

2024 Annual Report



Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Letter from the Executive Director

It is my pleasure to submit the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) Annual Report to Congress of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council or Council). The RESTORE 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 RESTORE Council's vision for ecosystem restoration in the Gulf Coast is "A Healthy and Productive Gulf Ecosystem Achieved Through Collaboration on Strategic Restoration Projects and Programs." The Council approves restoration projects and programs for funding under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the RESTORE Act as set forth in Funded Priorities Lists (FPLs), as well as projects and programs under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act as set forth in State Expenditure Plans. The Council develops FPLs through collaboration among its members and with feedback from stakeholders across the Gulf; State Expenditure Plans are developed by individual Council state members.

The Council continues to work collaboratively to plan and fund restoration across the Gulf coast. In early FY 2024, the Council approved additional funding for the Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support FPL which provided an additional \$350,000 per year per member for the next 5 years to support collaboration, coordination, public engagement and use of best available science in developing restoration projects. The Council also initiated its fourth FPL process, which is expected to be finalized in 2026.

Throughout FY 2024, the Council awarded \$260,366,661 through the completion of 131 grant actions to carry out projects and programs under the RESTORE Act. These awards now bring the total amount awarded by the Council to \$1.15B, crossing a major threshold for Council restoration activities across the Gulf Coast. These awarded funds include \$470.42M under the Council-Selected Restoration Component and \$679.17 M under the Spill Impact Component.

The Council continued to demonstrate its commitment to sound management, receiving a clean financial audit for the tenth year in a row. Further, Council staff worked throughout FY 2024 to increase efficiencies in its grants management processes, evaluating strategies to reduce award processing times while maintaining high performance and risk-reduction standards.

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 S. Walker

Executive Director

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The RESTORE Council

The Council is composed 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 (Administrator). The Administrator is the current Council Chairperson. The agencies shown below represent the Council members for the 2024 reporting year. Additional background on RESTORE Act can be found on our website in the 2022 Comprehensive Plan Update (<https://www.restorethegulf.gov/comprehensive-plan>). The Council spends no taxpayer funds and receives no annual appropriations from Congress. All funding comes from the Trust Fund.



RESTORE Council Background

Created by the [Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act \(RESTORE Act\)](#) of 2012, the RESTORE Council was established to provide for a regional approach to restoring the long-term health of the valuable natural ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. An innovation in state-federal partnership, the RESTORE Council manages over \$3.2 billion in ecosystem restoration funding through collaboration among its membership of the five Gulf states and six federal agencies. To date, the Council has approved over \$1.15 billion in Deepwater Horizon disaster recovery funding for wetland restoration, water quality improvement, and a range of other ecosystem and economic projects from Texas to Florida.

The RESTORE Act dedicates 80 percent of civil and administrative penalties paid under the Clean Water Act, after the date of enactment, by responsible parties in connection with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund) for ecosystem restoration, economic recovery, and tourism promotion in the Gulf Coast region.

The RESTORE Council administers the expenditure of 60% of these funds (Figure 1). According to the terms of the settlement with BP Exploration & Production Inc. ("BP"), these funds are deposited into the Trust Fund over a 15-year period ending in 2031.

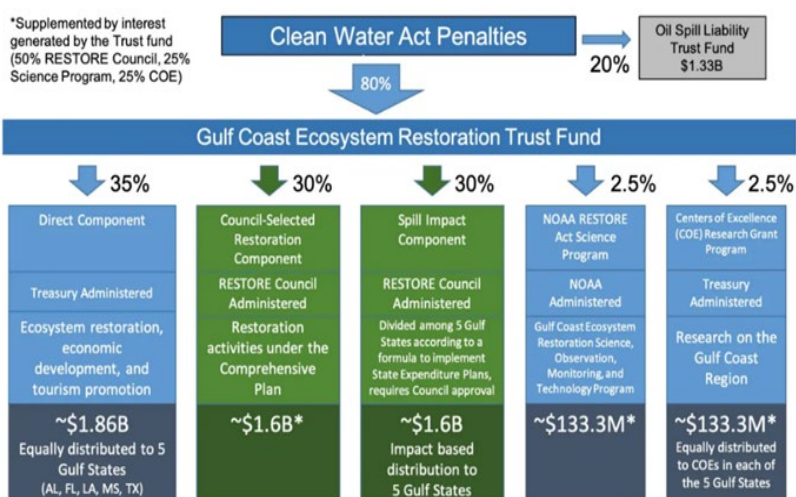


Figure 1. Allocation of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund based on settlements with BP, Transocean and Anadarko. The Council administers two of the five components, the Council-Selected Restoration Component and the Spill Impact Component shown in green.

The Council-Selected Restoration Component

Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the RESTORE Act, 30% of available funding is administered for Gulfwide ecosystem restoration and protection through Funded Priorities Lists (FPLs) developed in collaboration among the members of the Council. Council-Selected Restoration Component funding decisions are guided by criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act, the Council's Comprehensive Plan and other policies, including the Council's Planning Framework. For a more detailed look at previous FPLs and the project included on those FPLs, please visit the [RESTORE Council website](#).

The Spill Impact Component

The remaining 30% is allocated to the states under [the Spill Impact Component](#) of the Act, according to a formula and regulation approved by the Council in December 2015. Spill Impact Component funds are spent according to individual [State Expenditure Plans](#) (SEPs) that are developed by each state entity identified in the RESTORE Act. The SEPs must adhere to the criteria set forth in the Act and are subject to approval by the Council chair in accordance with those criteria. By US District Court Order in June 2024, the remaining funds from Halliburton Energy Services, Inc (HESI)/Transocean punitive damages settlement in the amount of \$27.8 M were also made available to the five Gulf states for expenditure under the Act's criteria.

Council Coordination

The Council takes an integrated and coordinated approach to Gulf Coast restoration. This approach strives to both restore the Gulf Coast region's environment and, at the same time, revitalize the region's economy. 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 important to successfully restore and sustain the health of the Gulf Coast region. This coordination is particularly important because diverse funding sources and decision-making bodies are investing in Gulf Coast restoration.

The Council defined goals and objectives in the [Comprehensive Plan](#) to guide its ecosystem restoration funding decisions. The Council selects and funds projects and programs that restore 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.

Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the Act, only Council members are eligible to submit proposals for funding. Council approval of funding requires the affirmative vote of at least three state members and the Chair. The other five federal members do not formally vote on Council funding. The Council coordinates amongst the eleven members to determine priority projects and programs for funding. The Council then develops [Funded Priorities Lists](#) (FPLs) through collaboration among its members and with feedback from stakeholders across the Gulf.

Funds for approved FPL projects are disbursed to Council members via grants to state members and interagency agreements (IAAs) with federal members. As part of the grant and IAA process, all activities for which funding is sought are reviewed to ensure consistency with the approved FPL and compliance with the RESTORE Act and all other applicable requirements, including compliance with all applicable federal environmental laws and the application of best available science criteria (BAS) as required by the Act and further defined by the Council.

RESTORE Council's vision statement is "A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs."

Significant FY 2024 Council Accomplishments

- ➔ The Council approved an [amendment to the Commitment and Planning Support FPL \(CPS FPL\)](#) adding \$350,000 per year to each member for five years to support restoration planning and coordination.
- ➔ The Council approved amendments to prior FPL's to provide implementation funds for projects including:
 - [\\$7,500,000](#) in implementation funds for Alabama's Norton Creek Sanitary Sewer Inflow and Infiltration Rehabilitation project, a component of the FPL 3b [Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program](#).
 - [\\$1,000,000](#) in implementation funds for Florida's Highway 297a Retrofit Pond project, a component of the [FPL 3b Florida Water Quality Improvement Program](#).
 - \$2,123,000 in implementation funding for Alabama's City of Loxley Corn Creek Tributary Restoration project, a component of the FPL 3b [Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program](#).
 - \$6,400,000 in implementation funding for Florida's Carpenter Creek Bayou Texar Watershed Outfalls project, a component of the FPL 3b [Florida Water Quality Improvement Program](#).
 - [Expansion of the geographic boundary](#) for DOI's FPL 3b Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program to allow for potential work with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas on land owned by the National Park Service within the Big Thicket National Preserve, Texas.
 - [Reallocation of \\$37,660](#) in previously approved FP_1 funding from Texas' Plug Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells project in Texas to the Jean Lafitte Canal Backfilling project in Louisiana.
- ➔ Three State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) were amended to increase funding for existing and/or to add new projects or programs.
 - [Texas SEP Amendment #2](#)
 - [Florida SEP Amendment #6](#)
 - [Mississippi SEP Amendment 2023](#)



Figure 2: Across the Alabama Coast water quality impacts recreation and the seafood industry.
Photo Credit: ADCNR, Billy Pope

Council Goals

The Council supports 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’s funding strategy includes both the desired environmental outcomes, and the processes used to accomplish them. In these processes the Council will build upon the tremendous restoration experience, scientific expertise, and other capabilities of its diverse membership of state and federal agencies. The Council makes funding decisions that leverage limited restoration resources for maximum effectiveness, while also supporting planning, science, and other activities that maximize the potential for success

The Council has adopted the following five goals which 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. These goals were collaboratively developed through and approved through coordination with all eleven members of the RESTORE Council and can be found in the Council approved [Comprehensive Plan](#).

| | |
|--------|---|
| Goal 1 | Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats. |
| Goal 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. |
| Goal 3 | Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources. |
| Goal 4 | Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with the capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes. |
| Goal 5 | Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy. |

Figure 3. RESTORE Council Goals as defined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Council Progress by Goals, 2016-2024

Over the nine-year period of FY 2016 to FY 2024, a total of \$470.42M has been awarded through the Council-Selected Restoration Component through grants, Interagency Agreements (IAA) and amendments, including Commitment Planning Support (CPS) funds through the second FPL. In that same period, a total of \$679.17M was awarded through the Spill Impact Component through grants and amendments. The remaining \$25.1M represents funding for the Council's Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support and the Planning State Expenditure Plans.

Awarded FPL and SEP Investments by Council Goal

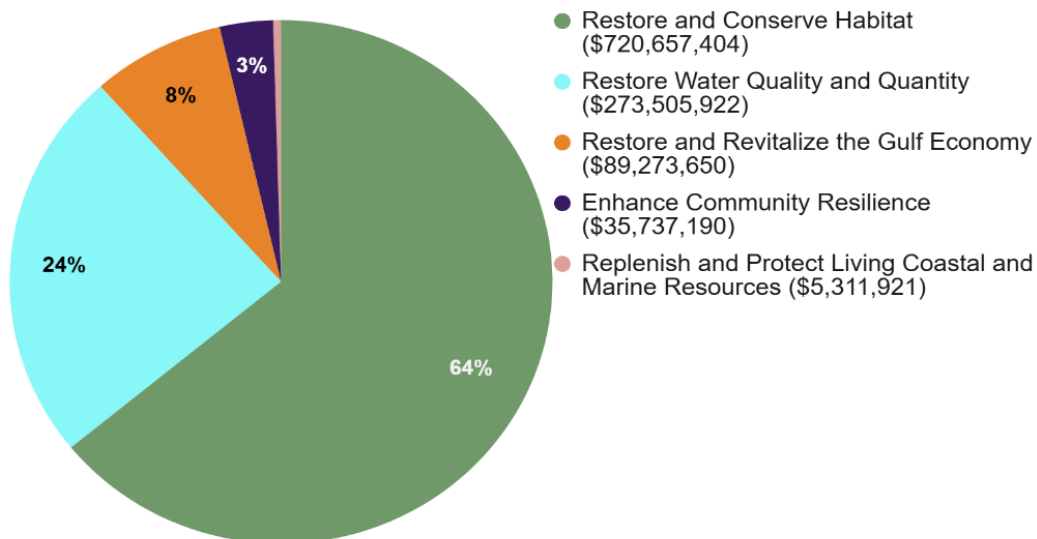


Figure 4. Funding distribution for investments to date, categorized by Council primary goal. Planning support funds, including Commitment Planning Support (FPL2) and planning SEP awards, are excluded.

Council Progress by Objectives, 2016-2024

Council objectives build on the goals by adding additional objectives that support communities and processes for restoration decision making. Most of the Council investment to date include funding for the following objectives:

- Restore, Enhance and Protect Habitats (45.3%);
- Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources (21.1%); and
- Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines (11.4%)

More information about the Council’s Goals and Objectives can be found in the [2022 Comprehensive Plan](#).

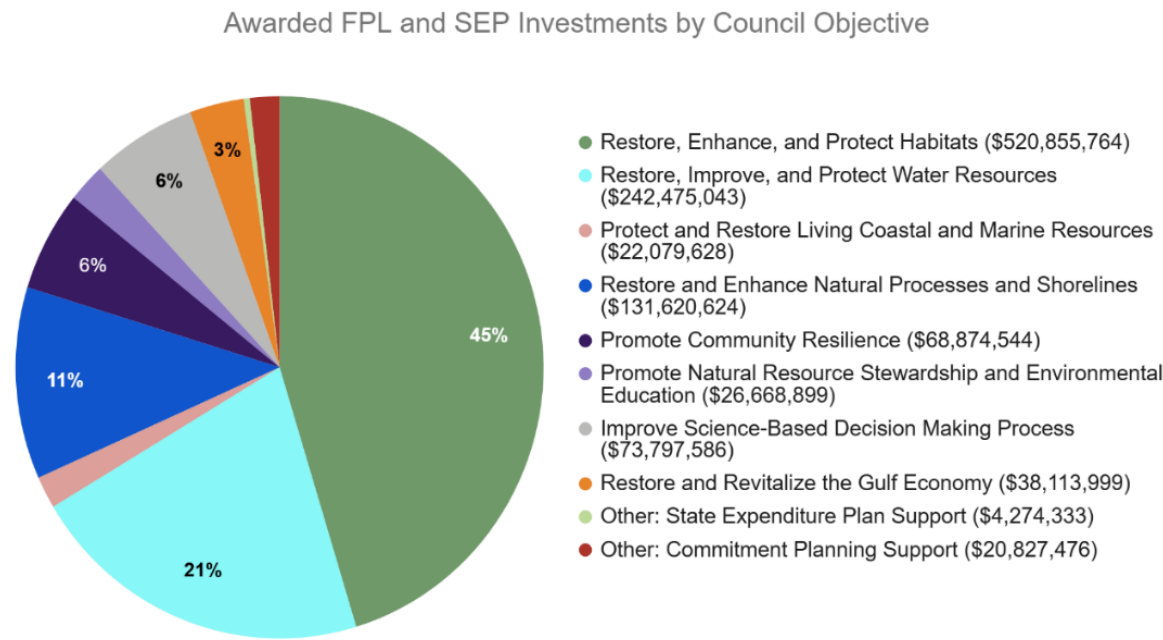


Figure 5. Funding proportions for state and federal members in support of the Council’s Comprehensive plan. Included FPL, SEP, and Planning support grants.








Council Progress by Approach, 2016-2024

The Council has adopted a Planning Framework to further clarify and guide restoration priorities under Council Goals and Objectives. The purpose of the Planning Framework is to signal the Council's FPL restoration priorities and to support the Council's Comprehensive Plan commitments to:

- Develop a regional ecosystem-based approach to restoration;
- Leverage resources and partnerships through increased collaboration;
- Increase public engagement, inclusion, and transparency regarding the funding decisions in Bucket 2;
- Advance science-based decision-making; and
- Deliver results and measuring impacts









The table below summarizes Council investments by the primary restoration approach undertaken. More information about the Planning Framework and restoration approaches can be found on the [Council's website](#). The Council's Planning Framework identifies several approaches or techniques which are shown in Table 1 for the Council-Selected Restoration Component FPLs and the Spill Impact Component SEPs (Table 2).

Table 1. 2015 Initial FPL, 2017 CPS FPL, 2020/2021 FPL 3 funds by primary approach, awarded as of September 18, 2024.

| Council Selected Restoration Component - Primary Approach | Funding Amount (percentage) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Restore Hydrology and Natural Processes  | \$179.2M (38%) |
| Protect and Conserve Coastal, Estuarine, and Riparian habitats  | \$113.7M (24%) |
| Reduce Excess Nutrients and Other Pollutants to Watersheds  | \$66.3M (14%) |
| Improve Science-based Decision-making Processes  | \$35.8M (8%) |
| Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education  | \$28.2M (6%) |
| Create, Restore and Enhance Coastal Wetlands, Islands, Shorelines, and Headlands  | \$21.7M (5%) |
| Restore Oyster Habitat  | \$4.7M (1%) |
| Other: Commitment Planning Support | \$20.8M (4%) |

Note: The "Improve science-based decision-making process" approach is sometimes used to support awards with other primary objectives.

Table 2. State Expenditure Plan award funding by primary approach, awarded as of September 18, 2024.

| Spill Impact Component - Primary Approach | Funding Amount (percentage) |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Restore Hydrology and Natural processes  | \$211.9M (31%) |
| Reduce Excess Nutrients and Other Pollutants to Watersheds  | \$199.8M (29%) |
| Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy  | \$80.4M (12%) |
| Create, Restore and Enhance Coastal Wetlands, Islands, Shorelines, and Headlands  | \$76.6M (11%) |
| Improve Science-based Decision-making Processes  | \$70.4M (10%) |
| Restore Oyster Habitat  | \$17.5M (3%) |
| Protect and Conserve Coastal, Estuarine, and Riparian habitats  | \$11.8M (2%) |
| Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education  | \$6.4M (1%) |
| Other: State Expenditure Plan Support | \$4.2M (1%) |

Note: The “Improve science-based decision-making process” approach is sometimes used to support awards with other primary objectives. For example, in the 2015 Initial FPL, some monitoring activities were funded to primarily benefit the “Restore, enhance, and protect habitats” objective.

Council FY 2024 Subaward Highlights

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. For FY 2024, the following subawards were made that met the above criteria:

- ➔ The Florida Department of Environmental Protection provided a subaward in the amount of \$2,200,000 to the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program for planning, design and permitting of a stream restoration project.
- ➔ Under the Texas Land Acquisition Program for Coastal Conservation Award, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality provided the following
 - One subaward in the amount of \$7,600,000 to The Nature Conservancy to purchase conservation easements on properties within the Goliad Refugio Prairie to ensure the preservation of land in perpetuity.
 - One subaward in the amount of \$3,000,000 to Armand Bayou Nature Center to acquire and preserve approximately 1,160 acres of habitat along Armand Bayou just north of the current 2,800-acre preserve.



Council Investment Over Time

The number of awards and funding levels provides only a partial view of the grant-related workload. With the costs of projects increasing because of a variety of factors, many members have requested monetary amendments to cover increased activity-level costs. In FY 2024 a total of 131 grant actions were completed with 10 new awards, 55 administrative adjustments and 66 amendments (including non-monetary, monetary and closeouts of awards). Funding trends over the past nine fiscal years have cumulatively resulted in more than \$1.15 billion investment in RESTORE Council restoration across the Gulf Coast (Figure 6).

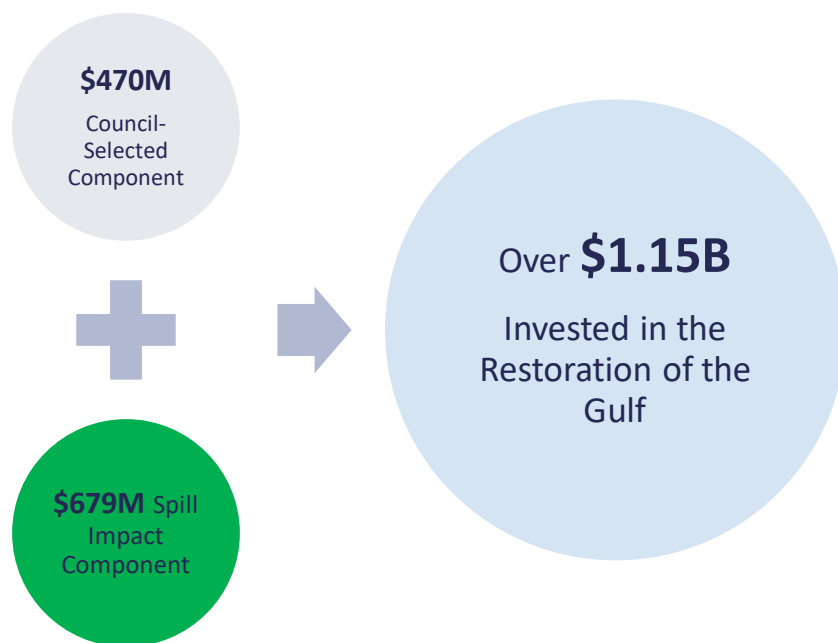


Figure 6: In FY 2024, the RESTORE Council reached the milestone of over \$1.15B invested in the restoration of the Gulf, with \$470M funding Council-Selected Component projects and programs, and \$679M funding the Spill Impact Component projects.

Appendix A: Projects and Programs Funded in FY 24

New Council-Selected Restoration Component (FPL) Activities Funded During FY 2024

| Organization | Grant Program | Project Title | Application Type | Awarded Amount | Award Issue Date | Award End Date |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--|----------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Louisiana - CPRA | FPL 3 | River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp (construction) | New | \$130,000,000 | 3/13/2024 | 3/8/2028 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | FPL 3 | Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program | New | \$16,130,749 | 3/13/2024 | 12/31/2028 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | FPL 3 | Perdido River Land Conservation and Habitat Enhancements | Post Award Amendment | \$16,733,827 | 5/23/2024 | 11/30/2026 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | FPL 3 | Coastal Alabama Regional Water Quality Program | Post Award Amendment | \$10,443,101 | 11/12/2024 | 12/31/2028 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | FPL 1 | The Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program | Post Award Amendment | \$212,737 | 8/16/2024 | 6/30/2027 |
| DOI - National Forest Service | FPL 3 | Apalachicola Regional Restoration Initiative: Strategies 2&3 | New | \$5,000,000 | 2/9/2024 | 12/31/2028 |
| NOAA | FPL 1 | Money Bayou Wetlands Restoration (Planning and Implementation) | Post Award Amendment | \$852,653 | 6/11/2024 | 12/31/2026 |
| NOAA | FPL 1 | Bahia Grande Wetland System Restoration | Post Award Amendment | \$968,863 | 8/20/2024 | 12/31/2029 |



Photo credit: Louisiana CPRA and RESTORE Council Staff

New Spill Impact Component Activities (SEP) Funded During FY 2024

| Organization | Project Title | Application Type | Awarded Amount | Award Issue Date | Award End Date |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #15: Mobile Area Storm Water Mapping & Resiliency Planning | Post Award Amendment | \$300,000 | 5/20/2024 | 1/31/2028 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #9: Extension of Effluent Force Main from Bayou La Batre WWTF | Post Award Amendment | \$1,981,000 | 5/20/2024 | 7/31/2026 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #3: Expansion of the Orange Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Program | Post Award Amendment | \$470,000 | 6/11/2024 | 7/31/2025 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #16: Three Mile Creek Watershed Restoration | Post Award Amendment | \$8,795,178 | 6/11/2024 | 7/31/2026 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #12: Perch Creek Area Sanitary Sewer Trunk Line CIPP | Post Award Amendment | \$5,005,346 | 7/25/2024 | 9/30/2026 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #7: Alabama Gulf Seafood Marketing | Post Award Amendment | \$24,987 | 8/5/2024 | 12/31/2024 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #11: Lillian Park Beach Habitat and Shoreline Protection | Post Award Amendment | \$364,997 | 8/5/2024 | 4/30/2026 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #8: Aloe Bay/Mississippi Sound Water Quality Enhancement Project | Post Award Amendment | \$6,969,000 | 8/5/2024 | 12/31/2027 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #2: Development of a Regional Strategic Plan for the Coastal Alabama Region | Post Award Amendment | \$14,986 | 8/8/2024 | 12/31/2024 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #5: Characterization and Delineation of Significant Sand Resource Areas Essential for Beach Restoration | Post Award Amendment | \$258,904 | 8/8/2024 | 1/31/2027 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #17: Fairhope Area Community-Based Comprehensive Land Use | Post Award Amendment | \$28,332 | 11/12/2024 | 3/31/2025 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #10: Bayou La Batre Collection System/Lift Station Upgrades | Post Award Amendment | \$1,000,000 | 11/12/2024 | 12/15/2027 |
| Alabama - ADCNR | State Expenditure Plan #6: City of Chickasaw Sewer Rehabilitation Project | Post Award Amendment | \$1,548,476 | 11/12/2024 | 12/15/2027 |
| Louisiana - CPRA | Adaptive Management | Post Award Amendment | \$25,510,310 | 6/24/2024 | 6/30/2028 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | D'Iberville Working Waterfront and Commercial Seafood Harbor | New | \$6,462,523 | 3/13/2024 | 3/14/2029 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | Compatibility, Coordination and Restoration Planning | Post Award Amendment | \$498,831 | 6/27/2024 | 6/30/2025 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | Workforce Training - Meeting the Needs of the Supply Chain | New | \$5,294,686 | 7/2/2024 | 12/31/2028 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | Health Professions (HEALP) for Our Community: Health Professions Center of Excellence | New | \$6,284,685 | 7/8/2024 | 12/31/2028 |
| Mississippi - MDEQ | Coastal Habitat Management Program | New | \$3,264,176 | 8/22/2024 | 7/31/2029 |
| Gulf Consortium | 5-1: North Bay Water Quality Improvement Program (Septic-to-Sewer) | New | \$6,563,518 | 1/16/2024 | 5/1/2027 |
| Gulf Consortium | 19-1: Sarasota County Dona Bay Hydrologic Restoration Program, Phases III-V | Post Award Amendment | \$1,866,069 | 5/20/2024 | 3/1/2030 |
| Gulf Consortium | 17-2: Delaney Creek - Palm River Septic to Sewer Conversion | New | \$7,485,976 | 5/20/2024 | 8/31/2028 |
| Gulf Consortium | 14-5: Coastal Stormwater Improvement – Calienta Street | New | \$3,052,661 | 6/24/2024 | 12/31/2026 |
| Gulf Consortium | 2-1: Santa Rosa Sound Water Quality Improvement Program - Monitoring and Construction | Post Award Amendment | \$8,805,641 | 11/12/2024 | 12/31/2024 |

Completed/Closed Grants During FY 2024

| Organization | Grant Program | Project Title | Total Award Amount (after de-obligations) | Project Start Date | Project End Date | Date Award Closed Out |
|-----------------|---------------|--|---|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| DOI-USGS | FPL-1 IAA | Council Monitoring & Assessment Program Development (USGS) | \$1,174,999.98 | 3/8/2017 | 12/31/2020 | 2/6/2024 |
| EPA | FPL-1 IAA | Mobile Bay National Estuary Program-Planning | \$350,268.41 | 6/1/2017 | 3/30/2020 | 2/6/2024 |
| NOAA | FPL-1 IAA | Marsh Restoration in Fish River, Weeks Bay, Oyster Bay & Meadows Tract (Planning) - Fish River and Weeks Bay Marsh | \$318,756.42 | 8/17/2018 | 11/30/2020 | 2/6/2024 |
| NOAA | FPL-1 IAA | Marsh Restoration in Fish River, Weeks Bay, Oyster Bay & Meadows Tract (Planning) - Meadows Tract | \$295,279.16 | 8/17/2018 | 11/30/2020 | 2/6/2024 |
| NOAA | FPL-1 IAA | NOAA Marsh Restoration in Fish River, Weeks Bay, Oyster Bay & Meadows Tract (Planning) - Oyster Bay | \$264,370.41 | 8/17/2018 | 2/28/2021 | 2/6/2024 |
| Gulf Consortium | SEP | Wastewater Improvement – Combined Project 1 (2-1 Santa Rosa, 3-4 Okaloosa, 13-1 Citrus, 20-1 Charlotte) | \$709,196.56 | 10/8/2018 | 3/31/2022 | 8/8/2024 |
| Gulf Consortium | SEP | 8-2: Coastal Access Program – Bayside Marina Feasibility Study | \$52,784.79 | 1/7/2019 | 12/31/2021 | 8/8/2024 |
| Gulf Consortium | SEP | 9-2: Wacissa River Park Improvement Program – Planning and Acquisition | \$1,236,271.00 | 10/1/2018 | 10/29/2021 | 8/8/2024 |
| ADCNR | SEP | SEP #23: Orange Beach North Sewer Force Main Upgrade | \$5,998,795.33 | 10/1/2019 | 9/30/2023 | 8/8/2024 |
| ADCNR | SEP | SEP #21: Alabama Point Seawall Repair | \$2,562,640.00 | 11/1/2019 | 1/31/2024 | 8/8/2024 |
| ADCNR | SEP | SEP #13: Longevity, Stability & Water Quality Improvements, Bon Secour DMDA | \$585,159.73 | 10/1/2019 | 2/7/2023 | 8/12/2024 |
| DOI-USFWS | FPL-1 IAA | Strategic Conservation Assessment of Gulf Coast Landscapes | \$1,841,808.51 | 6/20/2017 | 7/31/2022 | 9/24/2024 |
| USDA NRCS | FPL-1 IAA | Bayou DuLarge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration (Planning) | \$4,260,677.89 | 2/23/2017 | 12/31/2021 | 9/24/2024 |
| NOAA | FPL-1 IAA | Gulf Coast Habitat Restoration via Conservation Corps Partnership | \$8,677,184.32 | 6/15/2017 | 1/31/2022 | 9/24/2024 |
| NOAA | FPL-1 IAA | Council Monitoring & Assessment Program Development | \$1,630,228.84 | 6/15/2017 | 12/31/2021 | 9/24/2024 |

Appendix B: Centers of Excellence Annual Reports

Centers of Excellence 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 for science, technology, and monitoring. In accordance with the RESTORE Act, each State provides an annual report on its respective Center of Excellence to the RESTORE Council containing grant information, including the amount, discipline(s), and recipients of each grant, and in the case of any grant awarded to a consortium, the membership of the consortium.

As required by the RESTORE Act, each Center of Excellence provides an annual report to the RESTORE Council with all grant information, including the amount, discipline(s), grant recipients, and in cases where grants are awarded to a consortium, the membership of the consortium. A high-level summary from each of the annual reports for each program can be found below, and the full reports can be found on the RESTORE Council website.

Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL)

In 2015, the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) selected the Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (MESC) at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) to be the home of Alabama's Center of Excellence (ALCOE). The Alabama MESC is comprised of 22 public and private colleges and universities located throughout Alabama, from the mountains to the coast: Alabama A&M University, Alabama State University, Athens State University, Auburn University, Auburn University (College of Aquaculture), Auburn University at Montgomery, Huntingdon College, Jacksonville State University, Samford University, Spring Hill College, Stillman College, Talladega College, Troy University, Tuskegee University, The University of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Alabama at Huntsville, University of Mobile, University of Montevallo, University of North Alabama, University of South Alabama, and University of West Alabama. The MESC was founded to focus resources and reduce redundancy in marine sciences in higher education institutions, serving as a collaborative vehicle for coastal studies. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab was founded in 1972, a former Air Force Base. Please see <https://www.disl.edu/about/our-history> for a history of DISL's facilities, science, and personnel. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab's mission is to become a center for transformative U.S. oceanic and coastal research and education. The AL Center of Excellence (ALCOE) aims to provide Alabama's citizens and officials with access to innovative research <https://www.disl.edu/research/data-management-center> findings and information related to Mobile Bay and Alabama coastal waters. <https://arcos.disl.org/>

The ALCOE is dedicated to the following RESTORE Act Priority Disciplines:

- (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;
- (3) Sustainable and resilient growth, economic and commercial development in the Gulf Coast Region;
- (4) Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf Coast.

Summary of the annual performance of the COE

Of the 15 milestones outlined in the amended Alabama Center of Excellence Federal Award issued in September 2022, two (2) were completed between October 1, 2023, and September 30, 2024: the installation/upgrade of wet lab instrumentation and the completion of RFP #2 MASGC reviews, selection, and notification. During this period, the advertisement and selection process for the RFP #2 competitive grant program was conducted, resulting in the selection of eight (8) projects.

Work continued on the following components of the Center of Excellence:

- Wet lab: Work is complete, and supplies have been acquired. Wetlab is in use.
- ARCOS: Maintenance of the ARCOS network continued throughout the reporting period.
- RFP1: Monthly RFP1 project check-in calls continue to ensure steady progress and coordination among researchers. All projects are advancing smoothly, with no new issues or concerns reported. The regular check-ins have fostered valuable information sharing and collaboration among the RFP1 researchers, strengthening the overall impact of the program. This coordination has facilitated cross-disciplinary insights and ensured that the research remains aligned with the program's objectives while addressing regional priorities effectively.
- RFP2: Research projects have been selected. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab is working with the subrecipients to develop subawards. The Department of the Treasury authorized the Dauphin Island Sea Lab to use the Fixed Amount Subaward method. Subawards will be reviewed by ADCNR for compliance with State and Treasury standards, and then subawards will be executed.

For more information, please see the entire Annual Report for Alabama's Center of Excellence on the following website: <https://www.restorethegulf.gov/restore-centers-excellence>

The Florida Centers of Excellence

The primary accomplishments of the Florida Centers of Excellence research grant program in 2024 were the publication of a decadal program review, unveiling of a new program website, finalization of a new 10-year strategic plan, hosting a Co-Production Science Workshop, and announcement of a competitive research grant request for proposals.

Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) (grant administrators) and the Program Management Team (PMT) finalized a new strategic plan that charts the next decade of the research grant program. Part of the process included a review of the results and impact of past Florida Centers of Excellence projects. Each of the 21 projects, which includes completed, in-progress, and just awarded grants, summarized major results, impact, and additional knowledge gaps in 2-page articles that were published in a report “Results and Impacts of the First Decade of the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program,” in January 2024. In addition, external consultant, Richard Batiuk, from CoastWise Partners, solicited feedback from individual PMT members through a guided conversation, to learn more about their perspectives on FLRACEP and future directions. The summary includes twelve key findings that were presented to the PMT and FIO and discussed at the annual meeting in January 2024. Subsequent meetings between FIO and the PMT resulted in a 1-page strategic plan that includes an objective strategy with guiding principles and implementing actions with rolling 5-year plans. The Annual All Hands Meeting in January 2024 took place at the University of South Florida’s University Student Center in St. Petersburg, Florida, with a virtual option for the broader community. Over a day and a half, the current and newly awarded Centers of Excellence leads, and several students reported on research progress. The meeting also included program updates, including the unveiling of a new program website, and shared meals for networking and discussions.

In May 2024, the NOAA RESTORE Science Program, Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program, the NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative, Florida Sea Grant, and the University of Florida’s Natural Resource Leadership Institute partnered to host a two-day workshop in St. Petersburg, Florida to help bridge the gap between researchers, resource managers, and other end users. The workshop gathered 51 individuals from across the state to learn about science co-production and discuss best practices to improve science for natural resource management in Florida. Participants worked in small groups and engaged in a range of activities, giving them the chance to not only learn about the process of co-production and how to effectively implement it, but to also build relationships with each other. A new competitive research grant competition was announced in June 2024. FIO submitted a budget amendment to support a request for proposals (RFP) V in July 2024. Letters of intent were received in late August and full proposals are due in early January 2025. It is anticipated that 3-5 projects will be awarded funding for 2–3-year projects. The total available funding is \$4,000,000.

FIO continued financial and administrative support and oversight for FLRACEP. Staff continued to monitor RFP II, III, and III.5, and IV. RFP III and III.5 projects performance periods end December 31, 2024, with final reporting due in early 2025. The Office of Gulf Coast Restoration has obligated over \$10.83 M in research awards through five RFPs since the inception of the program. For more information, please see the entire Annual Report for the Florida Centers of Excellence on the following website: <https://www.restorethegulf.gov/restore-centers-excellence>

The Center of Excellence for Louisiana (LA COE)

In the 2024 financial year (FY24), the RESTORE ACT Center of Excellence for Louisiana (LACOE) successfully closed out the period of performance for its second Request for Proposals (RFP2 cycle). This included the completion of four graduate assistantship awards and four research awards. In addition, the LA-COE initiated its third Request for Proposals cycle (RFP3 cycle). This included developing RFP3 in collaboration with the Louisiana Coastal Protection Authority (CPRA), soliciting and reviewing letters of intent and full proposals, and the selection of three Graduate Assistantship awards and nine Research Awards. During FY24, LA-COE hosted a

kickoff webinar for RFP3 award recipients and continued ongoing program operations according to the standard operating procedures (SOPV4), which were updated in December 2023. The details of the RFP3 awards, as well as how this research can inform the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan is routinely updated on the LA-COE RFP3 cycle webpage: <https://thewaterinstitute.org/lacoe/funded-research-rfp3-cycle>.

Given the provisions of the RESTORE Act requiring that Centers of Excellence must focus efforts on a selected set of disciplines, LA-COE focuses on the following:

- Coastal and deltaic sustainability, restoration, and protection including solutions and technology that enables 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;
- Sustainable and resilient growth, economic, and commercial development in the Gulf Coast region;
- Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping of the Gulf Coast.

Key accomplishments during the FY24 reporting period include:

- (1) successful conclusion of the RFP2 funding cycle, including the review and approval of eight final reports,
- (2) approval of a third Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA3) between CPRA and The Water Institute,
- (3) refinement and release of RFP3,
- (4) sponsoring the Gulf Coast Conference (GOMCON) 2024 and coordinating with other RESTORE Act-funded programs on a session,
- (5) review of 41 letters of intent and 23 full proposals submitted for RFP3,
- (6) managing 12 new research subawards for RFP3, including awards selection and contracting,
- (7) hosting a kickoff webinar to provide training on program and data management requirements and best practices for subawardees,
- (8) assessing and reporting on progress using defined metrics that address federal reporting requirements, including reports to the U.S. Department of Treasury was also conducted, and
- (9) operating the LA-COE according to the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including website management, data management, coordination with other Centers of Excellence, and dissemination of information.

For more information, please see the entire Center of Excellence for Louisiana's Annual Report on the following website: <https://www.restorethegulf.gov/restore-centers-excellence>

The Mississippi Based Restore Act Center of Excellence (MBRACE)

Brief Description of the Center of Excellence

The Mississippi Based Restore Act Center of Excellence (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.

Overview of focus of the COE

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's long-term Science Plan focuses on the State's directive toward sustainable coastal management through three major thrust areas: (1) monitoring and ocean observations, (2) modeling, and (3) process studies.

Summary of the annual performance of the COE

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. MBRACE continued working on three key 2023 All Hands Meeting Action Items: (1) Model Coordination; (2) Conceptual Model and Paper Development; and (3) Policy Brief. Follow-up work included coordinating and contributing to meetings with PIs and ESC, communicating via e-mail and calls, and text/figure review and revision. Regular e-mails and communications with EAG, ESC, and PIs and Leads continue on these topics. MBRACE was involved in the writing and submission of a proposal for NOAA NOFO Restore Act Program.

For more information, please see the entire Annual Report for the Mississippi Center of Excellence on the following website: <https://www.restorethegulf.gov/restore-centers-excellence>

The Texas Centers of Excellence

In March 2015, as the Texas Governor's appointee to the RESTORE Council, Commissioner Toby Baker of the TCEQ established two Centers of Excellence in Texas in accordance with the requirements set forth in the RESTORE Act and U.S. Treasury regulations: Texas OneGulf and Subsea Systems Institute.

Texas OneGulf

The mission of the Texas OneGulf (OG) Center of Excellence is to gather and improve knowledge about the Gulf Coast to inform decision-making around the challenges to environmental and economic sustainability of the Gulf Coast 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. Drawing from the Texas OneGulf Strategic Research and Action Plan, the Council identified Texas OneGulf Priority Needs, including priority research questions in the Community Resilience and Estuarine and Coastal Environments focus areas.

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. The mission of SSI is to improve the safety and efficiency of offshore energy development by facilitating engineering, science and policy research and through third party unbiased validation of technology and practices, and by increasing skill sets across the workforce aligned with the development and deployment of new technologies. The vision and objectives for the institute are to:

- Support economic and workforce development in the State of Texas through collaboration between research institutions, colleges and industry
- Develop the best available technology and risk mitigation practices to positively impact offshore safety by bringing together NASA, industry and academic expertise
- Provide unbiased third-party validation and establishment of best practices to build public trust in the sustainable and safe offshore drilling and production operations in the Gulf Coast region and beyond
- Attract and retain talent for jobs and investments in the local, state and national economy

Summary of the annual performance of Texas COE

Texas continues to move the Centers of Excellence program forward. Both Center's continued to work with stakeholders and advisory councils. TCEQ monitored activities associated with each Centers' operational Grant Activity Description (GAD) and research project GADs (five with Texas OneGulf and four with SSI). In November 2023, TCEQ participated, participated, along with the Centers, in a meeting requested by Treasury to discuss COE activities. The meeting included discussion of current, upcoming and longer-term activities and goals. In May 2024, OG's new director, Dr. Paul Montagna, was introduced to the Texas OneGulf Agency Council (TOAC). In September 2024, Treasury issued an amendment to Grant II award, providing an additional \$3,088,000.00 to each Center, and extending the end date to August 31, 2027.

For more information, please see the entire Annual Report for the Texas Centers of Excellence on the following website: <https://www.restorethegulf.gov/restore-centers-excellence>