this project would provide reinforcement of the creek against further erosion and remove existing sedimentation, thereby stabilizing Twelve Mile Creek and increasing the recreational, educational, and cultural activities in Langan Municipal Park.

Project Title: Alabama Gulf Seafood Marketing

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $2,937,434 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20AL0094

Start Date: 4/8/2019 End Date: 12/31/2024

Project Description**:** The Alabama Seafood Marketing Commission (ASMC) will work to continue to develop how best use the Alabama seafood brand utilizing an integrated and comprehensive marketing strategy, work with chefs to encourage the use of Alabama seafood, and work to increase tourism by promoting a coastal experience that includes Alabama seafood. Work completed by the ASMC will be focused at events held throughout the state of Alabama and especially at events held in the coastal counties of Mobile and Baldwin. Completion of this scope of work will continue to show the abundance of and confidence in the safety of Alabama seafood.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #14 Replacement of Substandard Facilities at the ADEM Coastal Office and Mobile Field Office

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $6,038,599 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20AL0095

Start Date: 4/1/2020 End Date: 3/31/2023

Project Description**:** The purpose of the project is to design and construct a new facility for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) Coastal Office, replacing the old, substandard facilities at the ADEM Coastal Office and Mobile Field Office. The building will be approximately 14,500 square feet and contain both office space to support staff, and laboratory space to support the laboratory functions that are part of the ADEM water quality monitoring and air quality monitoring efforts. Other constructed amenities will include a parking area and construction of an equipment storage building. The ADEM Mobile Field Office will support water quality, air quality and biological analysis (fish sampling and analysis) as well as permitting functions related to restoration projects. ADEM is tasked with the statutory mandate of protecting Alabama's air, land, water and coastal zone resources and ensuring that today's environmental resources support economic activity and at the same time are protected for all to enjoy.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #2: Development of a Regional Strategic Plan for the Coastal Alabama Region

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $579,375 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20AL0096

Start Date: 12/1/2019 End Date: 6/30/2023

Project Description**:** This project will showcase coastal Alabama's ecotourism opportunities in the Mobile Tensaw Delta by developing and implementing a marketing brand supported by an online resource directory for tourists. This project will focus on: expanding eco-tourism and reinforcing education opportunities, developing an inventory for "place-based" tourism in Mobile and Baldwin counties, a collaborative branding campaign to foster growth in tourism, promote natural assets through creative economy initiatives, improve regional connectivity and mobility, and foster the food scene through culinary arts initiatives. A key component to this campaign is the development of an inventory and assessment of ecotourism opportunities in both counties, including identification of potential voids in the market. The resulting marketing campaign will integrate this inventory to publicize the resulting "brand" developed by the project. The marketing approach will utilize (but not limited to) signage, online marketing, and paid advertising. These actions will not only expand eco-tourism and education opportunities but also assist in combating the negative perceptions created due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and help restore and enhance the Gulf Coast economy.

Project Title: State Expenditure Plan #5: Characterization and Delineation of Significant Sand Resource Areas Essential for Beach Restoration

Council Member: State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Award Amount: $950,170 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20AL0120

Start Date: 11/1/2019 End Date: 3/14/2024

Project Description: This project will update the Offshore Alabama Sand Information System (OASIS) platform through collaboration with interested governing and private parties; acquiring data and characterization of further offshore sand resource areas; addressing data gaps; and disseminating work through the OASIS platform, publication(s) and presentations. Designated a regional project by the Alabama Council, results of this research effort intend to inform future restoration efforts and identification and protection of significant offshore sand resource areas.

Project Title: Wastewater Improvement – Combined Project 1 (2-1 Santa Rosa, 3-4 Okaloosa, 13-1 Citrus, 20-1 Charlotte)

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $1,150,464 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0088

Start Date: 10/8/2018 End Date: 6/30/2021

Project Description: This project includes the Engineering & Design portions of four Florida SEP projects focused on wastewater management improvement to restore and protect water quality. Design work for the following projects are combined into a single program: 2-1 Soundside Drive Septic to Sewer Conversion, Phase I (Santa Rosa County); 3-4 Shoal River Headwaters Protection Program (HPP) - Phase I (Bob Sikes Airport Industrial Park Water Reclamation Facility (BSAIP WRF) Effluent Disposal Expansion) (Okaloosa County); 13-1 NW Quadrant Sewer Force Main Project (Citrus County); and 20-1 Charlotte Harbor Septic-to-Sewer Conversion Program (Charlotte County). The primary Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives for all four projects are the same: Goal 2 - Restore Water Quality and Quantity, and Objective 2 - Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources.

Project Title: 8-2: Coastal Access Program – Bayside Marina Feasibility Study

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $81,004 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0089

Start Date: 1/7/2019 End Date: 12/31/2021

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to conduct a study in regards to the feasibility, reasonableness and economics of acquiring the privately owned and operated Bayside Marina and turning it into a County owned and operated public boating facility. The purpose of this work is to provide management with a fact-based tool to guide the County's decision making on moving forward with acquisition of the property and turning it into a County owned and operated public boating facility. The goal of the project is to increase public access for outdoor recreational opportunities, provide resting/viewing areas of natural North Florida habitats and limit development having a negative effect on water quality and natural habitats.

Project Title: 3-3: Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $1,066,139 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0090

Start Date: 2/14/2020 End Date: 2/10/2025

Project Description: This portion of the Choctawhatchee Bay Estuary Program (CBEP) is to fund the hiring of two personnel for a period of 4 years in order to establish the CBEP. There are deviations in the Bucket 3 funds from the milestone-level detail envisioned in the SEP; however, it was determined (in collaboration with RESTORE personnel) that there was no overall change in scope for the project as whole. The change from the SEP was only in the focus of the two funding sources. In order to simplify administrative efforts and to avoid having fully co-funded Bucket 3/Bucket 1 milestones, it was decided to

focus the Bucket 3 efforts on staff hires and travel/supplies and to utilize Bucket 1 funding for CCMP development and implementation. The duties of the two staff (program director and outreach specialist) are:

- Plan, organize, and implement creative programs and projects that engage partners and/or the public in improving the environmental quality of the estuary.
- Develop a strategy to create and operate a program office with necessary staff.
- Deliver a plan for the function, structure, and longevity of the CBEP.
- Establish funding sources for long-term CBEP sustainability.

The expected project duration in the SEP was 7 years; as a result of the change in milestone focus for this application, the expected duration is 4 years. The overall goals and scope remain consistent with the SEP project as a whole.

Project Title: 16-1: Lake Seminole Sediment Removal

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $ 1,237,121 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0091

Start Date: 2/19/2019 End Date: 9/30/2026

Project Description: The purpose of the Lake Seminole Sediment Removal Project is to remove approximately 900,000 cubic yards (approximately 100,000 cubic yards funded by Spill Impact Component) of organic and nutrient enriched sediments from the bottom of Lake Seminole, and to monitor nutrient loads to quantify sediment removal impacts. The objectives of the project are to: (1) reduce nutrient concentrations and improve water quality in Lake Seminole; (2) reduce nutrient loads discharged from Lake Seminole to Long Bayou and Boca Ciega Bay, a segment of the Tampa Bay estuarine system; and (3) increase seagrass coverage in Long Bayou and Boca Ciega Bay by improving estuarine water clarity.

Project Title: 19-1: Sarasota County Dona Bay Hydrologic Restoration Program, Phases III-V - E&D

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $1,107,192 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0092

Start Date: 10/1/2018 End Date: 10/1/2023

Project Description: With this award, Sarasota County will contract the planning, design, engineering and permitting components of Phases III, IV and V for the Dona Bay Hydrological Restoration Program. The planning design, engineering and permitting components are the initial steps to complete the full implementation for this program which is intended to restore estuarine function to, and water quality within, the Dona Bay estuary. This will ultimately be accomplished through subsequent funding by implementing projects planned through this award to balance the salinity regime by reducing freshwater discharges to the estuary. The outcomes of projects designed during this award period will increase the freshwater storage within the basin through aquifer storage, increased surface storage and reclaimed water augmentation, Additionally, the program will design and permit weir modifications to allow for improved flow controls to the Dona Bay estuary.

Project Title: 22-1: Comprehensive Watershed Improvement Program - Monitoring and Master Plan

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $820,516 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0092

Start Date: 10/1/2018 End Date: 12/31/2024

Project Description: The Gulf Consortium, in collaboration with Collier County, is requesting funding for the monitoring program for SEP project 22-1: Comprehensive Watershed Improvement Program. This project, once designed and built, will be a series of linked surface water management projects on approximately 10,000 acres of eastern Collier County, Florida with the objectives of restoring the hydrology and ecology of both Naples Bay and Rookery Bay, as well as the hydrologic restoration of the southern Belle Meade area of the Picayune Strand State Forest (PSSF). The goal is to divert water from entering Naples Bay, which is impacted by a freshwater surplus during wet season, by creating a flow-way from the Golden Gate Canal structure through the PSSF to Rookery Bay, which has a freshwater deficit. Collier County is proposing a monitoring program for the Comprehensive Watershed Improvement Program to determine the progress and success of the hydrologic restoration and to monitor water quality of flows entering Naples and Rookery Bays. This portion of the project also includes a conceptual analysis for the North Belle Meade area of the Collier County Comprehensive Watershed Improvement Plan (CCCWIP) for potential ecological restoration and re-hydration options.

Project Title: 5-2: St. Andrew Bay Stormwater Improvement Program - St. Andrew Bay Watch - Water Quality Monitoring

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $545,139 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0098

Start Date: 5/1/2019 End Date: 5/26/2025

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to provide information to guide efforts to reduce legacy non-point source pollution at priority locations in Grand Lagoon and North Bay through the retrofitting of a variety of water treatment activities. The objectives of this project are to: (1) conduct water quality monitoring on nutrients, bacteria, and sediment percent; and (2) summarize monitoring information to show the health of the bay and provide information to decision makers. This monitoring program will be important to assess the impact of future phases of this project. Future project scope includes 1) design and permitting of centrifugal separation units or baffle boxes at priority outfalls in the St. Andrew Bay watershed, 2) a regional stormwater treatment facility to provide both sediment and nutrient sequestration, 3) implementation of paved roads and grassed swales that trap sediments and prevent the nutrients in those sediments from reaching the Bay, and 4) support small-scale restoration projects like oyster shell recycling, seagrass or marsh restoration, living shoreline stabilization, and others

Project Title: 4-1: Choctawhatchee Bay Septic to Sewer Conversion - Feasibility Study

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $525,288 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0105

Start Date: 10/1/2018 End Date: 1/31/2022

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to develop a feasibility of water quality projects in order to achieve the following goals as a result of the construction phases of this project: (1) improve water quality in Choctawhatchee Bay; and (2) restore marine habitats and living resources in the bay that may have been degraded by poor water quality.

Project Title: 9-2: Wacissa River Park Improvement Program – Planning and Acquisition

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $ 1,236,271 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0106

Start Date: 10/1/2018 End Date: 10/29/2021

Project Description: The purpose of this project is two-tiered. The first portion involves conducting a feasibility study for acquisition of private property adjacent to Wacissa River Park, at the headwaters of the Wacissa River. Subsequent to the feasibility study, and pending results, property acquisition is to take place. The project will provide a fact-based information as a tool to help guide the County's decision making on moving forward with property acquisition and turning it into a County owned and operated site, expanding public access and recreation opportunities at Wacissa River Park and adjacent lands. The goal of the project is to increase public access to outdoor recreational opportunities, relieve overcrowding at the existing Wacissa River Park, improve public safety, and reduce adverse impacts to surrounding natural resources resulting from overuse.

Project Title: 13-2 Cross Florida Barge Canal Boat Ramp - E&D

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $695,024 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0107

Start Date: 2/7/2020 End Date: 12/30/2022

Project Description: The Cross Florida Barge Canal Boat Ramp project proposes the design and construction of a new public boat ramp on the north side of the Cross Florida Barge Canal (CFBC) in northern Citrus County, Florida. The project will ultimately provide residents and visitors with a safe, high-volume, and deep-water boating access to the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, there are a limited number of public boat ramps in Citrus County. During the summer scallop season, existing boat ramp facilities on the Homosassa River and Crystal River are well over capacity, and demand is increasing. In addition, the federally protected West Indian manatee uses spring discharges at the headwaters of these rivers extensively for feeding, calving, and winter refuge. Heavy boat traffic in the Homosassa River and Crystal River is incompatible with the protection of this species. Shifting some of this boat traffic to the CFBC will meet growing public demand for Gulf access without putting additional pressure on manatee populations. This phase of the project is for engineering and design only (non-construction).

Project Title: 14-1: Artificial Reef Program - E&D and Monitoring

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $453,807 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20FL0110

Start Date: 10/1/2018 End Date: 3/1/2024

Project Description: The Gulf Consortium, through its subrecipient, Hernando County, will complete the planning, design, permitting, and monitoring of ten artificial reefs, which will expand Hernando County's existing permitted artificial reefs, creating a regional network of reefs. The overarching goal of the reefs will be to enhance and increase nature-based tourism within the county, while also creating essential habitat for fish and sessile invertebrates. Planning assessments (site evaluations) will be completed to identify suitable sites that not only meet permitting requirements, but will also provide ecological benefits through their strategic placement as recommended within the County's Marine Area Strategic Plan. Site characteristics (overall size, depth, sediment type, distance offshore, buffer distance to seagrass and/or live bottom) will be used to design reefs tailored to specific objectives for both recreation and fisheries. Recreational objectives will include enhancement of scuba diving, creation of free diving and snorkeling reefs, and enhancement of recreational fishing. Fisheries objectives will focus on either increasing overall diversity or abundance of target species such as gag grouper

Project Title: 6-2: St. Joseph Peninsula Coastal Erosion Control Project – E&D

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $194,413 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20FL0010

Start Date: 10/1/2019 End Date: 12/15/2021

Project Description: The Gulf Consortium, through its subrecipient, Gulf County, will improve the shoreline conditions along the southern portion of St. Joseph Peninsula, a severely erosive shoreline. This application is requesting funds for design and permitting for this shoreline improvement project. During construction, the project will involve placing a series of segmented, submerged, and emergent breakwater structures that will be placed offshore in support of a beach-nourishment effort located north of Stump Hole. This project will provide ecological restoration with a primary focus on coastal erosion control. The breakwaters and groins will reduce the erosion rate and help to anchor beach fill, reducing the amount of fill needed over time and reduce road wash-outs and storm damage to the only hurricane evacuation route on the Peninsula. A wider beach will provide better habitat for nesting sea turtles and shorebirds, and the offshore structures habitat for fish, shellfish, and coastal birds.

Project Title: 12-2: Suwannee Sound/Cedar Key Oyster Restoration

Council Member: Gulf Consortium

Award Amount: $2,080,054 Federal Award ID Number: GNSSP20FL0013

Start Date: 9/30/2020 End Date: 3/31/2028

Project Description: This funding request is for the Gulf Consortium to work with subrecipient Levy County to implement the Suwannee Sound / Cedar Key Oyster Restoration Project: project 12-2 in the Florida SEP. The Cedar Key Oystermen's Association will act as the subrecipient to restore oyster reef habitat and oyster resources in Suwannee Sound, Cedar Key, and Waccasassa Bay using a combination of proven restoration techniques. The project involves the planning, permitting, and placement of reef building substrate and live oyster seed on depleted oyster reefs, which will provide suitable habitat for oyster recruitment, accelerate oyster resource recovery, support a sustainable oyster fishery; and contribute to the economic revitalization of coastal fishing communities. Additionally, this project supports the long-

term monitoring of established oyster reefs. The Gulf Consortium will establish internal controls procedures specifically for this project.

Project Title: Lake Lery Marsh Creation Project

Council Member: State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Award Amount: $2,997,844 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20LA0071

Start Date: 8/9/2019 End Date: 4/30/2024

Project Description: The Lake Lery Marsh Creation Project will use dredged material to restore marsh as part of an ongoing phased approach to restore and protect the Lake Lery area. This project will build upon previously expended Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds by constructing the designed 39-acre marsh creation and marsh nourishment project. The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority will enter into a subrecipient agreement with the St. Bernard Parish Government to implement the restoration.

Project Title: Freshwater Bayou Canal Shoreline Protection

Council Member: State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Award Amount: $4,832,624 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20LA0072

Start Date: 5/1/2020 End Date: 8/30/2022

Project Description: As part of the Parish Matching Program, the Freshwater Bayou Canal Shoreline Protection Project (Freshwater Bayou) proposed by Vermilion Parish Police Jury (VPPJ) is one of six projects selected by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for implementation to contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast. The main purpose of the project is to provide shoreline protection by constructing approximately 10,600-linear feet of foreshore rock dike along the eastern bank of Freshwater Bayou Canal to prevent further deterioration of shoreline areas and existing adjacent marsh. This project consists of design, permitting, bidding, and construction of a foreshore rock dike to stabilize and protect the FWB.

Project Title: Westward Expansion of the CWPPRA Rockefeller Refuge Shoreline Stabilization Project

Council Member: State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Award Amount: $6,848,575 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20LA0076

Start Date: 8/9/2019 End Date: 4/20/2022

Project Description: As part of the Parish Matching Program, the Rockefeller Gulf Shoreline Stabilization Project (Rockefeller) proposed by Cameron Parish Police Jury (CPPJ) is one of six projects selected by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for implementation to contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast. This project will mitigate erosion at the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge which averages approximately 70 feet/year with a subsequent direct loss of emergent saline marsh. As a continuation of the authorized Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) ME-18 project, which provides 14,854 linear feet (2.81 miles) of reef breakwater from

Joseph Harbor westward, Rockefeller will increase the reef breakwater construction by an additional 6,000 linear feet (1.14 miles).

Project Title: Grand Bayou Freshwater Reintroduction (Engineering and Design)

Council Member: State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Award Amount: $599,386 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20LA0081

Start Date: 8/1/2019 End Date: 6/30/2022

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to complete the hydrologic modeling, engineering, design, and permitting activities to advance Grand Bayou toward implementation. As part of the Parish Matching Program, the Grand Bayou Freshwater Reintroduction Project (Grand Bayou) proposed by Lafourche Parish is one of six projects selected by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for implementation.

Once constructed, the overall objective for Grand Bayou is to increase the flow of fresh water down Grand Bayou Canal from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) which would lower salinities and add nutrients to the canal wetlands south of the GIWW along the east and west banks of the Grand Bayou Canal. Completion of the Grand Bayou project will contribute to the overall ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf by increasing freshwater flow to help sustain marsh in an area that is experiencing one of the highest rates of land loss in Louisiana.

Project Title: Manchac Landbridge (Rock Breakwater) Shoreline Protection Project

Council Member: State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Award Amount: $3,179,266 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20LA0083

Start Date: 5/8/2019 End Date: 6/30/2022

Project Description: As part of the Parish Matching Program, the Manchac Landbridge (Rock Breakwater) Shoreline Protection Project (Manchac) proposed by Tangipahoa Parish is one of six projects selected by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) for implementation to contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast. This project consists of updating engineering and design for the Manchac Landbridge Shoreline Protection project and construction of approximately 7,553 linear feet of rock breakwater along the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline.

Project Title: Round Island Living Shoreline Demonstration and Protection Project (Planning)

Council Member: State of Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Award Amount: $2,160,747 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20MS0087

Start Date: 11/1/2019 End Date: 10/31/2022

Project Description: The purpose of the Round Island Living Shoreline Demonstration and Protection Project (Planning) (the Project) is to support the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region through the planning, engineering and design and permitting of living shoreline structures at

the Round Island Beneficial Use (BU) site to protect the newly created sand berm and marsh from erosion. Activities may also include planning and permitting for expansion of the footprint of the current Round Island BU site. Round Island is a 220-acre coastal marsh island that replaces a years' worth of coastal marsh and habitat loss in Mississippi, and additionally was created to provide significant ecological benefits for coastal birds as well as other coastal species that use a marsh habitat. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is interested in evaluating living shoreline techniques which utilize material to stabilize shorelines as well as provide a variety of ecosystem service benefits to protect the investment in Round Island. This Project will be implemented by MDEQ.

Project Title: Gulf of Mexico Citizen Led Initiative

Council Member: State of Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Award Amount: $1,899,702 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20MS0084

Start Date: 11/8/2019 End Date: 1/30/2024

Project Description: The purpose of the Gulf of Mexico Citizen Led Initiative (Project) is to support the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region. Through data collection efforts, the Project will yield information that resource management agencies can use to inform decisions regarding water quality, economically viable fish stocks, and ultimately track changes in the overall health of the coastal ecosystem. The Project will develop a Mobile Application for Marine Assessment (MAMA) that will be used to recruit citizens to gather coastal ecosystem health assessment data. MAMA will allow Gulf Coast citizens and visitors to a) upload photos, measurements, GPS locations, and other data regarding specimens they have captured, observed, and identified, b) submit photos of endangered/unusual specimens of fish and other marine life for identification, and c) document invasive species in Mississippi Gulf Coast waters. The Project will be administered by MDEQ with the University of Mississippi (UM) as the sub-recipient for implementation. UM will implement the Project in collaboration with MDMR and with contractual support.

Project Title: Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline

Council Member: State of Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Award Amount: $5,992,526 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20MS0103

Start Date: 3/1/2020 End Date: 2/28/2024

Project Description: The purpose of the Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline (HCMLS) Project is to support the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region by adding additional components to the current Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline project. In 2013, the State of Mississippi began implementation of the HCMLS project through early restoration funding under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process, which has constructed almost 6 miles of living shorelines and 46 acres of oyster reefs and will construct an additional 46 acres of marsh. This Project will allow the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to increase the acreage of marsh protected in Hancock County and enhance community resilience by mitigating further coastal erosion of one of the largest contiguous marsh complexes in coastal Mississippi, while providing storm surge and

wind/wave erosion protection for coastal ecosystems and coastal communities. The project will be implemented by MDEQ and include engineering and design, permitting and construction of approximately 1.5 miles of additional living shoreline extending the existing HCMLS to the area near Bayou Caddy.

Project Title: Mississippi Sound Oyster Shell Recycling Program

Council Member: State of Mississippi, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Award Amount: $649,722 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20MS0123

Start Date: 3/1/2020 End Date: 2/28/2023

Project Description: The purpose of the Mississippi Sound Oyster Shell Recycling Program (Program) is to support the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region through the collection of discarded oyster shells for cultch placement. This Program is anticipated to enable the collection of discarded oyster shells from restaurants and other venues to increase the available shell supply for reef maintenance and restoration efforts implemented outside of the scope of this project. The Program will include development of an economic sustainability plan and implementation of the pilot oyster shell recycling program. Activities performed under this program (planning activities and pilot program implementation) will provide direction for the state's future oyster shell recycling efforts. This Program will be administered by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) with The Nature Conservancy as a sub-recipient.

Project Title: FY20 RESTORE Nature Based Tourism

Council Member: State of Texas, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Award Amount: $7,406,388 Federal Award ID Number: GNTSP20TX0100

Start Date: 2/1/2020 End Date: 2/28/2024

Project Description: The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) proposes to work in collaboration with the Texas Governor's Office to assist local Texas coastal communities that were severely impacted by Hurricane Harvey in 2017. As nature-based tourism is one of the largest economic drivers for Texas coastal communities, the rebuilding of tourism is imperative to improving the economy while benefiting the environment and ecological systems.