

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council  
Fiscal Year 2023  
Annual Performance Plan  
December 2020

*This report is available on the internet at [RESTORE Council Website](#).*

## Table of Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES</b> .....	<b>5</b>
2.1. THE RESTORE ACT .....	5
<b>3. STRATEGIC GOALS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>5. PERFORMANCE METRICS</b> .....	<b>15</b>
5.1. INFUSING COLLABORATION INTO THE PROCESS .....	8
<b>6. PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020</b> .....	<b>15</b>
6.1. PERFORMANCE GOAL 1: PROMOTE A GULF-WIDE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO RESTORATION ....	16
6.2. PERFORMANCE GOAL 2: COUNCIL-SELECTED RESTORATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE ..	16
6.3. PERFORMANCE GOAL 3: SPILL IMPACT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE .....	17
6.4. PERFORMANCE GOAL 4: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE .....	18
6.5. PERFORMANCE GOAL 5: MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE.....	18

## Preface

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 continually degraded and lost due to development, infrastructure, sea-level rise, altered riverine processes, ocean acidification, salinity changes and other human-caused factors. This degradation represents a serious risk to the cultural, social and economic benefits derived from the Gulf ecosystem.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) is an independent federal agency which was established by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012, or the RESTORE Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1321 (t). The Council is comprised of five Governors from the Gulf Coast States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas (States), the Secretaries from the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Army, Commerce, Agriculture, and Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency whom currently (FY20) serves as the Council's Chairperson. A Steering Committee handles various activities that do not require a RESTORE Council vote. The Steering Committee is led by the chair and an annually-rotating state co-chair (Alabama for calendar year 2020).

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 will be administered for Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration and protection according to a Comprehensive Plan developed by the Council. 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. The SEPs must adhere to four basic criteria and are subject to approval by the Council.

In cooperation with our restoration partners, the Council is striving to establish a benchmark for collaborative work while facilitating efficient and responsible implementation of large-scale restoration projects across the Gulf. The Council recognizes its unique and unprecedented opportunity to implement a restoration effort in a way that restores and protects the Gulf Coast environment, reinvigorates local economies and creates jobs in the region. Further, the Council is committed to working with Gulf communities and partners to invest in actions, projects, and programs that will ensure the long-term environmental health and economic prosperity of the Gulf Coast region.

# Introduction

This document provides the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Annual Performance Plan for FY2023 which is used to communicate the agency's strategic objectives and performance goals with other elements of the agency budget request. The plan describes how the goals will be achieved, identifies priorities among the goals and explains how the agency will monitor progress.

The Gulf Coast region is vital to our Nation and our economy, providing valuable energy resources, abundant seafood, extraordinary beaches and recreational activities, and a rich cultural heritage. Its waters and coasts are home to one of the most diverse environments in the world—including over 15,000 species of sea life. More than 22 million Americans live in Gulf coastal counties and parishes, working in crucial U.S. industries like commercial seafood, recreational fishing, tourism, and oil and gas production. The region also boasts of a significant shipping industry with 10 of America's 15 largest ports accounting for nearly a trillion dollars in trade each year.

Despite the tremendous economic, social and ecological importance of the Gulf Coast region, the health of the region's ecosystem has been significantly impacted, most recently by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as well as by chronic and acute harm caused by other past and ongoing human actions. Restoring an area as large and complex as the Gulf Coast region is a costly and multi-generational undertaking. Over the past several decades, the Gulf Coast region has experienced loss of critical wetlands, erosion of barrier islands, imperiled fisheries, water quality degradation leading to, among many other impacts, one of the world's largest hypoxic zones every year, alteration of hydrology, and other cumulative environmental impacts (e.g., an area the size of a football field are lost every hour in coastal Louisiana). While hurricanes (such as Michael, Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike), subsidence and other natural forces are also key factors in land loss, this may be exacerbated by human actions which have greatly reduced ecosystem resilience and thus made coastal wetlands more vulnerable to these natural stressors.

In addition, the Gulf of Mexico experienced extensive and severe water quality and habitat impacts resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill including excess nutrients, altered sediment resources, pathogens, mercury, remaining *Deepwater Horizon* oil and other pollutants. Eight years after the spill, living coastal and marine systems still show signs of stress, such as depleted species populations and degraded habitats.

The Council plays a key role in helping to ensure that the Gulf's natural resources are sustainable and available for future generations. Use of the Gulf restoration funds represent a great responsibility. The ongoing involvement of the people who live, work and play in the Gulf region is critical to ensuring that these monies are used wisely and effectively.

## Scope of Responsibilities

The Council was formally established in 2015 as a new, independent Federal Agency with a clear mission to implement a long-term, comprehensive plan for the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region. Unlike most federal agencies, the Council does not receive funds through the annual federal appropriations process (all funds are received through the Trust Fund (Trust Fund)); however, the Council does appear in the Appendix to the President's Budget.

### 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](#) (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](#) (Initial Plan) to describe how the Council would restore the ecosystem and the economy of the Gulf Coast region. The Council has oversight of the expenditure of 60 percent of the funds made available from the Trust Fund. Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the Act, 30 percent of available funding is administered for Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration and protection according to the Initial Comprehensive Plan 2013: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem & Economy (Initial Comprehensive Plan) developed by the Council. The remaining 30 percent 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.

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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Treasury 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 [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).

In 2016 the United States entered into a Consent Decree with BP for the resolution of civil claims for entities held responsible for the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill totaling 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, plus interest) to the Trust Fund, consisting of 80 percent of the following: \$1 billion (plus interest) in civil penalties from Transocean Deepwater Inc. and related entities for violating the CWA 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 CWA civil penalty under the April 4, 2016, consent decree (Consent Decree), payable over a fifteen-year period at approximately \$91 million per year through 2031.

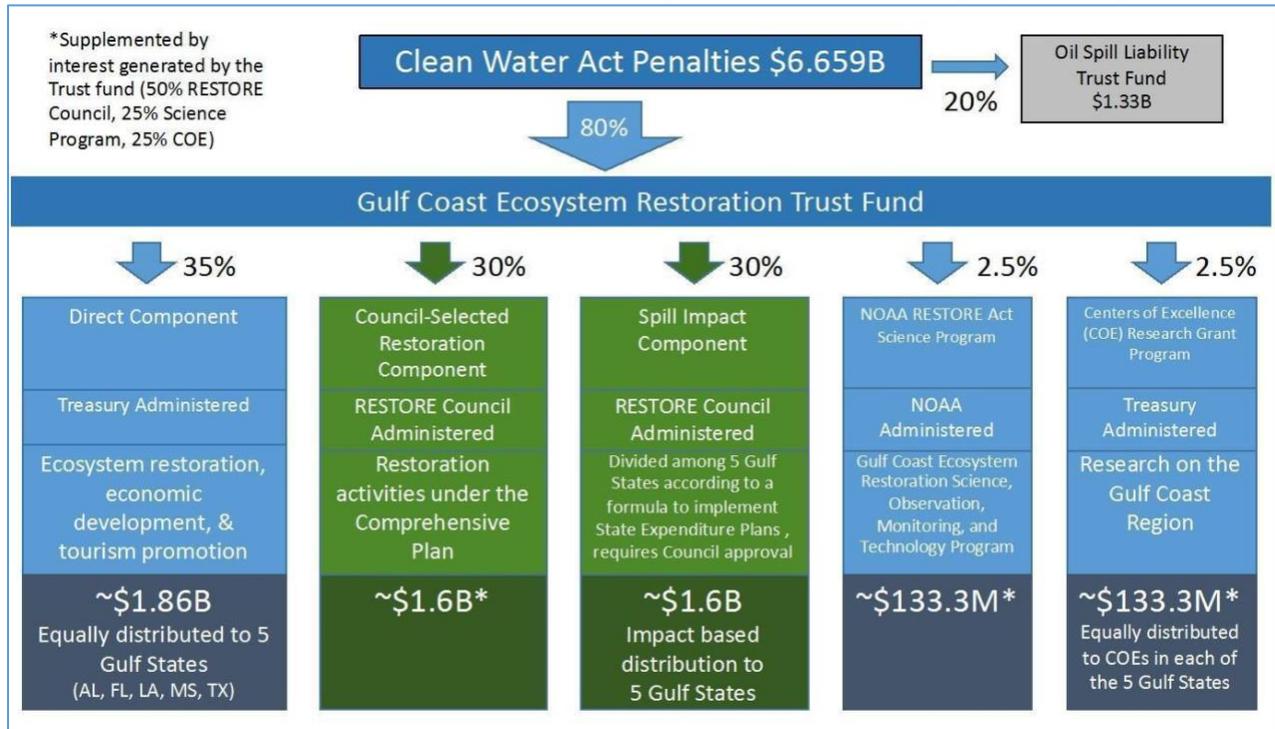
Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, the Council is responsible for administering a portion of the funds associated with settlement of civil penalties against parties responsible for the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Specifically, the Council is responsible for administering two funding sources: (1) the Council-Selected Restoration Component (Bucket 2) and (2) the Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3). Bucket 2 receives 30% of the funds allocated under the RESTORE Act.

The Council is directly responsible for two of the five components, as follows:

- *Council-Selected Restoration Component*: 30 percent of the funds (plus 50 percent of interest earned) will be administered for ecosystem restoration and protection according to the Comprehensive Plan developed by the Council. The Council approved and published an Initial Comprehensive Plan in August 2013. The Council approved the Initial FPL in December, 2015 ([RESTORE Council's Initial Funded Priority List](#)). With this FPL, approximately \$156.6 million was approved for restoration and conservation activities that focus on habitat and water quality based on a watershed/estuarine approach, as well as several Gulf-wide projects. These activities are intended to provide near-term “on-the-ground” ecological results, while also building a planning and science foundation for future success. In 2018, the Council implemented the Commitment and Planning Support Funded Priority list (approximately \$20 million from FY18 to FY22). The Council was initially planning on developing FPL 3 as a single action, comprised of a list of restoration projects and programs 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 (FPL 3a approved February 2020 and FPL 3b which is anticipated to be approved in the spring of 2021) 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 will consider restoration projects and programs that address additional ecosystem needs across the Gulf.
- *Spill Impact Component*: 30 percent of the funds are dedicated to the States based on a formula set forth in the RESTORE Act and established by the Council through a regulation. This allocation formula is based on a weighted allocation of the number of miles of shoreline of each State that experienced oiling as a result of the *Deepwater*

*Horizon* oil spill; the inverse proportion of distance from *Deepwater Horizon* drilling rig to the middle of oiled shoreline in each State; and the average coastal county population in each State as of the 2010 Census. Each State will be required to have a State Expenditure Plan (SEP) in place for the use of these funds. The SEPs must be consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and are subject to Council approval in accordance with criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act. More information regarding SEP guidelines can be found on the [RESTORE Council website](#).

**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.



## Infusing Collaboration into the Process

Building on the strong foundation established in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force<sup>1</sup> 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, at the same time, 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.

<sup>1</sup> The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by President Obama through an Executive Order on October 5, 2010, and was the result of a recommendation made in [Secretary Mabus' report](#) on long term recovery following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill..

The RESTORE Council is using a collaborative process to help ensure that Council-Selected Restoration Component (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. Because of 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 strides can be achieved to increase the resiliency of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem against these stressors.

### **Commitment and Planning Support FPL (CPS FPL)**

The Council recognized that meeting its Comprehensive Plan commitments requires resources to support the personnel, travel, and logistics necessary for more effective collaboration and planning. In 2017, the Council approved funding to support this planning and collaboration. A major challenge to Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration is coordinating efforts within each state, among Council members, among stakeholders, and across the Gulf restoration efforts. This funding was approved in a second FPL titled “Funded Priorities List: [Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support](#)” (CPS FPL). Prior to CPS FPL, 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 provided 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 CPS FPL funding provided 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 CPS FPL, each of the eleven Council members were able to 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 equaled \$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 CPS FPL 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 the 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. Progress of the CPS awards, which provided \$18.7 million through 2023, is summarized by Council member in Appendix A.

## **Planning Framework**

As the Council turned its attention to laying the foundation for FPL3, 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 numerous 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 lead to the Council's development of the [2019 Planning Framework](#).

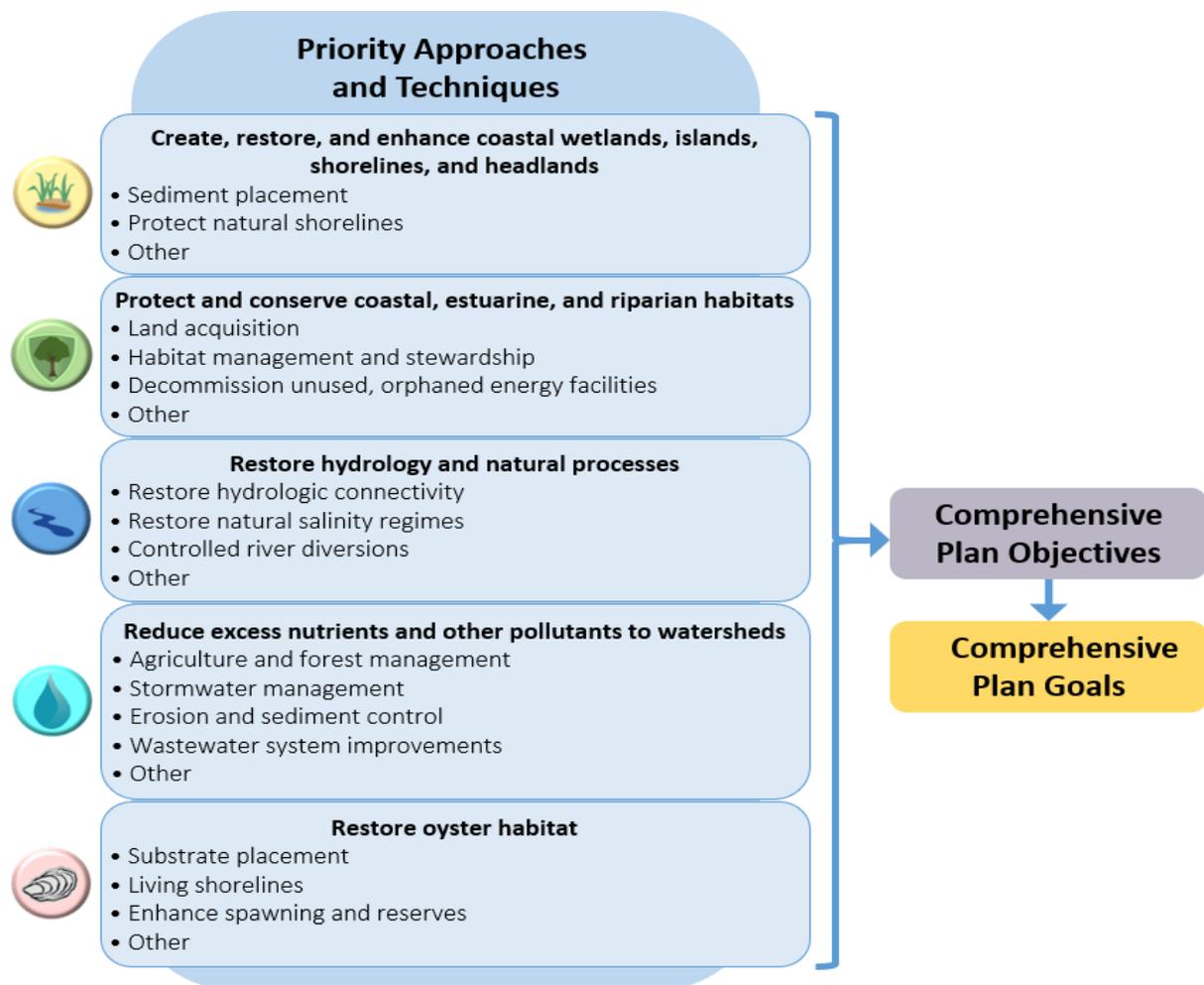
The Planning Framework is a new element of the FPL process and is being used for the first time in the development of FPL 3. The Planning Framework intended to serve as a "bridge" between the Comprehensive Plan and FPLs, and from one FPL to the next. The Planning Framework strategically links past and 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 will focus in FPL 3 in advance of selecting projects and programs. In this way, this Planning Framework draft 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. As part of the development process for future FPLs (e.g.,

FPL 4, FPL 5, etc.), this Planning Framework will be reviewed and revised as needed. 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

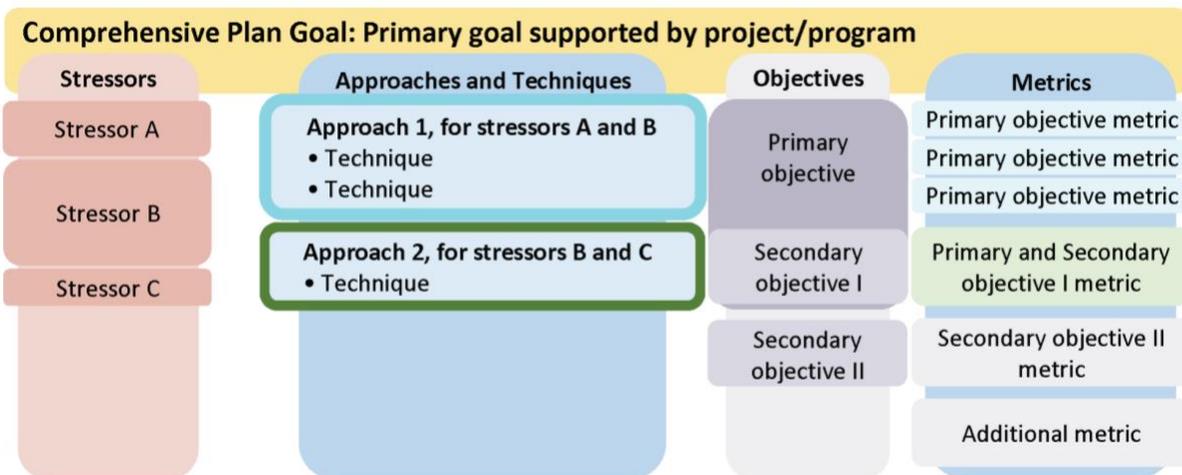
The Planning Framework lists priority restoration approaches and techniques (Figure 2) their relationship to the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, and associated geographic areas. The purpose of this document is to provide the public and potential funding partners with an indication of the kinds of projects that are 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.

**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 value tool in helping describing how projects and programs selected for funding under the Council-Selected Restoration component relate to the Council’s Goals and Objectives, Figure 7 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.



It was also through this collaborative process that the Council recognized that developing FPL 3 in two phases would enable the Council to fund projects requiring near-term attention and take advantage of important partnership opportunities to advance large-scale ecosystem restoration in the first phase, FPL 3a. In the second phase, FPL 3b, the Council will consider restoration projects and programs that address additional ecosystem needs across the Gulf.

## Strategic Goals

One of the Council's primary responsibilities when it was first established was to develop an Initial Comprehensive Plan to restore the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region. The Council approved and published an Initial Comprehensive Plan (Plan) in August 2013 that outlines overarching goals for restoring and protecting the natural resources of the Gulf ([2013 Initial Comprehensive Plan](#)).

The task of restoring the Gulf environment is a multi-generational undertaking. A comprehensive approach to Gulf restoration must include the engagement of a wide and diverse array of stakeholders, including federal, state and local governments, Tribes, private businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the general public. By working closely with our restoration partners, the Council believes it can make significant progress towards comprehensive Gulf restoration and provide substantial environmental and economic benefits to current and future generations.

A significant component in assisting the Council achieve ecosystem restoration of the Gulf is through its Comprehensive Plan. Following an extensive public feedback effort, the Council approved the [2016 Comprehensive Plan Update](#) on December 16, 2016. The Council's selections for the Initial FPL were based on a variety of factors, including the need to respond to widely-recognized ecological stressors, foundational investment needs, substantial public input, support for certain high-value areas, and socioeconomic and cultural considerations. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update presents the Council's vision for long-term restoration in the Gulf of Mexico. This vision is to promote a "healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs." To meet this vision, the Comprehensive Plan Update takes a holistic approach to restoration in recognition of the interconnected nature of coastal and marine ecosystems (a fundamental organizational principle of watersheds/estuaries), and the importance of addressing system-wide stressors that reduce ecosystem integrity. Moving forward, the Council will work to use this holistic approach before, during, and after the proposal development, review, and selection processes in order to maximize project benefits and track outcomes.

To provide the overarching framework for an integrated and coordinated approach for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration and help guide the collective actions at the local, state, tribal and federal levels, the Council has adopted five Strategic Goals as follows in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, recommitting to them (with the addition of Water Quantity to Strategic Goal 2) in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update:

**Strategic Goal 1:** Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats;

**Strategic Goal 2:** Restore Water Quality and Quantity – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine waters;

**Strategic Goal 3:** Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources;

**Strategic Goal 4:** Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes;

**Strategic Goal 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 to ensure that those 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 can be considered in the context of comprehensive restoration.

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.

## Strategic 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 not within the scope of these Strategic Objectives for ecosystem restoration will not be funded under the Council-Selected Restoration Component. The Strategic Objectives are not listed in any particular order, and the Council does not anticipate that restoration efforts funded under the Council-Selected Restoration Component will be equally distributed among these objectives. Further, restoration projects and programs are likely to achieve multiple objectives simultaneously.

**Strategic Objective 1:** Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats – Restore, enhance, and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats. These include barrier islands, beaches, dunes, coastal wetlands, coastal forests, pine savannahs, coastal prairies, submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster reefs, and shallow and deep-water corals.

**Strategic Objective 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.

**Strategic Objective 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.

**Strategic Objective 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.

**Strategic Objective 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.

**Strategic Objective 6:** Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities, professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.

**Strategic Objective 7:** Objective Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes – Improve science-based decision-making processes used by the Council.

**Management Focused Strategic Objective:** Organizational Excellence – Council staff will provide exceptional service to Council members, partner state and federal agencies, and public, private, and other stakeholders to support the Council’s efforts to achieve integrated and coordinated efforts for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration.

## Performance Metrics

The Council has currently identified 56 performance-level metrics ([RESTORE Council Project Metrics](#)) for grants to states and Interagency Agreements (IAA) with the federal members funded through the Council-Funded Component and for grants funded under the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act. These metrics are used to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of projects and programs in meeting mission goals and objectives of the Council and track annual performance. For each of the performance metrics, the associated Strategic Objective supported by that metric is provided, along with the supporting activity/outcomes), metric description, and the overarching concomitant approach to support ecosystem restoration.

## Performance Goals and Indicators for Fiscal Year 2023.

### Mission Performance Goals

The Mission Performance Goals include the core functions and activities of Federal agencies that are reflected in statutory requirements or leadership priorities and which serve to drive

their efforts in addressing pressing and relevant national problems, needs, and challenges (OMB A-11, Section 240).

**Performance Goal 1: Promote a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Approach to Restoration**

***Effective and efficient advancement of the Council's vision for "A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs."***

**Performance Indicator 1.1:**

A comprehensive approach is applied to consideration of restoration efforts through:

- a) *The cooperative examination and analysis of stressors and environmental drivers, as well as outcomes and lessons learned from previously implemented projects (including project monitoring data), scientific and technical developments, changing policy, public input, and other planning considerations by Council members, the NGO community, interested stakeholders and the public.*
- b) *Application of Best Available Science (BAS), and adaptive and data management principles maximize the quality, objectivity, and integrity of information used in the selection and execution of RESTORE projects under both the Council-Selected Restoration and State Expenditure Plan components of the RESTORE Act, and clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties. In 2023, the Council will employ a variety of activities that promote adaptive management based on an assessment of projects and programs funded to-date, as well an examination of the application of BAS at all stages of project/program development, execution and documentation.*

**Performance Indicator 1.2:**

The Council determination of future funding priorities is informed by consideration of the entirety of restoration activities funded by the RESTORE Act, DWH NRDA, NFWF GEBF, and other restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico region as captured in the Council's Planning Framework and 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update.

**Performance Indicator 1.3:**

Coordination and collaboration among members and other restoration efforts of Gulf restoration maximize the Council's "return on investment" as demonstrated by completing the evaluation of the Commitment and Planning Support awards to achieve the coordination and collaboration commitments of the Comprehensive Plan. Depending upon the positive outcome of that analysis, development of FPL 4 Commitment and Planning Support to continue collaborative efforts for subsequent funded priority lists.

**Performance Goal 2: Council-Selected Restoration Program Performance Excellence**

***Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Council-Selected Restoration Program to achieve the goals of the Act.***

**Performance Indicator 2.1:**

The Council's Planning Framework is updated that highlights ecosystem restoration strategies in preparation for development of Funded Priority List 4.

**Performance Indicator 2.2:**

Efficiency of the Environmental Compliance processes to support Council actions is advanced through:

- a) *Effective processes for the determination of environmental compliance of Category 2*

*projects for funding consideration by the Council are developed to support the evaluation of the efficacy of moving Category 2 projects to Category 1.*

- b) The efficiency and effectiveness of Council environmental compliance is enhanced by the Council participation in the interagency regulatory efficiency team and the sharing of efficiency tools and practices.*

**Performance Indicator 2.3:**

Programmatic Staff Management of Grant and Interagency Agreements:

- a) The programmatic component of the Council staff reviews of grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under FPL 3a and b meet the timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability. This will include review of submissions for best available science and environmental compliance with NEPA and other environmental federal regulations*
- b) Post-award management and oversight ensures that grants funded under the Initial FPL and FPL 1 and 3a and 3b are on schedule to achieve intended results.*

**Performance Indicator 2.4:**

Compliance Staff Management of Grant and Interagency Agreements.

- a) The grants and compliance component of the Council staff review of grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under FPL 3 a and b meet timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability.*
- b) Post-award management and oversight is carried out for all grants and Interagency Agreements. Pre- and post-award reviews ensure compliance with all administrative and regulatory requirements under the RESTORE Act, Part 200, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, support mitigation of applicable critical risks in the Council Risk Profile and IPERA, and meet other federal regulatory requirements.*

**Performance Goal 3: Spill Impact Program Performance Excellence**

***Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Spill Impact Program achieve the goals of the Act.***

**Performance Indicator 3.1:**

Programmatic Staff Management of Grants.

- a) The programmatic component of the Council staff reviews of grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under the SEP processes meet timelines established by Council Standard Operating Procedures. This includes review of submissions for best available science and environmental compliance with NEPA and other environmental federal regulations.*
- b) Post-award management and oversight ensures that grants and agreements are on schedule to achieve intended results.*

**Performance Indicator 3.2:**

Compliance Staff Management of Grants.

- a) The grants and compliance component of the Council staff review of grant applications for funding under each state's SEP, meet timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability.*

- b) *Post-award management and oversight will be carried out for all grants and Interagency Agreements. Pre- and post-award reviews by Council program, grant, administrative and financial staff ensure compliance with all administrative and regulatory requirements under the RESTORE Act, 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, support mitigation of applicable critical risks in the Council Risk Profile and IPERA, and meet other federal regulatory requirements.*

## Stewardship Goals

The Stewardship Goals respond to the responsibilities of Federal agencies to provide appropriate safeguards in executing mission and service-related activities effectively and efficiently, including minimizing instances of waste, fraud, and abuse (OMB A-11, Section 240).

### **Performance Goal 4: Operational Excellence**

***An administrative infrastructure that supports team work, collaboration, synergy between functional areas and overall operational excellence to provide excellent services, programs and outcomes to the Gulf Coast region is maintained.***

#### **Performance Indicator 4.1:**

Effective oversight of grant and interagency agreement post-award cash disbursement processes supports the prevention of improper payments.

#### **Performance Indicator 4.2:**

Grant and IAA drawdowns are compliant with award terms and conditions, and consistent with the progress achieved and milestones met.

#### **Performance Indicator 4.3:**

Applications include relevant and adequate justification for the selection of particular metrics and an adequate proposal for scientific monitoring.

#### **Performance Indicator 4.4:**

Reported progress towards metrics provides a useful gauge of the success of the project or program. Reports include a description of the methodology for quantifying results for each metric and monitoring the achievement of the metrics.

### **Performance Goal 5: Management Excellence**

***Council staff will provide exceptional service to the Council members and their accompanying state and federal agencies, as well to the many stakeholders associated with restoration of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem by meeting programmatic, administrative and customer service objectives.***

#### **Performance Indicator 5.1:**

Requisite reports submitted in timely manner.

#### **Performance Indicator 5.2:**

OIG audit findings and recommendations addressed in a timely manner.

**Performance Indicator 5.3:**

All Council operations required by the RESTORE Act are monitored and audited by the Department of Treasury OIG, and audit recommendations are promptly implemented.

**Performance Indicator 5.4:**

Records are management in accordance with NARA guidelines.

**Performance Indicator 5.5:**

Workforce.

- a) *Decisions regarding human resources and HR requirements support the transition from an entrepreneurial start-up operation to a steady-state operational mode.*
- b) *Workforce initiatives support the 21st Century Cross-Agency Priority Goal and its Sub-goals:*
  - i) *Enabling simple and strategic hiring practices,*
  - ii) *Improving employee performance management and engagement, and*
  - iii) *Reskilling and redeploying human capital resources.*

**Performance Indicator 5.6:**

Organizational Risk Assessed and Risk Mitigation Factors Employed.

- a) *Organizational risk assessment recommendations meet all OMB Circular A-123 requirements; documentation of tactical level risk mitigation activities is complete, including 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), and the President's Management Agenda.*
- b) *Completion of project and program site visits serve as useful tools to provide technical assistance to our recipients while simultaneously mitigating critical risks on the Council's external risk profile.*
- c) *Comply with all requirements under FISMA including submission of timely reports.*

## Service Goals

The Service Goals speak to the activities that reflect the interaction(s) between individual citizens or businesses and Federal agencies in providing a direct service on behalf of the Federal Government, and which is core to the mission of the agency (OMB A-11, Section 240).

**Performance Goal 6: Public Engagement Through Inclusion and Transparency**

***The Council staff will provide public engagement opportunities that reflect the richness and diversity of the Gulf Coast communities to ensure ongoing public participation in the Council's restoration efforts.***

**Performance Indicator 6.1:**

Strategic engagement with all stakeholders, including the underserved/under-represented Gulf Coast communities through proactive engagement of stakeholders and providing accurately translated materials and interpretation services at public meetings.

**Performance Indicator 6.2:**

Effective coordination and consultation with federally-recognized Tribes to provide a

foundation for building durable relationships, addressing issues concerning federally recognized tribes (Tribes) self-government, Tribal trust resources, Tribal treaty and other rights, and enhancing, protecting and preserving Tribal cultural and environmental resources.