



**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Draft Funded Priorities List 3b Public Comment Webinars
November 16, 2020
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm & 6:00 pm -7:30 pm (CST)**

Questions and Answers

Question 1:

- Regarding, Develop Ecological Flow Decision-Support for Mobile River and Perdido River Basins: This proposal focuses on development of data and models that would almost exclusively provide tools for managing instream flows in inland, non-coastal areas. There would be some benefit to coastal freshwater inflow management, but that is clearly not the primary purpose. Additionally, data and model needs for managing estuarine freshwater inflows could be met with a much smaller, simpler, and much less costly program. It seems highly likely this proposal represents an attempt to direct RESTORE Act funds, to non-coastal purposes. How do you defend this proposal in view of these observations?
- Will the council fund impoundment of coastal wetlands, which has been demonstrated to have disbenefits in many cases, or simply may not be effective for their stated purpose.
- Will the Council fund states to upgrade drainage (stormwater) systems, even if they don't demonstrate any actual environmental benefit? It appears to me that Texas intends to fund local government drainage projects under the guise of coastal restoration.

Answer: Thank you for submitting your comment. The Council Staff will address these and other comments received in the Response to Public Comment document. This document will be released after the close of the public comment period on January 5, 2021.

Participant Response: Thanks. You can probably disregard my question, since I intend to submit all my comments in writing later.

Question 2: Do the projects proposed have performance metrics included to be able to determine the success of the efforts and whether or not the intended goals are met?

Answer: Yes, all project and program proposals include proposed metrics that could be used to track the success of those activities. The metrics identified as potential metrics for these activities can be found in the full proposals available on the Council's website.

Question 3: Will the state virtual meetings include information on the regional programs that take place in each state?

Answer: Each of the regionally focused webinars will include proposed activities for that geographic area.

Question 4: For clarification, why was more funding allocated in this second phase of FPL3 than the first phase and were different projects considered for a than b?

Answer: Yes, more funding was allocated to the proposed FPL 3b. FPL 3a was not designed to address ecosystem needs across the Gulf; rather, it was developed to address two near-term ecosystem restoration opportunities, one in LA and one in AL. The second phase, FPL 3b, is looking at additional ecosystem needs across the Gulf.

Question 5: Were all of the projects in the draft included in the proposals submitted earlier this year?

Answer: Yes, the proposed activities were submitted by Council Members on April 24th. These proposals then underwent 3 external best available science reviews, as well as an internal review panel discussion. Proposal sponsors were then able to revise their proposals by July 17th, 2020. These proposals were then made available on the Council's website. Some of the activities that appear in this draft FPL 3b have been *revised in response to internal and external reviews as well as continued collaboration among Council members to determine the activities and funding levels to include in this draft FPL 3b.*

Question 6: Was this webinar announced previously? I appreciate the notice today.

Answer: The RESTORE Council announced today's webinars to those subscribed to our eBlasts approximately two weeks ago. If you would like to subscribe, please visit restorethegulf.gov and select "Subscribe to eBlast". You can select the geographic areas you like to receive updates from.

Question 7: Are any of the funds set aside for Indian Tribal programs? Poarch Creek's program has been sponsored by the Dept of the Interior in the past.

Answer: Yes, draft FPL 3b includes the "Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program." This program provides funding to the Chitimacha Tribe, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Miccosukee Indian Tribe, and the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. Tribal youth will conduct projects to protect natural resources and the environment, and maintain a healthy ecosystem, while learning cultural values. This program is sponsored by the US Department of the Interior.