



GULF OF MEXICO UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium, Florida Institute of Oceanography, Louisiana Universities Gulf Research Collaborative, Mississippi Research Consortium, Texas Research Consortium

BOARD MEMBERS:

Alabama Marine Environmental
Sciences Consortium
<http://www.disl.org/>
Dr. John Valentine, Executive Director,
Dauphin Island Sea Lab,
jvalentine@disl.org

Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO)
<http://fio.usf.edu>
Dr. William T. (Bill) Hogarth, Director,
billhogarth@fio.usf.edu

Louisiana Universities Gulf Research
Collaborative
<http://www.sce.lsu.edu/LUGRC.html>
Dr. Christopher F. D'Elia, Dean, LSU
School of the Coast and Environment,
cdelia@lsu.edu

Mississippi Research Consortium
<http://www.usm.edu/research/mississippi-research-consortium>
Dr. William M. (Monty) Graham, Dean
USM Dept. of Marine Science,
monty.graham@usm.edu

Texas Research Consortium
Dr. Larry McKinney, Executive Director,
Harte Research Institute,
larry.mckinney@tamucc.edu

July 8, 2013

Subject: Input regarding Gulf Coast Ecosystem Council's Initial Comprehensive Restoration Plan

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Sirs/Madams:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding the Council's Initial Comprehensive Restoration Plan (ICRP). Following are 1) general recommendations for carrying out a science-based restoration program, and 2) specific comments related to the ICRP.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council and Plan Focus: The RESTORE Act intends that ICRP funds be used to mitigate environmental damages, restoring and sustaining ecosystem goods and services, and not support economic prosperity at the expense of natural capital. Pot 1 (35% to States) of the RESTORE Act is not beholden to the ICRP, and will likely support economic projects that build coastal infrastructure. This is not the function of the Council's pot 2 and 3 funds.

Council Leadership: Gulf-wide coordination of the varied settlement and litigation-funded restoration programs is essential. What role will the Council play in integrating all these programs to ensure a comprehensive, sustained, efficient recovery? Proposed mechanisms include dedicated support for Gulf-wide coordination efforts, for example, the GOMURC-led Gulf Restoration Science Programs Coordination Team, GOMURC's Gulf Restoration Science Workshop, GOMRI annual restoration and ecosystem science conference and the Harte Research Institute's State of the Gulf Summits.

Independent Science Capacity: Restoration must be based on "the best available science" developed and conducted independently of policy pressures and integrated in ways that transcend agency agendas. Mechanisms may include:

- Council **science advisory committee** should be composed of representatives from the Section 1604 Gulf Science Program, Section 1605 Centers of Excellence, and scientists and technologists from across the region, including international partners with stakes in a healthy Gulf.
- ICRP should be accompanied by a **science plan** that is critically reviewed and periodically updated by the Science Advisory Committee; plan should be initially developed in coordination with all RESTORE Act and settlement funded programs and with public engagement; plan should include guidance regarding effective peer review (e.g., quality and relevance criteria, policies and standards), and performance evaluation (e.g., metrics, monitoring, adaptive management).
- Council should hire a full-time **chief scientist** who is independent of participating agencies and who leads and is advised by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Transparency and Engagement: The Council must establish processes for RESTORE section 1603 efforts including continued development of the ICRP, project submissions and selection, and required outputs. Florida, for example, hosts a portal for RESTORE Act section 1603 pot 2/3 proposal submissions (http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/projects_restore_act.htm), but other states have nothing comparable. Now is the time to establish standards that can inform and guide the many other programs. Meaningful public input is critical to long-term success and support for the programs. Proposed engagement mechanisms include:

- Council **citizen's advisory committee** including ecosystem service stakeholders from all five states; all advisory committees should have approved charters and by-laws.
- Advance public notice and open meetings to support **regular opportunities for public comment**; Sea Grant, for example, has proposed to host local town hall sessions (including 2 face-to-face meetings per state per year, and a monthly webinar series) to communicate with citizens on restoration plans and progress.
- Work plans and other documents, meeting schedules, opportunities for engagement, budgets, audit results, results of scientific studies and restoration projects, and other information and **materials must be easily available on-line**. Sea Grant has also proposed development of a web portal for uploading, sharing and accessing project information related to spill science and monitoring activities, based on their work done after the spill with NOAA.

Monitoring, Assessment and Adaptive Management: Restoration and adaptive management without monitoring, assessment and evaluation are doomed to failure, and future disaster response will not evolve without improved baselines. Proposed mechanisms include:

- **All projects should include funding for monitoring** of restoration measures for at least several years after implementation, and continuing when adaptive measures are employed.
- Monitoring should be use **best practices and standardized methods** across programs, with as much integration and efficiency as possible; for example, build on existing observing systems, and base build-out plans on gap analyses driven by science-based adaptive management.
- An **endowment-funded Gulf Observing System** should be supported to assess the status of the entire Gulf Large Marine Ecosystem through combined monitoring, mapping, research, modeling, and synthesis (e.g., Gulf Integrated Ecosystem Assessment) and reports (e.g., Gulf Report Cards); costs for these efforts should be shared by all restoration programs as they are the foundation for all program success.

ICRP COMMENTS:

- P. 6 and P. 13: Plan recognizes that "best available science" must be the foundation for project selection and for ensuring that projects are contributing to the overall goals of the Council, and coordinated with the science community. Comment: Science Plan needs to accompany the ICRP including details for how to accomplish these objectives.
- P. 8 and pp. 11-14: Goal five is to "restore and revitalize the Gulf economy," but there are no related objectives for this goal. Comment: The Gulf economy and social welfare will benefit from restoring and sustaining the valuable ecosystem goods and services that make the Gulf the nation's most valuable region in terms of related

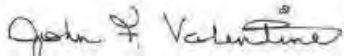
revenues. This should be stated at the beginning and not assigned a separate goal in the ICRP without objectives.

- P. 13: Objective 6 is to “promote natural resource stewardship and environmental education.” Comment: This objective should include informal and formal education to develop the next generation workforce of environmental scientists, engineers and managers through student support, new and enhanced curricula, and professional development opportunities.
- P. 14: RESTORE Act directs the Council to “use the best available science.” Comment: this needs to be defined by the actions the Council takes to ensure this critical program element. There are no details for how this will be accomplished (e.g., see recommendations above in “General Comments” and first “ICRP Comments” bullet).
- P. 16: The Council will periodically request proposals from its members. Comment: We are concerned that, as written, the process does not encourage an open, competitive process that will engage all the region’s stakeholders and capabilities. The preliminary list of projects in Appendix A, for example, does little to nothing (including projects from federal agencies) to restore marine ecosystem goods and services in federal waters where most of the oil and impacts occurred. At least the 30% support that is run through the Council should be implemented for this purpose.
- APPENDIX A- Preliminary Projects: Less than 1.4% (8) of the 585 proposed projects have anything to do with restoring and sustaining offshore ocean habitats and resources, a disparity also evident in NRDA early restoration program projects, and inconsistent with the spill location and likely ecosystem impacts. The Council is taking ideas from state and local government officials, which are relevant, but need to be balanced with restoring and sustaining ocean ecosystem goods and services.

Sincerely,



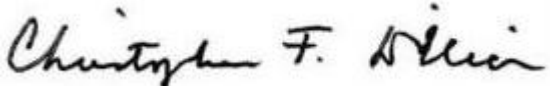
Larry McKinney, Executive Director, Harte Research Institute, Texas Research Consortium, GOMURC Chair



John Valentine, Executive Director, Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium



William T. (Bill) Hogarth, Director, Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO)



Christopher F. D'Elia, Dean, LSU School of the Coast and Environment, Louisiana Universities Gulf Research Collaborative



Monty Graham, Dean, Department of Marine Science, University of Southern Mississippi



***Comments of the Gulf Restoration Network on
the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's
Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy***

I write on behalf of the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) to provide our comments and concerns with regard to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's (Council) Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy (Draft Plan). The GRN is committed to empowering people to protect the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico for future generations. Since the BP drilling disaster occurred we have been engaged in monitoring efforts to clean up the oil and dispersant and restore the resources that were impacted.

The GRN is pleased to see that the Plan states the Council's commitment to science based decision making and adaptive management of plans and projects. We believe that all projects funded under the RESTORE Act must be required to have a plan for evaluation and a system for measuring outcomes which would allow true adaptive management to occur.

We support the Council's commitment to (1) focusing the Council-selected Restoration Component and the Spill Impact Component to funding for ecosystem restoration (as defined by the 5 Plan goals), which is necessary to ensuring that we benefit the natural resources, our economy, and our communities; and (2) taking a regional, ecosystem-based, and landscape-scale restoration approach to restoration that addresses the entire Gulf as one interconnected ecosystem. **However**, to date all restoration efforts appear focused on the coastal environment. Yet, the disaster occurred and the greatest impact was to the marine environment. Accordingly, moving forward there must be a more focused commitment by the Council to addressing both the coastal and marine restoration/recovery.

We also support the Council's stated intent to use an integrated and coordinated approach and work closely to ensure that efforts funded through NRDA and NFWF are complimentary. Since funding for comprehensive restoration will be limited in relation to the restoration need, leveraging multiple funding sources will be critical to getting the most bang for our buck on environmental restoration. Efforts to integrate restoration also integrate restoration with the increasing need for community protection.

Our coastal communities are some of the most vulnerable in the nation to the impacts of storms. The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience, providing non-structural storm protection and facilitating climate change adaptation (strengthening barrier islands, restoring coastal marshes and forest, etc). We must use available restoration dollars to protect critical infrastructure that ensures the economic, and cultural, survival of coastal communities. For coastal communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

We are pleased that the Council is considering the formation of a Citizen Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee. As the Council has experienced during this comment period, communities are eager to provide input to the Council on the considerations that should guide the Council in choosing RESTORE projects. Greater transparency and community participation in RESTORE Council decision-making in a meaningful way is something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Traditional public hearings do not provide the needed participation. Creating a formal Citizens' Advisory Council will:

- help to establish a trusting relationship between the community and the members of the Council throughout project selection and implementation;
- provide guidance on the Council on how to better obtain input from communities;
- provide more buy-in and social investment in the projects in those communities

We hope to see in the coming months a stronger commitment to establishing these committees and a move to quickly begin the nomination process for membership on these committees.

Although generally pleased with the direction set by the Draft Plan we have numerous concerns with the lack of specificity in the Draft Plan.

First, we are disappointed that the plan does not contain a list of priority projects or an allocation plan as required by the Restore Act. We understand the Councils' lack of certainty regarding the amount and timing of monies available under the RESTORE Act. A draft list of priority projects should be released to the public as soon as possible to allow for full public review and comment. We would request that the Council establish a publicly accessible portal where projects may be submitted and viewed and where the status of publicly submitted projects can be updated by the *Council*. Council members do not have access to all of the worthy conservation and restoration projects that exist in the Gulf.

We also believe that the Council must commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs.

Additionally, we are concerned that the Draft Plan does not include clear definition from the *Council* as to what qualifies as economic restoration particularly in comparison to infrastructure -- funding for which is limited under the RESTORE Act. We believe that economic restoration in the context of RESTORE must consider project sustainability and environmental impact -- does the project create a healthier environment or will add to pollution and environmental degradation. Since RESTORE Act funds will flow through penalties for violation of an environmental law, the Council must commit to ensuring that "economic restoration projects -- whether funded through the Council controlled or state impact component will not degrade the environment nor negatively impact ecosystem restoration projects funded under RESTORE, NRDA or NFWF. Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed Alabama beach-front hotel and conference center in Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

Consideration of local jobs creation must guide project selection. Implementing ecosystem restoration could create thousands of new local jobs for coastal communities significantly impacted by the BP drilling disaster. If project selection includes consideration of local hire, a new restoration economy could provide ecologically sustainable economic opportunities and broad public benefit to local

communities, including disadvantaged and distressed communities. The Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Council has the ability to build a solid foundation for decades of positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes by setting a strong precedent for managing large-scale restoration with an eye to community economic recovery and sustainability.

The GRN has significant concerns about the Objectives states in Section IV “Council-Selected Restoration Component”. First and foremost we believe that Objective 1 inappropriately ignores the need to restore marine habitats. The BP drilling disaster occurred in the marine environment and many of the impacts documented to date, including impacts on corals and the like, occurred in the marine environment. The Council cannot simply assume that there will be enough monies available under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process to address damage to marine habitat. Moreover, there is historical damage to marine habitats that will not be covered under NRDA. Accordingly, the Council should include within it habitat objective restoration of marine habitats.

Second, Objective 3 “Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources”, is so broad that it could cover virtually anything living in the Gulf. Far too many of the Gulf’s wildlife are threatened or endangered and far too many of its fisheries are overfished or undergoing overfishing. Additionally, the Gulf is being invaded by numerous invasive species which threaten native species. The GRN believes that the Council should focus this objective on those species most in need of protection and restoration, namely threatened, endangered or overfished species.

While we appreciate the Council’s statement of criteria for project selection, those criteria are broad and sometimes ambiguous. The final Plan should state more detailed specific criteria. Additionally, as discussed above specific mention of restoration of the marine environment and marine resources must be included.

We also believe that the council should develop additional criteria for vetting projects. For example, in selecting projects the Council should be required to consider whether a project will involve hiring of local workers, including the potential workforce development and job training programs that will allow a transition of workers in communities affected by the disaster to transition to employment in a restoration economy. Similarly, the Council should consider whether projects:

- invest in the resiliency of distressed communities;
- invest in green infrastructure and energy efficiency upgrades while reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and investing in clean, renewable sources of energy; and

Finally, a major question that remains unresolved by the Plan is how RESTORE Projects will come before the Council for potential selection. Do projects *have* to be sponsored or supported by one of the 11 members of the *Council* in order for them to be considered? If so, does the Council foresee considering only projects where the state or federal government is a sponsor. Or, will there be a procedure for submitting projects to Council members to be considered for sponsorship. The process that the Council foresees for public review and comment on projects that were sponsored by *Council* members is also less than clear. Will lists of potential projects selected by the Council be published for public review?

Council members, both state and federal, are not and cannot be aware of the myriad of worthy restoration and conservation projects being developed by universities, nonprofit conservation groups, municipalities, and coastal counties/parishes throughout the Gulf. It is, therefore, critical that the Council establish a process that allows submission of projects for review by Council members for possible sponsorship.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and look forward to working with the Council as it moves forward.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia M. Sarthou', with a stylized, flowing script.

Cynthia M. Sarthou
Executive Director

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some keys of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependant economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependant for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Maureen and Charles Chaisson
1110 LeCompte Drive
Westwego, Louisiana 70094
(504) 339-5997
moebbt@cox.net

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

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- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
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- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

KADai

1111 KENNEY DR.

WESTWEGO, LA 70094

504-347-3082

KADOIRON@COX.NET

Bob

As an avid sportsman & resident of Louisiana, I am deeply concerned about the state of our coast. I have ~~seen land disappear~~ fished an island one year and returned the next to find a ~~sea of shells~~ mound of shells not much larger than my dining room table. ~~The next~~ I have ~~talked~~ heard stories about the fields of sugar cane, ~~that~~ ~~and~~ cypress cypress swamps and oak groves ~~that~~ that are ~~now gone~~ ways full of pumping stations. ~~and~~

To the point, my daughter is taking over this letter if I ~~don't~~ hurry. The money should be used for restoration, not ~~economic~~ economic infrastructure. I.E. ~~not~~ hotels or casinos should ^{not} be built w/ the B.P. money. I support ~~a~~ a citizen ~~advisory~~ committee. It is essential.

~~10/10~~

The money should be spent on restoration. However, the idea of doing no ~~no~~ environmental harm is ~~flawed~~ ^{flawed}. For example, if ~~the~~ the levees of the Mississippi were destroyed tomorrow, it might do the greatest good for the restoration of our coast. The environmental damage would be great, ~~but~~ but restoration ~~would~~ would be aided and, perhaps, guaranteed. I am not proposing removal of the ~~levees~~, I am simply making the point that if ^{temporary} environmental harm ~~occurs~~ facilitates long term restoration ~~and~~ efforts ~~then~~ then it must be considered. Language stating that no ~~no~~ environmental harm can occur ~~would~~ ~~could~~ could ~~be used to~~ ~~end~~ ~~be~~ ~~a~~ limit or derail some ~~of the~~ legitimate restoration efforts. I ~~can~~ ~~could~~ could write much more and more legibly, but my daughter is climbing my back + it's night, night time.

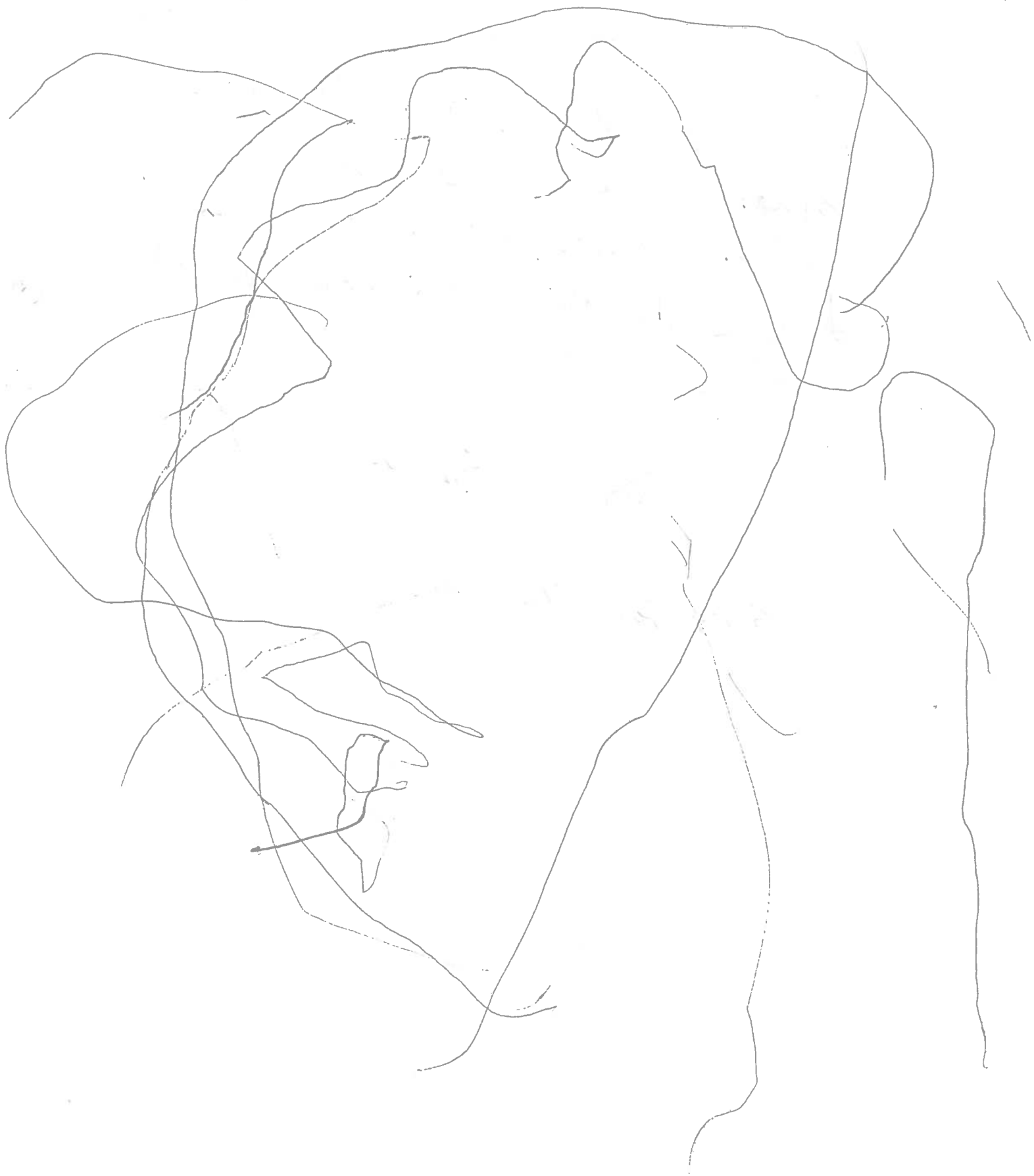
asworks1@cox.net
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Arion Smith

I planned to clean this up
but my 2½ year old had
other plans. I will write
another letter, but in the mean time
I do with this chicken scratch
what you wish.

Aaron Smith

Sorry for the mess



Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Department of Commerce

Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

As a Gulf Coast resident, I am concerned that the restoration plan has not included a priority list of spending allocation plan. I would like to make sure that all monies donated to this cause be fully accounted for and totally spent on the active restoration of our coast and not frivolous fees that can eat up a budget.

I would also like to see BP held responsible for the mess they created by not insuring that proper safety procedures were followed in favor of profit and production schedules.

Thank you,

Douglas J. Valotta

1236 Lecompte Dr.

Westwego, Louisiana 70094

(504) 264-7595

greeniguy51@bellsouth.net

June 11, 2013

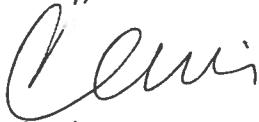
Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

A young man from the Gulf Restoration Network just came to my front door and spoke very passionately about the importance of restoring the Gulf of Mexico. He explained that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this twenty page document failed to address some key areas of concern. For example, it is disappointing to hear that the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of targeted projects or a spending allocation plan. I am curious how the Draft Plan would recommend action without a sense of which projects are of highest priority and in greatest need of funding. I also am disappointed to hear of plans for a conference center and hotel in Alabama's State Park. This might be a good step for economic recovery, but I am puzzled how this might improve environmental protections. My opinion is that the Citizen Advisory Committee proposed by the Gulf Restoration Network would be a wise step in finding not only a balance between economic and environmental needs, but also to make the residents of the Gulf Coast active participants in rebuilding their communities.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carolyn Lewis
2070 Cherrydale Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
Carolyn_7701@yahoo.com
225-892-0367

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

CHARLES K. DIEL
Attorney At Law

3535 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd., Suite 233
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70816
Ph: (225) 715-2121
Email: ckdiel@hotmail.com

June 11, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

As a lifelong resident of Louisiana, I know that the future of our state depends on the future of our greatest resource, our coast. For too many years, political agendas have failed to properly ensure the preservation of our levees, marshes and the entirety of the flora and fauna that comprise Louisiana's coastal ecosystem. While I applaud the work carried out by The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, after reviewing the recently released Draft Plan, I am afraid that it falls short of accomplishing the purpose of the Council. Therefore, I feel obliged to offer my concerns.

The Plan must incorporate a detailed and prioritized list of projects. Also, the process used to determine the amount of funding allocated to each project should be clearly published. This transparency will help us avoid the politics of the past while getting the most value out of each dollar spent. The Council must of course commit to comply fully with all laws whether environmental or otherwise. Finally, any proposal incorporated by the Council cannot seek short-term gain over long-term good. For example, the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, is not acceptable. Unless a prudently conducted study demonstrates, unequivocally, that the financial gain of a proposal outweighs its potential environmental harm, the proposal should not receive consideration.

The carpenter's adage, "measure twice, cut once" rings true simply because harmful actions are worse than inaction. Thank you for your time.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,


Charles K. Diel

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

June 12, 2013

Monalisa Phelps
735 CAMELIA ~~AVE~~ ST.
BATON ROUGE LA 70806
TEL 951-579-0401

Dear Mr Ehrenworth,

I am a concerned citizen that is very much involved in making efforts to restore the gulf coast and any other environmental issues that may damage the eco system or corrupt the health of all earthly inhabitants.

Together we can make a difference if we can unite and manage a committee for the proposed projects that have been waiting to be resolved. More and more people are concerned about their environment and are waiting to see what will be done. Please do not delay in your plans to effectively deal with these issues as our planet is in need of strong leadership regarding the environment and inhabitants.

Sincerely,
Mona Lisa Phelps

Mrs. Janet Laurie, RN, LNCC
2588 Biron St.
Mandeville, La. 70448
Phone: (985) 635-2651
Email: laurijl0@att.net

Justin Ehrenworth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenworth,

As you know, it has been three years since the 2010 British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; the worst environmental disaster in United States history. Citizens of the Gulf Coast are aware that there has been receipt of settlements and fines to assist in resolving the damage to the Gulf Coast. However, there is heightened concern that these funds may be used improperly or inappropriately. These funds should not be obliterated by state and local politicians who may choose to make unethical and unconscionable money grabs which may be used to fund environmentally destructive projects; we are supposed to be improving and restoring - not causing further damage.

Mr. Ehrenworth, it is of utmost importance that these funds be used for projects that restore the Gulf's ecosystems and restore the people who are still suffering. This is an opportunity to build a more resilient Gulf for future generations. Please make every effort to ensure that these funds are utilized properly by restoring the coastal lines of defense considering the increasing threat of stronger storms and rising seas as well as restoring the livelihoods of individuals and families who have been dependent on the resources of the Gulf for generations and continue to be dependent on its ecosystem.

The Council must include project lists in the Council's Draft Plan with consideration given to prioritizing and spending allocations to help ensure that goals are met. Funding must not be wasted frivolously. There must be no tolerance for any project that would cause environmental harm and all projects must comply with environmental laws. Citizens of the Gulf Coast must be included for membership on the Citizen Advisory Committee to further insure that funds are used appropriately.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Janet Laurie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

June 12, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Draft Plan released by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council successfully incorporated many of the recommendations from the public over the last several months, but failed to address some key areas of concern. Where is the list of projects or spending allocation plan? Why was this not included in the Draft Plan? As I'm sure you are aware, a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

Gulf Communities are dependent on the natural resources of the Gulf for their livelihoods; therefore, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery. It is also important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding. Projects must do no environmental harm, and any programs that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

Please take every effort to protect our Gulf Coast and make those who do harm to it accountable for such harm. This is my home, and it must be protected just as your home must be protected.

Sincerely,



Michelle Autin
1030 Scarlet Oak Ln
Mandeville, LA 70448

Cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, LA

June 3, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am writing in regards to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recent plan to improve the GULF RESTORATION. There are several issues of concern that need to be addressed from a citizens' point of view.

- Consider implementing a Citizen Advisory Committee which will acknowledge the interest of the people along the Gulf Coast, whether it be our citizens' livelihood or as a consumer.
- Represent the community in their best interest, as their life depends on a resilient coast. Encourage a resilient recovery for the residents; the fish in the sea and all the coastline's natural resources has to offer.
- Please be mindful of the detailed projects and spending allocations for the purpose of the environment not just the economic development of the coast.
- Be considerate of environmental laws in protection of all the programs and projects that receive that funding.

A clean coast is a productive and profitable coast.

Sincerely,



Linda Biven
2117 Champion Dr.
LaPlace, LA 70068
985-652-2827

Cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, LA

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

Even though the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released a Draft Plan incorporating many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several month, the 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The Gulf Coast communities who are dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, need every dollar the Council approves as a means to increase their resilience in the face of future storms which will impact these communities.

Therefore, the Draft Plan should include a priority list of projects or spending allocations. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

The Council should commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs.

Any projects supported by the Council must do no harm to the environment, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy, equally should not do further damage to the environment. The proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park do not meet this criteria, and are absolutely unacceptable.

I am glad the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, which the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to begin the nomination process for membership on this committee. The faster the committee is established, the faster things can start to happen for the benefit of all concerned.

Sincerely,

Ramona A. Maspons



5724 Rhodes Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70131-3924

504-494-4636

IWillPraiseTheLORD@gmail.com

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,
The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan failed to address key areas of concern.

It is Disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan didn't include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan! Please include a list of projects & DETAILED criteria for how projects will be selected for money!

Also, it is important that each project is in full compliance with environmental laws & regulations!

It is good to see the council considering a citizen Advisory Committee.

I want to see that our recovery dollars are used wisely!

- Collin Ross

523 Jena St
New Orleans LA 70115
504-722-2556
THEUSICA@aimail.com



To see the draft plan, visit <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Executive Director Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

5/30/13

Executive Director Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am concerned about possible oversights in your recent draft plan:

You are our best hope for focused attention on the importance of environmental restoration to our economy and its recovery.

I don't understand the paucity of detail in the draft plan, and it makes me feel uneasy.

Are you seriously proposing a conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park? This is not at all reassuring.

Riding roughshod over the landscape is not going to be helpful. More than ever we need respect for and enforcement of the environmental protection laws already on the books, but widely ignored with impunity.

I look forward to hearing about the nomination process for a Citizen Advisory Committee.

Your actions will affect millions of residents as well as generations as yet unborn.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration,
I am

Sincerely yours,
Kathryne Collins
500 Coolidge St.
New Orleans, La. 70121-2423



© Kathryn Collins
New Orleans, La

Justin Chrensweth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystems Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Chrensweth,

- It is important that your council approves and follows through with a plan that will bolster the economy in the Gulf region while at the same time ensuring the environment is sustained.
- Monies that are supposed to go towards the restoration of the gulf should be used for that purpose and no other.

Sincerely,
Myrl Dolin
2037 Buion St.
Mandeville, La. 70448

June 12, 2013

To: Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec. Dir.
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I'm a lifelong resident of southeast La. Along with so many of my family and friends, we worry that the Council's Draft Plan does not include or represent the priorities of projects necessary to restore our Gulf and its coastlines from the destruction and degradation stemming from BP's on-going oil spill. For too long we've seen monies mishandled or misappropriated. A list of projects and detailed criteria is essential to ensure our coastal environments and communities are restored as best as we can for our future, and for our children's futures.

I do not agree, or feel that a conference center and a hotel is what should be listed as an appropriate way to spend funds. Nor, does it help to restore the environment! Any projects should only go toward cleaning, restoring, and assisting the environment ~~and~~

its' people who live off the Gulf. An Advisory Committee (comprised of citizens) should be consulted as to each community's needs. Hotels and conference centers do not improve our Gulf!

I sincerely hope that you and the Council only consider projects that do no environmental harm, and that a detailed list of projects with specific criteria are presented. The draft plan should have spending allocations and details on how projects are selected.

It will take many years of on-going restoration for our Gulf to be healthy again. Please hold BP accountable, and not waste money on hotels and conference centers which are not needed through funding from a restoration fund.

Sincerely,

Mary Bowen
LaPlace LA.

Executive Director Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's draft plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while ~~damaging~~ damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Please help BP bully accountable for the damage that has been done to our beautiful coast.

Elizabeth N. Mull

Elizabeth N. Mull

28 Cactus Road

Mary Esther, FL 32569

(228) 224-6309

mne7995@yahoo.com

Douglas McMurry (Douglas_mcmurry@yahoo.com)
405 shrewsbury ct
#2
Jefferson, La 70121
May 30, 2013

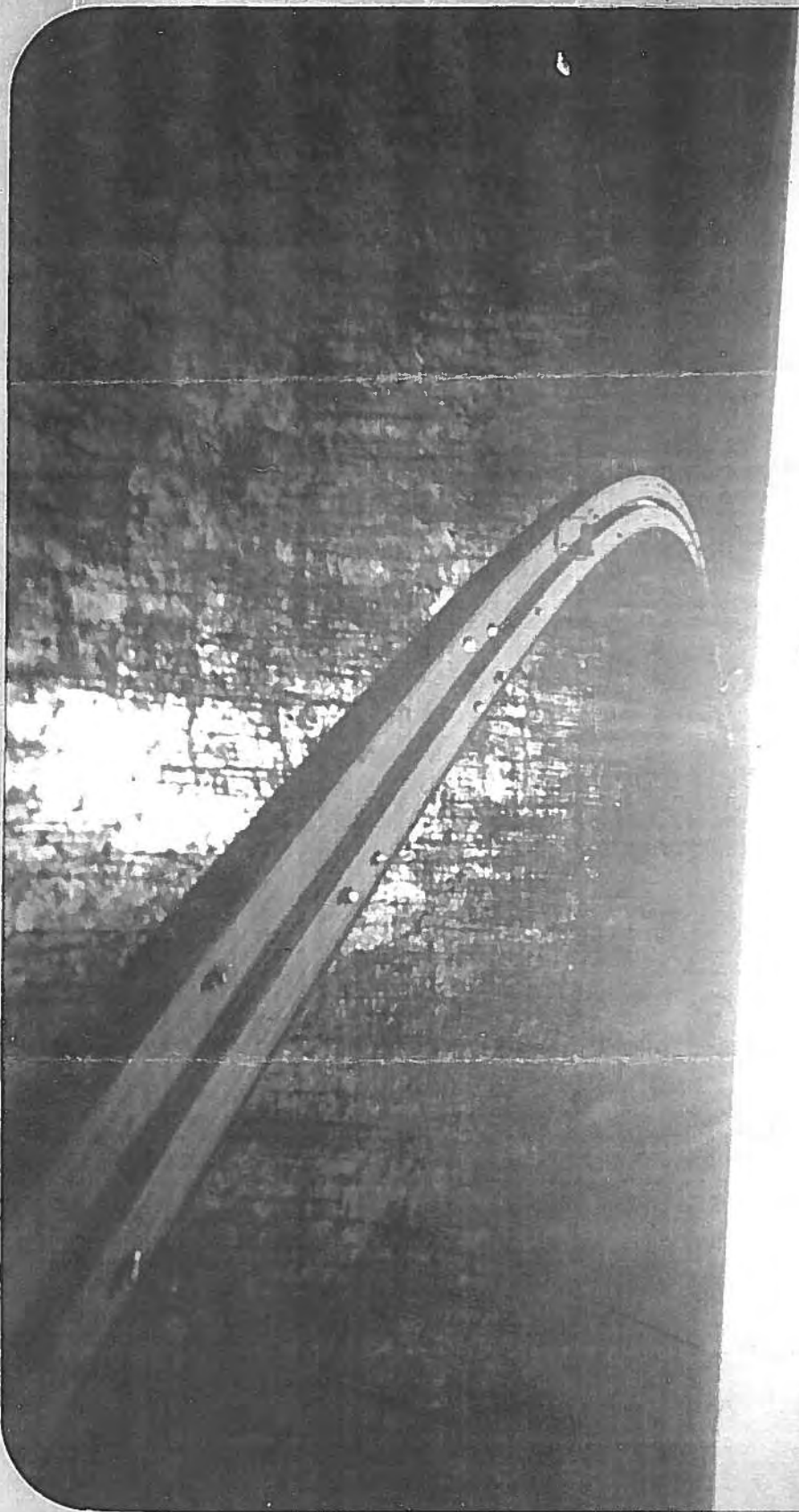
Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth
and other concerned parties,

I personally know several families and individuals who were devastated by the big oil spill (BP Horizon). They will never recover fully from the damage to their livelihood. In the early years of digging canals, drilling and ravaging the marshlands and coastal regions of the Gulf, we didn't realize the irreparable damage we were doing to the ecosystem, in the name of Almighty Free Enterprise (PROFIT).

Now we know, at least partly, that many species of wildlife in our oceans depend on the estuaries of this area to survive. We may never know how many species will eventually become more endangered or even extinct due to the oil spill and other unforgivable raping of the environment & resources of the Gulf Coast.

However, we CAN do everything possible to prevent future damage and accidents like that. Repairation and damage control need to be priorities. Methods mandated and funded need to be specific and measurable, not vague with room for interpretation and non-compliance through loopholes and unclear expectations. BP and other oil companies have no problems anticipating and protecting their profits, (i.e. - price hikes on gas in anticipation of an impending storm damaging (possibly) refineries). They should be made to put that much care, attention and resources into rebuilding the ecosystem and preventing ANY further damage.

It is time to advance the holding them accountable. Sincerely, Douglas McMurry



PROTECT AND REPAIR



Scarlett Andrews <scarlettashlen@gmail.com>

FW: Letter for GCERC

1 message

Gabriel Burgos <gabo_bc07@hotmail.com>

31 May 2013 21:42

To: scarlett@healthygulf.org, raleigh@healthygulf.org

From: meredith@southwings.org
Date: Fri, 31 May 2013 17:24:50 -0500
Subject: Letter for GCERC
To: gabo_bc07@hotmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I am writing to you as a citizen of the Gulf Coast to thank the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council for successfully incorporating many of the comments and recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months into the recently released Draft Comprehensive Plan. In addition, I wanted to address a few areas where I see room for improvement.

I am pleased to see a commitment to science-based decision making and adaptive management of plans and projects, and to see that the Council is committed to taking a regional, ecosystem-based, landscape-scale restoration approach that addresses the entire Gulf as one interconnected ecosystem; however, I would like to be assured that restoring both the coastal and marine environments will receive due consideration. I am also glad to see that the Council is using an integrated and coordinated approach and working closely to ensure that efforts funded through NRDA and NFWF are complementary.

I am pleased that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. I hope to see in the coming weeks a stronger commitment to establishing this committee.

While I appreciated that the Council integrated comments from the public into the recent Draft Comprehensive Plan, I was disappointed that the plan did not contain a list of priority projects or an allocation plan. I would like to see the priority list released to the public as soon as possible. In addition, I would also like to have a publicly accessible portal where projects may be submitted and viewed and where the status of publicly submitted projects is updated by the Council.

Most importantly, I hope to see a clear commitment from the Council that economic projects funded through the state impact component will neither negatively impact ecosystem restoration projects nor the environment overall. RESTORE projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment are unacceptable. Implementing ecosystem restoration will create thousands of new jobs on the Gulf Coast. This new economy should provide ecologically sustainable economic opportunities to local communities, including disadvantaged and distressed communities.

Restoring our environment restores our economy.

Sincerely,

Meredith Dowling
6043 Hurst St.
New Orleans, LA 70118
meredith.dowling@gmail.com

While I'm pleased that the Draft Plan
of the Council's Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration
appears to represent many of the coast's needs, I'd
like to make note of a few concerns I have.
As a long term resident of St. Tammany Parish I've
seen many well intended efforts get muddled by
the system. I believe that a not real party -
preferably a non-profit organization be set to
oversee ~~the~~ the process of the restoration and funds spent.
I believe that BP should pay the full amount
permitted by law to help the gulf coast recover
from the oil spill. As many indicators still show these
effects are long term and we will require every
dollar possible to help put the ecosystem back
as well as possible. Thank you,



Troy Matola
411 Greenfield Dr.
Mandeville, LA 70448

985-
788-3332
treyevana
yahoo.com

John Ehrenweth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

June 5, 2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

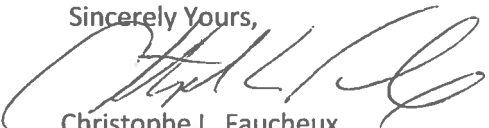
The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the past several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern. This is Louisiana's one chance to make our Gulf coast and our communities more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms.

Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or council-led plans, should increase our resilience to the rising sea level, Hurricane storm surge, and environmental restoration. There is indentified plan that can meet all of our objectives. I strongly believe that it is in the best interest of Louisiana to divert Mississippi river sediment into our salt water marshes to help fortify and restore our coast. Historical data proves that the Mississippi river is best method to rebuild Louisiana's coast and improve habitat. **Mississippi River diversions are also the most cost effective method to achieve our objectives.** It would allow our state to continually restore our coast through an initial investment and with minimal maintenance costs the State would have a sustainable model to protect its citizens from future disasters.

Additionally, it is public knowledge that Louisiana has suffered the vast majority of the damage from the oil spill and as such is entitled to the vast majority of restoration money. Please do everything you can to ensure that the oil spill fines and monies are allocated to the areas that sustained the greatest harm (Southeast Louisiana) Also, I'm happy to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

With Kindest Regards, I remain

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Fauchaux', written over the typed name.

Christophe L. Fauchaux

Christophe L. Fauchaux
45 Country Club Dr.
Laplace, LA 70068

Executive Director Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I open by saying, "Hello and thank you for your time. I appreciate it." I am very concerned with and moved by my environment. I want it to bless my children and their children. In order for that to happen a few things need to take place. Anyone who threatens our environment needs to be held responsible for that repair/restoration and there should be a group to truly govern that restoration. I have been informed that that group is The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. This Council should commit fully to environmental laws for all projects and programs. It should also ensure that the supported project will do no harm to the environment. In no way is continuing to allow these events acceptable. The public should be made aware of all planned project for restoration and maintenance to our beautiful Gulf Coast prior to their commencement. The committee should hold themselves publically accountable, by way of a prioritized list of projects and spending detailing how the projects will be selected for funding, also made available to the public prior to their commencement. With that said I appreciate the Council considering a Citizen Advisory Committee and would like to see that take immediately.

We need to protect our environment for ourselves and our children. I thank you for your time and your consideration.

Yours truly,



L. Angel' Dabney

LaPlace, La. 70068

HonorandPraise@gmail.com

To: Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I have been reading about a Draft Plan
the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
(GCERC) released that included many
of the very things the public was clamoring
to include which was great. I fault this
report/document as failing to address some
key areas of concern, by using the public's,
but only the ones to smoke screen
the main issues.

It was discouraging and disconcerting
that GCERC Draft Plan did not include
a priority list or spending allocations
plan

It is of the utmost importance that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental for all projects and programs.

The Council, any supported project should do no environmental harm. As is in the proposed Alabama Gulf State Park's hotel and convention center.

The Council should move quickly in establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee Council and begin the ~~nomination~~ process for membership.

Sincerely

Daryll A Garcia

Daryll A. Garcia
1401 Carrollwood Dr.
LaPlace, LA 70068
704 682 1487

6-10-13

Dear Mr Ehrenworth

In Regards to the Restore the Gulf.

My Neighbor is a Commercial Fisherman.

He fishes in Lake Pontchartrain La.

Since the Oil spill he has lost his House
and Crab Traps. He is living with his
father now trying to get his life
back together.

I think B. P. Oil Co. should be
responsible for restoring the Gulf Coast
as it was before the spill.

Cal Elliott
1604 Carrollwood Dr
La Place La
70068.

June 10, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council has started off good by releasing the Draft Plan, but I am concerned that the monies will not be allocated to the projects that are critical. The Council needs to commit to the environmental laws for all the projects that are receiving funding.

I have lived in South Louisiana all my life and don't want to see the Gulf coast waste away. There are so many people who rely on the coast for their lively hood. These trades have been passed down from generation to generation and personally I don't want to see these people lose the only thing they have done for their entire life.

As far as hurricanes, building up the Gulf coast means more protection. I was involved in hurricane Katrina and was devastated by the amount of people that have not recovered yet. Our people need to be protected and so does our land.

It is also important that the projects the Council supports not cause any harm to the environment. We are a sportsman paradise and the more people who come here for our environment , the more our economy will recover.

Sincerely,



Connie S Courville

349 Rosedown Dr.

La Place, LA 70068

504-667-2345

Chefwan2b@yahoo.com

Justin Ehernwerth, Executive Director

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Resoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehernerth:

While as a resident of Louisiana I'm pleased that many of the recommendations proposed were incorporated by the Gulf Coast Restoration Council; in all of the 20 pages of the released documents, there many concerns still unaddressed.

Enviromental restoration is esssential to economic recovery of our gulf communities. We rely on the council to represent our best interest in the restoration and future resilience of our coast. It is disappointing that the council's drfat Plan failed to include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A detailed criteria of how projects will be determined for funding is critical. While doing so, it is also important that the council stays true to the environmental laws in all future projects and programs that are recieving funding.

Iti s also important that no projects aimed at boosting the ecomonic growth of our communities hamr our environment in the process. We do thank the Council for considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has requested on several occasions in the past. We only ask that you move quickly to establish and began the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerly,



Kimberly Hartmann

2039 Ponderosa PL

Mandeville, L 70448

cleohartmann@yahoo.com

Justin Ehernwerth, Executive Director

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Resoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

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Sincerly,



Barry T. Hartmann

2039 Ponderosa PL

Mandeville, L 70448

cleohartmann@yahoo.com

Monday, June 10, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Adam Rowe
2006 Red Oak Lane
Mandeville, LA 70448
adam.alissa75@gmail.com

June 7, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- ✓ The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- ✓ The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- ✓ It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- ✓ It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- ✓ Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- ✓ It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Joe Lemay
311 Goldenwood St.
Mandeville, LA 70448
985-626-1931
joelmay@yahoo.com



To see the draft plan, visit <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf!

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
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- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Even better – Come make your comments in person!

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Public Hearing
Wednesday, June 12
6:30 pm CST (doors open at 6:00 pm CST)
Belle Chasse Auditorium
8398 Louisiana Hwy 23
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Betty Perez
145 Jeanne DR.
Avondale La 70094

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address key issues of concern.


The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

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It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cheryl King Gansemer", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Cheryl King Gansemer
24 Holly Drive
Laplace, LA 70068
cherylgansemer@yahoo.com

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, LA

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

June 13, 2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I am writing to you with regard to the recent "Draft Plan" your council proposed. While it did contain many of the public's recommendations collected over the past several months, several major components for true success of the plan are as yet still missing. Because our restored coast represents our greatest defense against rising seas and stronger storms, it is imperative that our new proposals be concrete, detailed, in full compliance with environmental laws and (obviously) ensured to do NO MORE damage to the environment.

Thankfully, the council is considering a Citizens Advisory Board. An excellent idea! Please expedite the nominations and get this citizens' board working with you towards the "cure" - coastal restoration - and, our economic recovery will soar with it.

Sincerely,

Jeanne On
125 Holly Drive
Laplace, La 70068

cc: Barret Graves

HI, MY NAME IS GEORGE BOURGEOIS
I'M JUST WRITING TO SAY THAT.

I'M GLAD THAT THERE'S STILL
PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT
OIL POLLUTION IN THE GULF AND
SURROUNDING AREA'S. I'VE BEEN
I'VE BEEN FISHING IN GANDE ISLE
SINCE I WAS (8) YEARS OLD
AND I'M GOING TO BE (52) YEARS OLD
I HAVN'T BEEN SINCE THE SPILL.

IT SEEM THAT SOMEBODY'S
DOING A GOOD JOB IN THE
LAFITTE AREA AND FISHING
HAS PRETTY GOOD. I'M JUST
WRITING TO SAY THANK YOU
TO THE COUNCIL AND ANYONE INVOLVED
IN THE PROJECT.

THANK YOU SINCERLY
George Bourgeois
469 W. MAPLE LOOP
LAPLACE LA. 70068



Scarlett Andrews <scarlettashlen@gmail.com>

FW: Gulf Letter

1 message

Gabriel Burgos <gabo_bc07@hotmail.com>

To: scarlett@healthygulf.org

13 June 2013 21:49

Date: Sat, 1 Jun 2013 15:17:33 -0500

Subject: Gulf Letter

From: gweiss1858@gmail.comTo: gabo_bc07@hotmail.com

Jeff Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am writing this letter in response to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently drafted plan. While I am satisfied with many of the points proposed in this plan, it does seem to be missing a few key initiatives. One problem this bill has is that it doesn't ensure that all money appropriated to the Council increases our gulf's resilience to rising seas and stronger storms. Increasing resilience leads to a safer environment, and more natural resources essential to our local economy. One other problem is the lacking of a detailed priority list of projects. It is not enough to simply hope that the most important projects will be put first. It is also important that this piece of legislation make sure that we do not hurt the environment purely for economic means, in the words of Abraham Lincoln "I hope to stand firm enough to not go backward". By moving ahead with plans to build a hotel and conference center in Alabama's Gulf State Park, we are moving backwards. Lastly please be sure to continue with plans to create a Citizen Advisory Committee.

P.s. Mr. Ehrenwerth, I know you will be receiving a ton of letters, and you will probably be annoyed with our perseverance, but remember, grassroots movements are the epitome of U.S. Democracy. This is the number one way a constituency can speak directly with their officials, so please hear our voice, and act.

Sincerely,

Gerhardt Weiss, 6056 Hurst street, New Orleans, LA 70118

Dear Mr. Ehlworth

- I am a member of the
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration
Council. You better rebuild
our gulf with money instead
of spending it on your
government agenda. Bp must be
responsible and pay and
the money must only be used
to restore the gulf!!!

Sincerely,
Craig Sippel

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Robert Wiltse
2001 Myrtle Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70806
Rrobb52@aol.com

Cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, LA



To see the draft plan, visit <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf!

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Even better – Come make your comments in person!

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Public Hearing
Wednesday, June 12
6:30 pm CST (doors open at 6:00 pm CST)
Belle Chasse Auditorium
8398 Louisiana Hwy 23
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

June 14, 2013

Joshua Ehrenworth, Ex. Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenworth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal development economics more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economy, recovery,

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish: begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,
Amy Schissel

Amy Schissel

6226 Carlson Dr

NO LA 70122

aschissel@hotmail.com.

Now that I have written the polite letter enclosed I would like to say that as one who writes community & regional plans for a living and a current federal employee, I am embarrassed by this 20-page document without priorities or allocation and accountability. If I was involved in such a plan I would lose my job. With the amount of money in consideration & the possible consequence it is dreadful that this plan has been diluted to its current state. Please take these requests with the seriousness they are given —

AS



cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana
Coastal Protection + Restoration Authority
Baton Rouge, LA

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or council-led programs, should increase our resilience. Gulf communities and the rest of the country depend on the natural resources of the Gulf.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION IS ESSENTIAL TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND HEALTH.

The council must fully comply to environmental laws for all projects that receive funding. Projects must **NOT POSE ENVIRONMENTAL HARM**, like the proposed conference center in Alabama's State Park, which is absolutely unacceptable.

Please begin the nomination process for membership on this committee!

Sincerely,

RANDON ROSENBOHM

Randon Rosenbohm
7738 SYCAMORE ST
70118 NEW ORLEANS

June 14, 2014

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

Over the past several months, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council ~~recently~~ been incorporating the public's recommendations to recently release a Draft Plan, but the 20 page document has not included the main area of concern. The council's efforts to jump-start restoration of Coastal lines defer and Gulf coast communities and coastal-dependent economy more resilient ~~in the~~ with rising sea levels and stronger hurricanes. Each dollar the Council approves through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. The Gulf is essential for many gulf communities and environmental restoration is needed to rebuild the economy. There's a big disappointment to see the Council's Draft plan didn't include a priority list of projects or spending. The list of projects and detailed criteria of funding is critical. The Council's commitment to full compliance with environmental laws for all project and programs receiving funding is very important. Any Council supported projects must not environmentally involve harm to boost economy, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, is absolutely unacceptable. It would be better if the Council consider a Citizen Advisory committee, something that has been asked repeatedly by the public. Please consider the points of issue I have addressed in plan.

Truly Yours,
Kyra Scoby-Hamilton, 5876 MacArthur Blvd. New Orleans
LA, 70131, (504) 438-9245, princesskay99@yahoo.com

~~Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.~~

~~Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:~~

~~Over the past several months~~

To Mr. Justin Ehrenworth

I haven't kept up with these issues
for some time, because I don't believe B P
- I don't have much faith in the elected
officials. If you can keep a eye on these guys -
so this money can be put to good use
it would be deeply appreciated

David A. Augustine Jr.
2728 Yorktown Dr.
Laplace La-
70068

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr Ehrenwerth

The Restoration Council's Draft Plan fails to address many areas of concern. Every dollar the council approves should improve the Gulf Coast's resilience, especially for the benefit of the community. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

All plans will need to comply with all environmental laws. Projects that bolster the economy while damaging the environment must not be approved. An example of this is the proposed Alabama beachfront hotel and conference center.

Please consider a citizens advisory council - after the efforts seen in Alaska post-Valdez, this would be great for the Gulf.

Sincerely,

Heleen Tanner
290 Prospect #2
Auburn MA 01501
hktanner@gmail.com



Restore the Gulf

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
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- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Director Trudy Fisher
P.O. Box 2261, Jackson MS 39225-2261

2257 New York Street
New Orleans, LA
70122

June 18, 2013

Mr Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec. Dir.
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr Ehrenwerth:

I am a New Orleans citizen who is greatly concerned about the complete restoration of our ecosystem. The efforts of the Gulf Coast Council represent our best opportunity to make our communities whole. Many families in this area depend on the natural resources which have been either destroyed or damaged by the oil companies.

The greatest need of this community is a draft plan that includes a specific projects, spending allocations and a list of priorities which are of greatest need. It is also urgent that the Council commits itself to compliance with all environmental laws applicable to such projects.

Thank you for considering the addition of a Citizen Advisory Committee. This process should begin immediately to insure citizen input and participation

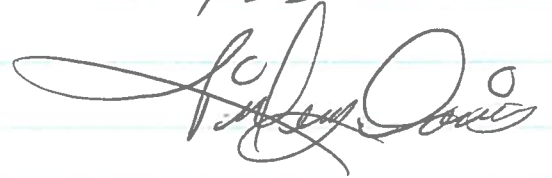
Sincerely
Geri M. Elie

DEAR MR. EHRENWEATH,

MY NAME IS RICKY AN I WAS NOT IN THE AREA WHERE
THE OIL SPILL HAPPEND, BUT I AM CONCERN ABOUT WHAT
HAPPEND TO THE PEOPLE THAT LOST EVERYTHING HOME
BUSINESS JOB ETC. BP OIL SHOULD BE HOLD ACCOUNT-
ABLE FOR ALL DAMAGES. GIVE THE PEOPLE THE MONEY
THAT THEY DESERVE TO RESTORE THEIR LIVES.

RS. I AM NOT FILING A CLAIM BECAUSE I
WAS NOT IN THE AREA OF THIS DISASTER

SINCERELY
I AM MAD DAMIT GIVE THE
PEOPLE WHAT THEY DESERVE

A stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ricky'.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am very tired of people in Washington talking about what needs to be done and doing Nothing about solving the need to restore our coast. Our community depends on the resources of the Gulf.

The talk and the waste of our taxed dollars needs to stop. Immediate action needs to happen!

Sincerely,

Yarn B. Bailey

2429 Cous Couson

Mandeville, Louisiana 70448

DEAR MR. EHRENWERTH,

I AM WRITING IN REGARDS TO THE RECENTLY RELEASED DRAFT PLAN FROM THE GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL. THE PLAN SUCCESSFULLY INCORPORATES MANY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSED BY THE PUBLIC BUT DOES LEAVE KEY AREAS OF CONCERN. THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT PLAN DOES NOT INCLUDE A PRIORITY LIST OF PROJECTS, SPENDING ALLOCATION, AND A DETAILED CRITERIA FOR HOW THE PROJECTS WILL BE SELECTED FOR THE FUNDING IS VERY CRITICAL AND IMPORTANT. THE COUNCIL SHOULD ALSO COMMIT ITSELF FULLY WITHIN THE LAWS FOR ALL PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS THAT RECEIVE FUNDING. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT ALL PROJECTS AND FUNDING SHOULD BE TRANSPARENT IN IT'S PROCESS, SO THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING, AT EVERY ASPECT. THE COUNCIL SHOULD NOT ONLY CONSIDER, BUT APPROVE A CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE. THE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE MADE UP OF CITIZENS WHO NOT ONLY WANT TO HELP, BUT HAVE NO INFLUENCE FROM ANY POLITICAL, CORPORATE, ETC. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND LET'S DO THE RIGHT THING.

SINCERELY,

JASON BARD

1900 LIVINGSTON STREET

MANDERLILLE, LA 70448

(985) 246-6315

jibmonsterenergy@yahoo.com

06-03-2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I have lived with my family in New Orleans for more than 25 years. My children were born here. This is our home, our city, our coast. It is highly disturbing to us to see how this area has gone from bad to worse. My questions are many, but there are a few that are important:

① Is the Council committed to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects that receive funding?

② Will the council support projects that will continue to destroy our coasts? Economic progress at the expense of the environment is not progress. On the contrary, it is supporting and contributing to destroying our communities. For example, the proposed conference center in Alabama's Gulf State Park.

③ Where is the priority list of projects and plans for allocation?

I could go on and on but this gives you an idea of my concerns.

I want a healthy planet for my children and their children, I want the effort to be placed in restoration of our world, not making money at the expense of nature.

Please move quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee.

I do not want to leave my home, but if I have to go, I will choose a state or an area that does as much as it can to put the health of our world first.

Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely,

Blanca Anderson + family
8219 Sycamore Place
NO LA
70118
bandersn@gmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
GCEBC
Dept of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I'm writing as a concerned resident of Louisiana and as a concerned citizen of the world. In our backyard exists a precious yet dangerous resource that ~~must~~ has put the Gulf and its residents at risk. I appreciate the efforts of the council to regulate how money is allocated in cleaning up the Gulf and urge the council to create the Citizen Advisory Committee so the community has input in these decisions, as well.

While efforts by the council to restore the Gulf are essential to economic recovery, it is also crucial to take into consideration how economic recovery may be detrimental to this very effort. The proposed project in Alabama's Gulf State Park is one ~~way~~ such project that may lead to economic recovery at the expense of long-term environmental damage which will lead to eventual destruction of the natural environment and those dependent on it for their livelihoods.

Finally, I urge the council to take the steps necessary to ensure that the Draft Plan includes a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected. This crucial element should decide, in the favor of staying on the right side of history, how coastal dependent economies and the communities they foster will remain resilient and these criteria should keep this as an overarching mission.

Sincerely,

Selma Alamin
2312 Dublin St
New Orleans, LA 70118
202569 9668
Selma.alamin@gmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Councils 20 page document failed to address key area of concern to coastal residents.
- Gulf Coast communities are dependent on every dollar given to restoration of the coast. So more money should be allocated for this fund
- Preserve the coastal way of life prior to the oil spill. Generations depend on this way of life.

Sincerely,

Jeanine Casey
6331 Caldwell Dr
W.O. LA

Jeanine Casey

Anonymous...

The GCERC's Draft Plan is probably the best chance at actually getting progress in areas that truly need it. I feel it is imperative that ~~the~~ these things be written in stone, so to speak. Also, with said specifics put to paper they become more of a contractual obligation rather than the "right thing to do," which we all know politicians are no good at. Now, that's not to say all politicians but, the ones pushing this issue around. I'd love to see BP "man up" and take one for the ecosystem, unfortunately that doesn't even happen in the movies. That being said, the GCERC needs a battle plan, if you will. I think it is vital for the restoration effort that this Draft Plan be severely revised and specified.

It's not much but for what it's worth I hope it helps.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I'm writing you concerning the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration. I believe the funds should be monitored. There should be a spending plan they should not be using the funding for anything else but to restore what was destroyed during the BP spill. Alabama planning to use the funds given to their State to build a park this should not be. I have friends, and family that was diagnosed with different illness from the unclean water. Please make sure the process of the park being build is **STOPPED!!**

Jovonna Cooley
188 Grove Park, La Place, LA 70066
(504) 315-9913 Jovonna32@gmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

As a resident of the gulf coast, I
cherish the culture, the people, and
most of all the environment. The wetlands
and coastal regions of Louisiana are
disappearing faster than ever before.
We in the coastal states urge you to make
our coast & wetlands a priority.

Sincerely,
Kelly N. Tyler
5733 Cameron Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70122
kntyler@me.com

①

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

It is very disappointing to see how BP has tried to settle with communities in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana.

My livelihood has drastically changed. Job loss due to the spill in 2010.

Our Gulf Coast has drastically changed.
Environment forever changed.

BP has paid billions of dollars for entertainment before taking care of other critical issues.
BP should be held accountable for the losses of ~~B~~illions.

2

Still praying for the Council to have
an investigation into BP. Gulf Coast Citizens
deserve their livelihoods back.

Please work on all the issues at hand.

Sincerely,

Janet Forsyth

Janet Forsyth

5714B Pasteur Blvd.

New Orleans, LA 70122

(850)-691-8203

To Whom it May Concern,

Since the spill in the gulf my attitude towards BP has gone from not happy with their efforts to neutral or even somewhat pleased with their commitment to the gulf. I cannot say that I will join their group but continue to support my efforts to restore and improve the coast.

I will continue to monitor the internet and participate in any discussion concerning BP's efforts. The door to door campaign re-enforces my feelings towards a favorable opinion of BP.

I believe now that BP is truly concerned and hope that their commitment continues to stay strong.

The BP representative I spoke with Mr. Gabriel Burgoa was well versed and knowledgeable and should be commended for his efforts.

Thanks for your attention

Mr. GERALD LABAT Jr.

159 Holly Dr. Laplace LA 70068

(225) 317-2148

GLABATJR@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

Saltwater invasion, lack of proper sediment deposition into inland coastal Louisiana marshes, and the recession of the mouth of the Mississippi River have been ongoing problems for years now. It is known that the mouth of the Mississippi River is shifting to the north due in large to the erosion and depletion of our coastal marshes. Because we have noticed the phenomenon before it has become a paramount threat, there is a great chance for us to initiate objectives and projects in order to delay this natural erosion which we have exacerbated through much anthropogenic activity.

BP's oil spill in 2010 has affected the Louisiana coast in many ways. On November 15, 2012 Eric Holder made an announcement from the Attorney General's Office in New Orleans that BP had recently been fined in the amount of \$4.5 Billion, of which they are to pay the majority, of, allegedly, to coastal restoration organizations & projects. With this amount of money, being available for the restoration of Louisiana's coast, I believe that much progress can be made with the money being put into the right hands.

That being said, my concern is that this money will be spent in inappropriate ways & not entirely used for the necessary task at hand, namely the restoration & conservation of the Louisiana coast. The Louisiana coastal marsh and its surrounding area are a very important entity, to the state for business, recreation and a place of residence for many people. As much as we depend on the southernmost part of our state, we cannot afford to put every penny rewarded toward anything else but reparations to

those who have lost so much, & for the much needed objectives of protecting our marshes to be acted upon.

I see this as a perfect opportunity to take action on coastal erosion & saltwater ~~invasion~~ invasion problems that have come over our coast for years. I am proud to be from Louisiana, and proud of our unique biodiversity which calls our marshland home. I hope you will take my concern into full consideration, and help us to ensure those funds being put into the appropriate projects in order to preserve one of Louisiana's most treasured resources, which are our coastal marshes.

Sincerely,
Hunter Fugua
rfugua3@lsu.edu

June 11, 13

A note from
Calla Walker

Dear Mr. Chrewerth,

This note is
ask you to be sure
all money received
from B. P. goes to
Gulf Coast Ecosystem
Restoration

Calla Walker
530 Marine Ave.
Mandeville
La 70448



June 4, 2013

Justin Ehrenworth
Gulf Restoration Grp -
Dear Mr Ehrenworth,

Please use your knowledge & influence guide your decisions for the beneficial guardianship of the welfare of the gulf and the surrounding wetlands for the benefit of Louisiana, the border states of the Gulf, and ultimately the whole country. Most people are not aware of the importance of the wetlands to the whole eco-system and therefore to the national economy -

I saw and read about of the somewhat dubious ways GP was throwing money at the "problem." They seemed

June 4, 2013

Justin Ehrenworth
Gulf Restoration Grp -
Dear Mr Ehrenworth,

Please use your knowledge & influence guide your decisions for the beneficial guardianship of the welfare of the gulf and the surrounding wetlands for the benefit of Louisiana, the border states of the Gulf, and ultimately the whole country. Most people are not aware of the importance of the wetlands to the whole eco-system and therefore to the national economy -

I saw and read about of the somewhat dubious ways GP was throwing money at the "problem." They seemed

to feel that to be seen
spending money was enough.

Please, now the courts
have acted, please be a
knowledgeable & prudent
steward of this award -
Please do not let it fall
into the pockets of
profiteers and fail to
reach the areas where it
can really make very
restorative changes
& clean the residual
oil, and hopefully
start to restore the
flora & fauna that have
been harmed by their
careless reaction to and
handling of the spill -

Andrew Smith

951 Laharrie St

Mandeville LA

70448

JUSTIN EHRENWORTH, Executive Director
GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL
DEPT. OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, DC

DEAR MR. EHRENWORTH,

I'm writing you on behalf of the GULF RESTORATION NETWORK as well as the CITIZENS OF LOUISIANA, as I am one, and others in the gulf area. I'm concerned about the well being and future of our lands. It would be a shame to see our wetlands disappear, especially since there are positive plans of action out there that can be embraced.

There has been a Draft Plan with many good ideas and recommendations proposed by the public that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council released; however some key areas of interest were not included. One item that should be addressed, and has not been yet, is a prioritized list of projects, detailed criteria of how projects will be chosen for funding and spending allocations. All projects and programs chosen to receive funding should also be in full compliance with

environmental laws; the Council should be committed to this. That being said, any plans enacted should do no environmental damage. Any proposals that aim to boost economy, while may be seemingly helpful, but sacrifice the environment should be denied.

The efforts of the Council are to make our land, and therefore our community, more resilient to damages, from weather or otherwise. We should be using every dollar approved to make our community stronger, by ensuring that our natural resources, on which our livelihoods depend, are continually being made more resilient.

As a cook, who sources local products most of the time if not all, like so many others, the gulf and restoration of it affects me directly. Therefore, while it is great that the council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, I urge you to move with haste on the establishment of the

nomination process for membership
on this committee.

Thank you for your time,

Amber Rademacher
7905 Panola St
New Orleans, LA 70118
(985) 237-3427
ambrerademaker@yahoo.com

Amber Rademacher

Dear Mr Ehrenworth 6/6/13

I attended the first public forum at The Coliseum in Biloxi. I spoke as a concerned coast resident who used the waters alot before the spill. I regret I

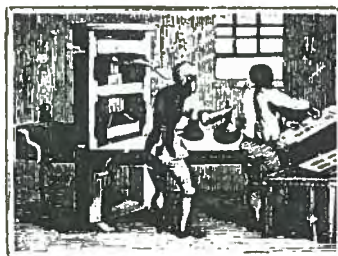
have grave concerns that the Gulf and surrounding wet lands are still effected by the oil spill.

I want a comprehensive Top to bottom survey of the presence of residual oil.

I want to see a priority list with scientific survey and comprehensive clean up plan on the TOP priority.

I want to be on the Citizen advisory committee. You must approve that group. With or with out me.

I want No Pork Barrel hotels ^{Glenn} ↓ will



Glenn Edward Miller
Printmaker

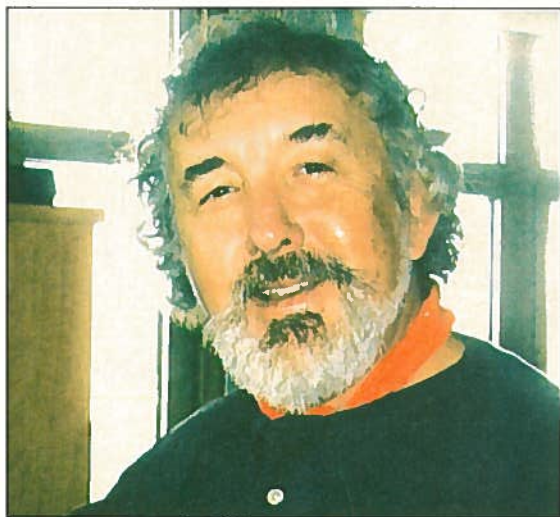


am an artist with
thirty years experience in
Etching. I've done a variety
of Plates on Local Subjects.
Presentation on Request.

STUDIO GALLERY
417 Dewey Ave.
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
228-217-2235
glennetching@yahoo.com

GLENN EDWARD MILLER

My name is Glenn Miller. I am a lifetime artist who lives on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Here recently my life and artwork has been heavily affected by hurricane Katrina. Before the storm I was predominantly an etcher and figurative in style, but I had also been working on a series of abstracts. I call these works "Indian Space Painting", the name and style I have adopted from my hero ... the little known great painter Steve Wheeler (1912-1991). After Katrina, I found myself using this aesthetic approach more and more. It has enabled me to explore a deep and wide form of expression. The process encourages surrealistic approaches such as automatic drawing. I have also immersed myself in Native American and Meso American art. There is a stylistic and metaphysical connection that involves symbol, formation, transfiguration, death and rebirth. I also feel able to fuse ancient tribal art and so-called modern art. I consider the "making" to be a ritual process that embodies universal truths through symbolic shapes, elemental designs, and the use of color and sacred light.



GLENN EDWARD MILLER

Glenn is a well-known Ocean Springs artist who received his early art training in New Orleans. There he became apprenticed to the famous etcher Eugene Loving. During his New Orleans period, Glenn created a now rare and collectable series of etchings of New Orleans jazz musicians. He received a BA degree from the University of New Orleans in printmaking and also attended Tulane Graduate School, where he also studied printmaking with James Steg.

STUDIO GALLERY

417 Dewey Ave. • Ocean Springs, MS 39564
228-217-2235 • glennetching@yahoo.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I believe that the money should be given to the Gulf Restoration Network because the gulf is a Major Money maker to Louisiana before the BP oil spill. Before the oil spill, Louisiana made most of its money through the seafood industry which mainly happened in the Gulf. After the spill though, the seafood became poisonous for humans to consume, or died away from lack of oxygen and a clean environment. Once that has occurred, the economy of Louisiana went down. Though, not only the Louisiana economy went down, but also the nation's. Louisiana is one of America's main seafood industry, and with that down, America's economy went down. If you give the money back to the Gulf Restoration Network, Louisiana's and America's economy will surely improve.

Sincerely,
Grace Wicker
181 Carmen Dr.
Avondale La 70094

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jump-start the restoration of our coastal lines of defense and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollars the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed Criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is Critical

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Abnams Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It's good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on the committee.
Sincerely, Tarré Robertson Jarotabe
177 Valentine Dr, Avondale, LA 70004. 504-352-5762
robertsontarr@ yahoo.com

6/13/13

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Draft Plan recently released by The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, has apparently failed to show and address some of the key areas of concern for our Coastal restoration.

The moneys allocated for the restoration of the wetlands, coastal erosion, coastal dikeade to keep storms for making more damage, is not being spent as such.

Please use the moneys to save our coastal areas, cause this could be your

2

house to be affected. So, re-read the Draft plan, and place your senses to the areas that need help. Build up our barriers, levees, coastal wetlands w/ the allocated moneys received.

Sincerely,

S. Bruce
109 Carmen Dr.
Avondale, La.
70094

504-252-4906

Justin Ehrenwerth 6/13/2013
Executive Director
of Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth;

Funding is ~~necessary~~ ^{necessary} to
projects to full restoration
of Gulf Coast area without
damaging the natural ecosystem.
This must be done in
such a way that the environment
is left in a natural way
without commercial endeavors.

Thank You
Ms Carol W. Fene
168 Carmen Dr
Fondale, La
70094

Dear Mr. Eshenwerth,

although I am very happy to see that our coastal states are ready to start coastal restoration projects that Hurricane Katrina and other storms plus years of neglect have damaged. I was disappointed to hear that some of this money was being considered for other projects like hotels, convention centers etc. This is unacceptable. Coastal restoration is vital not only for the marine life that resides there but for the residents of coastal states who depend on the coast to earn their livings. We deserve every dollar allotted to go to the intended purpose for which it was meant. I personally will not vote for anyone that approves the use of these funds for any other reason.

The people who live in these coastal communities deserve nothing less. Please do the right thing and for once lets put our homes and our families before money.

Thank You,

Joseph Minna

136 Felicia Dr.
Avondale, Az.

70094

jminna@carboditta-inc.com

Iris R. Whalen
Right to Know GMO MS
State Representative
1 Fleetwood Place
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec. Dir.
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 pg. document failed to address some key areas of concern. Those of us who live on the beaches still see the damaging results of BP's oil spill. We still are seeing above average incidents of dead sea life. Our land environments close to our waters still reflect damage and/or death. People are still sick here from the crude oil and dispersants. Our tourist industry was ravaged, along with our seafood industry, thus destroying, financially and emotionally, our citizens. We truly want restoration.

We want our towns to be the same as they were before BP's negligence turned our already hurricane damaged shores, sea life, human health, and economy ... upside down.

The efforts of the council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities, and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical. It is important for the council to commit to full compliance w/environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding. Any and all Council supported projects MUST DO NO FURTHER HARM to OUR ENVIRONMENT; and any

proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are completely unacceptable and do nothing to help us.

It is good to see that the council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process (from within those in our community that understand our environment, people, and needs) for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Iris R. Whalen Iris R Whalen

Right to Know GMO MS

State Representative

1 Fleetwood Place

Ocean Springs, MS 39567

(228) 382-8210 | righttoknowgmoms@gmail.com

cc: Director, Trudy Fisher

P.O. Box 2261, Jackson, MS 39205-2261

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth, 6-6-13

Much appreciation for the recently released Draft Plan! The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council is obligated to our communities and needs to take responsibility for EVERY dollar that it approves so that it may be applied towards viable & appropriate projects

A list of projects, spending allocation & how projects will be selected for funding should be very clear & forthright in the Draft Plan Documents.

My concern is that the Council is in full compliance with ALL environmental laws during this process. I disagree with building a hotel/Conference Center in Alabama's Gulf State Park! I agree with the choice for a Citizen Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

(228) 818-4755 Beverly Cobb FFL Gulf Coast Inc.
522 B Washington Ave. Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

June 21, 2013

It is disappointing to see the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. These should be included and a list of projects & detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is important.

Consideration of a Citizen Advisory Committee is something the public has asked for & the establishment of such a committee would be a good thing. I would like to see the nomination process for membership on this committee be established & implemented.

Sincerely,
Nancy Foster Glass
210 Tomeck Ct.
Ocean Springs, MS,
39564

(228) 243-1367
nancyglass571@hotmail.com

6/5/13

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am writing this letter to demonstrate my solidarity with and support for Gulf Restoration Network. I, too, believe that it is absolutely imperative that funds received by the Gulf Coast Restoration Council be used for the protection and preservation of our wetlands and our wildlife - two of our most precious resources. Such monies should not be squandered on pork projects such as hotels; and the very idea of building such an edifice within a protected park is, to say the least, outrageous. Surely there are other, more eco-friendly ways to employ such funds. There are, for example, many research facilities and university programs that would leap at the opportunity to study in more depth the local environment and its relationship to the Coastal economy and how both might be enhanced without one causing harm to the other. To my mind, this is a far more sound and reasonable approach than simply handing out funds for half-baked or ill-considered ideas.

One more thing... don't even think about allowing BP or any other oil company to drill within sight of our barrier islands! Have we learned nothing from the Gulf oil spill? Thank you for your consideration,

Karen Beaugez KAREN BEAUGEZ

419 Russell Ave

e-mail: celestial.the.queen@yahoo.com

Ocean Springs, MS 39564

June 10, 2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

You have been selected as the Executive Director for the Gulf Coast restoration council, which is an honor and gives you a voice to make a difference. Please look at our aspects and concerns involving the Gulf Coast restoration program. I am not sure where you were born and raised or where you currently reside, but my home is here in Southern Louisiana. Everyone and everything I love is here. Most areas I travel to are somewhere along the Gulf coast. It is home and a way of life for many. We live, play, raise families, and eat off this land. It is a great part of our heritage. It saddens me to see more and more of the land disappear, some of which we cannot change, but the things we can improve we should. So many people from all over travel down here, so there's another reason to keep it up. Everyone likes to know where

their money is going. I think it's only fair that when people put their hard earned money out for a cause, it's spent so justly. This country has more than enough homes, businesses, hotels, stores, etc that are supposed to build on the land. We'd like to keep some of the shade, as you know it's quite hot in Southern Louisiana. We even love our crazy wildlife. Please keep our voice alive and help to make sure the proper funding is used to help preserve our wetlands. After all it is a home. If you know all the facts, act on them.

Sincerely

Alexis K. Theriot

1338 Kenney Dr.

Westwego, La 70094

theriotalexisk@gmail.com

Alexis K. Theriot

Roger D. Theriot

☺
The Gulf Coast P.S. please help us to ensure as God is willing, our home, wildlife, food, jobs, recreational activities, etc.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

Firstly, thank you for your hard work and time spent leading the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. The objectives of the organization are noble. Our environment is all we have and your continued effort to protect and restore our Gulf Coast is vital to our communities here in New Orleans.

I reviewed the Draft Plan and was let down to some extent. I'd like to see more specific and concrete allocations of the Restore Act dollars from BP's Clean Water act fines go to more sustainable and environmentally friendly projects. Although your organization included some public advice such as the Citizens Advisory Committee, other projects like the Alabama Conference center and hotel on a State Park are less agreeable.

Please prioritize rebuilding our Barrier Islands and other lines of coastal defense with these fresh funds. It is our protection from the next Katrina.

Thank you for your consideration,
Carl Bakkenhaas
CB

New Orleans, LA 70118
7529 Barthe St. ~~New~~
512-983-2939
cbakken1@LSU.edu / carlbakn50@yahoo.com

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

As a conscious citizen I am glad to hear that some efforts have been made to protect the gulf coast, however, success in implementation of good ideas, especially dramatic changes, need good follow-through to succeed. In particular, I do think that it is vital to have input from people living in the affected area so the implementation of a Citizen Advisory Committee seems essential.

Although extracting oil is clearly valuable, equally important is preserving the natural environment which is what has provided that oil in the first place! It is extremely important for us to find a balance in this by honoring any and all funding commitments, and not further destroying the environment by building hotels in state parks!! Yes, people will come if you build it, but people will enjoy the nature if you don't! And sometimes it is necessary to honor what certain spaces were intended for!

Thank you for the actions you have taken thus far, and for all of our sake's, thank you for the action you will continue to take in the future to ensure our success in the future as a species! You have the power to do what is important and as everyday citizens, we are counting on you! Thank you,

720 2036351

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of our wonderful Coast and Wetlands. Although I appreciate what the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council is doing, I believe that there is so much more that can be done to preserve our Wetlands. We need to have accountability when it comes to spending the monies allocated for the restoration and preservation of our Coast-line. I have friends and relatives who depend on our Wetlands and it's natural resource for their livelihoods. Also we not only need to restore for our livelihood but for our future. So many times with many projects we allocate monies for certain things and those projects just never seem to happen because somewhere along the way things get lost in the shuffle and that main goal never seems to get finished. The monies are misused and then everybody is whining about not having what we need to complete our goal. They should have a "Priority List" and stick to it and let nothing stop them from achieving their "main goal". Restoring our Coast and our Wetlands, "No Matter What". Please, Use Wisdom and Do What's Right. Save our Coast and think about our future history. Don't destroy or damage Our Environment any more. Nature has managed to do that by herself. I would love for my Grand-Children to be able to be proud of and enjoy our Coast and our Wetlands. Thanks for your consideration. God Bless You In Your Endeavor.

Sincerely David Grout
(over)

David P. Grabert

1234 KENNEY Drive

Westwego, LA. 70094

(504) 914-2902

E-mail anoointedone13@yahoo.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

This letter is to address the recently released Draft Plan by the Council. It is important that the council make every effort to restore Louisiana's coast lines. The Council's Draft Plan did not contain a priority list of projects or how the money will be dispersed. As I am sure you are aware, the council must be in full compliance w/ environmental laws and ensure any project does not do environmental harm or have a state's economy at interest while damaging the environment. Using funds to build a hotel in Alabama is unacceptable.

Thank you for considering the citizen advisory committee. Please move quickly to begin the nomination process for membership on the committee.

Sincerely,

J. Jones 2172 Ferndale Ave Baton Rouge
70809

9364 Ridgeview Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
June 3, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

My areas of concern are:

BP monies should be used for restoring all damaged fisheries.

Need more reefs (breakwaters) for our islands, Horn, Ship, Deer & Cat.

We don't need drilling of oil wells by our MS Islands that will cause devastation of the Gulf. We don't need another catastrophe like the one in Louisiana.

We need more plants for aquaculture.

Sincerely,



William C. (Bunky) Boswell
228-875-9852
mj_bunky@bellsouth.net

cc: Director Trudy Fisher
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, MS 39225-2261



Restore the Gulf

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Linda Johnson, 2953 Brewville Blvd,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

Ocean Springs, MS 39564
jwezt@comcast.net

cc: Director Trudy Fisher
P.O. Box 2261, Jackson MS 39225-2261

Sorry I don't have a printer

Aaron Wallace
200 Mason Ct
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

My comment concerning this matter of the
Restore Act funds

I'd like to see the funds used solely
for the purpose of restoring the ecosystem
and for however long research is needed
to ensure the public that all is well
in the gulf

Aaron Wallace



Restore the Gulf

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed* or *handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

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Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Director Trudy Fisher
P.O. Box 2261, Jackson MS 39225-2261

7 Jun 2015

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I was briefed by a representative of Gulf Restoration Network and I endorse their concerns for the gulf coast.

I expect any (and all) funds allocated for the coastal environment to be used for the environment. Funds diverted from the coastal environment to other projects that do not support nature or the good health of the coast is not accepted.

Please ensure all efforts are put forth to protect the natural environment. There is only one gulf coast and it should remain in good health.

Thank you.

Quinton Fambal

Ocean Springs, MS.

6/5/13

JUSTIN ENRENWORTH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, DC

DEAR MR. ENRENWORTH:

I HOPE THAT THE BP FINES WOULD BE USED
FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSES - THE TOTAL CLEAN-
UP AND RESTORATION OF OUR COASTAL AREAS
AND THE GULF OF MEXICO INCLUDING OUR
BARRIER ISLANDS, AND NOT SPENT OTHERWISE.

GOVERNMENT HAS A WAY OF SPENDING FUNDS
RECKLESSLY AND INEFFECTUALLY, AND DRAGGING
ITS FEET TO EAT UP MORE MONEY IN PAPER
PUSHING.

I HOPE THAT YOU AND YOUR UNDERLINGS
HAVE THE HONESTY AND INTEGRITY TO DO WHAT
IS RIGHT AND NEEDED IN RESTORATION SO
THAT WE CAN ENJOY OUR GREAT ECOLOGICAL
SYSTEMS AS BEFORE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

SINCERELY,

MICHAEL M. DICKINSON
P.O. BOX 1123
OCEAN SPRINGS, MS 39566
(228) 382-2449

**Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.**

7 June 2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I am writing to express my comments regarding the recently released Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Draft Plan.

First may I say how greatly impressed I am with this effort and with much of the content of the Draft Plan. Many valuable goals and objectives are included which could have tremendously positive effects toward restoration and protection of our Gulf Coast.


I would like to say I would appreciate more specifics in any future versions of a Draft Plan. Residents in coastal communities deserve to assess the specifics within any approved Plans for the utilization of those funds earmarked and restricted to the area-wide restoration effort. In particular, I would like to see any future versions of the Council's Draft Plan include:

- An explanation of the methodology used to select projects.
- An explanation of the formula used to prioritize approved projects.
- The method utilized to select projects geographically.
- Assurance that all projects selected will be required to comply with all local, State and federal environmental laws.
- The inclusion of a Citizen Advisory Committee to the Council, with community input into the nomination process for this Committee.

As an active Board member of the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, my specific and primary focus is to be a voice lobbying strongly for the inclusion of land conservation in this planning conversation as well. Land trusts such as ours should be at the table throughout the ecosystem restoration planning process because our organizations exist to protect, preserve and promote green spaces and open places, something our LTMCP has done for more than a decade along the Coastal Plain of Mississippi. This effort is vital to restoration and protection efforts.

I will continue to monitor the progress of the Council, and hope that there is still opportunity for comments such as mine to influence the final document issued by this Council.

With kind regards,


Melanie Allen
Post Office Box 353
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39566

sglmma@cableone.net

cc: Trudy Fisher, esquire
Executive Director MDEQ
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, Mississippi 39225-2261

**Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.**

7 June 2013

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With kind regards,


Melanie Allen
Post Office Box 353
Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39566

sglmma@cableone.net

cc: Trudy Fisher, esquire
Executive Director MDEQ
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, Mississippi 39225-2261

Dear Ms. Fisher,

While I understand the economic state of our coastal community and recognize the importance of bringing in monetary support via tourism... The boundaries in which we, as a Coastal State, set to protect our environment is equally as important. Our beautiful beaches and coastal land is, after all, the entire reason tourism is abundant in this area. Please do the best you can in allocating funds (or at least knowing where these funds are allocated) towards projects that do no more harm to our beautiful coast. BP has done quite enough damage.

Thank you for your ~~time~~ time and God Bless.

Sincerely,

Amanda Sulcer
608 Azalea Lane
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
asulcer@tulane.edu



For:
Gabriel
with
GRN

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

June 14, 2013

The Gulf Coast Restoration Council's recently drafted "Draft Plan" is a fabulous start to coastal recovery, however, this limited document failed to address crucial points. The Council is so critical to restoring, maintaining, and protecting our communities, economies, and homes. For this reason, I implore you to make an addendum to include a priority list for allocation of future funds to ensure this revenue is used and does go to the restoration of our wetlands and coastline. An explicit priority list is necessary to accomplish this. This list of projects should aim to support + maintain the environment and not the economic interests such as the proposed conference center + hotel in the At State park - which is outrageous and dishonest. Thank you for your time. Sincerely,
Mary McKen

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Mr Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities and our coastal dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

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Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Michael Ford
70314 L Street
Covington, LA 70433
southernwoodelf@gmail.com

cc: Garret, Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

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- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

Bathia
216 W. OAKLAND Dr ST. ROSE LA 70087

LATINOFA@GMAIL.COM

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

tel. 504-333-3611

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth

I grew up in lower St. Bernard Parish where my grandparents lived off the land/water. I remember how plentiful the wildlife really was and how fruitful the land can be. Those days are gone. We used to ~~put~~ bring the harvest to the original French Market - sell/buy what was needed. If we do not get a grip on all the lost that is happening today, there will be nothing left. The restoration is so vital to our way of life, it directly affects the people. I had the best childhood, family all around united for the common good. We need more of the uniting for the common good, starting with the roots of what we had - getting it all back on track. People had a sense of pride and foundation that has been destroyed - that foundation needs to be restored. I believe it can be restored.

it just needs us to help get it back
on track. My grandparents are all gone
and thank goodness there not here - it
would break there soul. If all this
communication - technical steps - the young
people in the majority of the land
would not know what to do, how, why
the land is so vital. If the erosions
does not halt / lessen - St Bernard,
St Tammany, Grand Isle to Houma
will be gone and the inland
will be the new coast. So Baton
Rouge - setup to handle that. When
it happen is the land ready to change
its foundation... I think not. St.
Bernard / St. Tammany, and all coastal
Parish are the new keefs to protect
the inlands and we not moving
fast enough to slow it down.

Please keep the coastland restoration
moving forward, we depend on it

Sincerely, Karen

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC.

Sir:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Recently Released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

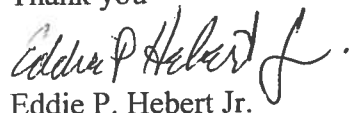
The efforts of the council represent our best opportunity to make our gulf coast, communities and economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Any monies approved should be spent to increase this resilience. Environmental restoration is essential to the economic recovery of the area.

The draft plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan which is critical for their timely and efficient completion.

I believe that the council should commit to full compliance with environmental laws and that any projects should do no environmental harm.

I agree with the proposed Citizen Advisory Committee and that it should be activated as soon as possible.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eddie P. Hebert Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eddie P. Hebert Jr.

JUSTIN EHRENWERTH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, DC

DEAR MR. EHRENWERTH:

PLEASE MAKE A LIST OF PROJECTS DETAILING THE CRITICAL AREAS FOR
FUNDING.

PLEASE USE THE MONEY WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW. PLEASE ALLOW NO MISS
USE OF FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR DIFFERENT PROJECTS

PLEASE DO NO ENVIRONMENTAL HARM. KEEPING THE ECOSYSTEM ALIVE IS
VERY IMPORTANT.

MANY OF OUR LIVELIHOODS DEPEND ON THE ECOSYSTEM SO PLEASE DO YOUR
BEST TO REPAIR IT WELL AND COMPLETELY

SINCERELY



MEGAN KENNEY

306 RIVERWOOD DRIVE

ST. ROSE, LA 70087

KELLEYKENNEY@YAHOO.COM

5048856133

CC: GARRETT GRAVES, CHAIRMAN, LOUISIANA COASTAL PROTECTION AND
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Sir,

After reading your Draft Plan I see that many of the recommendations proposed by the public have been incorporated but I also see where many key areas of concern were simply ignored. It is vital that every dollar spent is accounted for in the most vigilant manner. Before any money is spent a list of priority projects should be included in your Draft Plan. I also see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee. That would be a step in the right direction. Behind closed door spending should not be tolerated.

We live, work and play here. The monies received should be spent here. They should be spent in the most advantageous way that promotes economic recovery and environmental restoration. Our future, the future of our children and our children's children depends on how we protect what is ours. Generations to come will be living with the decisions made by the Council. Please take the time to do it right and make it right for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Lejune". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

J. Lejune
134 Jane Lane
St. Rose, La. 70087
504-468-3454

cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am a citizen deeply concerned with the health of the Gulf of Mexico. As such, I am pleased to see that the Council's recently released Draft Plan incorporates many of the ~~re~~ recommendations made by the public. However, I am troubled by the document's lack of a ~~priority~~ project list and criteria for choosing such projects. It is my view that all ambiguity and room for interpretation must be removed; all allocated CWA funds must be directed towards projects that comply with environmental laws, benefit the Gulf environment and visit no further harm upon it, and must restore and bolster the natural resources that lend resiliency to our coasts from storms and provide income to the coastal economy. In summation, using funds derived from the destruction of our Gulf to add further harm would be a grievous tragedy. I trust your discretion to avoid such ends.

Sincerely,

Cameron Wylre

8129 Green st

NOLA 70118

504 333 1979

1C2A3M@gmail.com

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem
restoration Council's
~~released~~ Draft plan ~~releas~~
successfully incorporated
~~the~~ the recommendations
proposed by the public
over the last several
months, but this 20 page
document address some
key areas of concern.



Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery. So please do not waste any money on efforts that do not strengthen our coast line. We need the wetlands to protect us.

Sincerely

Brett White

114 Stephen St.

St. Rose LA 70087

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

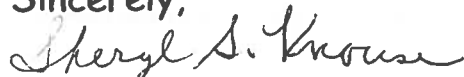
I am concerned that the Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Plan failed to address some key areas. Environmental restoration is essential to the economic recovery of communities whose livelihood depends on natural resources of the Gulf.

The council should fully commit to compliance with environmental laws for all projects receiving funding. A list of projects with detailed criteria and funding sources should be a priority.

Please reconsider the adverse effects of the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's State Park. Though this may help the economy, it would be detrimental to the environment.

I urge you to move in a timely manner to establish the Citizen Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,



Sheryl S. Knouse

110 Stephen St.

St. Rose, LA 70087

sherylknouse@gmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern. The efforts of the Council represent our best ~~opportunity~~ opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities, & our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas & stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or council led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery. It is also very important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws. Any & all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm & any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable. There should also be a Citizen Advisory Committee, this is something the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move quickly to establish & begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,


Casey McGowan
1306 North Tonti St., New Orleans, LA 70119
251-978-8046
peace_n_love13@hotmail.com

Dear Mr. Ehrenworth,

After reviewing the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Plan, I was pleased to see the Council incorporate many of the proposals submitted by the public in the last few months. However, there is still a lot of work to do, and this short document failed to address some key areas of concern. In particular, the Council must:

- Create a priority list of projects on a spending allocation plan, with detailed criteria for how projects are chosen.
- Commit to fully complying w/ all environmental laws, and not funding any projects that would do further environmental harm in the name of economic development.
- Move quickly on the promise to establish a Citizen's Advisory Committee.

As you said, quoting the stickers handed out by a little girl, at the Biloxi meeting, environmental restoration is economic restoration. The Gulf's communities rely on the long-term health of the Gulf, and it's essential that the Council seize this opportunity to make the Gulf more sustainable for future generations.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Raleigh Hake', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Raleigh Hake

1720 Washington, Apt. 1

New Orleans, LA 70113

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth

Sometimes i feel flooded, overwhelmed. Sometimes i feel like a dead zone. Sometimes i feel like my wetlands and barrier islands are disappearing and i'm raw and vulnerable when the storms come. I believe humanity and society echoes the Earth. We're not separate. We're interconnected and our continued survival depends on it. It depends on the Gulf.

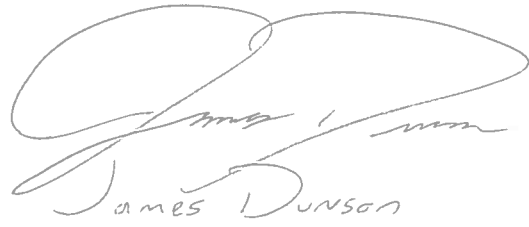
Please include in your council's plan a priority list of projects. As much of a disaster the BP Deepwater Horizon spill was, it is also an opportunity. We can mitigate so many projects with this incoming funds that can really make our communities safer and more sustainable.

Proposals like a convention center and hotel, like Alabama has proposed, is doing much more harm than good. We need to strengthen the economy, i agree. But without the planet, without a healthy ecosystem there can be no economy. That is why we need to put the resiliency of our communities and the health of the Gulf first.

to quote the Lorax in Dr. Seuss "nothing is going to change unless somebody like you cares an awful lot, it's just not".

You have the power to make ~~a~~ difference. There's a lot of responsibility there. Please think about our communities and future generations when you are making a

this plan. thanks for your time,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James Dunson". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

230 mirror lake dr, apt. A8
St Petersburg, FL 33701

4/20/13

DEAR MR. EHRENWERTH,

my name is Joshua Goll. I am a rising Junior here at Tulane University in New Orleans. This summer I have climbed aboard a not-for-profit organization you might be familiar with. We are called Gulf Restoration Network and are dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The reason I joined this team is because I have lived 20 years of my life thinking that someone else will go out there and fight for the causes that I, too, believe in. But recently, I am looking towards the teachings of Ghandi and am becoming the change. that I want to see in the world. I am proud of my work so far, but I know there is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to restoring the Gulf of Mexico.

What I would really like to see the restoration dollars spent on is on efforts to lessen the devastations of the dead zone in terms of the nitrogen & phosphorous pollution that is brewed in the Gulf & brought by the Mississippi River. Originally being from Chicago and drinking water from the fresh water lake of Lake Michigan, the quality of the water is noticeably different here in New Orleans. In fact, during my two years at Tulane so far, we have experienced a handful of "water-boil-advisories" due to contaminants in the water supply.

I feel like a good use of these restoration dollars should be directed towards ensuring the people of New Orleans are guaranteed safe, clean, and healthy water.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan did incorporate recommendations proposed by the public. However, the document fails to address key areas of concern. The efforts the Council put toward dealing with the Clean Water Act Fine money should be put into the best opportunities to restore the Gulf coast. With Louisiana losing a football field of wetlands every hour and ongoing issues with the Dead Zone, every dollar from the Restore Act should increase our resilience. Environmental restoration is essential to restoring our economy. The Draft Plan should have included a priority list of projects and spending allocation plan. None of the Council's projects should produce environmental harm under any circumstances. As an Alabama resident, I find it repulsive that there have been proposals to build a conference center and hotel in Gulf Shores with the Restore Act money. Don't we already have enough hotels on that beach already? I also hope to see that the Council ~~more~~ will move quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

Ashley Roca

9585 Timbercreek Blvd.

Spanish Fort, AL 36527

251-779-1860

alroca@louisiana.gov

Justin Ehrenworth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenworth

I am happy to see that the restore council's draft plan included many of the recommendations proposed by the public. However such an important document needs to include ~~also~~ many additional aspects.

The Council's effort will represent our regions best opportunity to improve the way our communities interact with the Gulf. In the face of climate change, pollution, and the Global Economic Downturn, ~~the~~ the things we use the oil spill fine money will define us for a generation.

With this in mind, I urge the Council to be rigorous and transparent in their selection of projects. Please ensure that further environmental damage is not caused, even at the ~~the~~ expense of immediate economic payoffs. Remember, the greatest payoff possible will be a healthy Gulf, which will support tourism, industry, and most importantly our human and wildlife populations.

As well, please move quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Council to assist the democratic process.

Thank you for your time and continued efforts!

Sincerely,

Benjamin Rums

Benjamin Rums

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,
As being a citizen of the United States

and staying nearby the Gulf, My Community
and I feel that action should be made
towards the Gulf ecosystem Restoration.
Our costal wetlands are losing instead of
gaining everyday. With BP playing the
front man and giving out false informati
How will someone ever know the truth.
We as humans need to fight ~~for our~~
to protect our Gulf; not only for
ourselves but for the wildlife that
God created.

Sincerely,

DeVante Mitchell
108 Alden Pl.
New Orleans, LA 70119

Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec. Director

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Department of Commerce

Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am writing concerning the recently released Draft Plan. I feel that it was successful in incorporating many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but it failed to address some key areas of concern in its measly 20 pages. The efforts of the Council are our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, including the communities and their economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and strong storms. Every dollar the council approves should increase our resilience. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery!

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan didn't include any kind of priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical in the face of billions of dollars. It is also important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment (i.e. Conference center in Alabama) are absolutely unacceptable!

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern. We have been given an amazing opportunity to make everything along our gulf coast such as our ecosystem, our economics, our communities and our environment more sturdy, strong and resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Our Gulf communities which depend on the natural resources of the Gulf for their livelihood must be resilient, and environmental restoration is therefore essential to economic recovery to build that resilience. That is why it is so important to spend every dollar on projects that increase our resiliency. This is also why it is disappointing that the Draft does not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. It is vital that we have a list of projects and detailed criteria of how projects will be selected to be funded to have successfully spent the money and shown the public that their best interests have been kept in mind. Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment are unacceptable. In fact the only way to ensure a strong and stable ~~an~~ economy for our states future is through having a strong and stable gulf coast environment so that we can continue to fish and shrimp and so forth. It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this Committee. Thank you so much for taking all of this into consideration.

Sincerely,

Kiri Blevins

5817 Clam St.

New Orleans, La, 70115

781-344-2997

kblea@tulane.edu

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Sandra J. Cook
4910 Venus St
New Orleans, La. 70122

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I have been informed that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released a Draft Plan. I understand that this plan includes many of the recommendations proposed by the public. This plan has failed to address some major areas of concern. Every dollar the Council approves should be spent in an effort to increase the resilience of our coastal area.

I am very disappointed to see that the Council's Draft Plan does not include a priority of projects or a spending allocation for projects. We the general public would like to know exactly where funding will be applied. As a concerned citizen I would like to know that Council supported projects would not cause environmental harm, and that all proposals aim to bolster the economy. I am in opposition of the construction center and hotel in Alabama Gulf State Park.

I commend the idea of a citizen Advisory Committee and hope that this committee consists of diverse group of individuals. I ask that you please move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Cook". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sandra Cook

cc: Garret Graves, La. Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority

Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan Successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this do page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

It is disappointing to see the council's Draft plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects & detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws & for all projects & programs that receive funding.

Any & all Council supported projects must do no harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damage the environment, such as the proposed conference center in Alabama's Gulf State Park are ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE ❗

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish & begin the nomination process for membership on this Committee!

Thank you for your Attention,

Ariel Joslin

2601 General Pershing
Birmingham, AL 35205

Dear Mr. Zentwerth

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council has a large task at hand, which comes with many choices. Having a specific plan which fully encompasses specific projects & a detailed spending allocation plan is necessary. I also realize that with so many variables, it is necessary to be somewhat broad in certain areas, But! the more concrete a plan is at the start, the easier it is to encompass fully thought out ideas with other more flexible ideas. "With great power comes great responsibility". Please use your & the council's power to effectively restore the Gulf of Mexico to the best that it can be, not just for me or anyone present on earth now, but for the future generations.

To a better gulf,

Jordan Stoleru

6920 Marbury Rd. Bethesda, MD 20817 heresjordan@aol.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

As a true-blue Cajune, my homeland does not just mean it's a place to live -- this is my culture. To be one with our land and to be self-sustainable is the essence of Cajun culture. I hope this Restoration Council will further their efforts on improving the Gulf Coast's draft plan. The 20-page document ~~not~~ released just a short time ago was not as transparent and ~~not~~ specific as I think it ought to have been. Though it is a work in progress, it is a deep concern of mine that the money coming into the Gulf will be used improperly. It is a now or never, marathon campaign we are running to ~~help~~ hold BP fully accountable, and it would be ~~so~~ terrible for our efforts to go to waste because some politician found a loophole in the master plan and decided to build himself a beach house, etc. Please, please move quickly to finalize and seal this plan air-tight so we may (re)begin being good to our Earth and to the beautiful Gulf of Mexico Coast she so happily gave to us. Remember, we do not own this Earth... we borrow it from our children. →

I do not want to point to a map one day, with my grandchild on my knee, and say, "This is where my home, my Gulf Coast, used to be." I want ~~to~~ to take them there, and pass on my Cajun culture.

Sincerely,

Morgane Lirette

1415 Soria St.

NOLA 70115

985-860-8443

melirette@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected or funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable!

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Emily Lubin

5817 Tara St New Orleans, LA 70115

elubin@tulane.edu

(862)-558-5299



Restore the Gulf

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten* letter in your own words is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Executive Director Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce

Dear Executive Director Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to jumpstart coastal restoration and make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- I am disappointed to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is also important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed NRDA project to build a conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- I am pleased that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. I hope to see in the coming weeks a stronger commitment to establishing this committee and a move to quickly begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

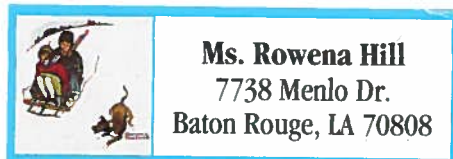
Rowena Hill

PHONE: 225 767 2824

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

Rowena Hill
cc: Commissioner Gunter Guy

cc: Commissioner Gunter Guy



Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council comments to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

And all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Larry Zeringue
513 Ellington Ave
Luling, LA 70070
985-308-1502

pralinezeringue@yahoo.com

cc: Garrett Graves. Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, LA

Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Dept of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I would like to comment on the Draft Plan for the restoration of our Gulf Coast. Our coast is still suffering from natural & manmade disasters and many Louisianians are dependent on this resource. You must quickly develop a priority list of projects & a spending plan for the allocated monies. We must have a blueprint in place in order to get started. The State Parks are a critical piece to our mission, so any & all projects should absolutely be geared towards saving our natural resource. (Not creating hotels) We must also begin the nomination process for the Citizen Advisory Committee so that I know my voice is being heard. As stated above, I am pleased with the progress, but I am eager to see you follow through!

Sincerely,

Ana Biles

154 Beau Arbre Pt - Covington LA - 70433

985 400 8556
bolesae@yahoo

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I am quite disappointed to see that the Council's most recent draft plan did not include a list of spending allocations. In the past, the draft plan failed to address some key areas of concern. Please listen to the people of this great state and the needs of the people that live here. We must remember that the Louisiana coast is losing valuable land hourly, and that citizens rely on the Gulf for their livelihood.

We must continue to hold BP responsible for its actions and how they continue to affect our coastline, our economy, and our lives. Environmental restoration key to Louisiana's economic recovery.

Please continue to fight BP and make sure that they're held accountable for what they have done to our communities, local wildlife, and to our great state as a whole.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance in this urgent matter,

Wendy Stein
107 Beau Arbre Court
Covington, LA 70433
(985) 400-3407
whstein@att.net

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern
- The efforts of the Council represent our biggest opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the council approves, either through state or council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent on their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to the economic recovery.
- IT is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical
- It is important that the council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding
- Any and all council supported projects must do no environmental harmed and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable
- It is good to see that the council is considered a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Danielle Baudouin
P.O. Box 395
Luling, LA 70070

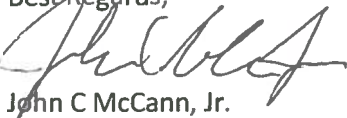
June 20, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth

As you are aware of, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released a draft plan; however this 20 page document did not address some of the key areas of my concern. I strongly feel that every dollar the Council approves should increase our resilience. The main focus should be on environmental restoration for our economic recovery and each dollar should be maximized toward this effort. I am not pleased that the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. I would like to see where the money is going and how much of it is going where. This information should have been provided and is critical toward an effective plan for our restoration being implemented. I hope that the Council is committing to full compliance with the environmental laws. The conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park are absolutely unacceptable. I appreciate that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, please move quickly with this process so that we can help assist with the restoration of our Gulf.

Best Regards,



John C McCann, Jr.
176 Oak Manor Lane
Saint Rose, La 70087
504-289-4810
JohnMcCannJunior@gmail.com

Cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Cathy Gudan
125 Ann Street
Saint Rose, LA 70087
(504) 202-8276
cgudan@hotmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released a Draft Plan successfully incorporated recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months. Unfortunately, this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plans. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must not do environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly establish and begin the nomination process for members to serve on this committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Gudan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cathy Gudan

cc: Garret Graves, Chair Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

I have lived most of my life in Louisiana. My family was here when Katrina hit and when the bp oil spill happened. Both tragedies were devastating, but they have one point in which they differ- one could have been prevented.

Despite that, both events have caused great stress for the state of Louisiana, as well as New Orleans, the heart of the state, and the place I have called home for almost two decades.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan incorporated several recommendations by the public, but failed to address other key areas of concern. For example, the Plan failed to identify projects with priority or even a spending allocation plan.

However, the Council has done well to consider a Citizen Advisory Committee. How are you going to help the people without knowing what or where they need the help? I beseech you to make the utmost haste in establishing and beginning the nomination process or membership on the committee.

Sincerely,

Alice Mao
2442 Killdeer St.
NOLA, 70122
ruqiaomao@gmail.com

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently release Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

- It is disappointing to see that the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or a spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding are critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,



Georgette Ioup
4678 Eastern St
New Orleans, LA 70122

<georgetteioup@yahoo.com>
504 288-2182

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I'm contacting you as a concerned citizen of the gulf coast in regards to the recently Draft Plan about the restoration of the gulf with your share of the Restore Act money. It came to a surprise me that a twenty page document lacked extensive detail about the primary goals and projects that are to take place. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in terms of how the RESTORE funds are going to be used may put into question the Council's intentions. Nevertheless, I do understand that it is important to invest my trust in organizations like this that try to do good. I only ask that as a leader you make sure that the Council's plan is clear and detailed; it has to comply with all environmental laws as well. Aim for restoration not further harm. Finally, I would encourage you to install a Citizen Advisory Committee to keep the voice of the people active and constant.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Burgos

7905 Spruce St. New Orleans, LA 70118
787-479-8047
gaboo-bc07@hotmail.com

3 July 2013,

I Robert J. Marcell am deeply interested and concerned about preservation and restoration of the coast of the State of our beloved Louisiana. I own property and a home at Grand Isle I have spent many significant and happy days with family members at the Grand Isle home. As if tomorrow relatives of mine are spending the Holiday at my home then my support and best wishes for success go to all who are dedicated to this cause

Robert J. Marcell

July 2, 2013

**Mr. Justin Ehrenwerth
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington D.C.**

Dear Sir,

As a concerned resident of South Louisiana I have a keen interest in how funds are allocated in your recently released Draft Plan for Gulf Coast restoration.

I have grown increasingly alarmed at, for example, moneys allocated toward hotel projects in Alabama. Hotels and other projects of this nature are nothing more than sops for big business and developers.

We are in yet another hurricane season. I do not intend to lecture you on how wetland loss makes each future storm even more dangerous for an increasing number of people, including my family in Baton Rouge.

Without being overly melodramatic, lives are at stake here. Frankly, Gulf Shores has more than enough hotels, we only have one coastline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William J. Isenberger', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William J. Isenberger

12

So when it may concern:

I am deeply concerned with the restoration
of the ~~gulf~~ ^{Gulf} Coast

Please include a priority list of projects
and spending allocations as that would be helpful!

Please make sure that the Council commits
to full compliance with environmental laws for all
projects and programs that receive funding.

Alabama's Gulf State Park hotel and conference
center is unacceptable.

I encourage the Council to consider the Citizen Advisory
Committee.

Philip N. Jackson
5386 Charlotte Dr.
N.O. La. 70122
504-473-1552

Mr. EHRENWERTH,

I would prefer to stay anonymous, but I would not like that decision to bury my voice among the others.

I believe that the BP oil disaster was exactly that:
a disaster.

It is a shame that we see people falling prey to the empty persuasion of BP's "clean Gulf" advertisements.

I am happy to know that a council for restoration in the Gulf coast has been formed, but it saddens me to know that a plan has been drafted without direction.

Please use the restore dollars towards real protection of our Gulf. Specifically, I would like to see progress on River diversion projects where we can rebuild our wetlands of coastal Louisiana.

STAY FOCUSED SO I CAN STAY IN LOUISIANA

6/28/13

JUSTIN EHRENWERTH
GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL
DEPT. OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, DC

DEAR MR. EHRENWERTH -

BEING A RESIDENT OF THE GREAT STATE OF
LOUISIANA I AM ONLY TOO AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE GULF OF MEXICO + OUR BEAUTIFUL WETLANDS -
BOTH ARE CRUCIAL TO THE WELLBEING OF NOT ONLY THE
CONTINUED HEALTH OF OUR GREAT STATE BUT ALSO
AS AN ECONOMIC VIABILITY - IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL
THAT ANY + ALL FUNDING GOING TOWARDS THE PROJECTS
IN THE WORKS BE CLASSIFIED AS ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND -
THE WONDERFUL PEOPLE OF LA, I'M SURE - WOULD
DEMAND ABSOLUTE TRANSPARENCY RE: ALL SPENDING
ALLOCATIONS - PLEASE WORK TO KEEP LOUISIANA +
ALL GULF STATES ECONOMICALLY VIABLE FOR YEARS
TO COME - IN A SAFE AND CLEAN MANNER -

THANK-YOU

SINCERELY

JENNIFER WILLIAMS
3500 BANKS ST LA
NOLA. 70119



2236 Woodgate Ct.
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
July 1, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

Living in South Louisiana, it is important to me that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

I am so glad to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee that the public has asked for. Hope that it happens soon.

Sincerely,
Barbara A. Kavanaugh
225-767-5595
cpkava@lsu.edu

MR. EHRENWORTH,

my name is Malloy Higgins. I am a suburban school teacher in Gretna, Louisiana. My 2nd grade class has just learned about photosynthesis so you could say that I'm getting the future leaders of the world environmentally involved. I have been reading up on the Restore act, which I believe has brimming potential. My students and I would really like to see these funds allocated under the Restore act to be used effectively and towards legitimate restoration of our coastal wetlands.

Today a young man from Gulf Restoration Network came to my door and informed me on the happenings, success, and urgency of the organization & their involvement with the oil drilling disaster. For that reason I write you today. I would like to see these Restore dollars to be spent on the re-evaluation & reconstruction of our cities infrastructure. Too often we see flooding in this area and it makes me worry about the future of our region. Please don't mispend these dollars because they can really do some good!

With hope for a clearer future,

Malloy Higgins



To see the draft plan, visit <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

Sample Letter

Take a minute to read over this sample letter before writing your own to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (we'll make and send copies to your state's Council representative). These bullets are a great guide to get you started, and a *personally typed or handwritten letter in your own words* is the most effective way to communicate your concerns.

Thank you for helping to restore our Gulf.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

8270 Boudreau St
Baton Rouge, LA
70808

(Sign your letter with your name, address, city, state, zip, phone, and email.)

cc: Director Chairman Garrett Graves; Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

The money that is raised for eco-restoration could well be sent on political action groups to support legislation for renewable energy. As a proponent of nuclear power, we should move forward in building nuclear plants to support the growing need for more energy. It is safe, reliable and sustainable energy and is regulated that assures safe reliable energy.

~~Keith Stana~~ (Keith Stana)

1141 Louisa Drive
Baton Rouge, LA. 70808

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

June 27, 2013

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

I am in agreement with the viewpoint of the Gulf Restoration Network in relation to the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy and accompanying Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment. Many aspects of the plan are commendable, but in addition I urge you to keep in mind the following considerations when moving forward with this initiative:

- the draft plan did not include a priority list of projects nor a spending allocation plan
- the council should commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding
- move quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on a Citizen Advisory Committee
- withdraw support from any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while doing harm to the environment

The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. I applaud your efforts to award the maximum dollar amount to this initiative while keeping in mind the nature of each project and how the ecosystem will be impacted.

Yours respectfully,



Gene Scaramuzzo
1505 South Jahncke Avenue
Covington, Louisiana 70433
eugene.scaramuzzo@stpsb.org

cc: Director/Chairman Garrett Graves; Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Joni James
70371 I Street
Covington, LA 70433

June 26, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

- The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.
- The efforts of the Council represent our best opportunity to make our Gulf Coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.
- It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.
- It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.
- Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.
- It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this committee.

Sincerely,

Joni James
70371 I Street
Covington, LA 70433

Cc: Garret Graves, Chair, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Jeanne Abadie
4735 Painters Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70122
jeanneabadie@cs.com
504-282-0584

June 24, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth:

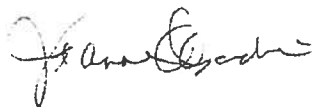
As a resident of New Orleans, an area where coastal protection and restoration is critical, I am pleased to know that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council recently released a Draft Plan; however, the proposed plan is incomplete.

Missing from the plan is a list of which projects will be prioritized, and how those projects priorities are selected must be part of the plan, along with the budget for each project. In addition, I believe that it is important that the plan actually state that all funded programs and projects will be in full compliance with all environmental laws and established regulations.

The proposed Citizen Advisory Committee should be a cornerstone as planning goes forward. People should have a direct say in how the funds associated with plan are spent. I urge you to establish a nomination process for this Committee and fill the seats for the Committee quickly, so that there is confidence that the public is involved and there is transparency in the process.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this further. I wish the best as Gulf Coast Ecosystem and Restoration Council moves forward to adopt an effective plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeanne Abadie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeanne Abadie

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released a draft plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern. It is a matter of how funding should be ~~sent~~ spent. The funding should help restore the ecosystem.

Sincerely:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Trevor K.", written in dark ink.

Justin Ehrenwerth, Exec. Dir.
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration
Council
Dept. of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr Ehrenwerth,

The 20 page Draft plan recently released by The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council failed to address some key areas of concern.

- ① a priority list of projects
- ② Spending allocation plan
- ③ List of projects & detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding

I am glad to see that the Council has considered a Citizen Advisory Committee, which the public has asked for multiple times. I pray that you move quickly and begin the process for membership.

The people of the Gulf coast region greatly depend on the efforts of this council to be responsible and diligent in increasing the resilience and restoring our coast.

Sincerely

Stephanie Heaphy
130 Stephen St.
St. Rose, LA 70087

StephanieHeaphy@gmail.com

P.C. Marcel Graves Chair, La. Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority, BR, LA.

Julie Ann Stroble
P.O. Box 120
Covington, Louisiana 70433

June 19, 2013

Dear Sirs,

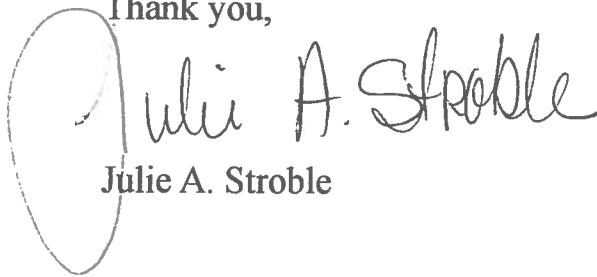
Please consider this as my response to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's draft plan. In appreciation for considerations made by the Council, there are several issues that remain ambiguous.

Firstly, there is very little information regarding the allocation of funds towards where these monies are to be spent.

Secondly, resilience of our natural resources, as well as developmental run-off have not been addressed. The Draft has not addressed any faction of agenda for priority for allocation for funding projects, There appears to be no priority as to project priority.

Thirdly, any type of projected projects anticipated by the council has not been understood by the community. A further and complete understanding of the projected projects by the council would be of great interest to the residents of this area.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie A. Stroble". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of a large, faint, oval-shaped stamp or watermark.

Julie A. Stroble

Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Ehrenwerth,

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this 20 page document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The efforts of the Council represent a best opportunity to make our Gulf coast, our communities and our coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Every dollar the Council approves, either through state or Council-led plans, should increase our resilience. For Gulf Communities dependent for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the Gulf, environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery.

It is disappointing to see the Council's Draft Plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. A list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding is critical.

It is important that the Council commits to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding.

Any and all Council supported projects must do no environmental harm, and any proposals that aim to bolster the economy while damaging the environment, such as the proposed conference center

and hotel in Alabama's Gulf State Park, are absolutely unacceptable.

It is good to see that the Council is considering a Citizen Advisory Committee, something that the public has asked for repeatedly. Please move to quickly to establish and begin the nomination process for membership on this Committee.

sincerely,

Dustin & Julianne Molinere
70412 B. St.
Covington, La. 70433



Dear Mr Ehrenwerth,

The gulf coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's recently released Draft Plan successfully incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the public over the last several months, but this document failed to address some key areas of concern.

The plan did not include a priority list of projects or spending allocation plan. This is critical. Also the Council needs to commit to full compliance with environmental laws. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Tail Peace

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Dave Schump
Email Schumpdog@hotmail.com
Address 2600 Oldque Dr Suite #303
City, State Raleigh NC
Zip 27604
Phone 919-332-4812



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

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Name Alex Marshall
Email alexmarshall@gmail.com
Address 6309 Windy Ridge Ct.
City, State Raleigh NC
Zip 27604
Phone



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

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Name Felicia Stinson
Email Stinsonlogic@gmail.com
Address 1042 Old Bardstown Rd
City, State Park City, KY
Zip 40160
Phone 370-670-7200



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

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Name Chris May
Email hgtz69@gmail.com
Address 3A E Hickory
City, State OK OK
Zip 73008
Phone



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Deanna McCulloch
Email deanna@gmail.com
Address 3820 Creech Hill Rd
City, State Yukon, OK
Zip 73099
Phone (405) 397-0205



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Taylor Prusa
Email taylorprusa@gmail.com
Address 2127 Progress Park Dr
City, State Stow, OH
Zip 44224
Phone —



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Nick Ave
Email zombieroe381@yahoo.com
Address 10831 Leader Lane
City, State Orlando
Zip 32816
Phone 354 584 3189



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Nickell Smith
Email nickellsmith@gmail.com
Address 2977 Sycamore
City, State Stow, OH
Zip 44224
Phone —



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Your efforts represent our best opportunity to make the Gulf coast, its communities and coastal-dependent economies more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. Environmental restoration is essential to economic recovery and therefore the Council must:

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Name Heather Borrelli
Email H.Borrelli@lorainhccc.edu
Address 8505 Vermilion Road
City, State Amherst, OH
Zip 44001
Phone _____

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

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Name Tyler Gehring
Email Tgehring@kent.edu
Address 3180 Berwin Dr
City, State Stow, OH
Zip 44224
Phone _____

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Cassie Lampe
Email cassandra.lampe@hotmail.com
Address 1039 E. Main St
City, State Kent OH 44217
Zip 44242
Phone 440-522-5965

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Name Danlee Mathias
Email lynnae.mathias@yahoo.com
Address 1643 E Main
City, State Kent OH
Zip 44242
Phone _____

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Name Taylor Barahano
Email TBarahano@aol.com
Address 701 Springdale Cir
City, State Palm Springs, FL
Zip 33461
Phone (561) 642-5282

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Name Hailey Torp
Email CallMeAniThompson@yahoo.com
Address 2184d Street
City, State Kimball, TN
Zip 37347
Phone 423-305-9223

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Name Megan Hanjiratpong
Email mhanjiratpong@ufl.edu
Address 9701 W Lake Ct
City, State Boca Raton
Zip 33434
Phone 561-715-5536

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Name Dawn Barahano
Email Dawn.barahano@aol.com
Address 701 Springdale Circle
City, State Palm Springs, FL
Zip 33461
Phone 561-964-7792

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Name Greg Apet
Email greg.apet@twc.org
Address 7137 Dixley Dr.
City, State Arvada, CO
Zip 80004
Phone 720-244-2083

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Name Mitch Horvat
Email Mhorvat412@gmail.com
Address 383 Cranberry Rd Dr
City, State Youngstown, OH
Zip 44512
Phone 412-735-3229

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Name Maggie Lane
Email maggie@lanea@gmail.com
Address 6790 Tartan Ave
City, State Eden Prairie, MN
Zip 55346
Phone 952-380-1045

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Name Tara Powers
Email tarahesma@taraipowers@gmail.com
Address 1609 Lilac St Apt B
City, State Pgh PA
Zip 15217
Phone 412-544-5363

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Name Amy Lewis
Email amykatherinee@gmail.com
Address 267 Brooke Nailey Blvd
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37922
Phone 865 500 6187

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Name NICHOLAS KNAPEREK
Email n.knaperek.jr@gmail.com
Address 9243 APRIL LN
City, State MOBILE AL
Zip 36688
Phone 708 341 5521

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Name Megan Stephenson
Email megstephenson@mail.com
Address 11018 Westland Lakes Way
City, State Knox, TN
Zip 37922
Phone 865 711 4800

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Name Humberto Galero
Email hgalero2@aol.com
Address 15086 Ballycastle Ct
City, State Lemont IL
Zip 60439
Phone 708 927 8242

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Name Lugile Ramonkate
Email rgm0723@uic.edu
Address 727 Broadway Blvd.
City, State Chely Park, IL
Zip 60487
Phone 815 464 0257

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Name Morgan Livezey
Email morgan.livezey@gmail.com
Address 5112 Lawton Dr
City, State Bethesda, MD
Zip 20816
Phone 703 508 6144



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Name Maggie Siddle
Email m.siddle93@gmail.com
Address 5620 4th St. S.
City, State Arlington, Va
Zip 22204
Phone 703 407 4020

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Name Nunahin Sadi
Email nunahin.sadi@yahoo.com
Address 8600 Karam Drive
City, State Silver Spring, MD
Zip 20910
Phone 301 589 0914



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Name Jessica Pietrowski
Email JPie@students.towson
Address 726 Camb. Circle Apt C, Towson, MD
City, State Towson, MD
Zip 21271
Phone 410-315-3301



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Name Jesse Day
Email day3@students.towson.edu
Address 5305 Sumner Dr
City, State Towson MD
Zip 21239
Phone 312-943-6593



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Name Ally Baust
Email allybaust249@yahoo.com
Address 201 Stockmeyer Rd.
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29212
Phone 803-414-5467



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Name Wendy Pahr
Email beach babe 41844@yahoo.com
Address 17 Red squirrel lane
City, State Pawleys Island, SC
Zip 29585
Phone 843 325 6272



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Name Taylor Floyd
Email floydtr@emil.sc.edu
Address 1310 Jannz Avenue
City, State Summerville SC
Zip 29485
Phone (843) 860-6978



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Name Sarah Stone
Email sarahangel05@sbcglobal.net
Address 13034 Kinsman Rd
City, State Burton OH
Zip 44021
Phone 537 4429



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Name Sam Bixion
Email withn.Bix@gmail.com
Address 5401 Greenville Rd.
City, State West Farming ton
Zip 44491
Phone 216 201 2113



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Name _____
Email _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____



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Name Alex Drake
Email adrake2@gmail.com
Address 33 Lyme Bay
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29212
Phone 803-467-3391



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Name Annie Parham
Email annieparham@gmail.com
Address 407 Shortbow Ct.
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29217
Phone 803-920-2202



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Name Katherine Stewart
Email stewartk6@gmail.com
Address 1617 Holly Spring Rd.
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29212
Phone _____



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Name Michelle Smyer
Email Michellesmyer@gmail.com
Address 323 Myrtle St
City, State Edisto Island, SC
Zip 29438
Phone 803-206-0108



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Name San Thoresen
Email ryb-ortega@yahoo
Address 29 Doro Dr
City, State Enfield, CT
Zip 06082
Phone _____

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Name Ben Cruger
Email BenjiCB06@hotmail.com
Address PO Box 879
City, State Millbrook, NY
Zip 12545
Phone 845 242 0327

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Name Sadie O'Laughlin
Email SadieO'Laughlin@lewisu.edu
Address 727 Seals Rd
City, State Amboy IL
Zip 61310
Phone 815 440-7936

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Name Steve Gadsen
Email slimgadwin@yahoo.com
Address 132 Ash St, New Lynn
City, State FL
Zip 32841
Phone 813-922-0413

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Name Matthew Leduc

Email _____

Address 361 Godley RD

City, State Brunswick GA

Zip 31529

Phone 912-299-2746

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Name Paul Robinson

Email Paul202@aol.com

Address 1100 Guter Circle

City, State U.S. Columbia High School

Zip 29109

Phone _____

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Name Cait thorn

Email cathorn@uark.edu

Address 905 W. Fairview St

City, State Fayetteville AR

Zip 72701

Phone 417-294-0879

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Name Alex Ladd

Email al.ladd@gmail.com

Address 701 E. 53rd Pl.

City, State Tulsa, OK

Zip 74145

Phone (918)706-5879

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Name Garon Wall
Email Wall.garon@Hotmail.com
Address 4404 E. Ottoni Apt. 16301
City, State Austin TX
Zip 78741
Phone 512-653-2197

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Name Nicole Rinaldi
Email NICOLER6293@aol.com
Address 5034 W. DICKENS AVE.
City, State Tampa FL
Zip 33629
Phone 813-690-1574

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Name Kim Sutter
Email Kim.Sutter@shoglobal.net
Address 1408 Main St
City, State Evansville IN
Zip 46022
Phone 317-652-8584 unlisted

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Name Shayne Teacher
Email shaynateacher83@gmail.com
Address NA
City, State Seminole FL 32232
Zip
Phone N/A

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Name Mary C. Muschett
Email maryc.muschet@gmail.com
Address 322 Northwood Ave
City, State Elkins Park, PA
Zip 19027
Phone (215) 379-3898



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Name CLARA HERRERO
Email CHERRERO@OXFAMAMERICA.ORG
Address 242 S. HUNTINGTON AVE. #3
City, State JAMAICA PLAIN, MA
Zip 02130
Phone 617-970-0938



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Name LAURA TRANCHIK
Email LTT11@MY.FSU.EDU
Address 1120 KRENITAL AVE
City, State TAMPA, FL
Zip 33609
Phone (813) 943-3409



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

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Name Heather Yeomans
Email Ehanna99@aol.com
Address 2656 Fredricka Ln
City, State St. Simons, GA
Zip 30130
Phone 901-233-1915



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Name Tayne Morano

Email Taymmmo@gmail.com

Address 43 Styvestant Drive

City, State Roseton Dough Keepsie NY

Zip 12601

Phone 845-342-2912

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Name Kaitlyn Albrecht

Email Kalbrecht93@aol.com

Address 47 Cooper Drive

City, State Verbank, NY

Zip 12585

Phone 845-702-1007

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Name Tim Coil

Email tincoil89@gmail.com

Address 19116 Grandwood Dr

City, State Ponchartraine LA

Zip 70053

Phone 732 641 0531

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Name Morgan Pennington

Email morganlepennington14@gmail.com

Address 138 Pitts Griffin Dr

City, State Triana AL

Zip 35756

Phone 256-692-9153

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Name Thomas Landers
Email thomasglanders@gmail.com
Address 1332 Palm Cove Ave
City, State Charleston, SC
Zip 29492
Phone 205 614 7386

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Name Sarah Freed
Email frifoxhurr@icloud.com
Address 4827 Jersey Pike
City, State Chattanooga, TN
Zip 37416
Phone _____

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Name Katie Landers
Email katie89h@gmail.com
Address 1330 Palm Cove Dr
City, State Charleston, SC
Zip 29492
Phone 205 614 7379

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Name Kathy Cochran
Email Kcochran12345@yahoo.com
Address 2 Blow Rock Rd
City, State Boone, NC
Zip 28608
Phone _____

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Name Audrey Van Camp
Email vancamp147@yahoo.com
Address 1003 Waterford
City, State Ballwin, MO
Zip 63021
Phone 314 701 8587

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Name Kyle Surles
Email kylesurles@gmail.com
Address 3515 Hobbs Court
City, State VA Beach, VA
Zip 23462
Phone 757 072 0611

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Name Kevin O'Connor
Email KevinOConnor88@gmail.com *No emails, please*
Address 129 Old Shelbyville Hwy
City, State Tullahoma, TN
Zip 37388
Phone 931-434-2629 *No calls, please*

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Name Lindsay Marshall
Email lmarshall07@gmail.com
Address 713 E. Washington St
City, State Iowa City IA
Zip 52240
Phone 540-272-3690

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Name Katherine Greenstein

Email katie.greenstein@gmail.com

Address 700 Carriage Hill #6

City, State Iowa City, IA

Zip 52246

Phone 916-320-1135

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Name Kenneth Thompson

Email kenton1986@yahoo.com

Address 293 Windsor Hwy

City, State New Windsor, NY

Zip 12553

Phone 845-541-7259

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Name Anna Revolinski

Email anna.revolinski@gmail.com

Address 19 Sidney Place

City, State Mpls, MN

Zip 55414

Phone

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Name Kt Thompson

Email kdytronradhead@gmail.com

Address 146 Wilson Ave

City, State Brooklyn

Zip 11237

Phone 513-617-1451

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Name Salia Quesada
Email sally45@sbglobal.net
Address P.O. Box 12605
City, State El Paso, T.X.
Zip 79913
Phone _____

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Name Michael Martinez
Email mikemtz2@hotmail.com
Address P.O. Box 12605
City, State El Paso, T.X.
Zip 79913
Phone _____

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Name Neslie Shannon
Email Weslie-brooke@gmail.com
Address 3625 Mammon Pike apt. 1000
City, State Murfreesboro, TN
Zip 37129
Phone _____

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Name Brittany Gras
Email brittanygras@gmail.com
Address 412 Darlington Dr.
City, State Derby NY
Zip 14047
Phone 716-270-3534

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Name Rachel Estus
Email Rachecstus@yahoo.com
Address 374 Coolidge Ave
City, State Angola NY
Zip 14006
Phone 716-238-3790



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Name Erik S Phillips
Email Greater-thingie@yahoo.com
Address 1134 S. Maryland Ave
City, State Springfield, MO
Zip 65807
Phone 417-207-5863



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Name Lena Kidd
Email cecile4ever2003@yahoo.com
Address 1818 Cross Creek Rd
City, State Huntsville AL
Zip 35802
Phone _____



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Name Audrey Mercer
Email audrey.mercer18@yahoo.com
Address 2304 Hayes
City, State Eastpoint, MI
Zip 48021
Phone 586-777-5734



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Name Sheila Caran
Email SheilaFbc@gmail.com
Address 2481 Carver road
City, State Biloxi MS
Zip 39532
Phone 228 257 3337

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Name Andi Fehl
Email ANDIFEHL@GMAIL.COM
Address 9686 Peltus Lee Cir 2
City, State Lorton, VA
Zip 22079
Phone 571 245 2219

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Name Autumn Vaughn
Email AutumnVaughnPromotions@gmail.com
Address P.O. Box 69
City, State Denver NC
Zip 28037
Phone 9803952457

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Name Lori Zoller
Email loribaughn@yahoo.com
Address 2513 Grand puy Dr
City, State Indpls IN 46224
Zip 46224
Phone 317 319 0504

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Name Ranya Maddela
Email ramyaaaa.sm@gmail.com
Address 7763 Hunters Trl.
City, State Mason OH 45040
Zip
Phone (513) 518-6767

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Name ERICA FISHER
Email fisher.675@buckeyeemail.osu.edu
Address
City, State COLUMBUS, OH
Zip 43212
Phone

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Name John Cooper
Email hell2eeke@yahoo.com
Address 2432 Wilmore Ave
City, State Jacksonville, FL
Zip 32218
Phone 904-228-8530

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Name Sylvie King
Email King, sylvie@yahoo.com
Address 1813 Jefferson St
City, State Chattanooga, TN
Zip
Phone

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Name Savannah Mellon
Email Smellon@uab.edu
Address 667 Idlewild Circle Apt 6
City, State Birmingham, AL
Zip 35205
Phone (205) 282-7706



☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.
Send mean email!

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Name Victoria Wheeler
Email VWheeler@jcu.edu
Address 220 College St. SW Apt. 107
City, State J'ville, AL
Zip 36205
Phone 205-936-0657



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Name Ivannoe Gonzalez-Dollar
Email ivannoe.gonzalez@gmail.com
Address 16175 Main St.
City, State Town Creek, AL
Zip 35672
Phone 256-606-8684



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Email.

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Name Allia Threet
Email Allia.Threet@yahoo.com
Address 2809 Matthews St.
City, State Florence AL
Zip 36633
Phone (256) 766-9348



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Name Kylie Deese
Email Kylie.deese214@gmail.com
Address 3115 Tys Carrollton Rd
City, State Carrollton GA
Zip 30117
Phone 678 416 7664

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Name Megan Dawson & Chase Miller
Email Megan.Dawson@yahoo.com
Address 2229 24th Street
City, State Santa Monica, CA
Zip 90405
Phone 310-428-0981

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Name Michelle Bluman
Email Blumoon94@aol.com
Address 8812 Lorraine dr.
City, State Strongsville, OH
Zip 44149
Phone 216 577-1633

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Name teresa gentry
Email tgentry@hotmail.com
Address 2423 Lismore Dr.
City, State M'boro TN 37127
Zip 37127
Phone

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Name Daniel Horton
Email danielhorton@gmail.com
Address 111 Hayloft Ct
City, State Harvest AL
Zip 35749
Phone 256 837 5010

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Name Shanah Horton
Email shanahorton@gmail.com
Address 111 Hayloft Ct
City, State Harvest, AL 35749
Zip 35749
Phone 256 837 5010

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Name CHRIS BREITER
Email chrisbreiter@hotmail.com
Address 11244 LAKE SHORE RD. W.
City, State PORT COLBORNE, ONTARIO
Zip L3K5V4 CANADA
Phone 905 834-3082

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Name Tess Gruenberg
Email tess.the.best@mac.com
Address 60 E. 96th St. #12
City, State NY NY
Zip 10128
Phone 917 499 1830

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Name Sebastian Burgess
Email _____
Address 3718 Pineak Rd.
City, State Richmond VA 23223
Zip _____
Phone _____



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Name Dorotea Flores-Kestner
Email 21 E Sharon Dr dlfestner@yahoo.com
Address Bayce, VA 22620
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone 571 211 2676



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Name Ariel Auster-mehr
Email aauster-mehr@yahoo.com
Address 5 Tyler St.
City, State Buffalo NY
Zip 14214
Phone 631 3329491



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Name Alex Blacutt
Email ablacutt@vt.edu
Address 1000 Venita Dr
City, State Albany, GA
Zip 30606
Phone 703 943 540



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Name Joseph Tucker
Email joseph-m.tucker@gmail.com
Address 430 Quynons Rd. #212
City, State Charlotte NC
Zip 28207
Phone 704-605-5029



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Name Ava Kyle
Email ava.kyle@gmail.com
Address 53145 N. Ridge Rd
City, State Marion Valley CA
Zip 92256
Phone



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Name Nick Chamberlain
Email njchamberlain@gmail.com
Address 150 Schubauer Dr
City, State Cary NC
Zip 27513
Phone 919 234 2601



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Name Lauren Shuler
Email laurenshuler123@gmail.com
Address
City, State Brentwood, TN
Zip
Phone



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Name Kelsey Fischer
Email kelsey92@aol.com
Address 425 Potter Blvd
City, State Brightwaters, NY
Zip 11718
Phone (631) 745-5861

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Name Alex Bober
Email awbober@yahoo.com
Address 51 Clark Rd
City, State Weymouth, MA
Zip 01901
Phone 781.331.8153

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Name Kat Kerr
Email kkerr13@utk.edu
Address 109 Deer Run Circle
City, State Crossville, TN
Zip 38572
Phone 931-200-1290

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Name Luke Biscan
Email biscanluke@aol.com
Address 3996 April Dr.
City, State Uniontown, OH
Zip 44685
Phone (330) 245-6065

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Name Ruby Mask
Email _____
Address 10340 Lower Trail Rd
City, State Dundee OH
Zip 44624
Phone 330-763-0421

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Name Becky Herschberger
Email _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Matt Callo
Email mcall90@gmail.com
Address 1127 Overton Place
City, State Knoxville TN
Zip 37917
Phone 865-296-1772

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Name Carlin Costen
Email cjcosten@indiana.edu
Address 115 Trawbridge Dr
City, State Lafayette, IN
Zip 47909
Phone _____

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Name Sage Martin
Email sgk@gmail.com
Address 1521 Indiana Ave
City, State Louisville, KY
Zip 40213
Phone 502-583-7100

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Name Kris Hanken
Email theheatbaxter1995@gmail.com
Address 3143 Bellwood Ln
City, State Glenview, IL
Zip 60026
Phone 847-814-3143

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Name Ned Lyndall
Email Ellyndall@gmail.com
Address Baltimore
City, State Baltimore MD
Zip 21224
Phone -

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Name Seahen MacDonald
Email seahenmacdonald@gmail.com
Address 2202 E Baltimore St
City, State Baltimore MD
Zip 21231
Phone -

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Name Mary Curran
Email Marymagical@hotmail.com
Address 2650 Hastings Dr
City, State Tallahassee, FL
Zip 32303
Phone 850-570-3888



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Name Alex Thompson
Email xela_rate97@yahoo.com
Address 504 deer point drive
City, State Gulf Breeze
Zip 32561
Phone 850-96-7973



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Name Hannah Cleek
Email hcz01210@ohio.edu
Address 11691 Lincoln heights
City, State Pomeroy, OH
Zip 45769
Phone 740 416 6655



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Name Alex Merrill
Email ahm121@my.fsu.edu
Address 121 Main st.
City, State Daytona FL
Zip 32229
Phone 941-320-4808



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Name Breanna Kincaid
Email feltgoldfibers@yahoo.com
Address 6944 Tom Sawyer Rd.
City, State Silver Point, TN 38582
Zip 38582
Phone 931-284-7947



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Name Steven Landro
Email SLandro@comcast.net
Address 324 Valley Brook Ave
City, State Lyndhurst NJ
Zip 07071
Phone 201 681 4354



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Name Mallory Madrak
Email ~~MalloryMadrak@gmail.com~~ Mallorymadrak@gmail.com
Address 76 Mitchell Street
City, State New Britain, CT
Zip 06053
Phone 860-797-0321



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Name Alisa Gonzalez
Email 1014aug@gmail.com
Address 7110 Wexford Dr
City, State San Antonio, TX
Zip 78240
Phone (954) 713-3417



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Name Emily Chavez
Email emchavez@rams.colostate.edu
Address 4600 Sierra Vista Rd.
City, State Alamosa, CO
Zip 81101
Phone 719-588-0694



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Name Katya Liotta
Email katyaliotta@hotmail.com
Address 1 Gateway Ctr.
City, State Whitby, ON, Canada
Zip L1R 3M9
Phone 904-790-4017



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Name Kris Cadieux
Email akadutchy@gmail.com
Address 596 Dunbridge Dr
City, State Webster, NY
Zip 14580
Phone _____



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Name Anthony Rae Shaltis
Email arshaltis@hotmail.com
Address 8873 Oakbrook Dr
City, State Weston, IL 60332
Zip 60332
Phone (954)-914-8826



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Name Steven Helton
Email stehelton@azcentral.com
Address 264 Brauford Lane
City, State Lansdale, PA
Zip 19426
Phone 215-644-7189

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Name Daniel A. Alonzo
Email alonzo.daniel@san-edu
Address 656 W. 115th St
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60628
Phone 773-953-0300

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Name Rochelle Melick
Email rmelick@cityoflakeland.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Lee Anne Goldman
Email swmlee23@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Cameron Mason
Email Cam_mason12@msn.com
Address 8 McMillan Cr.
City, State Cambridge
Zip NC 447
Phone 519 654-3120

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Name Justin Mitchell
Email J6MSoccer16@AOL.com
Address 177 Compmeeting Rd
City, State Willow Grove, PA
Zip 19090
Phone (215) 407-4757

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Name Alisha Hipp
Email Alishahipp@yahoo.com
Address 390 E. Mitthoff
City, State Columbus OH
Zip 43206
Phone 330-473-0763

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Name MALCOLM ENNEL
Email wali.jamara@yahoo.com
Address 3841 CHSTER DRIVE
City, State WENVIEW, Illinois
Zip 60626
Phone 773-646-8353

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Name Brittany Boicourt
Email brittany.boicourt@gmail.com
Address 118 E 103rd St
City, State NY, NY
Zip 10029
Phone _____

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Name Nica Ables
Email nicable@yahoo.com
Address 686 Gaudin Rd
City, State Sevier TN
Zip 37375
Phone (630) 598-9193

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Name Judah Sklan
Email sklan04@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Delaney Brooks
Email MissDelaney249@gmail.com
Address 705 Dean Ave
City, State Sarasota, FL
Zip 34237
Phone 941-822-7871



☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

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Name Lindsey Lovering
Email LindseyLovering@yahoo.com
Address 228 Dixie Dr
City, State Tallahassee FL
Zip 32304
Phone 813-362-2632



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Name Nikki Steiner
Email nsteiner107@yahoo.com
Address 3300 Sandburg Ter.
City, State Olney, MD
Zip 20832
Phone 301-643-0715



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Name Cory Waters
Email BWAT533@YAHOO
Address 3207 DERBY PL
City, State MOBILE
Zip 36688
Phone 504-913-1593



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Name Mr. A. Resnik
Email resnik@hotmail.com
Address 289 Whitmore Drive
City, State Waterloo Ontario
Zip N2K 2M5
Phone 819 503 0588

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Name DOLORES COCHRAN - STIFS
Email DCOCHRAN0606@GMAIL.COM
Address 9930 FRANK DR. W.
City, State SEMINOLE FL
Zip 33776
Phone 727-420-3233

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Name Allison Carroll
Email allisoncarroll@gmail.com
Address 7731 Chovezy St.
City, State Niagara Falls, ON CANADA
Zip L2H 2N8
Phone 905-350-0566

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Name BRIAN MARSHALL
Email BRIAN K. MARSHALL@GMAIL.COM
Address 221 BAER ST
City, State HUNTINGTON WV
Zip 25705
Phone 304-634-6785

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Name Taylor Barker
Email tbarker@uoguelph.ca
Address 1633 Reese Blvd
City, State Brampton, ON
Zip N3R 2S1
Phone 519 756 8424



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Name Liana Jones
Email ceejones@hotmail.com
Address _____
City, State Ontario, Canada
Zip _____
Phone 519 755 1554



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Name Deavin Hansford
Email islandgirl340@hotmail.com
Address 1006 Crossings Dr.
City, State Prattville AL
Zip 37110
Phone _____



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Name Jennifer Chory
Email JENCHORY@gmail.com
Address 14509 Ave
City, State Floral Park, NY
Zip 11001
Phone 514-707-9511



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Name Suzanne Forlini
Email Suzanne Forlini@gmail.com
Address 25 Shakerbrook Rd.
City, State Monroe, New York
Zip 10950
Phone 845-238-4584

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Name Maude Landry
Email maude.landry@live.fr
Address 5691, St-Hubert
City, State Montreal, Canada
Zip J4Y 1X6
Phone 514-926-0386

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Name Macey Mullens
Email maceymullens@yahoo.com
Address 1808 Cherokee Valley Rd
City, State Rineyville, TN
Zip 38573
Phone 423-987-2561

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Name Teresa Knittle
Email TK@qmail.com
Address 2500 Adison Lane
City, State Jeff, IN
Zip 47120
Phone 812-284-0020

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Name Greg Bunker
Email greg1bunker@gmail.com
Address 1631 27th Ave N
City, State North Myrtle Beach, SC
Zip 29582
Phone 843-251-7423

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Name Joshua Moore
Email jmm82@mtmail.mtsu.edu
Address 2827 S. Rutherford Blvd.
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 38130
Phone 901-65-478-8158

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Name Damian Anderson
Email damian@damiansimagry.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Natasha Pelak @gmail.com
Email _____
Address 114 Edith St.
City, State State College, PA
Zip 16803
Phone 727 662-0511

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Name Mike Krawiec
Email KrawiecMike@yahoo.com
Address 2180 Connell Terr Ballwin, MO
City, State _____
Zip 13027
Phone 315 560 8028

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Name Lena Bichell
Email lbichell@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Katherine Borst
Email _____
Address 743 The Parkway
City, State Mamaroneck, NY
Zip 10543
Phone _____

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Name Lola Renee
Email lolarenee@yahoo.com
Address 802 Zion Rd
City, State Cookeville TN
Zip 38501
Phone _____

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Name Toni Carmack
Email toni.carmack@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Chil, TN
Zip 38501
Phone _____

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Name Bailey Hargrave
Email Baileyhargrave@yahoo.com
Address _____
City, State Tallahassee, TN
Zip 37388
Phone _____

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Name Jake Asker
Email Jakeasker@hotmail.com
Address _____
City, State Tallahassee, TN
Zip 37388
Phone _____

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Name Nekola Geri
Email Kola-one@love@yahoo.com
Address 12858 South Alabama Street
City, State Elberta, AL
Zip 36530
Phone 251-504-6739

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Name Iffany Shalton
Email _____
Address 2216 Summerlane
City, State Kingsport TN
Zip 37660
Phone _____

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Name Ivan Garbano
Email 865-384-5461
Address 513 Manor Dr.
City, State Kingsport TN
Zip 37660
Phone Ivargibn@yahoo.com

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Name Scott Sanders
Email ssanders41@aol.com
Address 1529 Fairview Drive
City, State Kingsport TN
Zip 37664
Phone _____

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Name Jo Marie Thompson
Email jomarc88@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip 3722
Phone _____

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Name Sarah Bransdorfer

Email sarahbransy@yahoo.com

Address 322 N. Marydell Ave.

City, State Deland, FL

Zip 32720

Phone 386-717-8423

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Name Olivia Van Nreda

Email olvanreda@yahoo.com

Address 318 tuckson Ave

City, State Ephrata PA

Zip 17522

Phone N/A

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Name Aubree Clark

Email aubreecaroline@yahoo.com

Address 9625 Roberts Drive

City, State Atlanta, GA

Zip 30350

Phone 678-392-9132

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Name Nick Whitbeck

Email nwhitbeck@aol.com

Address 32 Thiel's meadow rd

City, State Pomona, NY

Zip 10970

Phone 845 659 8954

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Name Taylor Vold
Email swimmer514@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Jessica Bickford-Manson
Email ~~jessica~~ drenchedinfire23@yahoo.com
Address 37 Greenwood Ave Apt 1
City, State New York Mills NY
Zip 13417
Phone _____



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Name Amber Iler
Email amberiler1@gmail.com
Address 2010 S. Ingram Mill D-17
City, State Springfield, MO
Zip 65801
Phone 417 619 3737

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Name Chelsey Sikes
Email sikeschelsey@yahoo.com
Address 958 E. Delmar
City, State Spfld Mo
Zip 65803
Phone (417) 942-7929

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Name Sarah Spivey
Email piwacket2@yahoo.com
Address 4706 Ageratum Ct.
City, State Acworth, GA
Zip 30102
Phone 678-234-5260

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Name Meagan Barr
Email MegBarr@gmail.com
Address 1112 E 52nd Street
City, State Savannah, GA
Zip 30141
Phone 404-512-1665

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Name Dierdre Christian
Email kellygreenbeans@yahoo.com
Address 4706 Ageratum Ct.
City, State Acworth, GA
Zip 30102
Phone 404-488-5769

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Name Kyle Blair
Email KylcaBlair@hotmail.com
Address 18 ANNE MARIE CRES
City, State KIALARDINE, ONT
Zip N2T 2M8
Phone 519 396 3270

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Name Anna Walton
Email anna.walton85@gmail.com
Address 6651 Selmer Dr.
City, State Douglasville GA
Zip 30134
Phone MR

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Name Matt Jones
Email _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Shannon Ireland
Email shannon.ireland@outlook.com
Address 60 Denhire Ct
City, State AMC 2P2
Zip SCARBOROUGH, ON
Phone 416 884 1734

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Name Joe Andrews
Email joandrews@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Will Tomb
Email fearthetic@gmail.com
Address 423 Agnes Rd
City, State Knoxville TN 37919
Zip 37919
Phone 865 771 2622

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Name Israel Ostle
Email izzyl_01@hotmail.com
Address 43 Bellesme Street Mount Hawthorn
City, State Perth W.A.
Zip 6016
Phone +61 42965156

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Name Samara Bustamante
Email Samara.bustamante@student.ru.nl
Address 93 Munro Blvd
City, State Valley Stream NY
Zip 11581
Phone (516) 825-2050

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Name Todd Ryan
Email ~~trryan~~ trryanbreakaway@gmail.com
Address
City, State
Zip
Phone

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Name

Ali Whiteman

Email

Address

7589 Rang Way

City, State

Marietta GA

Zip

30092

Phone

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Name

Todd Ryan

Email

tryanbreakaway@comcast.net

Address

City, State

Zip

Phone

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Name

Jessica Blawie

Email

blawie@goldmail.etsu.edu

Address

193 Hidden Lake Rd

City, State

Hendersonville, TN

Zip

37075

Phone

615-714-7193

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Name

Cass Arnold

Email

Cassss014@AOL.com

Address

City, State

Zip

Phone

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Name Erin Greene
Email erin.nashville@gmail.com
Address 1209 Sunnymead Dr.
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip 37216
Phone 615-293-0712

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Name Katie Gnggs
Email _____
Address 174 Black Bear Trail
City, State Nashville TN
Zip 37130
Phone 615 217 1444

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Name Brett Ashh
Email _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Andrew Marion
Email am@newcmarketing.com
Address 1120 Hwy Crook Wells
City, State Nashville TN 37212
Zip 602-715-8222
Phone ✓

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Name Morgan Rock
Email msrock@live.com
Address 31 confederation
City, State Gorhamstown ON
Zip L7G 3R4
Phone ---

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Name Christina Kellogg
Email Kelloggcm@appstate.edu
Address 102 Kalida Ct
City, State Cary, NC
Zip 27513
Phone (919) 271-9194

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Name Emma Scott
Email cm66@hotmail.com
Address 4575 Palmreston Toronto ON
City, State Ontario CAN
Zip M6B 2N9
Phone (416) 759-4117

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Name Ingrid Forsyth
Email forsythi@appstate.edu
Address 239 Mountain Flower Dr
City, State Boone, NC
Zip 28607
Phone (828) 963-0145

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Name Sydney Lewis
Email satewise@wesleyan.edu
Address 1834 E. Ramble Ct.
City, State Deerfield, CA
Zip 36033
Phone 404-655-9974



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Name Zach Calhoun
Email zach.calhoun93@gmail.com
Address 1025 Ross circle
City, State Napa, CA
Zip 94558
Phone (707) 343-1508



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Name Amanda So
Email violinistamanda@gmail.com
Address 114 Troutman Street, Apt. 323
City, State Brooklyn, NY
Zip 11206
Phone 347-768-2627



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Name Matthew Marsh
Email matthewmarsh09@gmail.com
Address 244 McElbain Apt. 3m
City, State Brooklyn, NY
Zip 11206
Phone 734-718-7475



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Name Robina Nagel
Email robinagel64@gmail.com
Address 3558 Main St.
City, State Pittard
Zip 14533
Phone 585-319-0401

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Name BRANDON HARRIS
Email FREEDOM-INK8@YAHOO.COM
Address 5034 DASHY LANE
City, State PHARADELLE, NY
Zip 14219
Phone 716 697 0065

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Name PAUL HENDERSON
Email PAUL.HENDERSON@8@YANCOO.COM
Address 1602 DOWN LAKE DR
City, State WINDERMERE, FL
Zip 34786
Phone _____

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Name Artin Smith
Email agsmith65@gmail.com
Address 101 Chesire Pl
City, State Hendersonville TN
Zip 37075
Phone _____

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Name Kelly Hébert
Email kellyhebert7@gmail.com
Address 2200 Severn Ave Apt V308
City, State Metairie, LA
Zip 70001
Phone 931-607-3908

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Name Sara Copeland
Email saracopeland92@gmail.com
Address 3700 N. Richmond Rd.
City, State Schroton, RI
Zip 00051
Phone 815 307 6172

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Name Elizabeth Barney
Email barney@email.sc.edu
Address 3431 Covenant Road J6
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29204
Phone 404-353-6669

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Name Randy Medley
Email vandy@studio59.com
Address 2309 Hickory Valley
City, State Chatt, TN 37421
Zip 37421
Phone 423-894-1045

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Name Alex Henry
Email N/A
Address 415 South Maple
City, State ST
Zip 37807
Phone (865) 617-1320

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Name Bonnie Hanna
Email bhanna@g.clemson.edu
Address 328 Beck Avenue
City, State Chattanooga, TN
Zip 37405
Phone 912-786-5543

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Name Madeline Blackburn
Email eternalsunshine24@gmail.com
Address 954 Ridgewood Circle
City, State Lake Orion, MI
Zip 48362
Phone 248-330-9101

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Name Keegan Brown
Email Keegan.P.Brown@gmail.com
Address 1115 N 5th St
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip 37207
Phone 615-556-2529

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Name Mike Schaeffel
Email michael.schaeffel157@unv.edu
Address 4207 Old Buckingham Rd
City, State Portsmouth, VA
Zip 23139
Phone 804-240-2829

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Name LAURIE COZZOLINO
Email laurie.cozzolino@gmail.com
Address 1217 GLADE HILL DR
City, State KNOXVILLE, TN
Zip 37909
Phone 865-599-5166

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Name Jennifer Liay
Email JenniferLiay111@gmail.com
Address 1802 Highland Park Rd
City, State Denton, TX
Zip 76205
Phone (940)-382-7421

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Name Chris Mellow
Email Chetstphw@Hotmail.com
Address 2101 Emory Ln
City, State Franklin, TN
Zip 37204
Phone (615) 500-1449

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Name Stephanie Zaccarus
Email Stephanie.Zaccarus@gmail.com
Address 13 Malden St apt 1
City, State New Bedford MA
Zip 02746
Phone 508-287-7660

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Name Billy Kratze
Email Liv2wrench@yahoo
Address 8 Quittica Ave
City, State Freetown ma
Zip 02217
Phone 508 788-4441

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Name KAREN TACKETT
Email ttackett8686@charter.net
Address 105 Fairway Blvd N
City, State Tullahoma, TN
Zip 37388
Phone

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Name Aliana Linkemper
Email alianaLK@gmail.com
Address 42 mill pond road
City, State Durham
Zip N.H. 03824
Phone _____



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Name Lonielle Carothers
Email ljcarothers@yahoo.com
Address _____
City, State Smyma TN
Zip 37107
Phone _____



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Name Tim
Email T.Vaighan1@aol.com
Address _____
City, State Columbus
Zip 43202
Phone _____



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Name Schwantha MEEhony
Email "@Yahoo.com
Address 1370 Antlett Hollow
City, State Petersburg TN
Zip 37144
Phone 931 492 1911



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Name Lauren Belaidi

Email lbelaidi@gmail.com

Address 406 Bay Rd

City, State Durham, NH

Zip 03821

Phone 603-297-7955

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Name Jacqueline Griffin

Email jgriffin@gmail.com

Address PO BOX 6

City, State Nellysford, VA

Zip 22958

Phone 434-996-5987

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Name Aidan Holley

Email

Address 1629 Coliseum St. Apt 1c

City, State New Orleans, LA

Zip 70130

Phone -

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Name Caitlin Olfano

Email gummibear71190@aol.com

Address 20 Cross Ridge Rd

City, State Pittsford, NY

Zip 14534

Phone (585) 469-0633

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Name Benjamin Peters
Email benjamin2118@yahoo.com
Address P.O. Box 671
City, State Mountain Home, ID
Zip 83647
Phone (315)222-6527

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Name B. L. Thomas
Email B.Thomas26.net.com
Address 263 Thomas Square Rd
City, State Wales, W. Va. 26201
Zip 26201
Phone 615-342-3647

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Name John Mark Shidnutt
Email johnmarkshidnutt@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 30307
Phone _____

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Name Robin Swensen
Email Robin Swensen@yahoo.com
Address 6954 Highland Park Dr
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip 37205
Phone 615-881-0391

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Name JAMES TSIMEKLES
Email HT63@yahoo.com
Address 122 W WOODLAKE CIR
City, State LOUISVILLE KY
Zip 40047
Phone 502 499 1147

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Name Dave Hirsch
Email hirsch.dave14@gmail.com
Address 2445 Stafford Pl.
City, State Columbus, OH
Zip 43209
Phone 614-477-4800

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Name Anna Giddy
Email ahagiddy@gmail.com
Address 262 Kingsbury Rd
City, State NS / Canada
Zip B0S 2X0
Phone

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Name Margaret Murray
Email mm240407@gmail.com
Address 1013 Parkway Dr E
City, State Columbus OH
Zip 43212
Phone

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Name John Harrison
Email johnharrisonuf@hotmail.com
Address Santa Rosa Beach, FL
City, State To live here pr
Zip 32459
Phone _____



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Name Ryan Harlett + Athena Mc Cumber
Email RyanHarlett4456@gmail.com
Address 1443 County Rd 10
City, State Norwich, NY
Zip 13815
Phone 607-201-7028



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Name Katie Freyler
Email Katie@yepu.org
Address 2 Cedar Ct
City, State Bohemia, NY
Zip 11716
Phone _____



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Name Dana Goodie
Email danaraeg22@yahoo.com
Address 125 Lynford drive
City, State Murfreesboro, TN 37128
Zip _____
Phone 931 952 1764



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Name Rachael Griffin
Email rachgriff12@hotmail.com
Address 93 N. Congress
City, State Athens, OH
Zip 45701
Phone _____

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Name Hunter McNaair
Email hmac4423@gmail.com
Address 256 Hawthard Ave
City, State Nashville TN
Zip 37205
Phone 615-739-2078

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Name Jennifer Whitacre
Email jkwitacre@mail.usf.edu
Address 115 E. Parkland Av
City, State Evansville, IN
Zip 47711
Phone 812-205-8926

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Name Shannon Whitacre
Email swhitacre91@gmail.com
Address 411 Hare Ct
City, State Newburgh, TN
Zip 47630
Phone 812-205-8919

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Name Brenda Velez

Email _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

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Name Katherine Flores

Email Kaf2102@gmail.com

Address 1516 Ashleman dr.

City, State Fayetteville, NC

Zip 28314

Phone 910-366-3704

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Name Elisabeth Gustafson

Email elisabeth.elin@gmail.com

Address 1275 Eagle Vista Dr

City, State Los Angeles, CA

Zip 90041

Phone 323-718-4152

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Name Ronni Villanueva

Email Ronni.Villanueva@yahoo.com

Address 11661 Pine Bay Dr.

City, State Lake Mary, FL

Zip 32746

Phone 407 804 3827

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Name Vanessa Eaton
Email vanessaeaton57@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Lake Mary, FL
Zip 32746
Phone _____

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Name Janice Bacon
Email JBaconindy@aol.com
Address 8865 N Rivett Rd
City, State Monsieula IN
Zip 46157
Phone 317-996-3194

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Name Lars Stimbora
Email lstimbora@kent.edu
Address _____
City, State Hudson, OH
Zip 44236
Phone _____

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Name Annee Craven
Email SCHYCO-CHICK@yahoo.com
Address 285 Upper Powell Rd
City, State Will, ARMS OK
Zip 0 7544
Phone 217-556-5206

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Name Sarah Harrison
Email sarahharrison8114@gmail.com
Address 24551 Orange Ave
City, State Ft. Pierce, FL
Zip 34945
Phone 772-293-1109

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Name Ryan Mitchell
Email Rmhsoccer2@aol.com
Address 177 Campmeeting Rd
City, State Willow Grove, PA
Zip 17090
Phone 2154074759

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Name Paige Giddy
Email paigegiddy@gmail.com
Address 262 Kingsburg
City, State Rose Bay
Zip 30520
Phone

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Name Matt Kruger
Email matthkruger2@hotmail.com
Address 112405C Hamplain ave
City, State Chicago IL
Zip 60628
Phone 7086992719

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Name Nathan Muka
Email nathan.muka@gmail.com
Address 134 Ridge Rd.
City, State Lansing, NY
Zip 14882
Phone 607 793 4614

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Name Scott LaPinto
Email scottlapinto@gmail.com
Address 240 Etna Rd
City, State Ithaca, NY
Zip 14850
Phone 607 592 8465

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Name Trechie C. James
Email trechie88@yahoo.com
Address 324 Cascade Ave
City, State McMinnville, TN
Zip 37110
Phone 931-743-8498

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Name Casper James
Email Casper.James@hotmail.com
Address 324 Cascade Ave.
City, State McMinnville, TN
Zip 37110
Phone 931-808-6124

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Name Izella Berman
Email izella.berman@gmail.com
Address 3316 S Durango Ave #6
City, State Culver City, CA
Zip 90034
Phone (909) 680-1323



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Name Angie Cheatham
Email adavis.10022@yahoo.com
Address 312 Washington Ave
City, State Haddonfield, NJ
Zip 08033
Phone 856-433-8384



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Name Nina Berman
Email nina.rochelle.berman@gmail.com
Address 3316 S. Durango Ave #6
City, State Los Angeles, CA
Zip 90034
Phone 909 720 1609



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Name Felicia Osburn
Email fosburn26@aol.com
Address Apt. 8201 2133 E 2nd St.
City, State Edmond, OK
Zip 73034
Phone 765-994-6131



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Name Alec Hummer
Email mykroman99@aol.com
Address 9930 Frank Dr West
City, State Seminole FL
Zip 33776
Phone 727-631-1276



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Name Joseph Perkhovich
Email perjerk@gmail.com
Address 837 W 12 St
City, State DeKalb IL
Zip 60115
Phone 615 757-6535



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Name Andrea Viorel
Email Andrea.Viorel@gmail.com
Address 3324 Woodburn Village Dr #23
City, State Annandale VA
Zip 22003
Phone 571-235-3894



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Name Gloria Viorel
Email GloriaGStajmsn.com
Address 3729 Merrilee Dr. Apt 411
City, State Fairfax VA
Zip 22031
Phone



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Name Connor Daniel
Email cdaniel12@binghamton.edu
Address 29 Railroad Avenue
City, State Calverton NJ
Zip 07830
Phone (908) 310-0204

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Name Emily Skydel
Email emilyskydel@gmail.com
Address 43 Gladstone Rd
City, State New Rochelle, NY
Zip 10804
Phone 914-960-1136

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Name Mary Chapin Jones
Email MaryChapinJ@gmail.com
Address 102 Adelaide Dr
City, State Greenville SC
Zip 29615
Phone 8649050871

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Name Jennie-Mae Nisbet
Email jenniemae13@rocketmail.com
Address P.O. Box 384
City, State Ramford Maine
Zip 04276
Phone 207-418-7990

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Name Will Harper
Email iamwillharper@yahoo.com
Address [Signature]
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip [Signature]
Phone [Signature]



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Name Ashlie Leifer
Email ashlie.leifer@gmail.com
Address [Signature]
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip [Signature]
Phone [Signature]



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Name Elijah Eggers
Email elijah.eggers@gmail.com
Address 2800 SW Williston Rd. Southpl
City, State Gainesville, FL
Zip 32608
Phone [Signature]



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Name Ashton Bessette
Email ash-ton.b90@gmail.com
Address CANADA !! solidarity
City, State [Signature]
Zip #idlenomore
Phone #canpoli



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Name Austin Nolan
Email anolan321@yahoo.com
Address 1600 E. Mohr
City, State Norman, OK
Zip 73072
Phone (580) 284-4796
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Name Alex Temple
Email alextemple93@yahoo.com
Address 9920 Milltrail Dr.
City, State Dallas, Tx
Zip 75238
Phone 214-708-5048
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Name Tyler Rhynhart
Email tyler@rhynhart.com
Address 6012 Shady Brook Dr.
City, State Amarillo, Tx
Zip 79124
Phone 806 626 9845
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Name Kelsey Burton
Email kelseyburton@hotmail.com
Address _____
City, State Birmingham, AL
Zip 35205
Phone 205 541 6097
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Name Kelsi Phares

Email _____

Address _____

City, State Reading, PA

Zip 19606

Phone 360 609 3999

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Name Kelly Rhodes

Email Kellrh98@aol.com

Address 1720 Mary Ann Dr

City, State Gautier MS 39553

Zip 39553

Phone _____

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Name Adam Beck

Email adam.beck55@hotmail.com

Address 31 Confederation St

City, State Georgetown ON

Zip L2G 3G4

Phone 905-891-7901

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Name Mary Cole

Email _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

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Name Srirekha Radhakrishnan

Email srirekha.r@gmail.com

Address 951 Isha Lane

City, State McMinnville, TN

Zip 37110

Phone _____

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Name Robert Mante

Email r.mason.m@skydial.net

Address 105 W. Main St.

City, State Fort Worth TX

Zip 76110

Phone 817-733-1063

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Name Jessica Moffat

Email jessica.kmoffat@gmail.com

Address 1725 Errel Poulton Rd

City, State Pleasant View, TN

Zip 37146

Phone (615) 557-5386

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Name Elizabeth Hunt

Email elizabeth.hunt.isha@gmail.com

Address 951 Isha Lane

City, State McMinnville TN

Zip 37110

Phone 615 653 6813

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Name Don Boyd
Email dboyd@hotmail.com
Address 112 Bridge Street
City, State Corning, NY- 14830
Zip _____
Phone 828-298-5322

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Name Elissa Freddeen
Email elfreddeen@aol.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone 209 427 4047

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Name Trevor Fanning
Email canuckcrazy2004@hotmail.com
Address 6 Farr Crescent
City, State Ontario
Zip N2C 1R6
Phone 800

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Name Bronson Patterson
Email Bronson.patterson@yahoo.com
Address 390 E Mithoff St
City, State Columbus OH
Zip 43206
Phone (330) 763-3344

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Name Francesca Lynne
Email franceska@beatlemail.com
Address 1820 Canyon Dr. #102
City, State LA, CA
Zip 90028
Phone _____



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Name Raul Gallegos
Email rgallego@gmail.com
Address 807 E. Gibson St.
City, State Laramie, WY
Zip 82072
Phone [REDACTED]



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Name Xavier DeLosSantos
Email XavierDeLosSantos3@gmail.com
Address 1007 Remont
City, State Watford, MI
Zip 48326
Phone 248.212.2951



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Name Ashley Redelico
Email Redelico16@yahoo.com
Address 505 Hillside Av
City, State Daytona Beach, FL
Zip 32118
Phone 908 938 1942



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Name Shalom Kaiser
Email ShalomKaiser@gmail.com
Address 5555 G Mockingbird Ln.
City, State Dallas, TX
Zip 75206
Phone 415-419-4003



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Name Glen R. Kerley
Email gkerley@biloxy.mil.us
Address 170 Porter
City, State Biloxi MS
Zip 39530
Phone 228-392-0641



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Name Joe Tapia
Email Jtapia7@gmail.com
Address 8280 S Balbo
City, State Chicago IL 60611
Zip 60611
Phone 312-221-4625



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Name Mike Elmore
Email homegme@live.com
Address _____
City, State Smithfield, NC
Zip 27577
Phone (919)464-3006



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Name KATIE HOSLOW
Email fhoslow@katiehoslow.com
Address 59A Midway Moor
City, State San Diego CA
Zip 92114
Phone -



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Name Enoch Bledsoe
Email enoch.bledsoe@gmail.com
Address 1 popple
City, State Greenville NC
Zip 28807
Phone -



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Name Darcy Swannerton
Email darcy_sw@hotmail.com
Address -
City, State -
Zip -
Phone -



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Name Jacob Davis
Email JACOB-DAVIS 21 @ GMAIL.COM
Address 1708 STAMMANT TRAIL
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37909
Phone 865-206-3411



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Name Doniqua Plack
Email doniqua.plack@my.maryvillecollege.edu
Address 1520 Carolina Ave.
City, State Kingsport, TN
Zip 37664
Phone (423) 412-0820



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Name Shawn Watt
Email shawnwatt@gmail.com
Address 1244 Tonka Ave
City, State Colorado Springs, CO
Zip 80904
Phone 719-338-5238



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Name Calvin Chen
Email Calvin.chen3@hotmail.com
Address 4521 June Dr
City, State Kingsport, TN
Zip 37664
Phone (423) 765-8901



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Name Jacob Baker
Email Jacobebaker24@gmail.com
Address 223 Elm St Apt #8
City, State Kalamazoo, MI
Zip 49007
Phone 269-632-5452



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Name

James Adler

Email

Jadler@LSBE.org.uk

Address

City, State

Toronto

Zip

Phone

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Name

Agata Chrobot

Email

agatachrobot@gmail.com

Address

City, State

Little Falls, NJ

Zip

07424

Phone

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Name

Denine DelBalso

Email

ddelbals@gmail.com

Address

City, State

Lakewood, Ohio

Zip

44107

Phone

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Name

SKIPP SPARROW

Email

DJEEPWILMA@GMAIL.COM

Address

4700 NW 76TH

City, State

OKC OK

Zip

73134

Phone

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Jessica Duke
Email jessica.k.duke@gmail.com
Address 17 7th Street Apt 1
City, State Shalimar, FL
Zip 32519
Phone 850 499 9123

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Newsletter



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Name Reed McManis
Email reedmcm@gmail.com
Address 333 2nd St
City, State Pittsburgh PA
Zip 15219
Phone _____

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Name Katie Kahn
Email katiekahn16@gmail.com
Address ~~2800~~ 1248 West 4th St
City, State Williamsport, PA
Zip 17701
Phone 570-447-2988

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Name William Brant
Email 14will@ yahoo.com
Address 1208 Creekwood Way South
City, State Jacksonville, FL
Zip 32259
Phone 904-287-8449

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Name Erin Saccomano
Email esacconano@gmail.com
Address 65 Spadina Rd
City, State Toronto
Zip M5R 2T1
Phone 416 799 9368

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Name Maria Lindgren
Email mlindgren86@gmail.com
Address 65 Spadina Rd
City, State Toronto, ONTARIO
Zip M5R 2T1
Phone 905 726 5976

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Name Tiffany Stewart
Email _____
Address 414 Hawkins Ave
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 37130
Phone _____

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Name Meagan Gardner
Email meagelizgardner@att.net
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Tori Mogensen
Email peaceball22@gmail.com
Address 1127 south Osprey Ave
City, State Sarasota, FL
Zip 34236
Phone 941-952-0502

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Name Victoria Blair
Email tori-blair10@hotmail.com
Address 2632 ESPANOLA AVE
City, State SARASOTA, FL
Zip 34239
Phone 941 105 9900

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Name JOE DAWSON
Email QDAWSON@COX.NET
Address 5942 Clematis Dr.
City, State Baton Rouge, LA
Zip 70808
Phone _____

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Name MJ KIRSCH
Email mjkirsch@cox.net
Address 910 Masterson Dr.
City, State Baton Rouge LA
Zip 70816
Phone _____

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Name Jaime Lindsey
Email Jaime-Lindsey@uiowa.edu
Address 328 E Market St.
City, State Iowa City, IA
Zip 52245
Phone —

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Name Leah Drielsma
Email leahd@gmail.com
Address 91 Rose St
City, State Clippendale, Australia
Zip 2008
Phone +61403992769

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Name Jackie Mogensen
Email snappleapplepineapple@yahoo.com
Address 1127 S. Osprey Ave.
City, State Sarasota, FL
Zip 34239
Phone 941-952-6502

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Name Lauren Briggsby
Email superman1545@aol.com
Address 1241 Center Pl.
City, State Sarasota, FL
Zip 34236
Phone ~~813~~

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Name ADAM WILLIAMS
Email AMW304@GMAIL.COM
Address 2815 4th ST NE Apt 2
City, State W/DC
Zip 20002
Phone (703) 389 6941

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Name Greg Tidwell
Email greg.tidwell@gmail.com
Address 353 E. Bonnevill Ave #147
City, State Las Vegas, NV
Zip 89101
Phone 415 886 7527

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Name JOSH EVANS
Email jde2424@gmail.com
Address 4912 MCCARTY LN
City, State LAFALETTE, LA
Zip 7009
Phone 765-412-2923

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Name ERIC EDDY
Email ERIC.EDDY@GMAIL.COM
Address 1209 S MONACO PARK
City, State DENVER, CO
Zip 80224
Phone _____

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Name Luke Dickinson
Email lukiepooh3@hotmail.com
Address 2365 Shady Oak Rd.
City, State Melbourne, FL
Zip 32935
Phone —

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Name Chenish Dobins
Email writesomewrong@gmail.com
Address 117 2nd J
City, State Woodford VA
Zip 22580
Phone —

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Name —
Email —
Address —
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Name Donald Matthews
Email —
Address —
City, State Purcellville VA
Zip 20141
Phone —

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Name Allina Ramirez
Email Allina.ramirez614@gmail.com
Address 235 Langford Valley Way
City, State Cary NC 27513
Zip 27513
Phone 919-606-4049

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Name Forrest Austin
Email forrest.austin@gmail.com
Address 925 SW 10th
City, State Moore, OK
Zip 73160
Phone 405-620-1465

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Name Randy Dunn
Email —
Address 531 Tift Co Line Rd
City, State Omaha, GA
Zip 31775
Phone —

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Name Deanna Rowe
Email —
Address 1282 Old Dominion Dr.
City, State Millford, OH
Zip 45186
Phone —

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Name Alyson Johnson-Sawyer
Email Sawyerigh@gmail.com
Address 38 Branchin-Berry Tr.
City, State Mills River NC
Zip 28759
Phone 828-990-3574

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Name Danielle Gooding
Email N/A
Address 916 Dry Branch Rd
City, State Stuyfork, WV
Zip 26291
Phone (804) 940-2800

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Name Joan Griggs
Email ashlyne@vallnet.com
Address 9 Hattie Dr.
City, State Fayetteville, TN 37334
Zip 931-433-6086
Phone

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Name Clay, Burns
Email Clay.Burns@gmail.com
Address 3621 Frankford
City, State Dallas, TX
Zip 75283
Phone 254-413-9011

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Name Mike Cross

Email moundgarden@gmail.com

Address 1707 Ward Ave NE

City, State Huntsville, AL

Zip 35801

Phone (256) 585-5971



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Name Tia Stein

Email tia-mannan@yahoo.com

Address 312 S Franklin St

City, State Tulahoma TN

Zip 37388

Phone



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Name Michelle Scott

Email mscott1500@aol.com

Address 120 Bridge Ave

City, State Murfreesboro TN

Zip 37130

Phone



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Name Jim Sawyer

Email sawyerjgh@gmail.com

Address 38 Branchin Berry Trail

City, State Mills River, NC

Zip 28759

Phone 828-891-3574



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Name Alexis Schwab
Email aschwab1@gmail.com
Address 655 S Hubert
City, State N. Judson
Zip 46366
Phone

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Name Ashley Accad
Email ashleyaccad@gmail.com
Address 10760 NW 107 AVE
City, State MI, FL
Zip 33176
Phone 305 282 1285

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Name Nora Ride
Email nridea@gmail.com
Address 13451 Albany
City, State MT, OAK Park
Zip 40237
Phone (246) 854-0877

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Name Ava Mohr
Email ava.snickers@gmail.com
Address 1790 Emory Ridge Drive
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 30329
Phone 404 550 9932

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Name Lizzie Wilson
Email lizwilson@gmail.com
Address 850 Oakdale Rd
City, State GA Atlanta
Zip 30307
Phone 4048037643



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Name Erica Smith
Email esmith@yahoo.com
Address 185 N George St
City, State Boston, MA
Zip 02215
Phone _____



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Name Lisa Keller
Email lkell08@yahoo.com
Address 429 Seminary St
City, State Pennsburg PA
Zip 18073
Phone 215-896-3251



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Name Valene Haase
Email haase.valene@gmail.com
Address 133 Ericson St
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 30317
Phone 912-399-2746



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Name Abby Grandinetti
Email agrandinetti22@aol.com
Address 1771 Lake Blvd Dr.
City, State W-S, NC
Zip 27012
Phone 334-745-5477

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Name Rachel Harper
Email rachelcaroline33@yahoo.com
Address 6243 Oris Miller Road
City, State Marionville TN
Zip 37801
Phone 865-206-4565

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Sarah Montoya
Email samontoya12@gmail.com
Address 2308 Notting Ln
City, State Apex, NC
Zip 27523
Phone 919 946 5865

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Name Sean Kelly
Email vitek.phaes@gmail.com
Address 1116 Merrill St.
City, State Kalamazoo, MI
Zip 49006
Phone (586) 879-9020

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Name RON KRENNING
Email R.KRENNING@GLOBE.NET
Address 7200 CROSTOWN
City, State ST LOUIS, MO
Zip 63129
Phone 314 846 5153

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Name Timothy Belley
Email timothy-belley@student.uml-edg
Address 55 Fay St
City, State Lowell, MA
Zip 01852
Phone 508 740 7666

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Name Shannon Hogue
Email shannon@yaho.com
Address 2207 Ardite St
City, State Slidell, LA
Zip 70460
Phone 201-8481

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Name Larissa Kunashko

Email 519-751-7051

Address 35 St. Andrews Dr

City, State Ontario

Zip N3T 6H3

Phone

larissais@msn.com



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Name Austin Daly

Email austin.daly@aol.com

Address 607 Cascade Ave

City, State Leesburg, FL

Zip 34718

Phone 352 430 4898



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Name Alyssa Kruger

Email potatoes229@aol.com

Address 6951 Dearborn Pl.

City, State Baynton Beach, FL

Zip 334137

Phone 561-737-3475



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Name Savannah King

Email savmeredithking@gmail.com

Address 1631 27th Ave. North

City, State North Myrtle Beach, SC

Zip 29587

Phone 843-246-0113



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Name Jay Cottler
Email BeggsCarr1235
Address 22324 Andrew Jackson Lane
City, State Chicago Illinois
Zip 60678
Phone (312) 5268740

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Name Edin McCurver
Email edwin911@comcast.net
Address 27831 Glenwood
City, State St Clair Shores MI
Zip 48087
Phone 586-215-1246

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Name McKenzie Carter
Email McKenzieCarter@gmail.com
Address 551 W Park Avenue
City, State Long Beach, NY
Zip 11561
Phone _____

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Name Brittney Means
Email bmeans315@gmail.com
Address 3507 Columbus ave
City, State Sandusky OH
Zip 44870
Phone 313 9095532

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Name BRADLEY GAUCHAT
Email BBGauchat@yahoo.com
Address 4489 Red Bud Ct
City, State Pegram, TN
Zip 37143
Phone 615-866-8116

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Name Angela Grout
Email aggrout@ioma.edu
Address 343 Hurffville Greenloch Rd
City, State Sewell NJ
Zip 08080
Phone 609-502-0313

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Name Jimmy Gierczyk
Email Jimmy.Regular@gmail.com
Address 2344 W FULLERTON CHICAGO
City, State ILLINOIS
Zip 60410
Phone 708 279-1405

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Name Stephen Carlborg
Email Sicarlboy@gmail.com
Address 9930 W. 105th Pl.
City, State Gr. Joh In
Zip 46373
Phone 219-249-7177

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Name Olivia Burtram
Email oberf626@yahoo.com
Address 327 Coningham St.
City, State Cafayette, LA
Zip 70507
Phone _____

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Name ZACH
Email mcurezo@gmail
Address _____
City, State _____
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Phone _____

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Name Henry Medio
Email Henry412@gmail.com
Address 2411 Dwyndale Ln
City, State Fort Lauderdale FL
Zip 33322
Phone 708-957-0671

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Name Angeline del Pilar
Email del Pilar_a94@yahoo.com
Address 3292 Dethan Ave.
City, State Spring Hill, FL
Zip 34609
Phone 352-232-1652

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Name Sean Kelly
Email sean.kelly.m@gmail.com
Address 1534 Azalea Dr
City, State Webster Groves, MO
Zip 63119
Phone 314-761-8788

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Name Erin Kelly
Email elk.wghts@gmail.com
Address 1534 Azalea
City, State Webster Groves, MO
Zip 63119
Phone 314 610 8921

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Name Elizabeth Vermeersch
Email e1vermeersch@gmail.com
Address 1534 Azalea Dr
City, State St L, MO
Zip 63119
Phone 314-922-4897

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Name LIM SKYE
Email BLUESKYE@AOL
Address 537 TURTLE CREEK
City, State BRENTWOOD TN
Zip 37027
Phone 615 400-4486

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Name SAR CATANZANO
Email _____
Address _____
City, State CLARKSVILLE TN
Zip 37040
Phone _____

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Name CHRISTINA MOSCIKO
Email CAMOJIKO@YAHOO.COM
Address ~~10000 WOODBRIDGE DR~~
City, State SARASOTA, FL
Zip 34231
Phone _____

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Name Justin Green
Email jgreen11@gmail.com
Address 30755 Georgia Tech Station
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 30332
Phone 908 788 8008



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Name Danielle Ikin
Email daniellenicole99@gmail.com
Address 67 East Clinton Ave
City, State Tenafly, NJ
Zip 07670
Phone 201 673 1518



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Name Lisa Driscoll
Email Soccer11d008@yahoo.com
Address 2981 Maple Grove Ln W
City, State Powhatan, VA
Zip 23139
Phone (804) 245-1361



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Name Leat Hupert
Email leat.hupert@gmail.com
Address 11 Glenview Dr.
City, State Alpine, NJ
Zip 08620
Phone 908 688 8938



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Name Lea Martin
Email arwen13@yahoo.com
Address 2370 SW Archer Rd Apt 97
City, State Gainesville FL
Zip 32608
Phone



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Name Cari Gandy
Email cariannegandy@gmail
Address
City, State
Zip 34601
Phone



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Name Trapper Haskins
Email trapper_haskins@yahoo.com
Address 549 E. Main #3
City, State Murfreesboro TN
Zip 37130
Phone



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Name Mandy Haskins
Email mandy5n1@hotmail.com
Address 549 E. Main St #3
City, State Murfreesboro TN
Zip 37130
Phone



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Name Daniel Deep
Email killerubc@aol.com
Address POB 1252
City, State High Springs, FL
Zip 32608
Phone (352) 454-2925

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Name Maria Mitchell
Email agoldenfirebird@yahoo.com
Address 55 N. Evergreen #1
City, State Memphis, TN
Zip 38104
Phone 901-304-9787

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Name Sabrina Molinar
Email gr8plak@gmail.com
Address 1766 Executive Center Dr. #301
City, State West Palm Beach
Zip FL 33401
Phone

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Name Ange la Morlin
Email paudrangel@gmail.com
Address 232 Carriage Parc
City, State Chattanooga TN
Zip 37424 37421
Phone 423-605-2124

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Name Michela Moscato
Email mmoscat@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Brookline, MA
Zip 02445
Phone 617-686-2931

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Name Eric ard
Email eric_ard4@gmail.com
Address 2116 Parker Rd
City, State Conover, NC
Zip 28626
Phone 919-567-3002

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Name Jessica Rohm
Email Jessica-Danielle.07@yahoo.com
Address 5209 Woodmere St
City, State Mobile, AL
Zip 36693
Phone 251-656-9261

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Name Daniel Clements
Email Daniel.Clements1808@gmail.com
Address 59 B. Alford Ave
City, State Mobile, AL
Zip 36604
Phone 251-581-3081

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Name Deb Amado
Email damado@charter.net
Address 80 Wakefield Dr
City, State Manchester TN
Zip 37355
Phone 931-808-0007



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Name Megan Baxter
Email spice loves nutmeg@aol.com
Address 2181 1/2 8th Ave N
City, State St. Petersburg FL
Zip 33713
Phone 727-400-1947



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Name William Moorman
Email wmoorman4@gmail.com
Address 2401 Airline Dr.
City, State Brenham TX
Zip 77835
Phone 979-451-2006



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Name Sara Trout
Email Strout0715@yahoo.com
Address P.O. Box 431
City, State Port Elizabeth, NO
Zip 08348
Phone 609-412-5687



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Name Sam Euler
Email sam.euler7@mac.com
Address 1030 Forest Avenue
City, State River Forest, IL
Zip 60309
Phone _____

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Name Laurel Johnson
Email ljohnson@floridabioscience.com
Address 828 Clinton
City, State Ok Park, IL
Zip 60304
Phone 706 254 9514

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Name Heather Hatfield
Email Heather.Hatfield@gmail.com
Address 1611 Poor Farm Rd
City, State Florence, SC
Zip 29501
Phone 843-230-6692

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Name Carlos J. Carreras
Email Cjcarreas5@gmail.com
Address 700 SW 144th Street
City, State Miami, FL
Zip 33158
Phone (305)-834-8970

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Name Emily Haney
Email haneyet@j. cofc.edu
Address 305 Coniney St Apt B
City, State Charleston, SC
Zip 29403
Phone 803 404 1526

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Name Samantha Alder
Email samantha.alder@ucgms.edu
Address 427 West Embargo Street
City, State Rome NY
Zip 13440
Phone 315-225-5623

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Name Ryan Baltz
Email masongroveband@gmail.com
Address 6 Nightingale Ct.
City, State Johnson City, TN
Zip 37601
Phone (704) 975-9004

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Name Senders Heese
Email SendersHeese@gmail.com
Address 28 A Drake St.
City, State Charleston SC
Zip 29403
Phone 803 371-2681

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Name Heather Smedley

Email _____

Address _____

City, State Michie, TN

Zip 38357

Phone _____

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Name Samantha Lanzetta

Email sammuraj@gmail.com

Address 3282 Chancellor Drive

City, State Woodbridge, VA

Zip 22192

Phone 571-264-8992

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Name Joel Henson

Email _____

Address Michie, TN

City, State _____

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Phone _____

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Name Brittany Cooper
Email BCOOPER216@gmail.com
Address /
City, State SC
Zip /
Phone /
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Name Michael Tolon
Email Michael.T.Tolon@gmail.com
Address 356 Crystal ave
City, State Staten Island, NY
Zip 10314
Phone 347-662-1568



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Name Skyler Patrick
Email Skylerpat@gmail.com
Address 7620 Crosby Dr.
Lone Tree, CO
City, State
Zip 80124
Phone 303-918-4706



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Name Carah Petty
 Email pettyx@email.sx.edu
 Address
 City, State
 Zip
 Phone

**GULF
 RESTORATION
 NETWORK**



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Name Rachel Edwards


Email Rnedwar@g.clemson.edu

Address _____

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Name Justin Ward
Email Kthggadeke@yahoo.com
Address 104 Newridge Rd. Oak Ridge
City, State TN
Zip 37830
Phone 865 972-3816

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Name Charles Orr
Email Corr@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Ryan Baker
Email _____
Address Ryan Baker@ilp.com
City, State IL
Zip 62404
Phone _____

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Name Jacob Remaly
Email greenman92@hotmail.com
Address 15562 Outlook Place
City, State Durham, VA
Zip 22025
Phone 703 674 8201

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Name Matt Hanna
Email MH5231@gmail.com
Address 7627 E 37th St. N Apt. 2804
City, State Wichita KS
Zip 67226
Phone 610-585-1084



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Name April Lawson
Email april.lawson@verizon.net
Address _____
City, State Belmont NC
Zip 28012
Phone _____



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Name Sarah Miller
Email Smiller23.93@gmail.com
Address 429 Chattahoochee Circle
City, State GA 30075
Zip 30075
Phone _____



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Name Ivan Nikitin
Email ivanikitin@gmail.com
Address 2917 Hawk Trace
City, State Maricopa CA
Zip 90066
Phone _____



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Name Zoe Doherty
Email zoe008@hotmail.com
Address _____
City, State Johnson City, TN
Zip _____
Phone _____
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Name Gabi Love
Email lovesa@oldmail.earthlink.net
Address _____
City, State Johnson City, TN
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Phone _____
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Name Chris Caracciolo
Email chucksager@hotmail.com
Address 15805 Wendy Ct
City, State Markclaire, VA
Zip 22075
Phone 703 987 0552
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Name Holly Lusby
Email HLusby@aol.com
Address _____
City, State Kansas City, MO
Zip 64151
Phone _____
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Name Robert Burford Sr.
Email win.burford@gmail.com
Address 155 Glenhaven Ave
City, State Athens, GA 30606
Zip 30606
Phone 662 719 7068

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Name Shuffel Carter
Email shuffelcarter50@yahoo.com
Address 407 Grand Lake Rd
City, State Rea, MS
Zip 39465
Phone 661-270-9352

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Name Olivia Lehman
Email oal-22@hotmail.com
Address 3638 Sussex Drive
City, State Milledgeville, GA
Zip 31061
Phone 478-451-8204

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Name Chloe Whitaker
Email Chloewhitaker@aol.com
Address 2815 Chandler Grove Drive
City, State Buxton, GA
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Name Ann Post
Email apost727@gmail.com
Address 2057 Pine Ridge DR
City, State Clearwater, FL
Zip 33763
Phone (727) 608-0606



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

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Name Rachael Kemmett
Email rachkemm@gmail.com
Address 28619 N. Park Dr.
City, State N. Olmsted, OH
Zip 44070
Phone (440) 655-6538



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Name DAVE HODGES
Email RAOUL DUKE 25@yahoo.com
Address 1630 ROBERTS DR
City, State MABLETON GA
Zip 3026
Phone _____



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Name Matthew Tonge
Email Matthewtonge@hotmail.com
Address 250 Butler Drive
City, State Reno, Nevada
Zip 89210
Phone 515-771-4256



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Name Elizabeth Fernandez
Email eefernandez1003@gmail.com
Address 2801 Elendale A. Apt. 4
City, State Los Angeles, CA
Zip 90007
Phone (508) 813-9058

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Name Jen Page
Email jenpage23@gmail.com
Address 601 Louis Street
City, State Manville, MT
Zip 59835
Phone 908 531 4355

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Name Julia Scullion
Email juliascullion@hotmail.com
Address 97 Wilderness
City, State at Kitchener, Ontario, NY, NY
Zip
Phone

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Name Evan Wise
Email archimedes314@gmail.com
Address 213 S. Bilbro Ave, Apt. C
City, State Murfreesboro, TN
Zip 37130
Phone 615-418-1038

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Name Shadden Brock
Email shaddenbrock@gmail.com
Address 606 Scotch Pine Lane
City, State Jefferson City, TN
Zip 37760
Phone 865-208-1822



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Name Rachel Aldrich
Email rachel.aldrich42@gmail.com
Address 81 Cross St.
City, State Andover, MA
Zip 01810
Phone 978-609-2059



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Name Scott C Backus
Email scbackus@uwalumni.com
Address 7221 N. Lombard Rd
City, State Milwaukee WI
Zip 53211
Phone ---



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Name Ben Wedin
Email triplerix@gmail.com
Address 1715 Pondview Terrace
City, State Wayzata, MN
Zip 55391
Phone 952-350-7036



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Name Katie Hamby
Email Khamby@gmail.com
Address 859 Underhill ave
City, State Bronx Ny
Zip 10473
Phone 917 836 4853

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Name Ashley Romero
Email Ashleyrom@gmail.com
Address 82 Kendall Rd
City, State Kendall PK NJ 08824
Zip
Phone 848 702 4490

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Name Madison Davis
Email Madi-L.Davis@hotmail.com
Address 1751 N 63 St
City, State Lincoln, NE
Zip 68505
Phone 402 855 7046

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Name Cody Nance
Email cody.nance11@yahoo.com
Address 1829 Prospect St Apt #2
City, State Lincoln, NE
Zip 68502
Phone 402 310 0948

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Name Leah Burns
Email lmb0025@Oakburn.edu
Address 101 Lacey's Spring Dr
City, State Lacey's Spring, AL
Zip 35754
Phone (256) 474-5222

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Name Antonio Mojica
Email itsantonioy@gmail.com
Address 3419 Triana Blvd
City, State Huntsville AL
Zip 35805
Phone 256 213-6316

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Name Chris Harriman
Email charriman820@yahoo.com
Address 11604 Houck Ln
City, State Dermont, AL
Zip 35711
Phone (252) 874-3176

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Name Curtis Bickler
Email cbickler@mail.usf.edu
Address 1104 Lunsden Pointe Blvd
City, State Valrico, FL
Zip 33594
Phone 813-841-2544

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Name Rebecca Webster

Email belectic27@gmail.com

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

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Name David Munro

Email dcmunro93@verizon.net

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

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Name Shannon Bean

Email Shannon.d.bean@gmail.com

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____

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Name Colin Custer

Email CCC5vd@virginia.edu

Address 7618 Sweetbriar Rd

City, State Richmond, VA

Zip 23229

Phone 804-363-4247

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Name Tony Vinella
Email tvinella@comcast.net
Address 101 S. 39th St.
City, State Philadelphia, PA
Zip 19104
Phone 207 337 1665

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Name Andrew Basayne
Email abasayne@gmail.com
Address 1754 E Centro Ave
City, State Napa, CA
Zip 94558
Phone 707 813 2672

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Name Ledah Finck
Email ledahfinck@live782@yahoo.com
Address 161 Hickory Tr.
City, State Banner Elk, NC
Zip 28604
Phone 828-406-7842

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Name Nathan Dumaine
Email 11dumaine@live782@yahoo.com
Address 629 S. 32ND STREET
City, State VINCENNE, IN
Zip 48310
Phone 417 210 4172

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Name Rose Ramirez
Email roramirez@vcu.edu
Address 12 College Ave
City, State PA
Zip 19604
Phone 610-557-2149

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Name MARCUS Kowalczyk
Email mkow1984@gmail.com
Address 4206 Dawnscliff DR.
City, State Brooklyn, OH
Zip 44144
Phone 216-386-7276

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Name Michael Stepanian
Email michaelstepanian@sccglobal.net
Address 2613 Remington Drive
City, State Grand Prairie, Tx
Zip 75052
Phone _____

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Name Loretta Stepanian
Email lorettastepanian@yahoo.com
Address 2613 Remington Drive
City, State Grand Prairie, TX
Zip 75052
Phone _____

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Name William Hulton
Email WJames@aol.com
Address 27 Rosemary Lane
City, State Old Bridge, NJ
Zip 07740
Phone 732-865-7928

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Name Mike Jones
Email MikeJones@hotmail.com
Address 400 N 600 E
City, State Orem, UT
Zip 84097
Phone 801-434-1276

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Name Joe Groth
Email jgroth@yahoo.com
Address 134 Elora St
City, State Mackinac, MI 32063
Zip 32063
Phone 942-254-0402

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Name Jake Shields
Email jshields@yahoo.com
Address 93 Myrtle St
City, State LeRoy, NY
Zip 14482
Phone 585-768-2641

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Name Julia Pandolfo
Email Julia.rose.pandolfo@gmail.com
Address 34 Washburn St.
City, State Rochester, MA
Zip 02125
Phone 914-552-1244



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Name Catherine Formley
Email cate---@hotmail.com
Address 216 Uplia St.
City, State Rippon, VT
Zip 05473
Phone



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Name Aaron Nazarian
Email aroonapb@yahoo.com
Address 304 Arabella
City, State New Orleans, La
Zip 70115
Phone 915-861-7080



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Name Shannon Kempf
Email smkempf98@yahoo.com
Address 1691 Union Ave
City, State Hazlet, NJ
Zip 07730
Phone 732-739-4352



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Name BOB FERGUSON
Email bobfergusone@gmail.com
Address 34 EDISON DRIVE
City, State SUMMIT, NJ
Zip 07901
Phone 908 656 0038

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Name Mike LePore
Email mlepora@aol.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone 845-279-2366

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Name GERARD PASUTIS
Email gipaxhu1@gmail.com
Address 3751 m'x - station K
City, State CA'swille TN 37777
Zip 37777
Phone 865 598-6948

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Name Michael Whalen
Email mw2457@gmail.com
Address 2457 W. 11th St
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60655
Phone 773/809-3090

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Name Melissa Sanders
Email MISSYdrop@aol.com
Address 3206 TOWN MAJOR CIRCLE
City, State Dacula GA
Zip 30019
Phone 770 307 7277

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Name CATHERINE BORDELON
Email catherine.claire00@gmail.com
Address 216 BOGAGE DR.
City, State DESTERHAN, LA
Zip 70047
Phone 985-764-2603

☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Samantha Savoy
Email SSAVOY472495@yahoo.com
Address 911 Joliet St.
City, State NEW ORLEANS, LA
Zip 70119
Phone 504-782-1167 504-920-9292

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Name David Harris
Email dharris34@gmail.com
Address 510 E Third Ave Apt 1
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37917
Phone 423-290-1056

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Name Celine Chen
Email celine1015@gmail.com
Address 2 Waverly Park
City, State New York, NY
Zip 10003
Phone 616-328-3088

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Name Ed J. Tomelch
Email eddt@yahoo.com
Address 138 Glenmere Ave
City, State Florida, NY
Zip 10921
Phone 845-283-1022

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Name Colleen Conway
Email ColleenConway80@gmail.com
Address 77 High Point Circle
City, State Newburgh, New York
Zip 12550
Phone (845) 519-9830

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Name David Molhe
Email dmolhe@energy.eds
Address 3659 Winfield Ln
City, State Wash DC
Zip 20007
Phone 202 204 9001

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Name

Lisa Hattaway

Email

Address

151 Archery LN

City, State

Manchester, TN

Zip

37355

Phone



healthygulf.org

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Name

Brandon Taylor

Email

Address

1205 Sycamore Dr

City, State

Manchester, TN

Zip

37355

Phone



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Name

Cynthia Royals

Email

Address

502 Brandwine Rd

City, State

Chapel Hill, NC

Zip

27516

Phone



healthygulf.org

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Name

Jason Rott

Email

jasonrott@gmail.com

Address

10513 Senga

City, State

Pensacola, FL

Zip

32534

Phone



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Name Maria Mitropoulos

Email _____

Address 3017 Watersedge Ln

City, State Florence, SC 29501

Zip 29501

Phone 843-660-8038

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Name Lee Halthanger

Email _____

Address 429 Kith Wake Dr

City, State W. Co, SC

Zip 29500

Phone _____

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Name Jessica Baril

Email _____

Address 3007 Gadsden St.

City, State Columbia, SC

Zip 29201

Phone 803-712-3366

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Name J. Cerulean

Email jeannie.hackercerulean

Address 309 S Crest Rd / @gmail

City, State Chattanooga TN

Zip 37404

Phone 423 432 2482

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Name Emily Torgin
Email em.torgin@torginrimson@gmail.com
Address 31660 City 12
City, State Lanesboro MN
Zip 55949
Phone _____

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Name Nick Volley
Email nick86nd@gmail.com
Address 2021 Papatell St
City, State Mandeville
Zip 70448
Phone _____

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Name Samantha Usilton
Email _____
Address 2312 Woodbury Hwy, 37055
City, State Manchester TN, 37355
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Nick Thomas
Email _____
Address 8053 Shingle Oaks Dr.
City, State Memphis, TN
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Houston Fred
Email houstonfred22@yahoo
Address 122 Balford Rd
City, State Hot Springs, AR
Zip 71901
Phone _____

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Email _____
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Name Travis Rutledge
Email Travis.metalhead@hotmail.com
Address 1411 E. ELIC ST.
City, State Dexter, MO
Zip 63841
Phone (573) 820-2472

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Name Kyle Bernis
Email kyle.bernis@yahoo.com
Address 44037 Mehtenana Rd.
City, State Franklinton LA
Zip 70438
Phone 337-326-1236

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Name Anthony Cirincione
Email acirincione@gmail.com
Address 3052 Brookwood Valley Court
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 30309
Phone 216-650-7195



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Name Karen Jacobo
Email kajacob1995@gmail.com
Address 2501 Northeastman Rd Apt 700G
City, State Longview, TX
Zip 75605
Phone (903) 931-1024



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Name Whitney Branch
Email _____
Address 8805 Dena Lane
City, State Oklahoma City, OK
Zip 73132
Phone _____



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Name Hyland Jacobo
Email hjacoba@gmail.com
Address 2501 Northeastman Rd Apt 700G
City, State Longview TX
Zip 75605
Phone (903) 931-1240



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Name Devin Guidry
Email devin.guidry@gmail.com
Address 402 Shastee St
City, State Estill Springs, TN
Zip 37330
Phone (955) 855-7710

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Name Paulina Gomez
Email pg124@yahoo.com
Address 1319 Melrose Heights St.
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29205
Phone 803-420-1326

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Name Gavin Miller
Email gmiller@utk.edu
Address 4015 Highland Court Way
City, State Knoxville TN
Zip 37920
Phone 865-268-8612

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Name JAKE FLUM
Email jakeflum@gmail.com
Address 51189 Magnolia Complex
City, State Tampa FL
Zip 33626
Phone (858) 804-9050

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Name Callie Bruley
Email calliebruley@gmail.com
Address 13731 Peach
City, State Savannah, MI
Zip 48195
Phone (734) 559-3187

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Name Erica Shekell
Email ericashekell@gmail.com
Address 4215 Southwoods Dr
City, State Howell, MI
Zip 48843
Phone _____

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Name Kenn Peters
Email kennpeters@gmail.com
Address 333 E pointe ln apt 918
City, State East Lansing, MI
Zip 48823
Phone 517 599 7716

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Name JOHN VOELZ
Email john@westwinds.org
Address 1600 Robinson Rd.
City, State Jackson, MI
Zip 49203
Phone 517-740-3991

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Name CONNOR VOELZ
Email voelzc@mail.gvsu.edu
Address 4035 Avilara Oaks Pkwy
City, State Jackson, MI
Zip 49201
Phone (517) 914-3233

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Name Imani Cruz
Email imani_cruz@yahoo.com
Address 401 W Kennedy Blvd box 2243
City, State Tampa, FL
Zip 33606
Phone _____

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Name Beet Ingram
Email beet.ingram@live.com
Address PO Box 4245
City, State Chatt, TN 37405
Zip _____
Phone 423-400-8351

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Name John Mezel
Email mezeljohn@gmail.com
Address 5251 Carters Creek Pk
City, State Thompson's TN
Zip 37179
Phone _____

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Name Shelley Meyer
Email Shelley.Meyer@DukeDymanUSA.com
Address 402 N. Tulsa
City, State Russellville AR
Zip 72801
Phone —

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Name Miguel Acero
Email miguel-acero@gmail.com
Address 581 Cliffside Dr
City, State Mansfield, OH
Zip 44904
Phone 419-631-9816

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Name David Lewis
Email d.lewis@yahoo.de
Address Klinkenburgerstr. 27
City, State Mönchengladbach, Nordrhein westfalen, Germany
Zip 41199
Phone 02166 / 673 2250

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Name Kahyn Harris
Email kharris1212@gmail.com
Address 314 Hermitage Dr
City, State Greenville, TN
Zip 37745
Phone 423 243 2064

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Name Richard Winkler

Email RichardW124@gmail.com

Address 15722 Dodson Branch Hwy

City, State ~~Cookeville~~ Cookeville TN

Zip 37001

Phone _____

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Name Julia Lewis

Email julest@hawaii.com

Address PO Box 4150

City, State Chatt, TN

Zip 37405

Phone _____

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Name Kip Wilkins

Email Kip5222@hotmail.com

Address 1414 Roper Rd.

City, State Orlando FL

Zip 32208

Phone (904) 628-3214

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Name Schylar Herrin

Email skippy5712@yahoo.com

Address 240 N. Dixon

City, State Kokomo, IN

Zip 46902

Phone 765 480 7372

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Name Nicole Cox
Email ncox@skidmore.edu
Address 99 Catkin Dr
City, State S. Burlington, VT
Zip 05403
Phone 802-862-0110

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Name Faith Brewster
Email faithb@utah.edu.au
Address 4210 N. LONGVIEW RD
City, State Phoenix, AZ
Zip 85014
Phone 602-621-5028

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Name Molly Kellie
Email mmkellie92@gmail.com
Address 6225 Dorr St
City, State Tolpeo OH
Zip 43615
Phone 7343448115

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Name Lucilayne Sousa
Email LUCILAYNE-SOUSA@HOTMAIL.COM
Address 60 Overlook rd
City, State White Plains NY
Zip 10605
Phone 914.468.5449

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Name Alexandra Gallina
Email gallina.alexandra@gmail.com
Address 13 Lincolnshire Dr.
City, State Manalapan, NJ
Zip 07726
Phone 732-625-3083



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Name Denys Urbanzik
Email denysajz@seznam.cz
Address 958 Falcon Crest dr.
City, State Lawrenceville, GA
Zip 30024
Phone 931 314 2144



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Name Sami Cola
Email sami-cola@yahoo.com
Address 8606 Wild olive Drive
City, State Potomac, MD
Zip 20854
Phone 202 997 0302



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Name Arana Nasser
Email aranan@verizon.net
Address 9916 Conestoga way
City, State Potomac, MD
Zip 20854
Phone 301-299-0181



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Name Kearn Scanlon
Email KSScanlon@aol.com
Address 4477 Bircala Ave.
City, State Coral Gables, FL
Zip 33134
Phone 305 310 4779

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Name Josh Doré
Email jedore15@gmail.com
Address 2119 Quinaland Lake Rd.
City, State Cookeville TN
Zip 38501
Phone (931) 252-0394

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Name Michelle Swall-Doré
Email msd514@gmail.com
Address 2119 Quinaland Lake Rd
City, State Cookeville, TN
Zip 38501
Phone (931) 510-3732

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Name Johnny Brooks
Email Johnny.brooks@bobcats.gsu.edu
Address 155 N. Lakeshore Dr.
City, State Juicy, Ga
Zip 31031
Phone 478-233-6664

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Name Lacey Hanemann
Email LaceyHanemann@gmail.com
Address 102 Inca Circle
City, State West Monroe LA
Zip 71291
Phone (318) 366-0093
☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Melanie Mabee
Email melaniesnakes@gmail.com
Address 94 Woodlawn Ave
City, State Albany NY
Zip 12208
Phone _____



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Name Scott Myers
Email scott.myers622@gmail.com
Address 1619 Milton St
City, State Monroe, LA
Zip 71201
Phone 318-614-3871
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Name Molly Manjak
Email mollything@yahoo.com
Address 115 ^{North} Winstate Ave Apt 3
City, State Burlington VT
Zip 05401
Phone _____



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Name Evan Wenner

Email evan.wenner@gmail.com

Address 401 High Street

City, State Carey, OH

Zip 43316

Phone 419-310-5315

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Name Jo Al Pamelio Cruz

Email japjc@yahoo.com

Address 12508 SW 18 ave

City, State Miami, FL

Zip 33186

Phone 786-253-2045

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Name Allison Tsmekles

Email atsmekles@gmail.com

Address 442 Procter Drive

City, State Santa Claus IN

Zip 47579

Phone ⁽⁸¹²⁾ 544-3374

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Name Sophia Etienne

Email setienne@fillnet.com

Address 290 E Robert E Lee Rd

City, State Santa Claus, IN

Zip 47579

Phone 812-686-7555

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Name Anne Barker
Email barkerb10@wlu.ca
Address 164 Wedgewood Dr.
City, State Oakville ONTARIO
Zip L6J 4R7
Phone 905-549-8418



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Please stop destroying our planet please.

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Name Sarah Fidler
Email sef1222@wky.edu
Address 3802 Raintree Ct.
City, State Prospect, KY
Zip 40059
Phone (502) 396-3062



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Name Kyle Casey
Email kcasey3@gmail.com
Address 1716 W. Wisconsin Ave #201
City, State Milwaukee, WI
Zip 53233
Phone 847-270-3953



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Name Allie Kerr
Email akerr@wisc.edu
Address 1528 Elmwood Ave
City, State Wilmate IL
Zip 60091
Phone 847 903 0194



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Name Chelsea Hoskey
Email phicen.of.mipress@gmail.com
Address 141 Manor Way Apt I
City, State Louisville TN
Zip 37777
Phone 865 321 6601

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Name Elijah Foster
Email marqwuqwert@gmail.com
Address 141 Manor Way Apt I
City, State Louisville TN
Zip 37777
Phone 865 200 0160

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Name Cari-Ann Hull
Email cariannhull@gmail.com
Address 1930 Sunset Ave #15
City, State Lake Worth FL
Zip 33461
Phone 561-386-8266

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Name John Gansz
Email gansz419@aol.com
Address 15380 84th AVE N
City, State Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Zip 33418
Phone 561-744-4675

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Name Stacey Voigt
Email StaceyBug85@aol.com
Address 2801 NW 23rd Blvd
City, State Gainesville, FL
Zip 32605
Phone _____

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Name Christine Voigt
Email christinevoigt@gmail.com
Address 2801 NW 23rd Blvd Apt N95
City, State Gainesville, FL
Zip 32605
Phone _____

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Name Kelsie Harris
Email kharris32@my.apsu.edu
Address 300 Greenwood Ave.
City, State Manchester TN
Zip 37355
Phone _____

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Name Bethany Fuller
Email bfuller0202@mscc.edu
Address 1604 Thoma St
City, State Manchester, TN
Zip 37355
Phone 931-952-0254

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Name Hannah Babel
Email hannahb1206@gmail.com
Address 08107 W. Mattheson Ln.
City, State Geneva, IL
Zip 60134
Phone 630 379 9193



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Name John Nelson
Email nelson85tn@gmail.com
Address 712 Deery St Apt 1
City, State Knoxville TN
Zip 37917
Phone (615) 587-3854



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Name Lauren Meide
Email laurenmeide@yahoo.com
Address 4984 Beresford Ct.
City, State Norcross, GA
Zip 30092
Phone 770-873-0153



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Name Jesse Gray
Email jessgray@yahoo.com
Address 3400 5th Place
City, State Bell, FL
Zip 32619
Phone 352-354-5484



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Name Rachel W. Bear
Email keeper@greenadgulf.com
Address 5266 Palms Key Blvd
City, State Scarsdale FL
Zip 34233
Phone 941-374-1742

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Name Brigitte Kolibab
Email BrigitteKolibab@gmail.com
Address 8630 Taylor May Rd
City, State Chagrin Falls, OH
Zip 44023
Phone (440) 221-9799

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Name Amy Fottrell
Email amyfottrell@gmail.com
Address 2019 Crancer Drive
City, State Goodlettsville, TN
Zip 37072
Phone 615-293-0590

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Name Maggie Woodworth
Email madmaggie1194@aol.com
Address 8062 Chagrin Road
City, State Chagrin Falls, OH
Zip 44023
Phone 216-835-9582

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Name Joe Viny
Email johnvdl@gsa.com
Address 272 Fort Lee Lane
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29207
Phone 803-261-7742



healthygulf.org

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Name Stone Whitener
Email grayman1884@yahoo.com
Address 124 tree trail
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29205
Phone 803-738-1444



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Name Marina Ramos
Email ramosmarina22@gmail.com
Address 1900 W Twin Oaks Way
City, State Columbia, SC
Zip 29209
Phone 803-629-3262



healthygulf.org

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

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Name Zachary Rock
Email zach.rock@comcast.net
Address 100 Union Rd
City, State Oak Ridge, TN
Zip 37830
Phone 865 591 0198



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Name MICHAEL J HAACK II

Email mike.haack@yahoo.com

Address 6225 Dorc / Thomas Blvd, Boca Raton

City, State Toledo, OH / Boca Raton, FL

Zip 43615 - 93442

Phone 567-686-7315

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Name Caroline Foss

Email cfoss0428@gmail.com

Address 5379 Silver Fox Way

City, State North Augusta, SC

Zip 29841

Phone 803-439-4728

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Name Hannah Vilos

Email HVjio@gmail.com

Address 2729 Sunset Drive

City, State New Smyrna Beach, FL

Zip 32168

Phone (386) 451-4524

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Name Derek Ward

Email dwardmodeling@yahoo.com

Address 149 Bentley Place

City, State North Augusta, SC

Zip 29841

Phone 803-439-4728

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Name Eileen Bury
Email eileen-cib@gmail.com
Address 712 Jasmine Way
City, State Birmingham AL
Zip 35226
Phone 205 391 3700

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Name Juliana Gursky
Email jag4779@gmail.com
Address 480 S. Lincoln Street
City, State Denver, CO
Zip 80209
Phone 516-225-7484

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Name Joshua Birkebak
Email birkebak@gmail.com
Address 109 Gill Ave
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37917
Phone 865 206 861-2694

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Name Maggie Clifton
Email MCKGILLAWIL@HOTMAIL.COM
Address 2957 Forbes St
City, State JACKSONVILLE, FL
Zip 32205
Phone 321-441-5501

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Name Alicia Eidsonne
Email aliciaeidsonne@gmail.com
Address [scribbled out]
City, State [scribbled out]
Zip [scribbled out]
Phone [scribbled out]



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Name Kayla Bucklew
Email ks.bucklew@gmail.com
Address 123 Spring Water Dr
City, State Madison, AL
Zip 35758
Phone 256-509-2609



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Name Sarah Bucklew
Email se.bucklew@gmail.com
Address 123 Spring Water Dr.
City, State Madison, AL
Zip 35758
Phone 256-508-9180



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Name Chandler Corbin
Email ChandlerCorbin@yahoo.com
Address [scribbled out]
City, State [scribbled out]
Zip [scribbled out]
Phone [scribbled out]



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Name Peter Robicheaux
Email probicheaux@gmail.com
Address 611 Lockwood St.
City, State Auburn, AL
Zip 36830
Phone 334-424-0018

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Name Anna Donsak
Email annadonsak@gmail.com
Address 1329 Hickory Lane
City, State Auburn, AL
Zip 36830
Phone 334 707 4843

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Name ERIN Bassett
Email EGB028@gmail.com
Address 1277 13th St
City, State Holly Hill FL
Zip 32117
Phone 386 547-6373

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Name Lisa Flair
Email lflair@comcast.net
Address 2310 Holly Lane
City, State Lafayette Hill PA
Zip 19444
Phone _____

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Name

Nahe Violette

Email

nahe.violette0902@yahoo.com

Address

City, State

Sunderstown, RI

Zip

02874

Phone

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Name

Alyssa Hiesorund

Email

lyssahiesorund@yahoo.com

Address

City, State

Westerfield RI

Zip

02971

Phone

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Name

SARA RUSSO

Email

annusson@gmail.com

Address

1116 S. CHARLES ST

City, State

BALTIMORE MD

Zip

21230

Phone

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Name

Christine Reilly

Email

cjmrillb@gmail.com

Address

City, State

Brooklyn NY

Zip

11220

Phone

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Name

Caroline Crook

Email

carolina052195@yahoo.com

Address

7652 Saw Timber Lane

City, State

Jacksonville, FL

Zip

32256

Phone

(904) 333-5678

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Name

Rachel Parsons

Email

rayrayk903@aol.com

Address

4518 Old Spanish Trail

City, State

Jacksonville, FL 32257

Zip

32257

Phone

(904) 654-4180

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Name

Katie Hallman

Email

Hallman.Katie@gmail.com

Address

8836 Meadow Grove way #107

City, State

Charlotte, NC

Zip

28216

Phone

704-324-2567

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Name

Matt Blushen

Email

C.matt@mattblushen.com

Address

131 Clay St.

City, State

Central Falls RI

Zip

02863

Phone

401-312-0383

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Name Adeline Rolnick
Email adeline.rolnick@gmail.com
Address 1674 Mc Loring St NW #13
City, State Washington DC
Zip 20010
Phone 914 815 6207

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Name Margie Quinn
Email harmar@hmail.com
Address 9475 Beavermeadow rd east
City, State Baltimore, ontario canada
Zip K9P 4G7
Phone _____

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Name Amber Hewett
Email a.hewett90@gmail.com
Address 6 Woodman Way #212
City, State Newburyport, MA
Zip 01950
Phone 978 518 6888

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Name Hannah Hill
Email Hannahhill@gmail.com
Address 205 crosscreek Dr.
City, State Bossier City, LA
Zip 71111
Phone 318-864-2223

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Name Michael Casañas
Email Michael.casañas@yahoo.com
Address 9975 SW 31 Ter
City, State Miami FL
Zip 33165
Phone (786) 488-9091

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Name Edwige Galdames
Email mgaldies88@gmail.com
Address 9601 Fontainebleau Blvd Apt 2p
City, State Miami, FL
Zip 33172
Phone 786-345-7161

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Name Andrew Candell
Email acandell89@gmail.com
Address 6483 SW 26 St
City, State Miami, FL
Zip 33155
Phone (305)-510 1106

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Name Jessica Kunder
Email jkunder@mail.uwf.edu
Address 207 Hamlet Trace
City, State Ormond Beach, FL
Zip 32174
Phone (386) 214-1571

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Name Caroline Kaufmann
Email ckk4@comcast.net
Address 9111 Alton Pkwy
City, State Silver Spring, MD
Zip 20910
Phone 301 588 1760

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Name Michael Thompson
Email mthompst@binghamton.edu
Address 42 Henry Street
City, State Binghamton, NY
Zip 13901
Phone 908 528 3722

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Name Ben D'Elia
Email BenD24@aol.com
Address 8120 11th Street Dr
City, State Bethesda, MD
Zip 20817
Phone 301-999-2782

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Name Rose Romanchak
Email roman2rj@gmail.com
Address 1007 Fremont Ave
City, State Waterford, MI
Zip 48328
Phone (248) 212-2344

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Name

Tori Pizzuto

Email

Address

4169 Raymond Ave.

City, State

Brookfield, IL

Zip

60513

Phone

768 336 1839

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Name

Kaley Blasinski

Email

Kaley-Elizabeth@comcast.net

Address

2542 S 2nd Ave

City, State

N. Riverside IL

Zip

60546

Phone

708 205 9252

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Name

Emily Dickason

Email

Address

3920 Grimes Drive

City, State

Columbus, Ohio

Zip

43204

Phone

614 275 0291

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Name

Isabelle Primer

Email

Address

880 Hawthorne Lane

City, State

Libertyville, IL

Zip

60070

Phone

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Name Rachel Murdoch
Email rachelemurdock@gmail.com
Address 127 Clinton Heights Ave
City, State Columbus OH
Zip 43202
Phone 614-805-8758

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Name Angela King
Email angela.neking@yahoo.com
Address 127 Clinton Heights Ave
City, State Cols. OH
Zip 43202
Phone 843 441 8184

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Name Mal Murray
Email malorie.kathleen@gmail.com
Address 1 room
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone 484 881 1655

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Name Casey Janulaitis
Email caseyjanulaitis@yahoo.com
Address 1773 Ennis Joslin Rd. Apt. 3208
City, State Corpus Christi, TX
Zip 78412
Phone (361) 850-0123

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Name Kayla Donnelly
Email kdonnelly0311@gmail.com
Address 1219 Morton Ave
City, State Ann Arbor, MI
Zip 48104
Phone (517) 358-4008

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Name Mark Bohlman
Email mbohlman414@aol.com
Address 1625 Commerce
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 38117
Phone 901-477-9804

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Name Laura Tabar
Email l4933111@ohio.edu
Address 6 Northwood Dr
City, State Athens, OH
Zip 45701
Phone _____

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Name Zach Stewart
Email ~~zstewart~~ Burgessstewart@gmail.com
Address 991 Isha Lane
City, State McMinnville, TN
Zip 37110
Phone _____

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Name Hannah Zosman
Email hannahbgz@yahoo.com
Address 11012 SW 88th Ave
City, State Miami, FL
Zip 33156
Phone 786-942-6730

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Name Yoni Wijma
Email Yoni.Wijma@gmail.com
Address 5730 Ridgely Drive
City, State Alpharetta, GA
Zip 30005
Phone 678-469-3913

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Name Chad Smith
Email chadsmith@gmail.com
Address 1070 W. Diehl Road
City, State West Chester, PA
Zip 19380
Phone 610-844-2629

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Name Catherine Hunt
Email catherinehunt92@yahoo.com
Address 537 Webb Road
City, State Chadds Ford, PA
Zip 19317
Phone 610-484-886-5743

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Name _____
Email _____
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Name Brendan Lyman
Email Blyman@tulane.edu
Address 7917 St. Charles Avenue
City, State New Orleans, LA
Zip 70118
Phone 304-559-7707

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Name Anthony Pinkney
Email anthony.pinkney71@gmail.com
Address 1717 Poythress Ave
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 38127
Phone (901) 282-2780

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Name Christian Powell
Email starbucks184@yahoo.com
Address 533 Riverview dr
City, State Franklin, TN
Zip 37064
Phone 615-569-4001

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Name Cami James
Email camijames1987@gmail.com
Address 19 Cut Off Rd.
City, State Cartersville, GA
Zip 30120
Phone 770-842-6081



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Name Augusto Cividini
Email augusto.civi@hotmail.com
Address 1223 East Ford Dr
City, State Key Biscayne
Zip 33149
Phone 305 498-6619



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Name Lucila Gambino
Email lucilagambino@hotmail.com
Address 785 Cranston Blvd #201
City, State Key Biscayne
Zip 33149
Phone 786 246 0637



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Name 1122 BISWELL
Email 1122 BISWELLMAIL@gmail.com
Address 73 WARREN
City, State CHARLESTON, SC
Zip 29403
Phone _____



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Name Amy Marimpietri
Email akmarimpietri@hotmail.com
Address 4575 miles Dr.
City, State Port orange, FL
Zip 32127
Phone _____

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Name Janeen Morge
Email jmenge10@cam.edu
Address 1709 Placidia Dr
City, State Gallup NM
Zip 87301
Phone 505 909 4161

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Name Joey Bush
Email Joey.Bush@ymail.com
Address 1325 Lake Shore Dr
City, State Columbus
Zip 43201
Phone _____

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Name Joshua Moss
Email mossmahcrrd@live.com
Address 640 Renrose Rd.
City, State Chicago IL
Zip _____
Phone 312-994-0064

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Name Lauren Bustos-Tenijillo
Email lmbt456@gmail.com
Address 4440 S. Yates St
City, State Denver, Co
Zip 80236
Phone 720-290-3253

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Name Randal Youngblood
Email randal.youngblood@live.com
Address 130 Creech Chase Rd
City, State Manchester TN
Zip 37355
Phone 931-952-3601

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Name Monica Bustos
Email h1AB1302056@gmail.com
Address 4440 S. Yates
City, State Denver, Co
Zip 80236
Phone 303-995-1520

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Name Sally Youngblood
Email Sallytare@hotmail.com
Address 130 Creech Chase Rd.
City, State Manchester TN
Zip 37355
Phone 931-409-7850

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Name Amanda Wayne
Email am1227@verizon.net
Address 227 Milford - Mt. Pleasant, Rd
City, State Milford, NJ
Zip 08848
Phone 908-872-0579

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Name Tanner Anchors
Email tanneranchors91@gmail.com
Address 1320 Journey Dr
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 38113
Phone 901 332-5215

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Name Linda D Politte
Email lindapolitte@gmail.com
Address P.O. Box 22422
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip 37202
Phone 615-481-1676

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Name BRADLEY BURGESS
Email Kj521stn@yahoo.com
Address 1131 PENNY LAKE
City, State MARIETTA, GA
Zip 30067
Phone 5805561060

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Name Armando Govey
Email Manolo93@gmail.com
Address 4900 Collier Apt 220
City, State AMARILLO TX Austin, TX
Zip 78741
Phone 915-346-7020

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Name Hermann Armenta
Email hermann10@gmail.com
Address 11325 Pancho Reyes
City, State El Paso, TX
Zip 79936
Phone 915 855-5623

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Name Courtney Harris
Email courtneyharris@del-valle.k12.tx.us
Address 1010 Willow St
City, State Austin TX 78702
Zip 78702
Phone _____

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Name Adrian Juarez
Email snarddrian@gmail.com
Address 4900 Wolgast St
City, State Austin
Zip 78741
Phone 915 372 2227

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Name Brandon Harris
Email 6pb271@gmail.com
Address 3449 Willowrun Dr 78704
City, State Austin, Texas
Zip 78704
Phone 512 970-7131

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Name Spencer Wilson
Email XSpencer611w@aol.com
Address _____
City, State Boulder, Colorado
Zip 80302
Phone 732 615 8612

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Name Chad Strong
Email chadstrong@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Boulder, CO
Zip 80305
Phone (856) 414-6075

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Name Simon Miller
Email S.Miller@salut.cc.ca
Address 1002 Levee Cr #
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37932
Phone 865-481-0025

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Name Jill Wellen
Email jswellen@mail.lipscomb.edu
Address 3423A RICHARDS ST
City, State NASHVILLE TN
Zip 37215
Phone _____

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Name Kyle Lawzen
Email d0minator92.KL@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Nick Kiley
Email nick@live.com
Address 6175 Thurston
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Ian Clark
Email ian.clark1938@yahoo.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Lindsay Hill
Email lindsay_hill@live.com
Address 2182 Meadowview Rd.
City, State Peterborough, On. Canada
Zip R9L 1S4
Phone 705-868-0648

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Name Sean Denny
Email creekhockey9117@yahoo.com
Address 2275 Princess Dr
City, State Beavercreek, OH
Zip 45431
Phone (937) 776-7131

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Name GRAV KELLEYS
Email grahamscg586@waterway.com
Address 28401 Gladstone
City, State Saint Clair Shores, MI
Zip 48081
Phone 986-214-9617

☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Sean Hill
Email seanhill@hotmail.com
Address 2182 Meadowview
City, State Peterborough
Zip R9L 1S4
Phone 705-743-8607

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Name Haithin Stok

Email kustok@gmail.com

Address 205 Laurel Dr

City, State Social Circle, GA

Zip 30075

Phone 770 722 6468

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Name Clara Canon

Email clara.canon@gmail.com

Address 3084 Northbrook Dr.

City, State Atlanta, Georgia

Zip 30341

Phone 828-545-8977

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Name Konrad Polodzick

Email konrad22@yahoo.com

Address 2556 Boatman Lane,

City, State Avalon, IN

Zip 46123

Phone 317 470-5852

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Name Kyle Wozoriski

Email kwo12@gmail.com

Address 138 Hardwood Dr

City, State Franklinton NC

Zip 27525

Phone 919 825-4999

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Name Ryan Lauth
Email ~~laauth~~ lauthrs@gmail.com
Address 2207 Ridge
City, State Evanston, IL
Zip 60209
Phone 317-850-9922



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Name Michaela Carlier
Email michaelaann@yahoo.com
Address 3625 CHURCH ST
City, State Cinti O 45244
Zip 45244
Phone 513 376 7136



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Name Daniel Smith
Email dontheman@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip 34239
Phone _____



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Name Diego Montoya
Email Diegachu310@yahoo.com
Address 601 Casa Park Ct J
City, State Winter Springs, FL
Zip 32708
Phone 321-696-9652



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Name Jase Milana
Email puft706@gmail.com
Address 1076 N. Paulina
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60622
Phone 630-643-9054

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Name Sarah Grandoff
Email sarah.grandoff@gmail.com
Address 56 Theodore Road
City, State Somerville MA
Zip 02144
Phone 603 928 9637

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Name Colleen Hickey
Email cmhickey16@gmail.com
Address 1076 N Paulina
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60622
Phone 630-306-3078

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Name Finn Turnbull
Email foraldphotography@gmail.com
Address 522 Jewel St
City, State New Orleans, LA
Zip 70114
Phone 985-445-3686

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Name Cindi L. Younce

Email cyounce@beaconcu.org

Address 2445 N 675 W

City, State Wabash IN

Zip 46992

Phone 765-833-9821

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Name Juliet Harris

Email julietharris@gmail.com

Address 102 Westowne Rd

City, State Baltimore, MD

Zip 21229

Phone 4107887611

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Name Rachel Reed

Email bowzgirl@yahoo.com

Address 35 N Christopher Rd

City, State Alpharetta Ga

Zip 30004

Phone —

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Name Adam Boukis

Email aboukis@gmail.com

Address 1295 E West

City, State Lutherville MD

Zip 21004

Phone —

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Name Shelagh Lenthner
Email breadbeerandmilk@gmail.com
Address 2009 Paige St.
City, State Knoxville, TN
Zip 37917
Phone (615) 680-6577

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Name Patrick Duncan
Email pduncan55@gmail.com
Address 405 Schinger Ave
City, State Bidgeland, SC
Zip 29930
Phone (843) 713-6183

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Name DANIEL AISENBREY
Email DAISENBREY@GMAIL.COM
Address 1655 JEFFERSON AVE.
City, State KNOXVILLE, TN
Zip 37917
Phone 423-200-6363

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Name Sterling Dial
Email dom1111111111@gmail.com
Address 3631 Ash place
City, State Dordendale, AL
Zip 35071
Phone 205-222-1578

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Name Katie Bick
Email ktisaght47@netscape.net
Address 3501 Brady Lane
City, State Gwinnville GA
Zip 30039
Phone 770 985 4656

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Name Wesley Aaron
Email wesaron23@yahoo.com
Address 260 N. Main St.
City, State Pontotoc, MS
Zip 38663
Phone 951-458-1863

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Name Luke Westfield
Email ComputerGuyLuke@gmail.com
Address 1222 Cadiz Street
City, State Mobile AL
Zip 36603
Phone 251 327 7720

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Name Amy DeBard
Email giggles1245@yahoo.com
Address 1030 Whispering Cane
City, State Casselberry Florida
Zip 32707
Phone 407 919 8161

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Name MARIA M. BELL
Email MERCYBELL@gmail.com
Address 918 BOSCOBEL ST
City, State NASHVILLE, TN
Zip 37206
Phone 615 720 5007

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Name Haley Williams
Email williams.haley@gmail.com
Address 14059 KNOX STREET
City, State Overland Park, KS
Zip 66221
Phone 913 616 4333

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Name Emily Mayer
Email emilymayer@gmail.com
Address 5741 S Hanover way
City, State Englewood, CO
Zip 80111
Phone 720 289 2689

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Name Paul Duder
Email mustangstungfastback@yahoo.com
Address 32 Perry Circle
City, State Bluffton, SC
Zip 29909
Phone 815 566 7208

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Name Steve Hall
Email dashhall9138@hotmail.com
Address 1111 W. Park Ave
City, State Chandler, AZ
Zip 85024
Phone _____

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Name Shane Goodman
Email shane.goodman244@gmail.com
Address 4113 CR 823
City, State Alvin, TX
Zip 77511
Phone 832-739-7889

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Name CHRIS BRANTON
Email CHSBRANTON@YAHOO.COM
Address 3811 SHILOH PARK CT
City, State FRIENDSWOOD TX
Zip 77546
Phone 281 650 5625

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Name RACHEL SAWYER
Email RACHELSAWYER@YAHOO.COM
Address 67601 LONG MEADOW CIRCLE SOUTH
City, State JAX, FL
Zip 32244
Phone (904) 660-0187

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Name Sean Graham
Email guywithglasses93@aol.com
Address 153 V/A90 Vista
City, State Casselberry FL
Zip 32707
Phone _____
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Name Tess Vander Male
Email terandermale@gmail.com
Address 806 Tricorn Drive
City, State Lansdale PA 19446
Zip _____
Phone _____
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Name Brady McCringleberry
Email bdawg@yahoo.com
Address 1436 Cliffy Road
City, State Memphis TN
Zip 38616
Phone 901-452-3246
☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Sackson Rotholmen
Email gack093@live.com
Address 420 N. McNeil
City, State Memphis, TN
Zip 38112
Phone _____
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Name Bryan Lilley
Email _____
Address 475 W Major Rd SC Ave Apt. 30
City, State Holland, MI
Zip 49424
Phone 616-298-8709

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Name Kyle Stone
Email KStone107@gmail.com
Address 484 Havens Cove Rd
City, State Brick, NJ
Zip 08723
Phone 732-556-8033

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Name Bryan Lilley
Email Wingchen.wu29rd138@gmail.com
Address 475 W Major Ave Apt 30
City, State Holland MI
Zip 49423
Phone 616-298-8709

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Name Preston Kennedy
Email PrestonKennedy113@yahoo.com
Address 320 E. Lakewood Ave
City, State Ocean Gate, NJ
Zip 08740
Phone 732-269-9361

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Name Samantha T. Hebaum

Email sathbaum@guinnipiac.edu

Address 45 Briar Dr

City, State Milford MA

Zip 01751

Phone 508-245-3752

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no net
call

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Name Nicole R. Carroll

Email nrcc93@gmail.com

Address 10901 S. Oakley Ave.

City, State Chicago, IL

Zip 60643

Phone 773-816-4202

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Name Danielle Cavaliere

Email dmcavaliere@aol.com

Address 75 Chestnut St.

City, State Massapequa, NY

Zip 11758

Phone 516 322-8957

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Name Kathleen R. Moriarty

Email kblueism@hotmail.com

Address 2738 N Pine Grove Ave APT 411

City, State Chicago IL

Zip 60614

Phone 708-471-0118

☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



healthygulf.org

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Name Xavier Carroll
Email Xavecarroll@yahoo.com
Address 47027 Lakerew
City, State Brand Beach, MI
Zip 49117
Phone 219-728-8564

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Name Brian Goodman
Email bgoodman@vandercook.edu
Address 2729 W. 94th St
City, State Evergreen Park, IL
Zip 60805
Phone 708-729-8393

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Name Lindy Ching
Email lindyak@gmail.com
Address 31-38 41 Street
City, State Astoria, NY
Zip 11163
Phone (917)385-5299

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Don't call or email

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Name Brandon Fox
Email forbrandoal@gmail.com
Address 132-47 Avey Ka
City, State Flushing, NY
Zip 11355
Phone 718-309-4455

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Name Algenon L. Marbley Jr
Email algenonmarbley@yahoo.com
Address 179 Prince of Wales Dr
City, State Gahanna, Ohio
Zip 43230
Phone 614-312-4466

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Name Terra Highfill
Email dukes1525@gmail.com
Address 226 Clark Dr
City, State Circleville, OH
Zip 43113
Phone 614 202 4514

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Name Crista T. Marbley
Email cmarbley@gmail.com
Address 179 Prince of Wales Dr
City, State Gahanna, Oh
Zip 43230
Phone 614-772-0319

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Name Vincent Smith
Email ntingib@gmail.com
Address 292 E. Gate st
City, State Columbus, OH
Zip 43204
Phone

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Name Brian Fair
Email Brian Fair 96@yahoo.com
Address 6952 Sugar Creek
City, State Lancaster KY
Zip 40444
Phone 855 379 6088



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Name Daphne Barnes
Email daphne.leanbarnes@gmail.com
Address 1107 S. Ridgeland
City, State Oak Park IL
Zip 60302
Phone _____



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Name Sophia Barnes
Email Sb3023a@student.american.edu
Address 1107 S. Ridgeland
City, State Oak Park, IL
Zip 60304
Phone _____



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Name Lana Hall
Email lana.hall@yahoo.com
Address 2442 W Park Ave
City, State Chandler, AZ
Zip 85224
Phone _____



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Name Megan Newman
Email mmnewman21@yahoo.com
Address 2423 Lismore Dr.
City, State M'DORO TN
Zip 37127
Phone (615) 568-0921

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Name Aimee Hinton
Email bae.aimee@gmail.com
Address 35 Greenwood Dr.
City, State TALLAHASSEE, FL
Zip 32307
Phone 734 444 0829

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Name Larissa Smith
Email Larissa.Smith74@gmail.com
Address 3716 Liberty Hill Rd
City, State Casterolle GA
Zip 30538
Phone 706-244-6899

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Name Sage McAvoy
Email McAvoy-Sage@yahoo.com
Address 161 County Farm Rd.
City, State TALLAHASSEE GA
Zip 32307
Phone 864-710-3171

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Name Patty Duffy
Email pduffy812@gmail.com EMAILS PLS
Address 1522 N. Talman Ave
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60672
Phone 773 802 1549

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Name Jennifer Dodds
Email jennifer.e.dodds@gmail.com
Address 41 Pequossette St
City, State Watertown MA
Zip 02472
Phone 207 939 5450

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Name Kayla Wolter
Email kayla.wolter@yahoo.com EMAIL
Address 1368 Bucktown Dr
City, State St. Joseph, MI
Zip 49085
Phone 269/605.0290

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Name Ross Glidden
Email rmglidden2010@gmail.com
Address 41 Pequossette St
City, State Watertown, MA
Zip 02472
Phone 207-752-7383

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Name Katie Schrader
Email kschrader8@gmail.com
Address 342 E Gate St
City, State Columbus, OH
Zip 43206
Phone 614-419-9109

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Name _____
Email _____
Address _____
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Phone _____

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Name Mike Elmore
Email homegme@live.com
Address _____
City, State Smithfield, NC
Zip 27577
Phone (919) 922-5251

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Name Emily Zank
Email em.zank@gmail.com
Address 215 Rolling Acres Rd
City, State Youngsville, NC
Zip 27596
Phone _____

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Name CHRISTOPHER NEETZ

Email CHRISNEETZ@GMAIL.COM

Address 950 PLENER AVE

City, State MIAMI SPRINGS, FL

Zip 33166

Phone 386-212-6485

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Name Erin Tang

Email ertang@alumni.cmu.edu

Address 4716 Ellsworth Ave

City, State Pittsburgh, PA

Zip 15289

Phone 412-705-8138

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Name Madison Lee

Email madisonlee2010@gmail.com

Address 230 Acklen Park Drive

City, State Nashville, TN

Zip 37203

Phone 318-422-7932

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Name Kelly Carter

Email Kcarter42@gmail.com

Address 58 Laurie Meadows Dr. #3

City, State San Mateo, CA

Zip 94403

Phone 415-247-1365

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Name Fanny Garcia
Email garcf90@gmail.com
Address 94 Turtle Ln
City, State Hinesville, GA
Zip 31313
Phone 323-452-9234

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Name Emily Brown
Email ebrown.com@gmail.com
Address 102 Country Walk Cir.
City, State Savannah, GA
Zip 31419
Phone (912) 272-9177

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Name Jack Nester
Email nesterj17@gmail.com
Address 31 Mueller Dr.
City, State New Orleans LA
Zip 70118
Phone (804) 873-4283

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Name Elizabeth Hensley
Email ehensley@gmail.com
Address 2021 Northbrook Drive
City, State Lancaster, PA
Zip 17601
Phone 717-723-6733

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Name Caleb White

Email ccwhite7@att.net

Address 4900 Village Oaks Drive

City, State Aven, IN

Zip 46123

Phone 626-4748

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Name Emma Ballet

Email emmashaycable@gmail.com

Address 553 Woodside Lane

City, State Gaylord, MI

Zip 49735

Phone 989.370.0264

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Name Andrea Ballet

Email ballettandrea@gmail.com

Address 3731 Wiggins Rd

City, State Gaylord MI 49735

Zip 49735

Phone

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Name Randal Henley

Email

Address 100 East Broad St D

City, State Dochard TN

Zip 37324

Phone 931 308-1215

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Name Hutch York
Email Hutch.york@agusthace.edu
Address 12302 Cypress Spring Dr
City, State Spring TX
Zip 79380
Phone 832-290-1777

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Name Rita Keeling
Email _____
Address _____
City, State TN
Zip 38501
Phone _____

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Name Bobby Lamonte
Email _____
Address 109 Argo
City, State Imperial TX
Zip 78025
Phone (830) 361-4334

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Name Coral Kanies
Email cmackin@gmail.com
Address 2706 Spruce Rd
City, State Decherd TN
Zip 37324
Phone 615-714-1777

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Name Toni Hedding
Email _____
Address _____
City, State TN
Zip 38501
Phone _____

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Name Mike Mortimer
Email mikemortimer0@gmail.com
Address 3340 Hickory crest drive
City, State Marietta, GA
Zip 30064
Phone 770 733 7650

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Name Mark Bowes
Email Bowes.mark@rocketmail.com
Address 4533 Madison Ridge place
City, State Marietta, GA
Zip 30064
Phone 678-362-2321

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Name Norm Tapping
Email latsavegreat@gmail.com
Address 1782 EXIBER AVE
City, State Manson Iowa
Zip 50159
Phone 202 465 2727

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Name

Max Wood

Email

maxwood@hotmail.com

Address

1587 Nelson Ave

City, State

Fort Dodge IA

Zip

50501

Phone

515 511 9123

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Name

Patrick Ambrose

Email

p-ambrose12@hotmail.com

Address

252 E. 2nd St.

City, State

Ellettsburg, IN

Zip

46970

Phone

674-806-5896

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Name

Elliot White

Email

ewhite504@gmail.com

Address

523 Homer St.

City, State

New Orleans, LA

Zip

70114

Phone

504-481-1174

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* INTERSHIPS - BIOLOGY MAJOR



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Name

Mick Heron

Email

mheron2@iastate.edu

Address

City, State

Cal. Arroyo

Zip

Phone

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Name STEVE PERNA
Email Steve@lemsshoes.com
Address 529 TAMARACK DR.
City, State SHARPSVILLE PA 16150
Zip _____
Phone 724-962-9123

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Name ANDREW RADENACHER
Email ANDREW@LEMSSHOOES.COM
Address 571 BUFF BLVD
City, State SHARON, PA
Zip 16146
Phone 724-977-3692

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Name Jacob Darouse
Email darouse.j@gmail.com
Address 14518 S. Fitzmorris Rd
City, State LA
Zip 70435
Phone 982-864-1742

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Name Greg Bitsky
Email gcbitsky@gmail.com
Address 3638 W. Diversey Ave Apt 2F
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60647
Phone (630) 632-5326

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Name Dawn Genser
Email cndee.canner-fair1@yahoo.com
Address _____
City, State Mahopac, NY
Zip 10541
Phone 860-463-9439

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Name Katlin Bowman
Email bowman.49@wright.edu
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name Lance Rust
Email lancrust@earthlink.net
Address Port Landerside
City, State 3016 SW 82nd
Zip 33512
Phone 204 20838

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Name Jaclyn Klaus
Email Klaus.12@wright.edu
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name JAMES SMITH
Email jis1974@yahoo.com
Address 2205 GREENWICH LANE
City, State KNOXVILLE TN
Zip 37932
Phone (865) 386-7840

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Name Cole Loney
Email coleloney@hotmail.com
Address 736 Dreyer Lane
City, State Sellersburg, IN
Zip 47172
Phone 812-987-6558

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Name Lela Dexton
Email l2l2buck@gmail.com
Address 1215 2nd Ave S
City, State Nashville TN
Zip 37210
Phone 615-804-9705

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Name Eva D. Jule
Email evad@jule.com
Address 17 Willow Tree Ct
City, State Elmhurst, IL
Zip 60126
Phone 630 229 3111

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Name David Manns
Email greenasiwanabe@yahoo.ca
Address 10 Main St, Ottawa, ON
City, State Ontario
Zip K1Y 2H8
Phone _____



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Name Mike Colley
Email MICOLLE VYIO@aim-con
Address 11411 S Spaulding Ave
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60655
Phone 312-405-8436



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Name Michael Schwartz
Email _____
Address 3402 Melbald Rd
City, State Baltimore, MD
Zip 21205
Phone 410-823-1784



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Name Kiam Forde
Email kiamf11@sbknet.net
Address 5551 W. 98 St
City, State Chicago
Zip 60608
Phone (773) 425-3928



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Name Anna Sullivan
Email richardsullivan@hotmail.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone _____

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Name James Field
Email JField@v@gmail.com
Address 105 South main st
City, State Cowdery, RI
Zip 02516
Phone 401 206 8007

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Name Rachel Ellis
Email ellisrachelv@gmail.com
Address 105 S. Main St
City, State Cowdery, RI
Zip 02816
Phone 401-206-8089

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Name Ethan Krone
Email ethan.krone@gmail.com
Address 7723 Beough Ct
City, State Atlanta, GA
Zip 40236
Phone 612-7923

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Name Rico Doss
Email rdoss@memphis.edu
Address 3107 Campus Postal Station
City, State Memphis, TN
Zip 38152
Phone (901) 338-1221
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Name Nick Jenkins
Email Njenkins32@hotmail.com
Address 2430 Winstead Rd
City, State Danah, NC
Zip 28510
Phone 402-560-1191
☒ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Shannon Cleveland
Email Shannon.Cleveland1@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State PA 19354
Zip _____
Phone 610-205-4976
☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.



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Name Kendra Pickren
Email KCP1027@yahoo.com
Address 2001 Noble Oaks Dr.
City, State Savannah, Ga
Zip 31406
Phone _____
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Name Amelia Cyze
Email ameliaCyze@gmail.com
Address 852 W Waveland
City, State Chicago, IL
Zip 60613
Phone 708-979-2499

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Name Victoria Andriulis
Email victoriaandriulis@yahoo.com
Address 11040 Jordan Dr.
City, State Oak Lawn, IL
Zip 60453
Phone 708-729-643

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Name Bennet McMaster
Email bennetmcmaster@comcast.net
Address 2003 Lombard Ave
City, State Nashville TN
Zip 37215
Phone 615-444-0237

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Name Paul Schied
Email pschied@college.harvard.edu
Address 56 Winthrop St.
City, State Cambridge, MA
Zip 02138
Phone _____

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Name Andrew Lorey
Email alorey@college.harvard.edu
Address 56 Linnaean St.
City, State Cambridge, MA
Zip 02138
Phone _____

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Name Jesse Eustis
Email Jesse.Eustis@gmail.com
Address 1818 LaSalle Ave
City, State Minneapolis MN
Zip 55403
Phone 646 244 5058

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Name Aaron Johnson
Email aaronmj84@gmail.com
Address 2265 Wardland Dr
City, State West Branch MI
Zip 48661
Phone (989) 345-1231

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Name Marich Madden
Email _____
Address 5528 Bensch Rd
City, State Kiger, Michigan
Zip 48016
Phone 989 329 1718

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Name Andrew Heo
Email andy.0510@hotmail.com
Address 6 Timber Ridge Crt.
City, State Kitchener, Ontario
Zip N2P 2K4
Phone (519) 893-7635

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Name Tyler Martin
Email tyler.J.A.Martin@gmail.com
Address RR1
City, State Chatham
Zip NOG 3M0
Phone (519) 496-9187

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Name Galen Colas
Email gncolas@valdosta.edu
Address 2208 Briarcliff Dr
City, State Valdosta, Ga
Zip 31602
Phone 404-558-1374

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Name Claire Burkemper
Email claireburkemper@yahoo.com
Address 1902 Stone Canyon Cir
City, State Manchester MO
Zip 63021
Phone 314-882-4853

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Name Sara Moore

Email SaraOlivia.moore@gmail.com

Address 918 Bosobel Street

City, State Nashville, TN

Zip 37206

Phone 501-743-8344

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Name Kevin Rosta

Email KWRATES@ME.com

Address 6572 Tracy Rd

City, State Atlanta TN

Zip 38004

Phone 901-485-3960

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Name Edward LeMaster

Email edwardlemaster4@gmail.com

Address 2002 Lombardy Avenue

City, State Nashville, TN

Zip 37215

Phone 615-260-6694

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Name Natasha Ferris

Email

Address 503 W. Main

City, State NC Raleigh

Zip 27608

Phone 504-907-9487

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Name Brittany Huff
Email bhuff2213@tatt@gmail.com
Address 4246 Bayview Ave.
City, State Alger MI
Zip 48106
Phone _____



☐ I'd like to get more involved in protecting the Gulf Coast.

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

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Develop a list of projects and detailed criteria for how projects will be selected for funding; Move to quickly to establish a Citizen Advisory Committee; Commit to full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs that receive funding; And ensure that selected projects do not further degrade the Gulf ecosystem

Name Virginia Walcott
Email walcothv@sas.upenn.edu
Address 12330 Live Oak St.
City, State Fairhope, AL
Zip 36532
Phone _____



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Name Aaron Jenkins
Email aaron.jenkins@live.com
Address 6137 Mockingbird Hill Court
City, State Destin, FL
Zip 32578
Phone (850) 758-0317



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Name Elizabeth Russell
Email elizabethannxp@comcast.com
Address 8150 Tod Ave Apt 3
City, State Boardman OH
Zip 44512
Phone 330-219-9206



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Name Payton Roberts
Email Paytonmorrill@gmail.com
Address 1670 Valley Ave Apt C
City, State Homewood, AL
Zip 35209
Phone (256) 404-3693

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Name Kristy Cross
Email crosskhol@baycollege.edu
Address 318 Harding Ave
City, State Kingsford MI
Zip 49802
Phone 906-239-2625

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Name Kayla Plourde
Email Kayla.plourde@hotmail.com
Address 221 S Ashland Ave Lower
City, State Green Bay, WI
Zip 54303
Phone 920-327-9043

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Name Tiffany Bullion
Email tbullion1@binghamton.edu
Address 8 Lock St
City, State Central Square, NY
Zip 13036
Phone 315-218-5967

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Name Thomas D. Dauschle
Email unomasdd@yahoo.com
Address 10527 Hamilton Ave
City, State Cincinnati, OH
Zip 45231
Phone _____

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Name Chloë Hockethorn
Email Jw00500@yahoo.com
Address 1443 Munroe Falls Ave
City, State Cuyahoga Falls, OH
Zip 44221
Phone 330-208-5367

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Name Sara Peckham
Email speckham10@gmail.com
Address 6033 Stanford Rd
City, State Peninsula, Ohio
Zip 44264
Phone _____

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Name Rex McArthur
Email Rexmcarthar@gmail.com
Address 514 Fouse Ave FL2
City, State Akron, OH
Zip 44310
Phone 330 954 7521

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Name Julie Chlysta
Email SKigurl240@hotmail.com
Address 1841 Ashton Ln. Apt. 017
City, State Kent. OH 44240
Zip 44240
Phone (330) 606-2346

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Name Sara Castillo
Email sc94angel@yahoo.com
Address 3705 Boxwood Park Dr.
City, State Buford GA
Zip 30518
Phone 770 289 2757

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Name Erica Viall
Email ericaviall@yahoo.com
Address 1815 Patrick Mill Pk
City, State Buford, GA 3
Zip 30518
Phone 678-234-8728

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Name Jennifer Wengand
Email JWengand1994@gmail.com
Address 201 Tall Trees Dr
City, State Pinehurst, NC
Zip 28374
Phone 910-528 0767

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Name Brittany Jones
Email sackherkeeper02@yahoo.com
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____
Phone 570-500-0367

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Name Azalea Roman
Email AzaleaRoman2@gmail.com
Address 2911 Perez St
City, State San Antonio, TX
Zip 78207
Phone (830) 279 8201

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Name Sky Nicholson
Email snicholson920@gmail.com
Address _____
City, State Nashville, TN
Zip 37214
Phone _____

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Name Gina Lee
Email ginath-y@hotmail.com
Address 1403 Cortland Dr
City, State Manassas, VA
Zip 20108
Phone 702-528-0250

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July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

RestoreTheGulf.gov

IUCN U.S. is pleased to have the opportunity to provide comments on the “Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast’s Ecosystem and Economy.” At this time in the Council’s process of developing the Plan, IUCN US will focus its initial comments on two issues. First, our comments will underscore the importance of the restoration and stewardship of the Gulf species diversity as a foundation of its ecosystem services and much of the human economies for the region. We therefore suggest these species resources be considered a priority in the “Ten-Year Funding Strategy,” and “Funding Priorities List.” Second, highlight and summarize a major partnership between IUCN US and the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies to further restoration and stewardship of the Gulf’s biodiversity.

Plan Goals

We suggest that the Plan be modified to be clear that it applies to all coastal and marine species for which their natural ranges include the Gulf of Mexico. As noted in the overview of the plan: The Gulf Coast region’s “water and coasts are home to one of the most diverse environments in the world-including over 15,000 species of sea life.” But that the “Living coastal and marine systems are showing signs of stress, such as depleted species populations and degraded habitats.”

While we understand the intent that this species diversity would be included in the concept of “coastal and marine resources,” we are, however, concerned that restoration needs not be equated simply to the role of those species currently providing extractable resources or currently protected by Federal law, e.g., the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The Gulf’s species diversity along with the abiotic environment fundamentally define the Gulf ecosystems and enable their ecosystem services, and related human economies. The restoration and stewardship the Gulf’s species diversity should be a clear concern in ensuring the overall health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico.

1630 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20009 Tel: 202-518-2047

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – United States (IUCN-US) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization registered in the U.S. Tax ID number 52-1443147. Donations to IUCN-US are tax deductible in the U.S.

Attached to this letter is a paper published subsequent to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, in the journal *Bioscience* prepared by several authors associated with the IUCN Species Survival Program. In part, the paper compares the Gulf species assessed by IUCN Red List standards as threatened with extinction with the species protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The IUCN Red List is considered to be the most reliable assessment of the conservation status of species worldwide. Recently the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration proposed 64 species of coral for the protection under the ESA that had been previously assessed to be in several Red List categories of species that were threatened with extinction.

As noted in the *BioScience* publication, only 14 Gulf species are subject to protection by the ESA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. At the time of publication, the authors of the paper identified 39 additional species that were considered vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered with extinction under the Red List. Since that time several additional assessments have been conducted under the Red List criteria and standards, and that number of species assessed under the Red List as threatened with extinction has grown.

This example underscores that there are Gulf species that should receive priority stewardship efforts that are threatened with extinction or made highly depleted and vulnerable by such catastrophic events as the Horizon oil spill. Nevertheless we understand such species are resources subject to restoration efforts under U.S. law and should be considered for such attention, as well as considered in applications of the National Environmental Policy Act. Moreover, not only are we concerned that these species may not receive stewardship efforts they require, but that they could be harmed by restoration efforts that do not take their conservation needs into account.

Plan Objectives

With respect to the “Council-Selected Restoration Component” of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, we particularly support the third objective to “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 [sic], and deep benthic communities.

Priority Criteria: There is considerable knowledge available concerning the environment of the Gulf of Mexico, and its stewardship and restoration. With ongoing research and analyses, that knowledge base is growing every day. However, for that knowledge to be effectively applied and used, policy makers and resource manager need to know what is available and where it can be accessed.

We believe it is particularly important that the first three years of the Council's efforts should focus on programs that will make the growing knowledge base on the Gulf's environment readily accessible for responding to future catastrophic events, chronic conditions such as areas of significant pollution, as well as for programs regarding restoration priorities. Similarly priority should also be given to regional capacity for spatial planning and projecting impacts of catastrophic events and chronic conditions. Such initial programs could include initiatives for establishing impacts of environmental change, monitoring and assessment programs for Gulf resources and species, and regional data bases. They could also include targeted restoration and recovery efforts. Many of the program needs identified in the draft Plan, such as restoration projects, will require reviews mandated by State and Federal law (for example, the National Environmental Policy Act) to help guard against inefficiencies and unanticipated adverse consequences. This would seem to be particularly the case for large-scale habitat restoration projects or those intended to provide long-term resilience to adverse trends. Careful consideration of how such projects need to be evaluated may inform priorities for improving the knowledge base, as well as inform the scope and nature of restoration activities.

With respect to the "State Expenditure Plans – Spill Impact Component" of the Trust Fund, we particularly support the inclusion in eligible activities the suite of those associated with "Restoration and protection of natural resources," "mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources," and "Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring."

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies – The new BioGoMx data base for Coastal and Marine Species

IUCN has been engaged for the past several years in conducting a Global Marine Species Assessment in which we are evaluating the conservation status of all marine vertebrates, and selected invertebrates and plants. The goal is to review 20,000 species worldwide; approximately 50% of these species have been assessed. The assessments are conducted under protocols and standards established over several decades of refinement for the IUCN Red List, and have proven to be highly reliable and reproducible. The Red List is recognized as the best indicator of the conservation status of species worldwide. www.iucnredlist.org

More recently we have accelerated our efforts to complete the GMSA for taxa occurring in the Gulf of Mexico. Each of the assessments is conducted through a workshop of experts with access to exhaustive literature searches concerning each target species. The GMSA for the Gulf of Mexico is giving us considerable insight into research and stewardship needs for the Gulf's biota. As noted previously, for example, preliminary review of the GMSA in the Gulf indicates that many more species are biologically threatened with extinction than are currently protected by the ESA and other related statutes. Such findings should inform research and stewardship priorities for the Council's Plan.

As we move forward with completing the GMSA in the Gulf, the Harte Institute is revising its current BioGoMx data base to include information about the GMSA's findings, in addition to other information important for Gulf species restoration and stewardship.

In summary, the new BioGoMx to be housed at the Harte Institute in Corpus Christi will include:

- all of the literature and other information relied on in conducting assessments of the conservation status of Gulf species,
- the results of the assessments,
- spatial planning capacity to project impacts of catastrophic and chronic events on the Gulf's biota, as well as for planning and implementing restoration activities
- a list of experts in Gulf taxa,
- and, a compendium of past and ongoing research and recovery efforts for Gulf taxa.

We anticipate the new BioGoMx will prove to be an invaluable regional database for the Gulf's living coastal and marine resources, and their stewardship and restoration. We believe this initiative responds well to the Plan's seventh objective to "Improve Science-Based Decision Making Processes," including "monitoring," "coordination," and establishing regional databases. IUCN and Harte staff would be pleased to brief the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council on our program of work to establish the new BioGoMx and would welcome suggestions on how to make this tool most useful for stewardship and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico.

IUCN commends the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council on the impressive "Draft programmatic Environmental Assessment" for the plan and we look forward to the plan's further development. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the public process to establish and implement the restoration for the Gulf Coast Region.

Sincerely,



Frank Hawkins
Chief Executive Officer



Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw

Chief Albert White Buffalo Naquin

100 Dennis St., Montegut, LA 70377
Phone: 985-232-1286 Fax: 985-594-3725
Email: whitebuffalo@aim.com
Website: www.isledejeancharles.com

REGARDING DRAFT INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Gulf Coast Restoration Council

Rebecca Blank - Department of Commerce
Governor Robert Bentley - Alabama
Governor Rick Scott - Florida
Governor Bobby Jindal - Louisiana
Governor Phil Bryant - Mississippi
Governor Rick Perry - Texas
Thomas Vilsack - Department of Agriculture
John McHugh - Secretary of the Army
Robert Perciasepe - Environmental Protection Agency
Janet Napolitano - Department of Homeland Security
Sally Jewel - Department of the Interior

Thank you for the opportunity to offer feedback on the workings to create a path for the restoration of our most precious Gulf Coast and the vibrant and ethnically diverse communities which share this rich ecosystem with the wildlife that inhabits it. Both are equally important and bring many to visit our Gulf Coast Communities. They come to experience our rich cultures and partake, if only for a day, in the experience.

As Chief of the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, along with our Tribal Council, the plan brings with it some hope for the future of the waters and lands that have long sustained us as a Gulf Coast Tribal Community. At the same time, there are limitations in the proposed plan that will again mean a cultural genocide for our Tribe and our ancestral homeland.

We live on the front lines, residing along the most southern reaches of coastal Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. Despite being a 501(c)(3) non-profit in order to help us serve the community, all structural means of restoration to date have failed to include our Tribal Community, including the State Master Plan and Morganza-To-The-Gulf. We like the holistic approach to restoration but we also realize, up close and personal, the urgent situation all coastal communities face. That the reality for many of us is even structural restoration will have limited, if any, immediate resolution.

In the proposed plan instead of taking the model from agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and their inclusiveness of State Recognized Tribes in their workings and funding cycles, the plan falls short. The language references two (2) Presidential Executive

Orders, namely Executive Order 13554 which sounds great until you read where it is supposed to work alongside Tribes. Here includes a failure existing in the language which goes on to state that the workings with Tribes, are in alignment with Executive Order 13175. This inclusion totally shuts the door to many State Recognized Tribes including ours. It leaves our voice at the table absent and further endangers our people and our Traditional way of living in harmony along the Gulf Coast.

Even if the language is changed to include State Recognized Tribes, for Tribal communities such as ours and our sister Tribes, as well as many others across the Gulf Coast Region, it means there is no alternative plan to relocate populations who will not obtain expedient restoration and have lost all their protection due to long term oil and gas harvesting from the marshes that were once our protection. Our homelands are now on an accelerated path to sinking into the Gulf brought courtesy of the environmental damage further caused by The BP Spill. It also fails to include helping populations such as ours to regain economic independence by creating new means of self-sustainability with the inclusion of funding that will enable the addition of business creation to promote new ways for Tribal members and the surrounding community employment opportunities that will lessen the burden on the State. Our hope to restore our people and our holistic and respectful way of living in harmony with Mother Earth appears to once again be neglected. The RESTORE Act will in essence not RESTORE us at all. It will leave out the many who have made it their life's work to protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats. It will leave out the many, who for generations have called the coastal wetlands home.

Additionally, the funds that may have the opportunity to reach and benefit the people of Terrebonne Parish appear to be being overseen by the same organizations who have the track record of not serving the whole community, serving only the select few, not the multitude. Organizations who have received grants to assist us but we remain at risk and unable to assist our population. Our people left to leave the life they have inherited and everything they have worked to gain and start again, elderly and disabled included. A broader oversight needs to be created that is non-discriminatory and has a track record for achieving long term and short term community restoration.

It is our feeling that if we are left out of the restoration and revitalization planned that we will only be first in what is sure to be the fate of many along the Gulf Coast. People tend to forget that all water is connected. The fish and other seafood's being caught with tumors a constant reminder to what the possible long term health impacts will be for many who love this place and have no alternative but to stay. Our right to clean air and clean water not to mention healthy foods to eat will be lost in the political lingo if it stays as is.

Being this is a plan in the works that allows for changes we encourage you to think, think if it was your family. What do you demand for your family? Are you willing to sacrifice them? We are not either. The comprehensive plan should speak for all. Being a State Recognized Tribe should not limit you, if it does then become like the countries we speak out for in the name of equality. We are all in this together, restoration and what we leave for the next generation, important to us all.

We feel we have a lot to add to the discussion and resolutions to solve the predicament we find the people of the Gulf Coast facing. We would like a seat at the table. We want to be part of something that has the power to be a model all over the world. Part of what happens when everyone comes together for the good of all.

Thank you again for the opportunity to include our voice, thank you for the work you are committed to accomplishing.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Albert P. Naquin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a stylized "N".

Chief Albert "White Buffalo" Naquin

JEFFERSON PARISH PROJECT LIST		
Project Name	Project Type	Project Source
Alligator Bend Shoreline Protection Project (NRCS)	Shoreline protection	CWPPRA Nominee
Barataria and Terrebonne Basins Stormwater Redirection (R2-BA-10)	Hydrologic restoration	CWPPRA Nominee 2009
Barataria Basin Long Distance Sediment Pipeline Project - Phase II (Barataria Bay Waterway to Lafouche Parish Hurricane Levee)	Marsh Creation	CIAP
Barataria Bay Rim Marsh Creation (002.MC.07)	Marsh Creation	LA State Master Plan
Barataria Landbridge Marsh Creation (USACE)	Marsh Creation	
Barataria Pass to Sandy Point Barrier island / Headland Resoration	Barrier Island / Headland Restoration	LA State Master Plan
Bay Dogris Marsh Creation	Marsh Creation	PPL23 Nominee
Bayou Barataria Lower Floodgate Structure South of Bayou Rigolettes	Hydrologic Restoration and Flood Risk Reduction	Mater Plan
Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery - Marsh Creation #3 (BA-164)	Marsh Creation	PPL 22
Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery - Marsh Creation #4	Marsh Creation	PPL23 Nominee (EPA)
Bayou Dupont to Bayou Barataria Marsh Creation (R2-BA-6)	Marsh Creation	CWPPRA RPT 2009
Bayside Segmented Breakwaters at Grand Isle (Phase 2)	Shoreline / barrier island protection	CIAP
Belle Pass to Caminada Pass Barrier Island / Headland Restoration	Barrier Island / Headland Restoration	LA State Master Plan
Chenier Ronquille Barrier Shoreline Restoration and Marsh Creation (R2-Ba-09)	Shoreline proection and marsh creation	CWPPRA RPT 2009
Completion of the Barataria Barrier Islands from the Mississippi River on the east to the Caminada Headlands on the West	Barrier Island Restoration	LA State Master Plan
East/West Grand Terre Islands Restoration (BA-30)	Barrier Island Restoration	PPL 09 (Transferred)
Elmer's Island Restoration (CWPPRA-PPL-22)		PPL-22
Elmer's Island Restoration (NOAA)	Barrier Island	PPL22 Nominee
Fifi Island Forested Wetland Restoration	Barrier Island	Grand Isle Independent Levee District
Goose Bayou Ridge Creation and Shoreline Protection (BA-51)	Shoreline Protetion	CIAP
Jonathan Davis Freshwater and Diversion	Hydrologic Restoration	
Kenner Effluent to Restore/Sustain LaBranche Mash and Wetlands	Hydrologic Restoration	CWPPRA Nominee
Lafitte Area Ring Levee Project	Levee/Flood Risk Reduction	LA State Master Plan
Lake Pontchartrain Barrier Plan (001.HP.08p) (Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity to the Pearl River)	Levee/Flood Risk Reduction	LA State Master Plan
Lake Salvador Shoreline Protection and Marsh Creation at Jean Lafitte National Park (Bayou Villars)	Marsh Creation / Shoreline Protection	CIAP/PPL22 Nominee
Large Scale Barataria Marsh Creation - Component E (002.MC.05e)	Marsh Creation	LA State Master Plan
Long Distance Sediment Pipieline across Lafourche	Marsh Creation / Diversion	CIAP and LA State Master Plan
Lower Barataria Diversion	Diversion	LA State Master Plan
Lower Lafitte Shoreline Stabilization at Rigolettes (BA-52)	Shoreline Stabilization	CIAP
Marsh Restorartion via Management of Rosethorne Municipal Effluent	Marsh Restoration	CIAP
Naomi Siphon Improvement (R2-BA-05)	Diversion / Hydrologic Restoration	PPL 19 Nominee
New Orleans East Land Bridge Restoration (001.MC.05)	Marsh Creation	LA State Master Plan

JEFFERSON PARISH PROJECT LIST		
Project Name	Project Type	Project Source
Northeast Turtle Bay Marsh Creation and Critical Area Shoreline Protection	Marsh Creation / Shoreline Protection	PPL23 Nominee
Northwest Turtle Bay Marsh Creation (BA-125)	Marsh Creation	PPL 21
South Cheniere Traverse Bayou Marsh Creation	Marsh Creation	PPL20 Nominee
South Shore of the Pen Shoreline Protection and Marsh Creation	Marsh Creation / Shoreline Protection	CIAP / Supplement #4
Tidal Restrictions at Harvey Cut and Bayou Perot	Hydrologic Restoration	CIAP
West Grand Terre Beach Nourishment	Barrier Island	
West Grand Terre Shoreline Protection and Marsh Creation on Western Bayside	Barrier Island	
Wetlands Harbor Activities Recreational Facility (The WHARF)	Recreational fishing	City of Westwego (land purchased with NOAA grant)



LEE COUNTY
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

13-031560
2013 JUL -5 AM 9:05

OS EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

John E. Manning
District One

Cecil Pendergrass
District Two

Larry Kiker
District Three

Tammy Hall
District Four

Frank Mann
District Five

Doug Meurer
Interim
County Manager

Andrea Fraser
Interim County Attorney

Diana M. Parker
County Hearing
Examiner

June 25, 2013

Via email: RestoreCouncil@doc.gov

Cameron F. Kerry, Acting Secretary of Commerce, Chair
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - Lee County, Florida Comment Letter

Dear Chair Kerry:

On behalf of Lee County, Florida we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Council's ("Council") Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy ("Plan.") We applaud the Council for developing this draft Plan and appreciate that the Council will continue to build more detail into the Plan and its associated processes as existing uncertainties are resolved. From Lee County's perspective as a member of the Florida Gulf Consortium and an active participant at both the State and Federal levels of government in efforts to protect and restore our natural resources, we appreciate the challenge of developing a Plan of this magnitude. Additionally, the level of uncertainty surrounding the timing and amount of penalty dollars that will ultimately be available to expend on ecosystem recovery in the Gulf Coast Region has made this even more challenging. Below you will find our general comments on the current schedule for reviewing and adopting the Plan and more specific comments on certain elements of the draft Plan.

General Comments

Given the phased approach to the legal proceedings in the BP Gulf Oil Spill Case, this uncertainty is likely to remain for several more months, possibly years. The aggressive statutory deadline of July 6, 2013 for approving the Plan appears to have assumed the availability of significantly more Trust Fund dollars at this time. With the likelihood of any type of resolution of the BP Oil Spill Case at least several months away, the urgency to adopt and publish the Plan is no longer necessary. We appreciate the Council taking a step back to allow for more public input and additional time to refine the draft Plan. The Council must take advantage of this time to develop a Plan that properly evaluates and selects priority projects and integrates all of the funding sources in a manner that efficiently and effectively carries out the intent of the RESTORE Act.

Duties of the Council Under the RESTORE Act

The RESTORE Act sets forth several duties that the Council shall complete and carryout in furtherance of the intent to restore the Gulf Coast Region. However, these duties are not delineated within the Plan document. These duties serve as the basis of the Plan and will frame its content and provisions. These duties must be clearly articulated within and reflected throughout the Plan.

Duty of Council to Identify Authorized Projects that Can Be Implemented Quickly

Chief among the Council's duties referenced above is to identify and list, as soon as practicable, projects that have been authorized prior to the adoption of the RESTORE Act but that have not yet commenced, that can be implemented quickly to fulfill the purposes and goals of the Plan – to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, barrier islands, dunes, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region. This list of "preauthorized" projects is not subject to the "best available science" standard when prioritizing the projects to be funded during the first three years of the Plan. Essentially, preauthorized projects that are "shovel ready" will receive preference over those projects that need further design or regulatory approvals and are not in a position to be immediately implemented. Under the RESTORE Act, this preference must be considered prior to evaluating the projects under the Plan's criteria in order to effectuate one of the Council's primary duties to quickly implement restoration projects.

The draft Plan, Appendix "A," contains a list of these "authorized but not yet commenced projects and programs" (collectively "projects"). The background information preceding this list describes such projects as those that "have been either federally authorized by Congress or approved under a State program, plan or action." However, the actual project list gives no indication whether the named project is actually authorized or approved by either Congress or a Gulf Coast Region State. Given the preference described above that these types of projects will receive, it is important that each project on this list be fully vetted to verify that it has been appropriately authorized or approved and is shovel ready. This vetting process may filter out several projects that are neither authorized by Congress nor authorized by a valid state program, plan or action. We suggest that the preauthorized list include, at minimum, the following: a specific indication whether such projects are authorized or approved, citation of the specific federal or state authorization or approval, and the status of the projects in terms of their readiness for construction.

For instance, in Florida, there are several types of statutory programs or plans that develop, implement and fund restoration projects. In Lee County, these include the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan ("CERP"), Caloosahatchee River Watershed Protection Plan, Caloosahatchee River Minimum Flows and Levels Recovery Strategy and the Caloosahatchee Estuary Basin Management Action Plan. These State of Florida plans or programs contain several projects that have been approved by the State of Florida and would further the purpose and goals of the Plan. They include, among others, the Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir Project (the "C-43 Project"), Spanish Creek/Four Corners Initiative, C-43 Water Quality Treatment and Testing Facility Project (BOMA Property) and the Caloosahatchee Area Lakes Restoration (Lake Hicpochee) Project.

While certain components of the Plan, like the 10 Year Funding Strategy, will remain incomplete until there is more certainty regarding the dollars available to the Trust Fund, the Funded Priorities list can and should be developed using the criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act. Given that one of the Council's primary duties is to implement projects quickly upon adoption of the Plan, the Council should immediately rank at the top of its list those projects that are shovel ready. Additionally, using the best available science, the Council should also begin evaluating and ranking other projects that can be implemented within the initial three year time period of the Funded Priorities List. This approach will put

the Council in position to quickly implement projects, if and when, the BP Oil Spill Case is resolved. Furthermore, the Council may then reevaluate and adjust the rankings and sequencing of the projects once the penalty dollars are allocated to the Trust Fund. In light of the Council's duty to quickly implement projects and requirements to update the Funded Priorities List on an annual basis, this approach fits with the intent of the RESTORE Act.

Priority Criteria

The Council seeks public comment on all aspects of the Plan, but is particularly interested in the Priority Criteria that are proposed to be used to evaluate ecosystem projects for at least the first three years of the Plan. Notwithstanding the comments above regarding the preference to quickly implementing preauthorized projects, we believe the Priority Criteria as laid out in the Plan are effective principles to help guide the project selection process and should not be refined so much as to limit the ability of the Council to fund worthwhile projects. In particular, we approve of several specifics with regard to the Priority Criteria. They include:

- 1) The first Priority Criteria describes projects that "are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting... the Gulf, without regard to geographic location within the... region." We wholeheartedly agree. Not all worthwhile Gulf restoration projects can or should be located in areas perceived to have received the most damaging impacts from the Deepwater Horizon spill. Furthermore, the RESTORE Act clearly emphasizes the importance of lands, water and watersheds adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and the value of restoring these. In fact, the Council has incorporated this emphasis into the Plan as its primary commitment. This commitment is aimed at focusing the Council's efforts on a "Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration." As stated in the Plan,

"upland, estuarine, and marine habitats are intrinsically connected, and will promote ecosystem-based and landscape-scale restoration without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region. A regional approach to restoration more effectively leverages the resources of the Gulf Coast and promotes holistic Gulf Coast recovery. The Council recognizes that regional ecosystem restoration activities can also have multiple human and environmental benefits, such as restoring habitats that sustainably support diverse fish and wildlife populations, while also providing an array of commercial, recreational, and other human uses of the ecosystem."

Here, in the Southwest Florida Gulf Coast Region, there is not a better positioned or more uniquely situated project to carry out this type of restoration approach than the C-43 Project mentioned above. The C-43 Project is located within the Caloosahatchee River watershed. The Caloosahatchee River and Estuary ("CRE") is at the head of a vast estuarine and marine ecosystem that includes aquatic preserves along with numerous other federal, state, and local parks and recreation areas.

The C-43 Project contributes to the restoration of ecosystem function in the CRE by reducing the number and severity of events where harmful amounts of freshwater from basin runoff and Lake Okeechobee releases are discharged into the CRE system. Also, the C-43 Project helps to maintain a desirable minimum flow of fresh water to the CRE during dry periods. These two primary functions help to moderate unnatural changes in salinity that are detrimental to the CRE's estuarine communities. In particular, the C-43 Project will optimize the health of the oyster

communities and vegetative communities that serve as valuable habitat (nursery, escape cover, feeding grounds) for a variety of freshwater, marine and estuarine-dependent fish and wildlife, including several endangered species. Most economically important saltwater fishes and crustaceans spawn offshore in the Gulf and then use estuarine areas, like the CRE, for nursery habitat. In particular, the mangrove shoreline, large expanses of sea grass meadows, oyster bars, and sand bars of the CRE serve as a nursery ground for many commercial and recreational fish species in the Gulf, including drum, grouper, sea trout, snook, tarpon, flounder, blue and stone crab, pompano, mullet and shrimp. In sum, the C-43 Project will directly contribute to the Gulf Coast Region recovery by assisting in restoring this valuable habitat and supports sustainable and diverse fish and wildlife populations, while also providing an array of commercial, recreational, and other human uses of the ecosystem.

- 2) The second Priority Criteria discusses the value of “large-scale projects.” Again, we agree with the Council’s approach. We believe the Council should focus its resources on large-scale, immediately implementable projects that will deliver vast improvements to the Gulf ecosystem. Relying solely on thinly spread funding on hundreds of small-scale restoration projects throughout the Gulf Coast Region will not allow for the transformative restoration that the RESTORE Act intends to make possible. These smaller-scale restoration projects are more appropriate for the Direct Component funding. The C-43 Project, given its size and scope, may provide more benefit to the Gulf Coast Region than any other project in Florida by improving the timing, quantity and quality of freshwater flows to the CRE and reducing the negative impacts to the Gulf from the unfortunately polluted Lake Okeechobee. The area of benefit is expansive and recognized as significant at a local, regional, state and national level. The benefited area includes several of Florida’s aquatic preserves (Matlacha Pass Aquatic Preserve, Pine Island Sound Aquatic Preserve and Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve) and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary. San Carlos Bay and the Caloosahatchee River are both designated as Federal Manatee Refuges. In addition, there are five national wildlife refuges in the benefited area, including: J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Caloosahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuge, Pine Island National Wildlife Refuge and Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge. There has also been significant public recognition of the importance of this area through continued support of this project by the local public and all levels of government. Simply stated, the potential scale of positive impact from the C-43 Project to federal and state natural and cultural resources is enormous.
- 3) The third Priority Criteria mentions that projects should be “contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans.” As mentioned above, the C-43 Project is included in CERP: Florida’s *comprehensive plan* for Everglades restoration. CERP is a multi-decade, monumental Federal-State partnership between the Army Corps of Engineers (“Corps”) and the South Florida Water Management District (“SFWMD”). Everglades restoration is predicated on the ability to store more water. Ultimately, more water must be made available to impaired ecosystems at the right times and in the right quantities. The C-43 Project is a foundational project of CERP. It will not only contribute to the improvement of the health of the CRE and the Gulf Coast Region, but it will also provide additional storage for the Everglades ecosystem. As all projects considered in CERP, the C-43 Project has gone through and completed rigorous scientific analysis and planning, including an Integrated Project Implementation Report and Environmental Impacts Statement. The C-43 Project has support from all agencies involved in its review including the Corps, the SFWMD, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, as mentioned above, the C-43 Project is the keystone project within several other State of Florida approved restoration plans. In sum, the multiple reviews and approvals of the C-43 Project by these federal and state plans, clearly underscore the fact that it needs no further analysis. Without

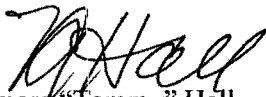
question, the science is there and it is accepted. It is designed and ready for construction and can be implemented quickly.

- 4) Finally, as indicated above, there is a large omission of the statutory preference for preauthorized and shovel ready projects within the Plan's Proposal and Selection Process. Again, one of the primary duties of the Council is to identify and quickly implement those projects that have been previously approved at the federal or state level. These preauthorized and shovel ready projects, like the C-43 Project, have already completed intensive planning efforts, rigorous engineering and design and lengthy environmental permitting reviews. The Council's Plan must specifically include within its Proposal and Selection process adequate provisions that ensure preauthorized projects will receive preference based upon the project's ability to be quickly implemented. While we understand the Plan may fund projects for many years, potentially even up to a decade or more, we feel strongly that the Council must clearly delineate and carry out in the Plan the mandated duty of the RESTORE Act - to implement a number of significantly impactful projects in the short term in order to help improve the health of the ecosystem in the Gulf Coast Region as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

Again, we appreciate the Council allowing for more public input and additional time to ensure that the adopted Plan clearly reflects the duties of the Council as well as a proper project evaluation and selection process as required under the RESTORE Act. A Plan that properly reflects these requirements will prioritize, integrate and expend all of the RESTORE Act money sources in a manner that efficiently and effectively carries out the intent of the RESTORE Act. We look forward to working with the Council over the next several years as you begin to implement the Plan.

Sincerely,



Tammara "Tammy" Hall
Lee County Commissioner
District 4

Louisiana Environmental Action Network

Helping to make Louisiana safe for future generations



July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Attn: Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director

Dear Mr Ehrenwerth,

The Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) offers the following comments on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy. LEAN has worked actively with coastal communities and citizens in the aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster to address their concerns about health, the environment, their health, homes and livelihoods.

General Comments: We support the central role that ecosystem restoration continues to have in the Draft Plan. As stated, the Preliminary Project List reflects potential projects within the 60% of RESTORE Funds under the Gulf Council's purview. The 35% of eventual BP funds that goes directly to Gulf States is the area where some controversy has arisen about proposed non-restoration projects. The Preliminary Project List was submitted by federal and state agencies, but it is not clear whether organizations and the general public will be able to submit specific projects for consideration. The Draft Plan states that the public will be able to offer ideas through the Council website and public meetings, and that these ideas will be considered by the Council. (p. 16). It also states that a "Funded Priorities List" will be attached to the eventual RESTORE Plan as an addendum.

The Preliminary Projects submitted by agencies come from a range of existing plans and programs. Most involve ecosystem restoration, and a number involve the important problem of water pollution from upstream sources. A number of the projects submitted by the Corps of Engineers appear to involve potential levee/flood control projects, some of which are included in the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan (p. 55). These projects have received initial authorization, but may still require a permitting/environmental impact assessment under current law, a requirement that should be maintained.

Specific Issues

Gulf Hypoxia: While Water Quality remains a key goal and objective of the Draft Plan, we are concerned about the lack of attention given specifically to the large “Dead Zone” that forms each year in the Gulf, in contrast to the 2011 Draft Gulf Restoration Strategy. This is especially noticeable since a record-size “Dead Zone” was predicted for the Gulf this summer.^[i] In addition to its habitat impacts, the Gulf Hypoxic zone continues to threaten the resilience of coastal communities where commercial and recreational fishermen operate, and poses a serious threat to the long-term health of the offshore fishery. Addressing the Gulf Hypoxia problem to ensure the health of the Gulf fishery seems even more important given the impacts of the 2010 spill on the seafood resource and its market.

Gulf Coast Energy Production/Use: Obviously, the issues of climate, energy, resilience, and sustainability are all linked together. The Gulf Oil Spill Commission established by President Obama released its latest report on post-spill progress in April 2013.^[ii] They noted that the new federal agencies under the Department of Interior charged with making offshore drilling more responsible have made progress (assigning them a ‘B’), and that the industry has continued to improve safety and response capability (assigning a B-). They gave the Congress a D+ because aside from passing the RESTORE Act, “it did nothing about many other critical issues the Commission identified to improve safety and environmental protection.”^[iii]

The Commission’s recommendations should not be ignored. The impacts of oil production in the Gulf are not limited to those of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, despite the scale of that disaster. A well off of the Lower Mississippi River Delta has been leaking since 2004^[iv], and there are numerous smaller spills happening at any given time. There are also proposals to build large new coal export facilities in Plaquemines Parish, which would further impact the small communities still remaining after Hurricane Katrina and subsequent storms.^[v]

Climate Change: Issues of energy production and use on the Gulf Coast tie into the issue of climate change. The absence of any mention in the Draft Plan of climate change and its impacts (other than a brief reference to sea-level rise on page 4) is a matter of serious concern. The Draft Plan includes a strong “Commitment to Science-Based Decision Making” (p. 6) and Improving Science-Based Decision-Making Processes” as one of its main Objectives (p. 13).

We stated in our comments on the 2011 Gulf Restoration Strategy:

“Climate Change/global warming is another serious problem impacting the long-term sustainability of Gulf Coast communities. The Draft Strategy makes a number of references to this problem, and to the projected effects of sea-level rise on the Gulf Coast, including the higher level of relative sea-level rise along Louisiana's coast, i.e., the combination of rising sea level

and a sinking delta. The meaning of the term “realistic sea-level models/projections” under the Modeling Need on p. 91 is unclear. The 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made a projection of global sea-level rise of up to a meter by 2100, but a number of subsequent scientific papers have concluded that this estimate is conservative, and that higher levels should be anticipated (<http://www.pnas.org/content/106/51/21527>.)”

The absence of any mention of climate change in the Draft Plan may reflect political pressure from the Gulf Coast states. If so, this will serve to weaken the effectiveness of restoration and recovery efforts under the RESTORE Act, since the region’s vulnerability to climate impacts is increasing. Improving resilience and the scale of these impacts should involve making the connection between climate and greenhouse gas emissions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2007 Report states that

“Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would cause further warming and induce many change in the global climate system during the 21st century that would very likely be larger than those observed during the 20th century.”[vi]

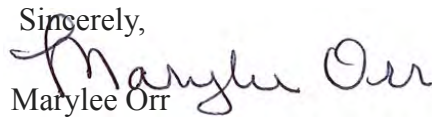
And an important scientific paper (Vermeer et al 2009) published subsequent to the IPCC 2007 Report concluded that their study’s results “suggest that emissions reductions early in this century will be much more effective in limiting sea-level rise than reductions later on.”[vii]

Recommendations:

The Draft Plan should integrate the issue of climate change in the Gulf Coast region in all its aspects – projected impacts on communities and resources, mitigation potential of proposed projects, and the role of the Gulf Coast states in energy and climate policy. (Many of the region’s political leaders are strongly opposed to any climate policy at the state or national level.)

The Draft Plan should explicitly include mitigation of the Gulf Hypoxic Zone under its “Restore Water Quality” Goal/Objectives.

To further these priorities, as well as meeting the Draft Plan’s “Commitment to Engagement, Inclusions, and Transparency” (p.7), Advisory Committees for Science and Citizen Involvement should be formed.

Sincerely,

Marylee Orr
Executive Director

[i] NOAA, “NOAA, partners predict possible record-setting dead zone for Gulf of Mexico,” June 18, 2013, http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2013/20130618_deadzone.html

[ii] Gulf Oil Spill Commission, *Assessing Progress: Three Years Later*, April 17, 2013, http://oscaction.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_OSCA-No2-booklet-Apr-2013_web.pdf

[iii] Ibid., p. 3.

[iv] LEAN, “Taylor Oil Well Leak Visible from Space; Taylor Still Underreporting,” <http://leanweb.org/our-work/water/taylor-well-oil-leak-visible-from-space-taylor-still-underreporting>

[v] LEAN, “Faith and Environmental Groups Challenge Proposed Coal Export Terminal in Plaquemines Parish,” <http://leanweb.org/our-work/community/faith-and-environmental-groups-challenge-proposed-coal-export-terminal-in-plaquemines-parish>

[vi] IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2007, Working Group I: The Physical Science Basis, http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg1/en/spmsspm-projections-of.html

[vii] Vermeer, Rahmstorf, “Global sea level linked to global temperature,” 2009, <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2009/12/04/0907765106.full.pdf>.

Louisiana Environmental Action Network was founded in 1986 in an effort to unify individuals across the state around environmental issues. It is only natural that the rich geology and the transportation superhighway of the Mississippi river has led Louisiana to being one of the most highly industrialized areas in North America. LEAN works to address the issues that arise as these industries and inhabitants work to coexist sustainably. Our work spans many areas and categories but always strives for the same goal: to make Louisiana a healthy and safe place to live.



LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

"... conserving our natural resources and your right to enjoy them."



July 8, 2013

Chairman
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
PO Box 2099
Fairhope, AL 36533

Re: Comments on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

Dear Council Members:

On behalf of the 8500 members and 25 affiliate organizations of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan to restore the Gulf Coast region. We appreciate the extension of time to comment on the draft plan.

We respectfully request that there be a second draft Initial Comprehensive Plan before a final plan is released so that the public can comment again on any new changes or specific additions, particularly if there are projects identified. This request is based on the amount of comments we expect have been submitted given the attendance at public meetings.

We are pleased to see that the draft of the plan affirms the RESTORE Act's statutory requirement that the Council-Selected Restoration Component be dedicated solely to ecosystem restoration projects. We support an approach to coastal restoration that is ecosystem-based using the best available science.

The state of Louisiana's "Louisiana Coastal Master Plan" identifies projects that address coastal restoration and was crafted to specifically stabilize and ensure a more resilient and sustainable Mississippi River Delta and coastal zone. Large-scale restoration projects are identified in the state's plan and make the greatest contribution to ecosystem restoration and addressing coastal land loss. In particular, LWF supports a large-scale sediment diversion as the best, most sustainable way to stem land loss and restore wetlands in the Mississippi River Delta.

The RESTORE Council can revise the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan to clearly explain how a state's plan should meet the four evaluation criteria points identified in the Draft, within the guidance provided for in the statute. More specificity in how plans and projects would be evaluated and selected is needed to understand how the Council will select projects with the amount of funding available, particularly when it is not yet known exactly how much funding will be available.

At the public meeting held in Belle Chasse, Louisiana on June 12, 2013, the RESTORE Council panel asked for public comments on creating a Science Advisory Committee and a Citizens Advisory Committee. LWF supports both committees as crucial resources to provide the Council with input and guidance to meet the five goals the Council has identified. The challenge

in creating these advisory committees is establishing a foundation that makes their input and participation meaningful to the decision-making process. Participants on either committee should have the right credentials to provide input and be effective representatives of the community or profession they represent. The Council should be committed and able to take their advice and use it. The mandate and expectations of these committees should be clearly spelled out before selecting members.

LWF represents hunters, anglers, bird watchers, hikers, and many other outdoor recreational enthusiasts who care deeply about Louisiana's wildlife and fish habitat and enjoy it regularly as part of the value of living in Louisiana. Louisiana's citizens depend on a healthy Gulf of Mexico and coastal area to support a sustainable fisheries habitat along our coast and in Gulf waters and important habitat for migratory birds and waterfowl. We look to the Council to help restore the environment and economy of the Gulf Coast region with a sense of urgency about implementation and a big vision for restoration based in sound science with appropriate citizen engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Triche". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rebecca" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Triche".

Rebecca Triche
Executive Director

**Lower Mississippi River
Sub-basin Committee on Hypoxia
Room 1197
Energy, Coast, & Environment Building
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, La 70803**

July 8, 2013

To: Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Comments on *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy*

The Lower Mississippi River Sub-basin Committee on Hypoxia was formed in 2003 under the *Action Plan for Reducing Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico* (2001, 2008),¹ and consists of states (AR, LA, MO, MS, TN) and federal partner agencies on the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force, along with researchers and stakeholders. The Sub-basin Committee works to coordinate efforts to implement the *Action Plan* in the lower river region.²

In my comments on the *Preliminary Gulf Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy* released by the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Task Force in 2011, I noted that restoring water quality was one of its key goals, and that the large annual hypoxic zone that forms off the Louisiana shelf was prominently included as one of the most serious water quality problems that the Gulf faces. Because the roots of the problem lie upstream in the Mississippi River Basin, I and some other stakeholders had proposed that some portion of BP funds be directed upriver to help alleviate the nutrient loading that drivers Gulf Hypoxia.

Initial language in the RESTORE Act opened the door to this possibility, in particular Paragraph (I) below.

Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and
Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2011
p. 36

(iii) RESTORATION PRIORITIES... the Council shall give highest priority to projects that address 1 or more of the following criteria:

(I) 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 ecosystem, without regard to geographic location.

(II) 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.

(IV) 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.

LMRSBC Comments on *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan* – 2

While the *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan* retains protecting and restoring Water Quality as a key Goal and Objective, it does not mention the Hypoxic Zone specifically. It also references later RESTORE language that stipulates geographic limitations on where funds can be spent:

“The RESTORE Act defines where and how funds may be spent. The Act defines “Gulf Coast State” to mean any of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, and includes the following areas within the “Gulf Coast region:”

1. In the Gulf Coast States, the coastal zones (including federal lands within the coastal zones) that border the Gulf of Mexico;
2. Any adjacent land, water, and watersheds within 25 miles of the coastal zones; and,
3. All federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. “[p. 5]

If these limits do define where RESTORE funds may be spent, then prospects for supporting the “effective state nutrient reduction frameworks” listed on p. 32 of the *Preliminary Gulf Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy* are severely limited.³ Louisiana and Mississippi, states with membership in both the Gulf Council and the Hypoxia Task Force, could be precluded from directing any of the RESTORE funds to watersheds in the northern parts of their states for activity in the Nutrient Reduction Strategies they are carrying out under the *Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan*.⁴

A number of projects submitted by agencies for the “Preliminary Authorized But Not Yet Commenced Projects and Programs List” are not in fact located in the coastal zone, so there may be some potential for supporting action upstream where much of the pollution that impacts coastal waters occurs.

A project of the kind that could deliver downstream benefits applicable to the Gulf Hypoxia problem is the “Homochitto River Restoration” submitted by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for a tributary of the Mississippi River (p. 14). Other projects in upstream watersheds include USFS proposals for landscape protection and restoration in Red River watersheds in the Kisatchie National Forest (p. 14), and wastewater treatment projects in Ascension and East Baton Rouge Parishes (p. 53), though not all of the latter areas drain their wastewater into the Mississippi River.

In the Louisiana coastal zone, a number of diversion projects are included that come from either/both the Louisiana Coastal Area Study (LCA), Louisiana Coastal Master Plan or Water Resources Development Act (WRDA): West Pointe a la Hache Siphon Improvement Project (p. 12), Medium Diversion at White Ditch, Violet Diversion (p. 28), Small Diversion at Hope Canal, Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove, Atchafalaya River to Northern Terrebonne Marsh (p. 54), Small Diversion at Convent/Blind River (p. 56), River Reintroduction into Maurepas Swamp (p. 59), and the Bertrandville Siphon (p. 59).

Diverting a portion of flow from the mainstream Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers will in itself reduce the overall nutrient load delivered through their mouths to the Gulf. The

LMRSBC Comments on *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan* – 3

particular nutrient processing results for each project would need to be assessed separately to gauge their effects in receiving areas. It has long been understood that reducing nutrient loads to the Gulf can be done most effectively by combining actions taken upstream with those carried out in the coastal zone.

While acting to alleviate and reduce the Gulf Hypoxic Zone is consistent with all of the Goals and Objectives of the *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the *Plan's* key Commitments to a Regional Ecosystem-Based Approach to Restoration and to Leveraging Resources and Partnerships, stipulation of the criteria/limitations for where funds can be directed both from the RESTORE process and other processes related to the BP disaster will clarify the extent to which those aspirations can be realized in relation to the Gulf Hypoxia problem.

Sincerely,

Doug Daigle
Coordinator

Cc:

Ken Brazil, Arkansas Natural Resources Commission
Joe Engeln, Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Richard Ingram, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
John McClurkan, Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Richard Raynie, Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
Nancy Stoner, Environmental Protection Agency

Notes

¹ 2001 Action Plan, <http://www.epa.gov/owow/msbasin/pdf/actionplan2001.pdf>; 2008 Action Plan, http://www.epa.gov/owow_keep/msbasin/pdf/ghap2008_update082608.pdf.

² LMRSBC, <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/lmrsbc/>

³ *Preliminary Gulf Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy*, 32: “Partnering with federal and state agencies, NGOs, private sector, landowners, and other agriculture partners to development watershed-level plans and promote adoption of science-based nutrient management conservation practice systems that offer enhanced environmental protection, and may also increase agricultural production.”

⁴ State of Louisiana, “Louisiana Nutrient Management”, <http://lanutrientmanagement.org/> ; State of Mississippi, “Mississippi Delta Nutrient Reduction Strategies,” [http://www.deq.state.ms.us/Mdeq.nsf/pdf/WMB_MississippiDeltaNutrientReductionStrategies/\\$File/Delta%20Nutrient%20Reduction%20Strategy_12-15-2009.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.deq.state.ms.us/Mdeq.nsf/pdf/WMB_MississippiDeltaNutrientReductionStrategies/$File/Delta%20Nutrient%20Reduction%20Strategy_12-15-2009.pdf?OpenElement)

Marine Conservation Institute
122 C St NW, Suite 240
Washington, DC 20001

July 8, 2013

To the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

My name is Katelin Shugart-Schmidt. I am an Ocean Policy Fellow at the Marine Conservation Institute. The Marine Conservation Institute, based in Seattle Washington, is a nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1996 that: uses the latest science to identify important marine ecosystems around the world; advocates for their protection; and works to ensure that they are managed and enforced carefully.

As part of this mission, our team of scientists has worked to identify and research an important and yet relatively unexplored ecosystem – that of the deep water and mesophotic coral communities. Our former colleague, Dr. Sandra Brooke, has extensively studied deep coral ecosystems from the mid-Atlantic to the Aleutian Islands, as well as in the Gulf of Mexico, while Dr. John Guinotte has engaged in predictive habitat modeling in order to locate these elusive communities. Dr. Brooke coauthored the most comprehensive look at deep sea corals in the Gulf of Mexicoⁱ. Our goal is to identify, explore, and protect these unique ecosystems whenever possible. We respectfully submit these comments to you today in the hopes that, when you evaluate your funding priorities, you look deeper than ‘surface-level’ into the restoration needs of the Gulf of Mexico.

In 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* well blow-out released an estimated 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. While a small percentage of the resulting material was removed from the surface and a large percentage was dispersed on the surface, a substantial fraction of the oil and gas was trapped by ocean stratification and remained at great depthsⁱⁱ. In addition, the use of Corexit dispersant created vast amounts of oil droplets and marine snow that has since deposited onto the sea floor^{iii,iv}. While the effects of the spill on coastal areas can often be easily seen (although not easily remedied), impacts from oil occurring at great depths are much harder and expensive to observe and are impossible, or nearly so, to remedy directly.

Already, however, a number of researchers working in labs across the country have begun to discover evidence of oil spill damage on deep sea and mesophotic coral communities^{v,vi}. These scientists have identified multiple deep water sites with corals hundreds of years old – now with dead or dying branches. Biomarker testing indicates that oil found on and around these corals is a match with the oil released by the *Deepwater Horizon* spill^{iv,vii}. A follow-up

exploration on one of these coral communities has indicated that, while lightly injured corals may be recovering, corals with significant damage are continuing to decline^{viii}. Only with long term monitoring of these difficult-to-reach sites will we be able to determine the full extent of the damage caused and develop an appropriate response.

While it is true that most of the Gulf is covered by a muddy bottom unable to support coral life, the patchy nature of coral ecosystems only enhances the need for protection of the limited number of sites. Deep water and mesophotic corals need protection not only because they are unique species with limited available habitat, but also because they can serve as critical habitat for commercially important fish species. Additionally, mesophotic corals may serve as a genetic reservoir of shallow coral DNA – the need for which may be exacerbated by increasing ocean temperatures and acidification^{ix}. The predicted future loss of shallow nearshore corals makes our efforts to protect and restore deep water and mesophotic corals even more critical.

We were very pleased to see the instances in which the draft plan recognized the need for deep water species restoration, specifically in Objective 1 (“Restore, enhance and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of ... *deepwater corals*”) and Objective 3 (“Restore and protect ... *deep benthic communities*”). We recommend that you continue to ensure your plan objectives consider some projects focused on damage assessment, compensatory protection, and restoration where feasible of deep sea and mesophotic corals.

Since restoration of deep sea corals and mesophotic corals from oil spill damage remains a difficult and/or unknown process, we suggest projects that focus on compensatory activities. When direct restoration of sites cannot occur, we suggest that you consider funding projects that will lead to the protection of healthy deep sea or mesophotic corals to compensate for irredeemable losses elsewhere.

We know that you have the difficult responsibility of determining key restoration priorities on a restricted budget. Places that are remote, out of sight and out of most minds, such as deep water benthic communities, often get the ‘short end of the stick’ in cases of limited funding. It is hard to justify spending money on places that few of us will get to see. While we understand the need for many of the projects to focus on nearshore or onshore restoration, we ask you to remember that the *Deepwater Horizon* event had impacts beyond those on the surface or near the shore.

Thank you.

Katelin Shugart-Schmidt

1 202 595 9206

dc.associate@marine-conservation.org

www.marine-conservation.org

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MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

8 July 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Chair, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue N.W., Room 4077
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council has a key role in leading efforts to restore the Gulf coast ecosystem and economy under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States (RESTORE) Act of 2012. One of the Council's initial charges was to develop a comprehensive plan outlining the framework that would be used to implement a coordinated, region-wide Gulf Coast restoration effort. On 29 May 2013, the Council published a notice of availability of its initial draft comprehensive plan and draft programmatic environmental assessment of the draft plan, and a preliminary list of ecosystem restoration projects under review by the Council (78 Fed. Reg. 32237).

The Marine Mammal Protection Act established the Marine Mammal Commission to oversee and advise federal officials regarding activities that may affect marine mammals and the ecosystems upon which they depend. The Commission is particularly concerned about potential adverse effects on Gulf of Mexico marine mammals from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill as well as other human activities and natural disasters that may be impeding the recovery of marine mammal stocks that may have been affected by the oil spill. In that capacity, the Commission, in consultation with its Committee of Scientific Advisors on Marine Mammals, offers the following recommendations and rationale regarding the Council's draft planning documents for restoration of the Gulf ecosystem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, in coordination with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and relevant federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, include in its restoration plan—

- Specific projects to assess and monitor the health and status of Gulf marine mammals, particularly those that are determined by the Trustees to have been injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; recommended projects include—
 - marine mammal stock assessment surveys (including vessel and aerial surveys, tagging, photo identification, passive acoustic monitoring, and genetic sampling);
 - enhancement of the Gulf marine mammal stranding response program;
 - live capture/release health assessments of bottlenose dolphins; and
 - environmental studies (including prey studies);

- Specific projects to characterize and address high-priority risk factors that may be impeding the recovery and restoration of Gulf marine mammals, particularly those that are determined by the Trustees to have been injured by the oil spill; recommended projects include—
 - establishing or expanding observer coverage of commercial fisheries known to interact with marine mammals;
 - minimizing incidental takes of marine mammals in commercial and recreational fisheries;
 - minimizing the indirect effects of fishing on important prey species of marine mammals;
 - monitoring ambient sound levels and assessing the effects of human-caused sound on marine mammals in the Gulf;
 - minimizing effects of human-caused sound on marine mammals and their prey; and
 - reducing other human-caused environmental impacts that may be detrimental to marine mammals and their prey.

The Marine Mammal Commission further recommends that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, in coordination with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and relevant federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, ensure that restoration projects include long-term monitoring to determine whether the projects are achieving their goals and injured resources are indeed being restored.

RATIONALE

The RESTORE Act of 2012 established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, an independent entity within the federal government with responsibility for directing a portion of the Deepwater Horizon Clean Water Act penalties for ecosystem restoration, economic recovery, and tourism promotion in the Gulf coast region. The Council is charged with implementing that responsibility by first publishing a draft initial comprehensive plan. The purpose of the plan is to (1) establish the overarching restoration goals for the Gulf coast region, (2) describe how the Council will solicit, evaluate, and fund projects and programs for ecosystem restoration, (3) outline the process for the approval of individual state expenditure plans, (4) include a list of projects or programs authorized prior to enactment of the RESTORE Act, but not yet commenced, and (5) provide the Council's next steps.

The Council's draft initial comprehensive plan has five goals that provide the overarching framework for achieving 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. They are—

- Restore and conserve habitat;
- Restore water quality;
- Replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources;
- Enhance community resilience; and
- Restore and revitalize the Gulf economy.

The Commission supports these goals and believes that they represent an appropriate focus on restoration efforts that will enhance both the health of the Gulf Coast ecosystem and the resilience of the Gulf coast economy. In selecting specific projects for funding, the RESTORE Act directs the Council to use the best available science and give highest priority to ecosystem restoration projects that meet the Act's priority criteria, including projects that would 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. Although restoration of marine ecosystems typically refers to activities intended to address loss of, or damage to, habitats (e.g., coastal marshes and wetlands), in this case Congress intended a much broader application of the term to include recovery of injured marine species.

The vast majority of projects identified by the Council in its preliminary list of projects designated as "authorized but not yet commenced" (Appendix A) appears to be focused on the restoration of nearshore habitats and nearshore species, with no projects identified for restoration of marine mammals and few projects identified for restoration of marine wildlife in offshore habitats. The Commission is concerned that this approach may be too limited given the broader focus of the Act's priority criteria on Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration. The Commission believes that Council should also include in its comprehensive restoration plan projects that restore and protect marine mammals, particularly those that are determined by the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees to have been injured by the oil spill. Recognizing that the restoration and protection of Gulf marine mammals—especially those found in offshore habitats—presents a greater implementation challenge, the Commission provides the following information and recommendations to assist the Council in identifying and incorporating projects in its comprehensive plan that would enhance efforts to restore marine mammals injured by the oil spill.

Impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on Gulf marine mammals

Twenty-two marine mammal species reside in or regularly visit the inshore, coastal, and offshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico (Waring et al. 2012, see Table 1 for a list of stocks and information on each). They comprise 57 stocks, 37 of which are bottlenose dolphin stocks. The scope and significance of injuries to Gulf marine mammals as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill have yet to be fully determined. However, the following evidence suggests that the oil spill may have adversely affected certain marine mammal stocks—

- 155 bottlenose dolphins, two sperm whales, two unidentified *Kogia* species (dwarf and pygmy sperm whales), two melon-headed whales, and six spinner dolphins stranded in the northern Gulf during the response phase of the spill (30 April 2010 through 17 April 2011), which was an increase in the mean monthly stranding rate compared to that for 2002-2009 (www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/oilspill/);
- some of the bottlenose dolphin strandings may have been part of an ongoing Unusual Mortality Event in the northern Gulf (Figure 1, adapted from www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/mmume/cetacean_gulfofmexico2010.htm);
- health assessments of coastal bottlenose dolphins in Barataria Bay, Louisiana, an area heavily affected by the spill, indicated high prevalence of poor health and suppressed metabolic and

- immune function (www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/2012/03/study-shows-some-gulf-dolphins-severely-ill/); and
- movements of sperm whales with home ranges near the spill site indicate that although whales remained in the area after the oil spill, they avoided the most heavily surface-oiled areas (www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2011_10_12_MAMMAL_Sperm_Whale_Tagging_LA-signature_Redacted3.pdf).

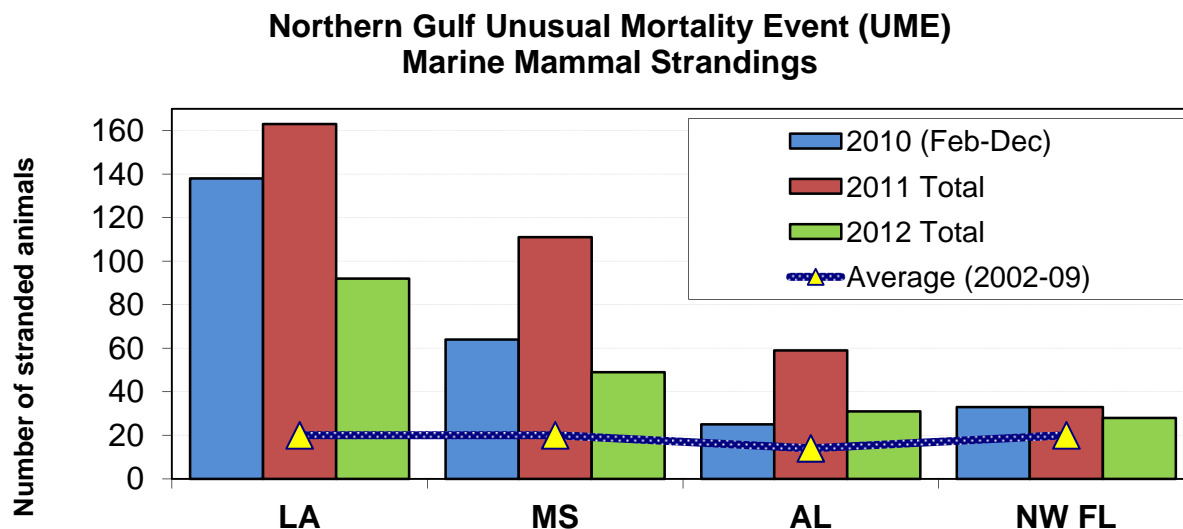


Figure 1. Number of marine mammals stranded in the northern Gulf of Mexico from Franklin County, Florida, to the Texas/Louisiana border, both before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (based on average strandings per calendar year) and after (by year) (Source: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/mmume/cetacean_gulfofmexico2010.htm)

In general, the numbers of injuries and deaths that are observed and reported represent only a fraction of the numbers that actually occur. For example, Williams et al. (2011) estimated that only two percent of the carcasses of animals that stranded in the Gulf immediately after the oil spill were likely recovered. Therefore, the reported damage does not tell the whole story. Besides the species and stocks represented in the stranding records, it is likely that other species and stocks of marine mammals that occur in the same habitats as those that showed up on shore were injured but their injuries were not detected. Therefore the reported marine mammal strandings should be considered only minimal estimates of actual injuries and deaths.

To ensure that restoration is guided by sufficient information, the Commission—with input from staff at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and other federal agencies—prepared the enclosed report entitled “Assessing the Long-term Effects of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill on Marine Mammals in the Gulf of Mexico: A Statement of Research Needs.” The report was intended to guide assessment of the spill’s long-term effects on marine mammal populations and mitigation and restoration efforts, and to help track the changes in the Gulf ecosystem, including those resulting from recovery and restoration efforts. The report summarized potential effects of oil exposure and response activities on marine mammals and identified two primary areas of focus for

marine mammals that should be given high priority when developing long-term restoration plans for the Gulf, as noted below.

Restoration priority 1: Promoting recovery and restoration of marine mammals injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill

The Commission has recommended that NOAA and the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees include assessment and monitoring of marine mammals in its comprehensive restoration plan for the Gulf of Mexico (see the Commission's letter to NOAA dated 28 December 2012¹). As the Trustees and other entities conducting research and monitoring on marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico develop a better understanding of the effects of the oil spill on marine mammals, this information can be used by both the Trustees and the Council to adapt restoration projects to target marine mammal species and habitats that are most at risk. An adaptive approach that builds on information obtained from continued injury assessment is a critical component of effective restoration planning. As noted by the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling in its 2011 *Deep Water* report, "A sophisticated understanding of the full range of impacts from a large-scale oil spill is critical to effective recovery and restoration efforts" (Oil Spill Commission 2011).

Given the lack of baseline information on the abundance and habitat use of the majority of Gulf marine mammal stocks prior to the oil spill, a comprehensive assessment of marine mammal injuries resulting from the spill may not be possible. However, studies on other wildlife have revealed chronic, delayed, and indirect effects of the *Exxon Valdez* spill that lasted longer and were more severe than initially expected or assumed (Peterson et al. 2003). Exposure to oil from that spill was still impeding recovery of certain sea otter and killer whale populations 15 years later (Ballachey et al. 2007, Matkin et al. 2008). The Deepwater Horizon oil spill differs in some important respects from the *Exxon Valdez* spill, but long-term effects are a significant concern for Gulf marine mammals because of the vastly greater amount of oil spilled, the greater quantity of dispersant applied at the surface and wellhead, the low recovery rates of spilled oil, uncertainty regarding the eventual fate of both the oil and the dispersant, and uncertainty regarding the sub-lethal effects of the spill and spill response on marine mammals and on ecosystem elements important to marine mammals.

Despite the lack of baseline information for Gulf marine mammals and uncertainties regarding the extent of injuries caused by the spill, a cautionary approach to restoration in the Gulf should include monitoring of the health and status of marine mammal stocks, particularly those that were most likely to have been injured (i.e., coastal and estuarine bottlenose dolphins and sperm whales). The Marine Mammal Commission therefore recommends that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, in coordination with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and relevant federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, include in its restoration plan specific projects to assess and monitor the health and status of Gulf marine mammals, particularly those that are determined by the Trustees to have been injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The plan should include a combination of projects targeted at studying both direct biological effects of the oil spill on individuals (such as displacement from preferred habitats, changes in foraging patterns, or physiological effects) as well as indirect effects on the

¹ Past Commission letters are available at www.mmc.gov/letters/welcome.shtml.

ecosystem as a whole (such as a decrease or displacement of key prey species or an increased incidence of harmful algal blooms or hypoxia/anoxia events). Studies to track population-level changes in abundance or vital rates over time also should be included to monitor recovery.

Recommended projects to monitor the health and status of Gulf marine mammals include—

- Marine mammal stock assessment surveys: Surveys to assess the abundance and distribution of marine mammal stocks are necessary to provide the basis against which changes in the status of a stock can be measured. Stock assessments require a basic understanding of stock structure, as stocks comprise the basic units of conservation within a species. The inadequacy of information on stock structure for many Gulf species, particularly coastal, bay, and estuarine bottlenose dolphins, is a significant impediment to current stock assessment efforts. Stock assessment methods differ depending on the stocks being assessed, but typically involve either a combination of vessel and aerial surveys or mark-recapture methods using tagging, photo-identification, passive acoustic monitoring, and/or genetic sampling. Stock assessment surveys should be conducted at least every other year for each stock, and should cover all portions of a stock's range and all seasons of the year.
- Enhancement of the Gulf marine mammal stranding program: Marine mammal stranding programs can provide information on the presence of marine mammals, movement patterns, reproduction, health status, toxin exposure, and causes of mortality. Stranding programs in the Gulf played a key role during the oil spill by monitoring coastal areas for stranded animals, collecting tissues for various types of analyses, and caring for live-stranded animals and moving them to facilities that could provide the necessary care. However, those programs operate primarily on a volunteer basis, often with limited or inconsistent institutional support. Existing support is not sufficient to sustain those programs and the kind of effort needed to assess the long-term effects of the spill. Particular focus should be on building capacity for stranding programs throughout the northern Gulf, including investments in training, equipment, supplies, data management, sample analyses, and rehabilitation facilities. Support should be provided to bring in experienced researchers and veterinarians from other regions to train local responders and to ensure that information collected from stranded animals is integrated with other assessment studies and contributes to a better understanding of the long-term effects of the oil spill and other human activities on Gulf marine mammals.²
- Live capture/release health assessments: The health of individual animals can be an important indicator of the adverse effects of risk factors, including exposure to oil, dispersant, and response activities. Coupled with information collected from dead stranded animals, in-depth assessments of live stranded or captured animals have provided important information on marine mammal health, disease, and causes of mortality. Live capture/release is a proactive means to evaluate risk factors and assess health conditions within populations, and it has been used in studies of coastal and estuarine bottlenose dolphin populations in the Gulf and elsewhere. Health assessments typically require collaboration among researchers

² The Marine Mammal Commission, in cooperation with Ocean Conservancy and marine mammal stranding network members in each of the Gulf coastal states, developed and submitted a project proposal to the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council (through the NOAA portal at <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration/give-us-your-ideas/>) for consideration in the Trustee's comprehensive restoration plan. The title of the proposal was "Expand and Improve Gulf of Mexico Marine Mammal Stranding Response and Science Capacity."

from federal agencies, private institutions, aquaria, and not-for-profit organizations to assemble the necessary expertise and logistic support.

- Environmental studies (including prey studies): Large-scale changes in community structure or prey abundance caused by the oil spill and response efforts can affect the carrying capacity and distribution of marine mammal populations. Quantifying those effects will require an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach. Tracking the movement and fate of oil and dispersant throughout the water column relative to the distribution of marine mammals and their prey species in the ecosystem seems essential for characterizing the ecological effects of these contaminants.

Restoration priority 2: Addressing other human-caused risk factors

The oil spill's effects on marine mammals were in addition to those from other ongoing human activities in the Gulf. Restoring marine mammal stocks to a healthy state will thus not only require addressing the direct effects of the oil spill, but also other risk factors from human activities in the Gulf. As noted previously, this broad approach to ecosystem restoration is consistent with the priority criteria identified in the RESTORE Act.

Several types of human activities may impede, directly or indirectly, the restoration of Gulf marine mammals. Seismic surveys used to locate oil and gas reserves or monitor their depletion generate high energy, low frequency sounds that can cause permanent or temporary hearing damage in marine mammals (Gordon et al. 2004), cause them to change their behavior, and cause them to change their habitat use patterns. Commercial fishing gear used in the Gulf can entangle and drown marine mammals (Garrison 2007). Dolphins frequently ingest and become entangled in recreational fishing gear (monofilament fishing lines and hooks), which generally leads to death (Powell and Wells 2011, Wells et al. 1998, Wells et al. 2008). Commercial and recreational vessel traffic and commercial tour operations directed at marine wildlife can disturb or displace marine mammals (Bejder et al. 2006, Nowacek et al. 2001). Commercial shipping also introduces a large amount of low-frequency sound energy into the Gulf (Snyder 2007). Military activities also can generate significant sound that can be injurious to certain marine mammals (Jepson et al. 2003). Agricultural runoff can cause excess nutrients to enter the Gulf, resulting in blooms of algae that die and degrade, depleting the oxygen in the water and creating hypoxic zones that cannot sustain marine life (Craig et al. 2001). Other blooms result in the production of toxic substances that effectively poison invertebrates, fish, and marine mammals (Magaña et al. 2003, Twiner et al. 2011). Table 2 provides a more complete list of human-caused and natural risk factors to marine mammals in the Gulf. Addressing the risk factors will help build resilience in Gulf marine mammal populations and accelerate recovery from the harmful effects of the spill.

The Marine Mammal Commission recommends that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, in coordination with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and relevant federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, include in its restoration plan specific projects to characterize and address high-priority risk factors that may be impeding the recovery and restoration of Gulf marine mammals, particularly those that are determined by the Trustees to have been injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Recommended projects include—

- Establishing or expanding observer coverage of commercial fisheries known to interact with marine mammals: The establishment or expansion of observer coverage is necessary to document (and quantify) incidental takes of marine mammals in commercial fisheries identified by the National Marine Fisheries Service as having frequent or occasional interactions with marine mammals, including (but not limited to) the large pelagics longline fishery, the inshore gillnet fishery, the shrimp trawl fishery, the menhaden purse seine fishery, and the stone crab pot/trap fishery (76 Fed. Reg. 73912);
- Minimizing incidental takes of marine mammals in commercial and recreational fisheries: Conduct additional research and testing of alternative fishing gear, implement time-area restrictions on fishing activities, increase outreach efforts, and implement other measures as appropriate to reduce incidental takes of marine mammals in the above-mentioned commercial fisheries as well as recreational hook-and-line fisheries;
- Minimizing the indirect effects of fishing on important prey species of marine mammals: Investigate and implement measures to minimize the indirect effects of fishing activities (both directed catch and bycatch) on important prey species of marine mammals;
- Monitoring ambient sound levels and assessing the effects of human-caused sound on marine mammals in the Gulf: Establish a monitoring program to monitor sound levels and assess sound-related effects on marine mammals from a variety of human activities, including commercial shipping, oil and gas development (including seismic surveys, drilling, and the explosive removal of oil and gas platforms), and military operations and training;
- Minimizing effects of human-caused sound on marine mammals and their prey: Develop measures to minimize the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of human-caused sound on marine mammals and their prey; and
- Reducing other human-caused environmental impacts that may be detrimental to marine mammals and their prey: Implement measures to reduce the occurrence and extent of other environmental impacts that may impede the restoration of marine mammals, such as hypoxic and anoxic events and harmful algal blooms.

The Marine Mammal Commission further recommends that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, in coordination with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and relevant federal, state, and local natural resource agencies, ensure that restoration projects include long-term monitoring to determine whether the projects are achieving their goals and injured resources are indeed being restored. Long-term monitoring will provide critical information on the effectiveness of various projects and will help focus restoration efforts on activities and approaches that are having the greatest benefit. Monitoring also will help identify any projects that are having adverse impacts on targeted or other natural resources, and assist in minimizing those adverse impacts. Information on the effectiveness of restoration efforts is critical not just for ensuring the best use of restoration investments in the Gulf, but also to help guide future restoration planning efforts.

The Commission hopes the Commission's report and the recommendations provided herein will be helpful to the Council as it continues to work with the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees and other entities on developing a restoration plan for Gulf natural resources.

Sincerely,



Rebecca J. Lent, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Donna Wieting, Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Protected Resources
Dr. Roy Crabtree, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast
Regional Office
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, Director, National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science
Center
David Westerholm, Director, NOAA, Office of Response and Restoration

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Table 1. Information for marine mammal species in the Gulf of Mexico. The population information is from Waring et al. (2013) and the information regarding prey species is from Jefferson et al. (2008). For all stocks, the information is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. CV=coefficient of variation, N_{best} =best estimate of abundance, N_{min} =minimum estimate of abundance, PBR=potential biological removal level, E=endangered under the Endangered Species Act, S=strategic under the Marine Mammal Protection Act). *As identified in Waring et al. (2013), although many sources of mortality and serious injury also may be applicable to other species.

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>) (E/S)	N_{best} = 763 (CV = 0.38) N_{min} = 560 PBR = 1.1	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Gulf stock distinct from other Atlantic Ocean stocks	Highly social, with adult females and juveniles of both sexes occurring together in mixed groups	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily deepwater cephalopods and fishes	Unknown	Oil and gas operations (seismic surveys), pollution
Bryde's whale (<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>) (S)	N_{best} = 33 (CV = 1.04) N_{min} = 16 PBR = 0.1	Primarily along the shelf break (200 m) in the northeastern Gulf	Unknown	Generally found as singles or pairs, no calves observed	Unknown	Unknown	Small schooling fishes	Unknown	Ship strikes, other sources unknown
Cuvier's beaked whale (<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>)	N_{best} = 74 (CV = 1.04) N_{min} = 36 PBR = 0.4	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (sonar) in Atlantic Ocean
Blainville's beaked whale (<i>Mesoplodon densirostris</i>)	N_{best} = 149 (CV = 0.91) N_{min} = 77 (Estimate for all <i>Mesoplodon</i> sp.) PBR = 0.8	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (SONAR) in Atlantic Ocean

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Gervais' beaked whale (<i>Mesoplodon europaens</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 149$ (CV = 0.91) $N_{\text{min}} = 77$ (Estimate for all <i>Mesoplodon</i> sp.) PBR = 0.8	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (sonar) in Atlantic Ocean and fisheries interactions
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) continental shelf stock	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Waters from 20 to 200 m throughout the Gulf	Uncertain but complex, stock is a mixture of genetically distinct coastal and offshore ecotypes	Highly social	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown	Fisheries interactions, gunshot wounds, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) eastern coastal stock	$N_{\text{best}} = 7,702$ (CV = 0.19) $N_{\text{min}} = 6,551$ PBR = 66	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep east of 84° W	Uncertain but complex, coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Limited health assessment data from Sarasota Bay	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, harmful algal blooms, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) northern coastal stock	$N_{best} = 2,473$ (CV = 0.25) $N_{min} = 2,004$ PBR = 20	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep from the Mississippi River Delta east to 84°W	Coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Limited health assessment data from St. Joseph Bay	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tide, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) western coastal stock (S)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep west of the Mississippi River Delta	Uncertain but complex, coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tide, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) oceanic stock	$N_{best} = 5,806$ (CV = 0.39) $N_{min} = 4,230$ PBR = 42	Upper continental slope (200- 1000 m) throughout the Gulf	Uncertain but assumed complex	Offshore morphotype, groups as big as 200 but typically around 20	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) St. Joseph Bay stock (S)	$N_{best} = 146$ (CV = 0.18) $N_{min} = 126$ PBR=1.3	St. Joseph Bay	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Limited health assessment data	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) Choctawhatchee Bay (S)	$N_{best} = 179$ (CV = 0.04) $N_{min} = 173$ PBR = 1.7	Choctawhatchee Bay	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) Barataria Bay stock (S)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Barataria Bay	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) 29 remaining bay, sound, and estuarine stocks (S)	N_{min} unknown for all but 4 stocks, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined for all but 4 stocks	Bays, sounds, and estuaries throughout the Gulf	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Atlantic spotted dolphin (<i>Stenella frontalis</i>)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Continental shelf throughout the Gulf, generally in waters 20-200 m	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes, supported by genetics data	Typical group sizes are less than 50, associate with smaller groups of bottlenose dolphins in some cases	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids, and benthic invertebrates	Unknown	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tides
Pantropical spotted dolphin (<i>Stenella attenuata</i>)	$N_{best} = 50,880$ (CV = 0.27) $N_{min} = 40,699$ PBR = 407	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typical groups are less than 100 dolphin but as many as 650 dolphins in a group have been observed	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes, squids and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown
Striped dolphin (<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>)	$N_{best} = 1,849$ (CV = 0.77) $N_{min} = 1,041$ PBR = 10	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typical groups consist of about 50 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Vessel strike
Spinner dolphin (<i>Stenella longirostris</i>)	$N_{best} = 11,441$ (CV = 0.83) $N_{min} = 6,221$ PBR = 62	Continental slope (200- 2000 m), primarily in the eastern Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in very large cohesive groups of up to 800 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Fisheries interactions
Rough-toothed dolphin (<i>Steno bredanensis</i>)	$N_{best} = 624$ (CV = 0.99) $N_{min} = 311$ PBR = 3	Oceanic throughout the Gulf and, less commonly, the continental shelf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typically in groups of less than 25 dolphins, associated with Sargassum in many cases	Unknown	Limited info from rehab animals	Fish, including larger species (mahi mahi) and squids	Unknown	Unknown

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Clymene dolphin (<i>Stenella clymene</i>)	N_{best} = 129 (CV = 1.00) N_{min} = 64 PBR = 0.6	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in large groups of up to 300 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Little known, small epi – and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Unknown
Fraser's dolphin (<i>Lagenodelphis hosei</i>)	Unknown (no recent sightings) PBR undetermined	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Extremely rare, associated with melon-headed whales in some cases	Unknown	Unknown	Small midwater fishes, squids, and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown
Killer whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>)	N_{best} = 28 (CV = 1.02) N_{min} = 14 PBR = 0.1	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Groups typically of 6-10 whales. Photo- identification indicates wide ranging but with some habitat fidelity	Unknown	Unknown	Gulf prey largely unknown, one instance of predation on panropical spotted dolphins	Unknown	Unknown
False killer whale (<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in cohesive groups that average 25 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Fish including larger species (dolphin fish) and squids	Unknown	Fisheries interaction
Pygmy killer whale (<i>Feresa attenuata</i>)	N_{best} = 152 (CV = 1.02) N_{min} = 75 PBR = 0.8	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Little known, occur in groups of less than 20 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Fishes and squids	Unknown	Unknown

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Dwarf sperm whale (<i>Kogia sima</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 186$ (CV = 1.04) $N_{\text{min}} = 90$ (Estimate for all <i>Kogia</i> spp.) PBR = 0.9	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily deepwater cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions, ingestion of marine debris
Pygmy sperm whale (<i>Kogia breviceps</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 186$ (CV = 1.04) $N_{\text{min}} = 90$ (Estimate for all <i>Kogia</i> spp.) PBR = 0.9	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Limited data from captive animals	Primarily deepwater cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions, ingestion of marine debris
Melon-headed whale (<i>Peponocephala electra</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 2,235$ (CV = 0.75) $N_{\text{min}} = 1,274$ PBR = 13	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in large cohesive groups of up to 275 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Small fishes and squids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Unknown
Risso's dolphin (<i>Grampus griseus</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 2,442$ (CV = 0.57) $N_{\text{min}} = 1,563$ PBR = 16	Shelf break area and oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Multiple groups of 5-10 dolphins typically occur over large areas	Unknown	Limited data from captive animals	Crustaceans, squids, and other cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions, red tide
Pilot whale, short finned (<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>)	$N_{\text{best}} = 2,415$ (CV = 0.66) $N_{\text{min}} = 1,456$ PBR = 15	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Highly social, in groups of 20 or more	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids but also fishes	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
West Indian Manatee (<i>Trichechus manatus</i>) (E/S)	N_{best} (based on single synoptic survey of warm-water refuges in Jan 2009) = 3,802 PBR = 12	In freshwater, brackish and marine environments along the Gulf, from Florida to Louisiana	Florida manatees considered a single stock, but separated into management units	Disperse in the warmer months to feed, breed and socialize, aggregate in warm-water refuges during colder times of year, calves typically stay with their mothers for 2 years	$R_{\text{max}} =$ 6.2%	Limited studies provide data on contamin- ants, hormone levels, and nutrition	Herbivores, feed on an extensive range of aquatic vegetation	Minimum estimates from stranding data	Vessel strikes, cold water exposure, red tides, drowning in water control structures, fisheries interactions, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Table 2. Human-caused and natural risk factors in the Gulf and potential consequences for marine mammals.

Activities	Specific risk factor	Potential consequences
Oil and gas development	Oil spills and leaks	Direct exposure: skin irritation/inflammation, necrosis, respiratory effects, organ damage Indirect: shifts in or loss of prey, habitat degradation
	Noise (seismic surveys, construction and decommissioning of platforms, and general operations)	Physical trauma to internal organs, permanent or temporary hearing loss, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Vessel operations	Vessel strikes (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
	Production waste (drill fluids and cuttings, produced water, deck drainage, municipal wastes, and debris)	Organ damage and impaired immune system function from heavy metal contamination, habitat degradation (decreased water quality), loss of prey
Commercial and recreational fishing	Fishing with nets and lines	Entanglement in and ingestion of fishing gear
	Fishing for prey species	Reduced availability of prey species, habitat alteration
	Vessel operations	Vessel strikes (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
Shipping and vessel traffic	Noise, vessel operations	Vessel strikes (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
Military activities	Vessel operations	Vessel strikes (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
	Noise (SONAR training and testing, explosives)	Acoustic and non-acoustic physical trauma, avoidance of preferred habitat, mortality in severe cases
Agriculture	Runoff of land-based pollutants (resulting in harmful algal blooms, anoxic or hypoxic “dead” zones)	Direct: injury/mortality Indirect: decreased water quality, shifts in or loss of prey species
Coastal development	Noise from pile driving and other activities associated with marina and bridge/causeway construction	Acoustic trauma (at short range), acoustic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Dredging	Loss of sea grass beds, habitat degradation
	Loss of coastal wetlands and other coastal habitats	Loss of prey habitat, habitat degradation
Renewable energy	Pile driving for anchoring wind and wave turbines	Acoustic trauma (at short range), acoustic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Turbine operations	Physical trauma, electromagnetic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
Greenhouse gas emissions	Ocean acidification	Shifts in or reduction/loss of prey species
	Warming seas	Habitat degradation, shifts in or reduction/loss of prey
	Increased storm activity and increased severity of storms	Shifts in prey, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Sea level rise, leading to coastal habitat loss	Loss of prey habitat, habitat degradation
Natural events	Seepage of oil	Direct: organ damage Indirect: habitat degradation
	Harmful algal blooms (e.g., red tide)	Injury/mortality, shifts in prey
	Predation	Injury/mortality
	Large-scale ecosystem fluctuations	Shifts in or loss of prey
	Hurricanes	Shifts in prey, avoidance of preferred habitat, displacement of animals, habitat degradation or destruction
	Water temperature anomalies	Shifts in prey, avoidance of affected habitats, cold stress

**Assessing the Long-term Effects
of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
on Marine Mammals in the Gulf of Mexico:
A Statement of Research Needs**



Prepared by the Marine Mammal Commission
with input from the National Marine Fisheries Service,
National Ocean Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement



**Marine Mammal Commission
4340 East-West Highway, Room 700
Bethesda, Maryland 20814**

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Executive summary

The April 2010 explosion of BP's Deepwater Horizon offshore drilling unit in the Gulf of Mexico resulted in an oil spill with significant ecological, social, and economic consequences. Achieving a full understanding of the spill's effects likely will require years of assessment because some effects may continue or worsen, whereas others may not yet have been realized or become apparent. In addition, spill effects may be confounded by the effects of other risk factors such as climate change, fisheries, commercial shipping, military activities, and coastal development.

Oil spills can affect marine mammals through direct contact, inhalation, or ingestion of oil; injury and disturbance from response activities; and long-term ecological changes. Questions about the potential effects of oil spills and the response activities on marine mammals—partially informed by past studies—guided much of the monitoring effort immediately after the Deepwater Horizon spill. Similar questions provide a framework for assessing the spill's long-term effects.

The Marine Mammal Commission, with input from related federal agencies, drafted this statement of research needs to guide assessment of the spill's long-term effects, to guide mitigation and restoration efforts for Gulf marine mammal populations, and to help track the changes in the Gulf ecosystem, including recovery and restoration.¹ It also should help guide assessment of effects on marine mammals from future spills in the Gulf and elsewhere.

The statement outlines legal mandates for assessing the spill's overall effects, potential effects on marine mammals, assessment efforts to date, priorities for future efforts, and the general need to improve assessment strategies on Gulf of Mexico marine mammals. All such efforts should be a high priority during or immediately after a spill. However, the likelihood of detecting certain impacts decreases with time and the utility and value of certain types of research declines accordingly. At this time, the Commission gives higher priority to assessment of long-term effects, including (1) assessing the health status of stranded or live-captured animals; (2) assessing oil spill-related changes in the ecosystem leading to a potential reduction in prey availability; (3) evaluating other ecosystem changes that are harmful to marine mammals and that may have been exacerbated by the spill (e.g., harmful algal blooms, hypoxia or anoxia); and (4) determining the extent to which exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to a reduction in status involving individual fitness, population vital rates (survival and reproduction), and population abundance and trends.

Implementation of the needed research will require resources beyond those currently available, as well as improved infrastructure (e.g., research vessels, aircraft, and laboratories), more trained personnel, better sampling methods, and refined analytical tools to detect and assess the effects of exposure to oil. Coordination of research activities is critical to focus on the most important topics, achieve collaboration to the greatest degree possible, develop a weight-of-evidence approach for detecting effects, and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Collaboration and partnerships among the involved federal, state, and local agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and organizations, and the public also should help maximize the benefits of limited resources and minimize the effects of research activities on marine mammals.

¹ The views contained in this statement are those of the Marine Mammal Commission and do not necessarily reflect the views of the natural resource Trustees designated under the Oil Pollution Act to assess natural resource injuries associated with the Deepwater Horizon spill and to develop and implement a plan to restore injured resources under their trusteeship.

Perhaps as much as anything, the spill and the national response to it provided a sharp reminder of how much remains to be learned about status of marine mammals in the Gulf. Such information is necessary to support management strategies that are science-based and sufficient to maintain the health and stability of the Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystem.

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Front cover: Bottlenose dolphins swimming in oil during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill incident.
(Photograph: A. Brandon/Associated Press)

Introduction

In April 2010 BP's offshore drilling unit Deepwater Horizon exploded, burned, and sank in the Gulf of Mexico, 52 miles southeast of Venice, Louisiana (Figure 1). Eleven of the 126 workers on the rig were killed and, over the following 86 days, an estimated 4.9 million barrels (206 million gallons) of oil were spilled into the Gulf (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2010). This was the largest accidental oil spill ever reported. The response also was massive, involving 13 federal agencies; multiple agencies from the five Gulf states; numerous local agencies; non-governmental organizations; oil companies and contractors; academia; and thousands of local residents, volunteers, and expert consultants.

In addition to the loss of life, the spill's effects have been significant ecologically, socially, and economically. Furthermore, some effects may continue or worsen and others may not yet have been realized or become apparent. To make matters more complex, any assessments of spill effects will be confounded by the effects of other risk factors such as climate change, fisheries, commercial shipping, military activities, and coastal development. For all these reasons, efforts to understand the spill's effects will require careful assessment of long-term effects.

Marine mammals may be affected by (1) the oil, its metabolites, or dispersants through direct contact, ingestion or inhalation; (2) injury and disturbance from response activities; and (3) short and long-term ecological changes resulting from the spill and response efforts. Relative to many forms of marine life, some marine mammals are more readily observed and studied. They also are long-lived and feed at high trophic levels, and likely will integrate ecosystem effects of the spill and response activities over many years. For those reasons, they may serve as useful indicators of at least some aspects of the health of the Gulf ecosystem following the spill.

Purpose

The Marine Mammal Commission has drafted this statement of research needs with input from the respective staffs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service and National Ocean Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (formerly the Minerals Management Service)—the primary agencies responsible for the conservation of marine mammals and for regulation of offshore oil and gas activities. The recommendations and conclusions of this statement, however, are solely those of the Commission.



Figure 1. Fire boat response crews battle the blazing remnants of the offshore oil rig Deepwater Horizon April 21, 2010. Multiple Coast Guard helicopters, planes and cutters responded to rescue the Deepwater Horizon's 126 person crew. (Photograph: U.S. Coast Guard)

The Commission developed this statement to help guide (1) assessment of the long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and associated risk factors on marine mammals, (2) mitigation and restoration efforts for Gulf marine mammal populations, and (3) monitoring of changes in the Gulf ecosystem, including recovery and restoration.² The statement also should help guide assessment of effects on marine mammals from future spills in the Gulf and elsewhere.

Statutory authorities pertaining to assessment of spill effects on marine mammals

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 provides for federal, state, and tribal Natural Resource Trustees³ to conduct a Natural Resource Damage Assessment following an oil spill. The assessment consists of collecting and analyzing information to evaluate the nature and extent of injuries resulting from an incident. Trustees then determine the restoration⁴ actions needed to bring injured natural resources and services back to baseline conditions and make the environment and public whole for interim losses (15 C.F.R. § 990.30). Natural resources include wildlife, such as marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, fishes, and invertebrates (e.g., corals, shrimps), and their habitat. Services include the functions of and benefits derived from those natural resources, such as those that support tourism, fishing, boating, marine products, and transportation. The Responsible Parties (i.e., those responsible for damages resulting from the incident) pay the costs of natural resource damages (including the costs of assessing such damage) and compensate the public for lost services derived from those natural resources. To assess damages and plan restoration, the Trustees must compare the best available baseline⁵ information on conditions before the spill against information collected during and after the spill.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 seeks to prevent marine mammal species and population stocks⁶ from diminishing, as a result of human activities, beyond the point at which they cease to be significant functioning elements of their marine ecosystems. For any particular species or stock, the Act defines that point as the lower limit of its optimum sustainable population, which is defined as the population's maximum net productivity level. Determining whether a species or stock has fallen below that level requires information on population stock structure and abundance. The Act includes a general moratorium on the take⁷ of marine mammals, subject to certain exceptions. Title IV of the Act—the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program—is aimed specifically at assessing the health status and trends of marine mammal populations.

² The damage assessment and restoration process under the Oil Pollution Act operates independently of the Marine Mammal Commission.

³ Natural Resource Trustees are those officials of federal and state governments, Indian tribes, and foreign governments designated under authority of 33 U.S.C. 2706(b) of the Oil Pollution Act for the Deepwater Horizon incident. They include representatives of the five affected coastal states (Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas), the Department of Commerce (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), the Department of the Interior (Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs), and the Department of Defense.

⁴ Any action (or alternative), or combination of actions (or alternatives), to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured natural resources and services (15 C.F.R. § 990.30).

⁵ The term “baseline” is used here to mean the conditions of natural resources and services that would have existed had the incident not occurred (15 C.F.R. § 990.30). Therefore, baseline conditions do not necessarily imply that those conditions were pristine.

⁶ The Marine Mammal Protection Act defines a population stock to mean “a group of marine mammals of the same species or smaller taxa in a common spatial arrangement, that interbreed when mature.”

⁷ The Marine Mammal Protection Act defines a “take” to mean “to harass, hunt, capture, or kill, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, or kill any marine mammal.”

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 provides for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats critical to their survival. All federal agencies are required to use their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of this act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species and threatened species. The Act also requires federal agencies, in consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service (depending on the species involved), to ensure that actions they authorize, fund, or carry out are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat of such species. With certain exceptions, the Act prohibits any action that takes⁸ listed species of endangered or threatened fish or wildlife, including marine mammals.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 establishes a national policy and goals for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of the environment and a process that federal agencies must use to achieve those goals. The Act requires that federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their proposed actions before acting. It also emphasizes public involvement in government actions affecting the environment by requiring assessment and disclosure of the risks of proposed major federal actions.

Marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico

Twenty-one cetacean species and one sirenian reside in or regularly visit the Gulf of Mexico (Waring et al. 2010; Table 1). They comprise 58 stocks, 37 of which are bottlenose dolphin stocks. The National Marine Fisheries Service has management responsibility for the cetacean species and the Fish and Wildlife Service has responsibility for the Florida subspecies of the West Indian manatee.

Table 1. Marine mammal stocks in the Gulf of Mexico.

Sperm whale*	Bryde's whale	Killer whale
Cuvier's beaked whale	Atlantic spotted dolphin	False killer whale
Blainville's beaked whale	Pantropical spotted dolphin	Pygmy killer whale
Gervais' beaked whale	Striped dolphin	Dwarf sperm whale
Bottlenose dolphin (oceanic)	Spinner dolphin	Pygmy sperm whale
Bottlenose dolphin (continental shelf)	Rough-toothed dolphin	Melon-headed whale
Bottlenose dolphin (coastal – 3 stocks)	Clymene dolphin	Risso's dolphin
Bottlenose dolphin (bay, sound, estuary –32 putative stocks)	Fraser's dolphin	Pilot whale, short-finned
West Indian manatee*		

*Listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act

Existing information on the status of each stock (Appendix A) falls well short of that required under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and needed to assess their pre-spill status and vulnerability to various risk factors. The necessary information includes stock structure, distribution,

⁸ The Endangered Species Act defines “take” to mean “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.”

abundance, movement patterns, age structure, reproductive rates, survival rates, and health (nutritional status, immune function, and exposure to contaminants, biotoxins, and infections).

The lack of research infrastructure (especially logistic support) is a significant impediment to surveys and other assessment studies. Most studies conducted to date have focused on specific topics (e.g., response of sperm whales to seismic surveys). Few studies have been directed toward understanding the cumulative effects of multiple risk factors, despite the fact that the Gulf is relatively industrialized and multiple marine mammal unusual mortality events have occurred there over the past 20 years. Appendix B lists anthropogenic and natural risk factors present in the Gulf and their potential effects on marine mammals.

Potential effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on marine mammals

All marine mammal stocks in the Gulf may have been, or may still be, affected by the Deepwater Horizon spill. All effects are initially manifested at the individual level, and must lower the individual's probability of survival or reproduction to affect the population. The effects may be direct (e.g., contact with oil or dispersants, interactions with response activities) or indirect (e.g., degradation of habitat, reduced availability of prey).

The null hypothesis (H_0) is that the spill did not have, is not having, and will continue to not have significant effects on marine mammals. The major alternative hypotheses are as follows:

H_1 - Spilled oil causes injury, lesions, disease, or death through—

H_{1a} - external contact

H_{1b} - internal contact

H_2 - Exposure to oil- or dispersant-related contaminants causes physiological dysfunction of—

H_{2a} - the immune system

H_{2b} - the reproductive system

H_{2c} - other vital systems

H_3 - Exposure to response activities causes injury via—

H_{3a} - vessel strikes

H_{3b} - interactions with booms or other response equipment

H_{3c} - noise introduced into the marine environment

H_4 - Exposure to oil and/or response activities disturbs or disrupts significant biological behaviors, including—

H_{4a} - foraging

H_{4b} - reproduction

H_{4c} - resting

H_5 - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to displacement from primary habitat

H_6 - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to disruption of social organization

H_7 - Oil and/or response-related changes in the ecosystem reduce prey or seagrass availability through—

H_{7a} - prey displacement
H_{7b} - reduction in biomass of prey or seagrass

H₈ - Oil and/or response activities lead to other ecosystem changes harmful to marine mammals via—
H_{8a} - hypoxia or anoxia
H_{8b} - harmful algal blooms

H₉ - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to reduction in status involving—
H_{9a} - individual fitness
H_{9b} - population vital rates (reproduction and survival rates)
H_{9c} - population abundance and trends

Under each of these alternative hypotheses, the full nature and extent of any effects will depend on a variety of factors, such as the—

- chemical constituents of the oil and dispersants, which change over time as oil and dispersants degrade and are metabolized
- dose of exposure (amount and duration)
- route of exposure (e.g., inhalation, ingestion, external contact, transplacental)
- type and trophic level of prey or seagrass consumed and their contaminant levels
- marine mammal species involved, and
- physical characteristics of individually affected animals (e.g., age, sex, reproductive and health status).

Current understanding of the potential effects of oil on marine mammals is based primarily on information from (1) observed effects of other oil spills on marine mammals (see reviews by Geraci and St. Aubin 1990 and Loughlin et al. 1994; also see Smultea and Würsig 1995, Bickham et al. 1998, Bodkin et al. 2002, Boehm et al. 2007, and Matkin et al. 2008), (2) a small number of controlled exposure studies using captive marine mammals (Geraci et al. 1983, Smith et al. 1983, St. Aubin et al. 1985), (3) simulations and *in vitro* studies (Braithwaite et al. 1983, Godard et al. 2004), and (4) observed effects of accidental and controlled oil exposure on non-marine mammal species (Bickham et al. 1998, Mazet et al. 2001, Golet et al. 2002, Mohr et al. 2007, Esler et al. 2010). The results to date are informative, but do not provide a sufficient basis for predicting, with full confidence, the severity of either short- or long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon spill on marine mammals. However, they provide ample evidence that exposure to oil can harm marine mammals. For example, inhalation of specific volatile organics from some types of oil can cause respiratory irritation, inflammation, or emphysema. Similarly, ingestion of oil may cause gastrointestinal inflammation, ulcers, bleeding, diarrhea, or maldigestion. Certain inhaled and ingested chemicals in oil also may damage organs such as the liver, kidney, adrenal glands, spleen or brain; cause anemia, cancer, congenital defects, and immune system suppression; or lead to reproductive failure. Chemical contact may cause skin and eye irritation; inflammation; burns to mucous membranes, mouth and nares; or increased susceptibility to infection. Oil mixtures can physically foul the baleen of mysticete whales, which is used for filtering food.⁹

⁹ The Bryde's whale is the only mysticete whale occurring regularly in the Gulf. North Atlantic right whales are sighted rarely in the Gulf and fin whales have stranded there occasionally, but are not regular inhabitants.

Response activities to contain and remove spilled oil also may affect marine mammals in the Gulf. Increased vessel and air traffic may disrupt foraging, habitat use, daily or migratory movements, and behavior (e.g., breathing and resting patterns) (Nowacek et al. 2001, Constantine et al. 2004, Williams et al. 2006, Stensland and Berggren 2007, Lusseau et al. 2009). Increased vessel traffic also increases the risk of vessel strikes (Laist et al. 2001, Fish and Wildlife Service 2001, Bechdel et al. 2009), although none were reported during the prolonged spill and response phase. Noise from seismic surveys (such as those used to detect potential leaks around the wellhead) or other response-related activities may cause disturbance or displacement, hearing loss (temporary or possibly permanent), or other physical injury to marine mammals (McCauley et al. 2000, National Research Council 2003).

Responders used large quantities of dispersants at the surface (e.g., Corexit 9527, Corexit 9500A) and at the wellhead (Corexit 9500A) (Joint Information Center 2011;

Kujawinski et al. 2011). Being listed on the National Contingency Plan product schedule maintained by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Regional Response Team had pre-approved the use of Corexit prior to the spill. The

Environmental Protection Agency was consulted and concurred on decisions related to the volume of

dispersants used in response to the spill, and conducted additional toxicity testing during the spill. These tests are helping to fill gaps in existing knowledge, as the long-term effects of Corexit and other dispersants on marine mammals are largely unknown (National Research Council 2005).

Responders also used booms (Figure 2) and skimmers to contain and collect surface oil and *in-situ* burning to remove it, and these activities also may affect marine mammals both through direct interaction and displacement from habitat. Burning reduces the overall amount of oil in the water, but also leaves behind a residue of uncertain composition and toxicity (Benner et al. 1990, Wang et al. 1999) and puts additional chemicals into the air, posing inhalation risks.



Figure 2. Bottlenose dolphin surfacing near oil spill boom, Grand Isle, Louisiana. (Photograph: S. Rosedahl/Flickr)

Oil spills also may affect marine mammals indirectly by altering the marine ecosystem and the key features of their habitat (Paine et al. 1996, Golet et al. 2002, Peterson et al. 1996, National Research Council 2002). Such effects could include reductions in prey or seagrass biomass, shifts in prey or seagrass distribution, or contamination of prey or seagrass. Oil from the *Exxon Valdez* spill accumulated in sediments, continues to contaminate nearshore environments, and appears to have impeded recovery of sea otters (Bodkin et al. 2002). How long that effect will persist is uncertain (Page et al. 2002, Rice et al. 2003, Neff et al. 2006, Boehm 2007). In the Gulf, spilled oil that has accumulated in coastal and offshore bottom sediments could be re-released during hurricanes and storms, resulting in intermittent, recurring effects on the marine ecosystem (Machlis and McNutt 2010). Further research is needed to characterize physical and biogeochemical degradation rates in the Gulf of Mexico to evaluate the likelihood of such long-lasting impacts.

Assessment activities to date

Responding to stranded marine wildlife exposed to oil was a high priority during the days immediately following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Under the Unified Command¹⁰, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network to coordinate the Gulf marine mammal stranding network, revise the marine mammal response guidelines developed by Johnson and Ziccardi (2006) to address Gulf species, train stranding responders regarding hazardous materials and chain-of-custody protocols, and distribute sampling supplies. Wildlife Operations under the Unified Command also initiated aerial surveys of the affected area to search for injured or dead marine mammals and other wildlife. The Unified Command for the oil spill response established a wildlife hotline for reporting oiled, injured, distressed, or dead marine mammals, sea turtles, and birds. Reports from the hotline and information from response vessels and aerial survey teams helped guide emergency response efforts. At the same time, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and other natural resource Trustees began assessing and quantifying exposure and injury to marine mammals and other wildlife as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process.

Response efforts were determined by the nature and tractability of the concern or question to be addressed and availability of infrastructure and other assessment resources. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service expanded aerial surveys to track movements of selected marine mammal stocks, document their direct exposure to oil (Figure 3), and describe their physical and/or behavioral reactions if and when they came into contact with oil. They enlisted academic researchers to deploy passive acoustic monitoring buoys near the Deepwater Horizon wellhead to detect the presence of vocalizing marine mammals. They responded to stranding reports, collecting and arranging for the analysis of blood, tissue, and other samples from stranded animals. They also placed observers on a limited number of response vessels to assess the immediate and obvious effects of skimming and burning operations. Although the initial data collection efforts are not a substitute for pre-spill baseline data for most Gulf marine mammal stocks, they were instrumental in determining movement patterns and behavioral responses of marine mammals immediately before, during, and after oil and chemical dispersants reached key coastal and deepwater habitats. For that reason, the data collected will provide a critical reference for analyses of spill and response effects.



Figure 3. Bottlenose dolphin observed with oil on dorsal fin, Mississippi Sound, Mississippi. (Photograph: B. Crone/National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration)

In May 2010 the federal and state Trustees for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment established a Technical Working Group for Marine Mammals and

¹⁰ The organizational structure for wildlife response during an oil spill is outlined in Johnson and Ziccardi (2006).

Sea Turtles.¹¹ The working group is composed of scientists and other representatives from federal and state Trustee agencies and contracted consultants and academics, and works in cooperation with the Responsible Parties. Since its establishment, the group has developed and evaluated work plans for identifying and quantifying injuries to marine mammals and sea turtles. Initial plans focused on short-term assessment, including (1) documenting exposure of marine mammals and sea turtles in oiled areas and exposure of particular species and habitats, (2) assessing the effects of response activities, (3) gathering and analyzing baseline information as possible, and (4) filling other data gaps. Natural Resource Damage Assessment projects already conducted or currently being conducted by the Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Technical Working Group include—

- photo-identification and biopsy sampling of bottlenose dolphin populations at selected estuarine sites (Barataria Bay, Louisiana; Chandeleur Sound, Louisiana; Mississippi Sound, Mississippi; and St. Joseph Bay, Florida)
- large-vessel pelagic research cruises to—
 - visually assess and photo-document marine mammal contact with oil and occurrence of marine mammals in oiled areas
 - deploy satellite tags and collect biopsy samples from Bryde's whales, sperm whales, and other marine mammals in offshore waters
 - collect habitat information including surface hydrographic data, temperature profiles, salinity, dissolved oxygen, and acoustic echo-sounder backscatter information to characterize water column productivity and prey resources, and
 - deploy low and mid-frequency passive acoustic monitoring buoys
- aerial surveys to estimate abundance and assess distribution of Florida manatees in oil-affected areas, document locations of manatees in distress, and inform rescue efforts
- live capture-release studies of bottlenose dolphins in Barataria Bay, Louisiana, and Sarasota Bay, Florida, to assess sub-lethal and chronic health impacts,
- genetic analyses of biopsy and stranding samples for species identification, sex determination, and/or stock structure,
- manatee tracking data analysis, and
- prey and seagrass sampling.

At present, the approved work plans do not include assessment of contaminant effects on marine mammals. The Commission considers this to be an important topic to be investigated.

In October 2010 the Trustees confirmed damage and injury to natural resources and issued a notice of intent to begin planning restoration activities.¹² Planning and implementation of restoration activities likely will take several years and require integration and analysis of multiple types of information (Figure 4). These include measures and comparisons of the ecological, biological, geophysical, chemical, and oceanographic conditions in the Gulf, both pre- and post-spill, and/or modeling of conditions where pre- and/or post-spill information is not available (e.g., French-McCay 2004). Restoration activities that may benefit marine mammals include not only clean-up of the spilled oil, but also (1) basic assessment of the marine mammal stocks in the Gulf, and (2)

¹¹ The Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Technical Working Group is one of many technical working groups established by the Trustees under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process to conduct damage assessments. For a brief description of all technical working groups and associated work plans, see <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/>.

¹² 75 Fed. Reg. 60800, 1 October 2010.

reduction of other human-related risk factors in the Gulf, such as noise from seismic surveys, vessel traffic, SONAR (SOUND Navigation And Ranging) and military activities; fishery interactions; disturbance from tourism and illegal feeding; harmful algal blooms and anoxic zones.

Determining the respective roles of human-related risk factors and their interactions with the spill is a substantial but important challenge. In 2010, prior to the spill, unusually high numbers of bottlenose dolphins began to strand in the northern Gulf.¹³ When the spill began, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration already was initiating consultation with the Working Group for Marine Mammal Unusual Mortality Events to determine whether an unusual mortality event should be declared (in accordance with section 404 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act). The spill delayed the consultation until the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration could reanalyze the data on marine mammal mortalities along the northern Gulf before, during, and after the oil spill. Consultation with the Working Group was reinitiated in October and, in December, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration declared the deaths to constitute an unusual

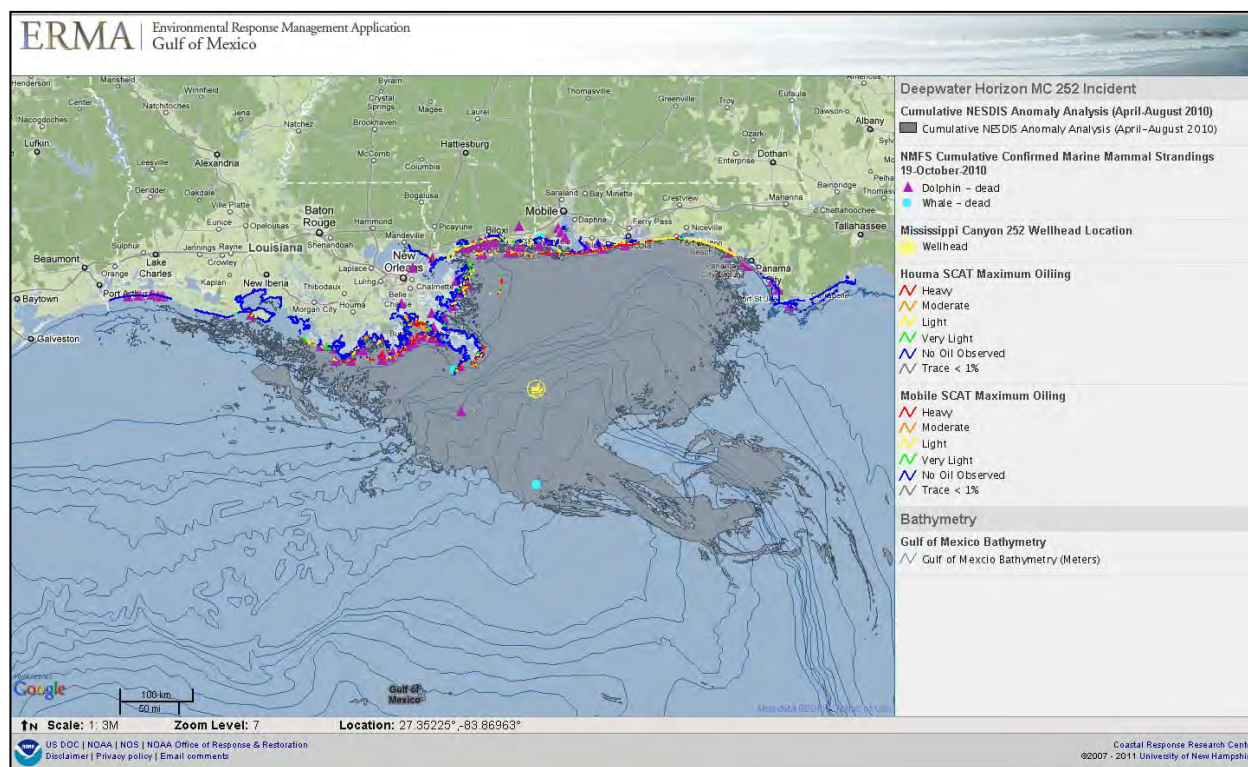


Figure 4. Map of cumulative marine mammal strandings in the Gulf as of 19 October 2010 and maximum shoreline oiling observations using data from shoreline cleanup and assessment of August 2010. Other types of data related to the spill and assessment activities also can be mapped and analyzed using the Environmental Response Management Application. (Map: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Response and Restoration)

¹³ http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/mmume/cetacean_gulfofmexico2010.htm

mortality event. To the extent practicable, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Working Group are coordinating the investigation of these mortalities (pre- and post-oil spill) with ongoing Natural Resource Damage Assessment activities where the data needs of these two processes coincide.

Assessing the spill's long-term effects on Gulf marine mammals

Exposure to oil from the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill had a long-term effect on marine mammals, 15 years or more after the spill (Matkin et al. 2008; Ballachey et al. 2007). Although the spills differ in some important respects, long-term effects are a reasonable concern for Gulf marine mammals because of the amount of oil spilled, the quantity of dispersants applied both at the surface and at the wellhead, the low recovery rates of spilled oil, uncertainty regarding the eventual disposition of both oil and dispersants (Crone and Tolstoy 2010; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2010; Nihous 2011), and uncertainty regarding the effects of the spill and response on features of the ecosystem important to marine mammals. In the *Exxon Valdez* case, long-term wildlife studies have revealed chronic, delayed, and indirect effects that were longer and more severe than previously expected or assumed (Peterson et al. 2003).

The null and alternative hypotheses listed above provide a foundation for assessing the long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on Gulf marine mammals. Evaluating each of the alternative hypotheses requires a variety of research approaches that are suitably adapted to the physical conditions in the Gulf, its marine mammal species (some of which are more difficult to assess than others), and the nature of the spilled oil and response activities. The opportunity to assess some acute effects may have passed but, in those cases, retrospective analyses could provide insights into actual effects or provide useful guidance for responding more effectively to future events. For those hypotheses that still can be tested with ongoing or new studies, especially regarding longer term or indirect effects, a variety of research tools and/or approaches are available (see Boyd et al. 2010, Perrin et al. 2009, and additional references in Appendix C for descriptions of standard research methods).

The alternative hypotheses are inter-related. Studies to characterize direct and indirect effects are particularly useful because they help describe how the effects occur. Where those studies are not possible, it still may be feasible to study survival and reproductive rates, which integrate and reflect the total influence of direct and indirect effects. However, vital rates vary by year, geography, age, and sex (Baker et al. 2010) and also may be difficult to assess for some species. When those rates cannot be determined, it still may be possible to assess population abundance and trends, which reflect the total influence of survival and reproduction for closed populations (i.e., with no migration in or out of the population) and the added influence of emigration and immigration for open populations. The Commission believes that attributing changes in vital rates or population abundance to exposure likely may require a “weight of evidence” approach based on a wide range of studies focused on individuals, populations, and the ecosystem generally.

The hypotheses, potential research tools for evaluating them, the associated benefits, and the relative priority that the Commission gives to each hypothesis are described in Table 2, and illustrated in Figure 5. The Commission considers all of the hypotheses to be a high priority during or immediately after a spill. However, because certain effects are less likely with time, the value of research into those effects declines accordingly.

In the past, researchers have had limited and inconsistent access to infrastructure (e.g., research vessels, analytical laboratories), personnel, and funding. Although there are considerable funds available through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process, it is not clear yet whether these funds will be available for studies of long-term effects or for filling important data gaps existing before the spill. In addition, funding through annual appropriations is not likely to improve significantly in the coming years. However, funding for studies of long-term effects may be available from non-governmental sources such as the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative, which has been funded by BP.

Assessment efforts likely will focus on a subset of the Gulf's marine mammal species that are considered to be at particularly high risk or more easily studied. For example, sperm whales have been more intensively studied than other deepwater cetaceans in the Gulf because of their endangered status and the overlap of their habitat with deepwater oil and gas operations (Jochens et al. 2008). As a result, studies focusing on sperm whales and their movements and foraging patterns are likely to continue. Coastal species such as bottlenose dolphins are less well studied but potentially more accessible to researchers. Bryde's whales are the only baleen whales in the Gulf and they also have been a focus of post-spill assessment because of their small population size. Without additional infrastructure to support research on long-term effects, studies of most other Gulf species will be limited and opportunistic. Therefore, estimating potential impacts of the oil spill on those other marine mammal species may depend heavily on modeling and inference based on the more studied species.

Absent additional resources, inadequate research methods also will constrain the assessment of long-term effects. Among other things, researchers need better sampling methods to detect and assess the effects of exposure to oil. For example, studies of ringed seals, fish, and other species suggest that certain samples (e.g., bile, urine, blood, and feces) are the best indicators of exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (Englehardt 1978, Balk et al. 2011). Such samples are difficult to obtain from live marine mammals. Instead, researchers studying contaminants in marine mammals have used skin and blubber biopsies from live-stranded or free-ranging animals (Marsili et al. 2001, Aguilar and Borrell 2004, Wilson et al. 2007, Godard-Codding et al. 2011) or liver and other tissues from dead animals (Holsbeek et al. 1999, Kannan and Perrotta 2008). These other tissues may be more easily obtained but are not as revealing as the preferred samples.

Finally, as noted above, research on the long-term effects of the spill will be confounded by the effects of other anthropogenic activities and natural perturbations in the Gulf. Such factors may include seismic surveys for oil and gas reserves, routine oil and gas operations, commercial and recreational fisheries, shipping and military activities, tourism, hypoxia and anoxia, harmful algal blooms, hurricanes, natural oil seeps, and climate disruption (Appendix B). Research will also be confounded by changes in the physical and biogeochemical properties of Deepwater Horizon oil over time as the result of natural weathering and degradation. Assessing these confounding factors, and distinguishing their effects on marine mammals from the long-term effects of the oil spill, will be a considerable challenge, particularly given the limited resources available for research.

Future research strategies and capacity

The extent to which we can learn more about the spill's effects on marine mammals, as well as the effects of other human-related factors, will depend largely on our ability to improve research

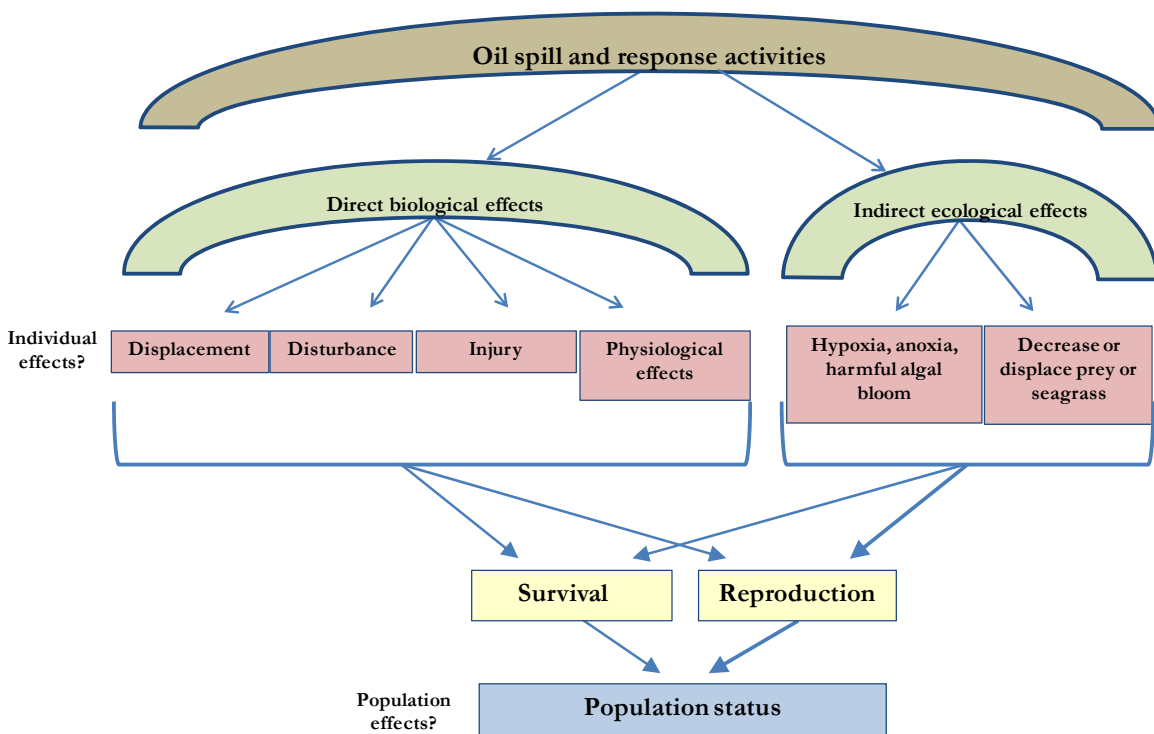


Figure 5. Conceptual framework for assessing the effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico. The spill and response activities may result in direct biological effects or indirect ecological effects on individuals. To be biologically significant at the population level, those effects must reduce either survival or reproduction, or both. Research strategies focused on individual effects seek information on the means by which the spill and response activities affect marine mammals, whereas research aimed at the population level seeks information aimed at determining their conservation significance over the long-term. A “weight of evidence” approach may be necessary to link effects observed at the individual level to long-term population-level effects on survival and reproduction.

strategies and capacity in the Gulf. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill provided a sobering indicator of the shortcomings of our current research and management approach for marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico. Those shortcomings can be grouped under five key topics, as follows.

Stock assessment: Stock structure is the most fundamental assessment information because it provides the basis for defining units of conservation. The lack of information on stock structure for multiple species, particularly coastal, bay, and estuarine bottlenose dolphin populations, is a significant impediment to further stock assessment efforts. Other shortcomings pertaining to the movement patterns and abundance and trends of stocks near the spill also undermine assessment of spill effects. Stock assessment information also is necessary to provide the baseline against which changes in the status of a stock can be measured. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center of the National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for assessing the stocks of marine mammals in the Gulf, and the Department of the Interior is responsible for assessing stocks of manatees in the Gulf of Mexico. Improving their capacity to complete these assessments in the future should be a high priority.

Table 2. Hypotheses to assess the long-term effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on Gulf marine mammals, potential research approaches, benefits, and relative priorities for long-term research. The Commission considers all of the hypotheses to be a high priority during or immediately after a spill. However, the likelihood of seeing certain effects decreases with time and the value of research into those effects declines accordingly.			
Hypothesis	Research approaches	Why important	Short/ long-term priority
H ₁ - Spilled oil causes injury, lesions, disease, or death through— H _{1a} - external contact H _{1b} - internal contact	Examinations of stranded live animals, necropsies of dead stranded animals, observations of living or dead animals at sea	Marine mammal contact with high concentrations of oil was a major concern immediately after the spill, but that concern declined as the oil was removed from the ecosystem by response activities or natural processes	High/Low
H ₂ - Exposure to oil- or dispersant-related contaminants causes physiological dysfunction of— H _{2a} - the immune system H _{2b} - the reproductive system H _{2c} - other vital systems	Assessment of health status and contaminant loads of stranded or live-captured animals, necropsies of dead animals, assessment of reproductive rates, observations of reproductive failure (e.g., aborted fetuses, malformed offspring), controlled exposure experiments, genomics	Marine mammals may concentrate contaminants through bioaccumulation if they ingest oil during foraging or ingest oil-contaminated prey. Existing evidence suggests that the immune and reproductive systems are particularly vulnerable to contaminants. The elevated number of premature, stillborn, or neonatal bottlenose dolphins over the past two years raises questions about exposure to oil as a possible contributing factor.	High/High
H ₃ - Exposure to response activities causes injury via— H _{3a} - vessel strikes H _{3b} - interactions with booms or other response equipment H _{3c} - noise introduced into the marine environment	Observations or records of vessel operators or onboard observers, examination of stranded animals for evidence of vessel-related wounds, assessment of hearing organs/tissues or other organs of dead stranded animals	Response activities are a serious concern immediately following a spill, but such activities have decreased to a low level or have been discontinued throughout the northern Gulf.	High/Low
H ₄ - Exposure to oil and/or response activities disturbs or disrupts significant biological behaviors, including— H _{4a} - foraging H _{4b} - reproduction H _{4c} - resting	Foraging studies using various types of instrumentation (e.g., location, depth, dive characteristics), observations of feeding behavior, analysis of stomach/intestinal contents, observations of mother-calf pairs and their daily movement patterns	Changes in significant biological behaviors were most likely during and immediately after the spill and over the duration of response activities. However, spill and response activities that may disrupt behavior are largely over.	High/Low

Hypothesis	Research approaches	Why important	Short/ long-term priority
H ₅ - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to displacement from primary habitat	Movement and habitat studies using telemetry, shoreline, vessel-based, or aerial observations, passive acoustics to detect presence	Spilled oil and response activities (e.g., vessels, noise) may have temporarily or permanently displaced marine mammals from their primary habitat, thereby reducing their survival and/or reproduction and, thus, population status.	High/ Medium
H ₆ - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to disruption of social organization	Observations of pod size during various activities (e.g., feeding, resting), frequency of mother-calf pairs and duration of their bond	Social organization likely would be most easily disrupted during the spill and response activities, which are largely over.	High/Low
H ₇ - Oil and/or response-related changes in the ecosystem reduce prey or seagrass availability— H _{7a} - prey displacement H _{7b} - reduction in biomass of prey or seagrass	Observations of condition of stranded animals, changes in diet as determined by observations of foraging behavior, stomach/intestinal content analyses, prey and seagrass surveys to assess biomass and changes therein over time and space (i.e., cooperation with agencies involved in fisheries assessment)	The spill or response activities could lead to long-term changes in marine mammal condition if they have bio-accumulated large concentrations of contaminants or if the spill and response activities lead to a decrease or displacement of prey biomass.	High/High
H ₈ - Oil and/or response activities lead to other ecosystem changes harmful to marine mammals via— H _{8a} - hypoxia or anoxia H _{8b} - harmful algal blooms	Observations of stranded animals, analysis of tissues for evidence of toxins, monitoring of harmful algal blooms and hypoxic/anoxic zones	The elevated numbers of marine mammals stranding in the northern Gulf pre- and post-spill raise concerns about Gulf environmental conditions. The 2010-2011 unusual mortality event began before the spill, but it is possible that the spill has exacerbated the mortality event.	High/High
H ₉ - Exposure to oil and/or response activities leads to reduction in status involving— H _{9a} - individual fitness H _{9b} - population vital rates (reproduction and survival rates) H _{9c} - population abundance and trends	Observations of increased number of dead animals, observations of evidence of reproductive failure (e.g., fetuses, malformed offspring), absolute or relative decrease in numbers of mother/calf pairs, aerial, vessel, or shoreline surveys	Individual fitness and population survival and reproduction rates are relatively difficult to measure, although reproduction rates can be evaluated by looking at the absolute and relative frequencies of mother-calf pairs over time. Repeated surveys of abundance over time provide the most general indication of spill and response effects, although counts generally do not provide insights into the nature of any observed changes. Nonetheless, trends in abundance are the most basic and important indicators of possible spill and response effects.	High/High

Stranding program: Over the past several decades, stranded marine mammals have become a major source of information used to manage marine mammal stocks in U.S. waters. Stranding networks have been developing in virtually all U.S. coastal areas, but they are less well developed in certain areas, including the Gulf. If improved, such networks provide an opportunity to collect information on species/stocks present, movement patterns, reproduction, age structure, health, and sources of mortality. In the Gulf, stranding networks played a key role during the spill by monitoring coastal areas for stranded animals, collecting tissues for various types of analyses, and caring for live-stranded animals and moving them to facilities that could provide the necessary care. The Gulf's stranding networks must be further developed and supported to assist with the tracking of the long-term effects of the oil spill.

Health assessments: The health of individual animals can be an important indicator of adverse effects from natural or anthropogenic risk factors in the ocean or coastal environment, including exposure to oil, dispersants, and response activities. Coupled with information from dead stranded animals, in-depth assessments of live stranded or captured animals have provided important information on marine mammal health, disease, and causes of mortality (Figure 6)—all information needed to promote effective conservation



Figure 6. Researchers conducting health assessment of wild bottlenose dolphins in Georgia. (Photograph T. Speakman/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

efforts (Hall et al. 2010). Live capture/release studies in particular are a proactive means for evaluating risk factors in living bottlenose dolphin populations (Wells et al. 2004). National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Fish and Wildlife Service scientists are working collaboratively with researchers from other federal agencies, private institutions, aquaria, and not-for-profit organizations to conduct health assessments in areas affected by the spill and control areas. The assessments will help determine the effect of exposure to oil and identify other risk factors, including those that may have contributed to the unusually high number of dolphin deaths in 2010 and 2011. Two assessment projects have been funded to date under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process; longer term funding sources are needed but have yet to be identified.

Environmental studies: The northern Gulf is a dynamic and heavily industrialized area. In addition to extensive oil and gas operations (Figure 7), the Gulf is the site of extensive commercial shipping, commercial and recreational fishing, military activities, recreational activities, coastal development, and freshwater and nutrient/contaminant input from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River Basin watersheds. The adverse effects of all of these activities are manifested in a number of ways, including the occurrence of extensive hypoxic and anoxic zones and harmful algal blooms. Large-scale changes in community structure or prey abundance caused by the oil spill or other anthropogenic or natural disturbances can affect the carrying capacity or distribution of marine mammal populations. Evaluating the adverse effects of these many factors, managing the activities

that cause them, and mitigating their impacts on the Gulf ecosystem, including marine mammals and their prey, will require a major commitment. In addition, environmental studies should include research on marine mammal/prey dynamics. Efforts to understand the oil spill's long-term effects on marine mammals likely will fall far short of their objective if research and management capacity in the Gulf are not enhanced. Assessing the relative roles of various threats to the Gulf's marine mammals will be a challenge, as illustrated by the difficulty of evaluating any potential influence of the spill on the recent bottlenose dolphin mortality events in the northern Gulf.

Cumulative effects: Finally, the status of the Gulf's marine mammal populations will vary not as a function on any single risk factor, but rather as a function of all of them, including the interactions between those factors. At the least, marine mammal research and management should be capable of identifying the marine mammal stocks in the Gulf and assessing their relative abundances and trends to determine if, when, and where they are being exposed to cumulative effects that hinder their potential to grow and recover. The current state of science in the Gulf is not sufficient to support even the most basic of statements about the status of most Gulf marine mammal stocks. Although the Commission supports efforts to characterize the full long-term effects of the oil spill on the Gulf's marine mammals, those efforts will have to be integrated with efforts to obtain information on the effects of other important risk factors.

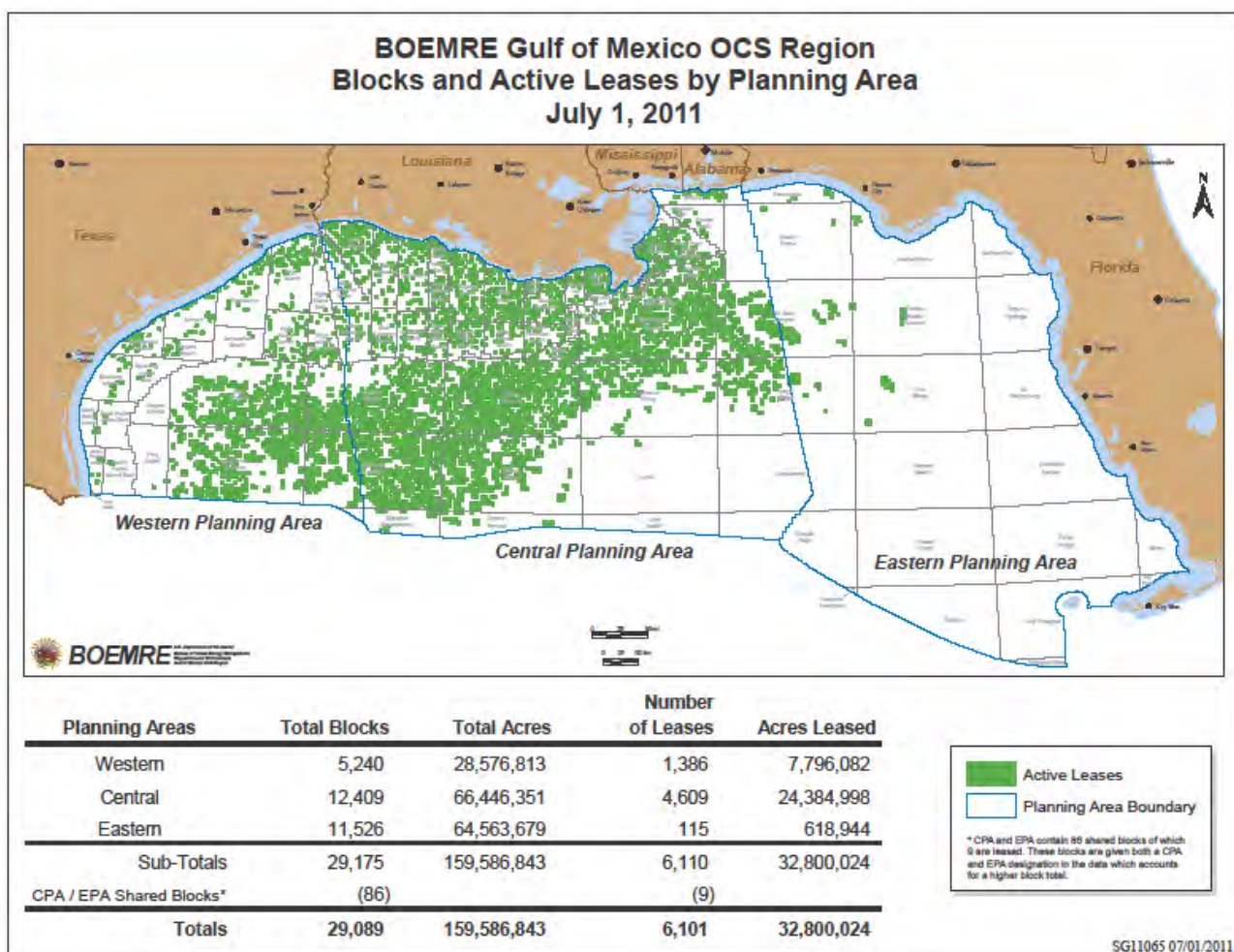


Figure 7. Map of Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf active oil and gas leases as of 1 July 2011. (Map: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement)

Federal agency missions and responsibilities in the Gulf

The Marine Mammal Commission drafted this statement of research needs with substantial input from staff of the National Marine Fisheries Service, National Ocean Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (formerly the Minerals Management Service). Other federal agencies with substantial research programs and/or management responsibilities in the Gulf include the U.S. Geological Survey, the Office of Naval Research, the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Division (N45), the U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Science Foundation.

Marine Mammal Commission: The Marine Mammal Commission is an independent agency of the U.S. Government, established under Title II of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to provide independent oversight of the marine mammal conservation policies and programs being carried out by federal regulatory agencies. With regard to the spill, the Commission's primary role is oversight of the other federal agencies responsible for response, assessment, and restoration. The Commission believes that it can play a useful role by convening interagency working groups where response, assessment, and restoration could benefit from coordination. The Commission also administers a small annual grant program that supports projects aimed at meeting the conservation and protection goals of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In addition, the Commission has initiated an annual survey of federally funded research on marine mammals to determine the nature of research conducted or supported by each agency. Information from the survey will be used to assess ways to enhance and target specific marine mammal research and conservation activities.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's mission is to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources to meet the Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. As part of this mission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sustains and manages ocean and coastal resources and evaluates the status of, and threats to, protected marine species, including whales, dolphins, and seals and sea lions (excluding walrus). Within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Ocean Service assume important responsibilities for protecting marine resources.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for protecting and conserving many of the Nation's living marine resources, including fish stocks, marine mammals, and endangered species and their habitats. The Service administers its research and management responsibilities through its headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, six regional offices, six science centers, and numerous labs and satellite offices throughout the country. The Service works in close association with academic institutions, communities, non-profit organizations, states, tribes, and other federal agencies. The Service's Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Southeast Regional Office conduct and coordinate research and management of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Ocean. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center is responsible for scientific research on living marine resources that occupy marine and estuarine habits of the continental southeastern United States, from Texas to North Carolina as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Southeast Regional Office administers provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act and, along with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, coordinates and manages the activities of the regional stranding network. The Service's Office of Protected Resources works to conserve, protect, and recover marine mammals and endangered species and is responsible for overall administration and

coordination of the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program. That program (1) oversees responses to stranded marine mammals along the U.S. coast, (2) assesses trends in marine mammal health, (3) correlates those trends with environmental data, and (4) maintains effective responses to unusual mortality events.

The National Ocean Service promotes safe marine navigation, assesses the health of coastal and marine resources, responds to natural and human-induced threats, and conserves the coastal ocean environment. The National Ocean Service's Office of Response and Restoration provides comprehensive solutions to environmental hazards caused by oil, chemicals, and marine debris. In addition, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program coordinates and guides natural resource damage assessments by working with remedial agencies, Natural Resource Trustees, and responsible parties to protect and restore National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration trust resources injured by releases of hazardous substances and oil. In addition, the Service's Center for Human Health Risk investigates how the marine environment affects people's health and socio-economic well-being. The Center's Oceans and Human Health Initiative is focused on new methods, approaches, and tools for evaluating how marine organisms respond to pollution, global climate change, coastal development and other human-related risk factors, and how best to identify and characterize chemical and microbial threats to marine ecosystems and human health. The Center's Chemical Contaminants research group explores ways to identify and measure contaminants of concern in the marine environment.

Fish and Wildlife Service: The Fish and Wildlife Service is a federal agency within the Department of the Interior. Its mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. As the principal federal partner responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service has the lead in recovering and conserving most endangered species, including the Florida population of the West Indian manatee. It works cooperatively with the U.S. Geological Survey and state and local Trustees in the Gulf to conduct the Natural Resource Damage Assessment. It is guided in this work by the Department of the Interior's Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Deepwater Horizon Case Management Office.

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement: The Bureau (formerly the Minerals Management Service) also is within the Department of the Interior. It is the federal agency responsible for overseeing the development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf. In accordance with the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, operations on the Outer Continental Shelf must preserve, protect, and develop oil and natural gas resources in a manner that is consistent with the need to make such resources available to meet the Nation's energy needs as rapidly as possible; to balance orderly energy resource development with protection of human, marine, and coastal environments; to ensure the public a fair and equitable return on the resources of the Outer Continental Shelf; and to preserve and maintain free enterprise.

Section 20 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act authorizes the Bureau's Environmental Studies Program and establishes three general goals for the program:

- to establish the information needed for assessment and management of environmental impacts on the human, marine, and coastal environments of the Outer Continental Shelf and the potentially affected coastal areas

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- to predict impacts on the marine biota that may result from chronic, low level pollution or large spills associated with oil and gas production, from drilling fluids and cuttings discharges, pipeline emplacement, or onshore facilities
 - to monitor human, marine, and coastal environments to provide time series and data trend information for identification of significant changes in the quality and productivity of these environments, and to identify the causes of these changes.

The research priorities of the Environmental Studies Program are determined by mission relevance, technical feasibility, scientific merit, timing, applicability, and affordability. In the Gulf, research on protected species has been driven by information gaps and recommendations for research either as part of the “terms and conditions” or the “conservation recommendations” of Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultations. Recent and upcoming programmatic consultations that may result in new studies include geological and geophysical activities and explosive removals of platforms.

Current and ongoing studies in the Gulf that may affect or have implications for marine mammals include seismic survey mitigation measures and an analysis of marine mammal observer reports, a sperm whale acoustic prey study (SWAPS), and a workshop on the status and applications for acoustic monitoring of marine mammals. New studies for 2011 include the effects of oil and gas exploration on sperm whales in the eastern Gulf and estuarine bottlenose dolphins. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill likely also will prompt new environmental studies to assess the impacts and long-term recovery of marine mammals in the Gulf.

Research permits and coordination

The Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act require permits or other authorizations for all research, assessment, and enhancement activities that may take threatened or endangered marine mammals (in the case of the Endangered Species Act) or non-listed marine mammals. These activities include scientific research, the import or export of marine mammal parts, photography, rehabilitation, public display, capture from the wild, or other activities that may intentionally or incidentally affect marine mammals. Permits are issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service for cetaceans and most pinnipeds and by the Fish and Wildlife Service for manatees, polar bears, walruses, and sea otters. Permits typically take 6-9 months to process for non-listed marine mammals and 12 months for listed marine mammals; Letters of Confirmation for taking by harassment typically can be processed in about 4 months. Permits to access public lands and collect samples in marine areas managed by the National Park Service or other agencies also may be required and should be pursued concurrent to permits issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service. As part of the permitting process, the Services evaluate the proposed research to determine if it is unnecessarily duplicative of ongoing research. To avoid unnecessary disturbance of animals, permit holders are required, to the maximum extent possible, to coordinate their activities. Permit applicants also may be required to comply with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act.

Many researchers involved in assessment of the spill’s impact on marine mammals are not affiliated with federal agencies. The Marine Mammal Commission appreciates their work and encourages their continued participation in this effort. Many of them already have permits for work in the Gulf or on species potentially affected by the spill. However, coordination of research

activities is critical to focus on the most important research topics, collaborate whenever possible, and avoid unnecessary duplication of research. Such collaboration should help maximize the benefits of limited resources and minimize unnecessary research-related effects on marine mammals. The Marine Mammal Commission has encouraged the Permits Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service to facilitate research on the Gulf's marine mammals by coordinating scientists already holding research permits and helping to guide future research.

During the summer of 2010, the National Marine Fisheries Service, working with the Fish and Wildlife Service, posted a notice on MARMAM (an online mailing list pertaining to marine mammal issues) about research and response activities in the Gulf. In addition, the Service wrote all researchers holding permits or letters of confirmation to encourage research coordination during and after the spill response.

The success of long-term research efforts will depend on collaboration by the involved federal, state, and local agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and organizations, and the public. Among other things, the participants in such research should meet annually to summarize their results and adapt their future research plans as needed.

Additional resources

Several websites have been established to provide information to the public regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, including response, assessment, research, and restoration activities. A partial list of websites is included in Appendix D.

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Appendix A. Baseline information for marine mammal species in the Gulf of Mexico. The population information is from Waring et al. (2010) and the information regarding prey species is from Jefferson et al. (2008). For all stocks, the information is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. CV=coefficient of variation; N_{best} =best estimate of abundance; N_{min} =minimum estimate of abundance; PBR=potential biological removal level; E=endangered under the Endangered Species Act; S=strategic under the Marine Mammal Protection Act). *As identified in Waring et al. 2010, although many sources of mortality and serious injury also may be applicable to other species.

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N_{best} (CV) N_{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>) (E/S)	N_{best} = 1,665 (CV = 0.20) N_{min} = 1,409 PBR = 2.8	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Gulf stock distinct from other Atlantic Ocean stocks	Highly social, with adult females and juveniles of both sexes occurring together in mixed groups	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily deepwater cephalopods and fishes	Unknown	Oil and gas operations (seismic surveys), pollution
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>) (E/S) Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands stock	Unknown, PBR undetermined	Continental slope and oceanic waters surrounding Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands	Limited information to distinguish from other Atlantic Ocean or Gulf stocks	Highly social, with adult females and juveniles of both sexes occurring together in mixed groups	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily deepwater cephalopods and fishes	Unknown	Coastal pollution, ship strikes
Bryde's whale (<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>) (S)	N_{best} = 15 (CV = 1.98) N_{min} = 5 PBR = 0.1	Primarily along the shelf break (200 m) in the northeastern Gulf	Unknown	Generally found as singles or pairs, no calves observed	Unknown	Unknown	Small schooling fishes	Unknown	Ship strikes, other sources unknown
Cuvier's beaked whale (<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>)	N_{best} = 65 (CV = 0.67) N_{min} = 39 PBR = 0.4	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (sonar) in Atlantic Ocean
Blainville's beaked whale (<i>Mesoplodon densirostris</i>)	N_{best} = 57 (CV = 1.40) N_{min} = 24 (Estimate for all <i>Mesoplodon</i> sp.)	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (SONAR) in Atlantic Ocean

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
	PBR = 0.2								
Gervais' beaked whale (<i>Mesoplodon europaens</i>)	N _{best} = 57 (CV = 1.40) N _{min} = 24 (Estimate for all <i>Mesoplodon</i> sp.) PBR = 0.2	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids, also deepwater fishes	Unknown	Unknown, possible military activities (sonar) in Atlantic Ocean and fisheries interactions
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) continental shelf stock	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Waters from 20 to 200 m throughout the Gulf	Uncertain but complex, stock is a mixture of genetically distinct coastal and offshore ecotypes	Highly social	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown	Fisheries interactions, gunshot wounds, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) eastern coastal stock	N _{best} = 7,702 (CV = 0.19) N _{min} = 6,551 PBR = 66	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep east of 84° W	Uncertain but complex, coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Limited health assessment data from Sarasota Bay	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, harmful algal blooms, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) northern coastal stock	N _{best} = 2,473 (CV = 0.25) N _{min} = 2,004 PBR = 20	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep from the Mississippi River Delta east to 84°W	Coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Limited health assessment data from St. Joseph Bay	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tide, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) western coastal stock (S)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Mainland shore to waters 20 m deep west of the Mississippi River Delta	Uncertain but complex, coastal stocks divided for management purposes based on dissimilar habitat characteristics	Highly social	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tide, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) oceanic stock	N _{best} = 3,708 (CV = 0.42) N _{min} = 2,641 PBR = 26	Upper continental slope (200- 1000 m) throughout the Gulf	Uncertain but assumed complex	Offshore morphotype; groups as big as 200 but typically around 20	Unknown	Unknown	Generalist, preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids, with squids more important in deeper waters	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, disease, gunshot wounds, mutilations, vessel strikes, oil rig removals, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) St. Joseph Bay stock (S)	N _{best} = 81 (CV = 0.14) N _{min} = 72 PBR=0.7	St. Joseph Bay	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities,	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates,	Limited health assessment data	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
			supported by genetics data		stock-wide rates unknown			distinguished by stock	ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) St. Vincent Sound/ Appalachicola Bay/ St. George Sound stock (S)	N _{best} = 537 (CV = 0.09) N _{min} = 498PBR = 5	St. Vincent Sound/ Appalachicola Bay/ St. George Sound	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) Barataria Bay stock (S)	N _{best} = 138 (CV = 0.08) N _{min} = 129 PBR = 1.3	Barataria Bay	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) 29 remaining bay, sound, and estuarine stocks (S)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined for remaining 30 stocks	Bays, sounds, and estuaries throughout the Gulf	Stocks provisionally based on discrete communities, supported by genetics data	Community- based, some individuals exhibit extreme philopatry	Some data regarding individual reproduc- tive rates, stock-wide rates unknown	Unknown	Preference for sciaenids, scombrids, and mugilids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data not distinguished by stock	Fisheries interactions, ecotourism, red tide, marine debris entanglement and ingestion
Atlantic spotted dolphin (<i>Stenella frontalis</i>)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Continental shelf throughout the Gulf, generally in waters 20-200 m	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes, supported by genetics data	Typical group sizes are less than 50; associate with smaller groups of bottlenose dolphins in some cases	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids, and benthic invertebrates	Unknown	Fisheries interactions, dredging, red tides

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Pantropical spotted dolphin (<i>Stenella attenuata</i>)	N _{best} = 34,067 (CV = 0.18) N _{min} = 29,311 PBR = 293	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typical groups are less than 100 dolphin but as many as 650 dolphins in a group have been observed	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes, squids and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown
Striped dolphin (<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>)	N _{best} = 3,325 (CV = 0.48) N _{min} = 2,266 PBR = 23	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typical groups consist of about 50 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Vessel strike
Spinner dolphin (<i>Stenella longirostris</i>)	N _{best} = 1,989 (CV = 0.48) N _{min} = 1,356 PBR = 14	Continental slope (200- 2000 m), primarily in the eastern Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in very large cohesive groups of up to 800 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Small epi- and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Fisheries interactions
Rough-toothed dolphin (<i>Steno bredanensis</i>)	Unknown, survey data more than 8 years old, PBR undetermined	Oceanic throughout the Gulf and, less commonly, the continental shelf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Typically in groups of less than 25 dolphins; associated with Sargassum in many cases	Unknown	Limited info from rehab animals	Fish, including larger species (mahi mahi) and squids	Unknown	Unknown
Clymene dolphin (<i>Stenella clymene</i>)	N _{best} = 6,575 (CV = 0.36) N _{min} = 4,901 PBR = 49	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in large groups of up to 300 dolphins	Unknown	Unknown	Little known, small epi – and mesopelagic fishes and squids	Unknown	Unknown

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
Fraser's dolphin (<i>Lagenodelphis hosei</i>)	Unknown (no recent sightings) PBR undetermined	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Extremely rare; associated with melon-headed whales in some cases	Unknown	Unknown	Small midwater fishes, squids, and crustaceans	Unknown	Unknown
Killer whale (<i>Orcinus orca</i>)	N _{best} = 49 (CV = 0.77) N _{min} = 28 PBR = 0.3	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Groups typically of 6-10 whales. Photo- identification indicates wide ranging but with some habitat fidelity.	Unknown	Unknown	Gulf prey largely unknown, one instance of predation on pantropical spotted dolphins	Unknown	Unknown
False killer whale (<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>)	N _{best} = 777 (CV = 0.56) N _{min} = 501 PBR = 5	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in cohesive groups that average 25 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Fish including larger species (mahi mahi) and squids, known to attach small and large cetaceans	Unknown	Fisheries interaction
Pygmy killer whale (<i>Feresa attenuata</i>)	N _{best} = 323 (CV = 0.60) N _{min} = 203 PBR = 2	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Little known; occur in groups of less than 20 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Fishes and squids, known to attack small cetaceans	Unknown	Unknown
Dwarf sperm whale (<i>Kogia sima</i>)	N _{best} = 453 (CV = 0.35) N _{min} = 340 (Estimate for all <i>Kogia</i> spp.) PBR = 3.4	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily deepwater cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions, ingestion of marine debris
Pygmy sperm whale (<i>Kogia breviceps</i>)	N _{best} = 453 (CV = 0.35) N _{min} = 340	Oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock	Very cryptic, usually in groups of less than 5	Unknown	Limited data from captive	Primarily deepwater cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from	Fisheries interactions, ingestion of

Species/stock (E=endangered, S=strategic)	Abundance – N _{best} (CV) N _{min} PBR	Distribution and movement patterns	Stock structure	Social structure	Vital rates	Health status	Prey species	Total human- caused mortality/ serious injury	Possible sources of human-caused mortality/ serious injury*
	(Estimate for all <i>Kogia</i> spp.) PBR = 3.4		for management purposes			animals		stranding data	marine debris
Melon-headed whale (<i>Peponocephala electra</i>)	N _{best} = 2,283 (CV = 0.76) N _{min} = 1,293 PBR = 13	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Occur in large cohesive groups of up to 275 whales	Unknown	Unknown	Small fishes and squids	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Unknown
Risso's dolphin (<i>Grampus griseus</i>)	N _{best} = 1,589 (CV = 0.27) N _{min} = 1,271 PBR = 13	Shelf break area and oceanic throughout the Gulf	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Multiple groups of 5-10 dolphins typically occur over large areas	Unknown	Limited data from captive animals	Crustaceans, squids, and other cephalopods	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions, red tide
Pilot whale, short finned (<i>Globicephala macrorhynchus</i>)	N _{best} = 716 (CV = 0.34) N _{min} = 542 PBR = 5.4	Oceanic throughout the Gulf but more common west of the Mississippi River	Unknown, separate from Atlantic stock for management purposes	Highly social; in groups of 20 or more	Unknown	Unknown	Primarily squids but also fishes	Unknown, minimum estimates from stranding data	Fisheries interactions
West Indian Manatee (<i>Trichechus manatus</i>) (E/S)	N _{min} (via aerial surveys) = 5,067 (2,779 on east coast of Florida, 2,288 on west coast of Florida) PBR = 12	In freshwater, brackish and marine environments along the Gulf, from Florida to Louisiana	Florida manatees considered a single stock, but separated into management units	Disperse in the warmer months to feed, breed and socialize; aggregate to warm-water refuges during colder times of year; calves typically stay with a cow for 2 years	R _{max} = 6.2%	Limited studies provide data on contamin- ants, hormone levels, and nutrition	Herbivores; feed on an extensive range of aquatic vegetation	Minimum estimates from stranding data	Vessel strikes, cold water exposure, red tides, drowning in water control structures, fisheries interactions, marine debris entanglement and ingestion

Appendix B. Anthropogenic and natural risk factors in the Gulf of Mexico

Activities	Specific risk factor	Potential consequences
Oil and gas development	Oil spills and leaks	Direct exposure: skin irritation/inflammation, necrosis, respiratory effects, organ damage Indirect: shifts in or loss of prey, habitat degradation
	Noise (seismic surveys, construction and decommissioning of oil platforms, and general operations)	Physical trauma, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Vessel operations	Vessel collisions (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
	Production waste (drill fluids and cuttings, produced water, deck drainage, municipal wastes, and debris)	Organ damage and impaired immune system function from heavy metal contamination, habitat degradation (decreased water quality), loss of prey
Commercial and recreational fishing	Fishing with nets, lines, pots/traps	Entanglement in and ingestion of fishing gear
	Fishing for prey species	Depletion of prey species, habitat alteration
	Vessel operations	Vessel collisions (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
Shipping and vessel traffic	Noise, vessel operations	Vessel collisions (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
Military activities	Vessel operations	Vessel collisions (injury/mortality), avoidance of preferred habitat
	Noise (SONAR training and testing, explosives)	Acoustic and non-acoustic physical trauma, avoidance of preferred habitat, mortality in severe cases
Agriculture	Runoff of land-based pollutants (resulting in harmful algal blooms, anoxic or hypoxic “dead” zones)	Direct: injury/mortality Indirect: habitat degradation, shifts in or loss of prey species
Coastal development	Noise from pile driving for marina and bridge/causeway construction	Acoustic trauma (at short range), acoustic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Dredging	Loss of sea grass beds, habitat degradation
	Loss of coastal wetlands and other coastal habitats	Loss of prey habitat, habitat degradation
Renewable energy	Pile driving for anchoring wind and wave turbines	Acoustic trauma (at short range), acoustic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Turbine operations	Physical trauma, electromagnetic disturbance, avoidance of preferred habitat
Greenhouse gas emissions	Ocean acidification	Shifts in or loss of prey species
	Warming seas	Habitat degradation, shifts in or loss of prey
	Increased storm activity and increased severity of storms	Shifts in prey, avoidance of preferred habitat
	Sea level rise, leading to coastal habitat loss	Loss of prey habitat, habitat degradation
Natural events	Seepage of oil	Direct: organ damage Indirect: habitat degradation
	Harmful algal blooms (red tide)	Injury/mortality, shifts in prey
	Predation	Injury/mortality
	Large-scale ecosystem fluctuations	Shifts in or loss of prey

Activities	Specific risk factor	Potential consequences
	Hurricanes	Shifts in prey, avoidance of preferred habitat, displacement of animals, habitat degradation or destruction
	Water temperature anomalies	Shifts in prey, avoidance of preferred habitat, cold stress

Appendix C. References describing data collection and analysis methods

The following references provide detailed descriptions of data collection and analytical methods used to assess the potential effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico. References include Gulf-specific studies where available.

Aerial survey design and analysis

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Appendix D. Online resources for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill

A number of websites have been established to provide information to the public regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The following is a select list. (All sites last accessed 3 August 2011.)

U.S. Government website on Deepwater Horizon oil spill response and restoration activities:
<http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of Response and Restoration website on Deepwater Horizon oil spill response: <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/deepwaterhorizon>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program's Gulf Spill Restoration website (including Natural Resource Damage Assessment workplans):
<http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov>

National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Protected Resources Gulf of Mexico oil spill website:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/oilspill.htm>

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website on Deepwater Horizon oil spill response:
<http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/index.html>

Environmental Protection Agency Response to the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico website:
<http://www.epa.gov/BPSpill/>

Oiled Wildlife Care Network Blog (includes archived postings regarding Deepwater Horizon wildlife response activities): <http://owcnblog.wordpress.com>

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill library and reading room: <http://www.boemre.gov/deepwaterreadingroom>

Marine Mammal Commission Deepwater Horizon oil spill website:
http://www.mmc.gov/oil_spill/welcome.shtml

National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling website and report:
<http://www.oilspillcommission.gov>

U.S. Coast Guard/Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement Joint Investigation Team website and report: <http://www.deepwaterinvestigation.com>

Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (BP funded research on effects of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and related topics): <http://www.gulfresearchinitiative.org>

Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant Programs Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Research and Monitoring Activities Database: <http://gulfseagrant.tamu.edu/oilspill/database.htm>



Mississippi Forestry Commission
660 North Street, Suite 300 • Jackson, Mississippi 39202
(601) 359-1386 phone • (601) 359-1349 fax

July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on and contribute to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Initiative. The Mississippi Forestry Commission has been a leader in forest protection, management and sustainability of our state's forests for over 85 years. Year after year we provide expertise, information and support to keep Mississippi's 19.8 million acres of forestland healthy, productive and profitable.

The MFC supports the efforts of Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and applauds their effort to be inclusive to the myriad of interest affected by this unprecedented environmental event.

The MFC would like to offer for consideration in environmental restoration efforts our publication ***Mississippi's Assessment of Forest Resources and Forest Resource Strategy*** found here:

http://www.mfc.ms.gov/pdf/Forest_Assessment/MS_Assessment_Resource_Strategy_2010.pdf

The Assessment provides an analysis of forest conditions and trends in the state and delineates priority rural and urban forest landscape areas. The Strategy provides general long-term plans for investing state, federal, and other resources to effectively stimulate or leverage desired action and engage multiple partners.

Many of the strategies and goals of the MFC mirror those of the Council especially related to the restoration and protection of "coastal forests" and "pine savannahs". We are leaders in Longleaf Pine Restoration and its associated ecosystems.

The MFC also operates the acclaimed Mississippi Invasive Plant Control Program through USDA Forest Service Funding. This program is actively suppressing Cogongrass in various counties of Mississippi yearly.

The MFC is pleased that "the Council recognizes that there are other partners critical to restoring and sustaining the health of the Gulf Coast region. [And] The Council will coordinate, as appropriate, with states, federal agencies, tribes, and other entities working in the Gulf Coast region to achieve common goals, create regulatory efficiencies, and collectively work towards an integrated vision for comprehensive restoration. Additionally, the Council will coordinate with other intergovernmental bodies and Gulf Coast restoration initiatives, as appropriate, to ensure that efforts are complementary and mutually beneficial.

The Mississippi Forestry Commission understands partnerships and interagency cooperation as that process is our mainstay. Our partners in current ecosystem restoration projects and habitat protection include, but are not limited to: the Mississippi Prescribed Fire Council, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the American Forest Foundation, the Mississippi Urban Forest Council, the Nature Conservancy, Mississippi State University Extension Service, the Longleaf Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and the USDA Forest Service.

The MFC looks forward to assisting the Council in any way possible by offering our expertise to any forest management matter as needed. We also hope to submit relevant restoration projects that aid the coastal area in invasive plant suppression, native Longleaf Pine ecosystem restoration, and enhanced coastal terrace forest management.

With best regards for future successful restoration efforts, I am

Yours sincerely,

+Jim Hancock, MS Registered Forester #1367
Grants Manager
Mississippi Forestry Commission
660 North Street, Suite 300
Jackson, MS 39202
Cell: (601) 720-0238
jhancock@mfc.state.ms.us

July 3, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

On behalf of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce and our 2,100 members, we are pleased that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council has drafted an initial Comprehensive Plan that outlines a framework to implement a coordinated region-wide restoration effort following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

While the Mobile/Baldwin region has made significant progress to rebuild coastal businesses and environmental assets following this devastating event, there remains significant work to be done to bring the region back to its full potential. It is our belief that the GCERC's Comprehensive Plan can effectively guide our region's recovery by implementing a balanced approach that addresses both ecological and economic priorities for coastal Alabama. As we strive to build a more resilient Gulf Coast, it is imperative that we also work toward an efficient infrastructure in support of the long-term needs of the region. In doing so, we simultaneously improve the prospect of the Gulf Coast's future economic success by prioritizing on-going improvements to our port, water and sewer and transportation infrastructure needs.

In conclusion, we strongly advocate that the final GCERC Comprehensive Plan work to ensure that all projects and initiatives funded by the Restore Act provide for long-term environmental restoration and economic recovery to Alabama's coastal region. Furthermore, ***we strongly recommend that all approved projects and initiatives should adhere to a sound, scientific framework of analyses, an economic benefit assessment and a method of accountability.***

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce stands in support of Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, and applauds your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Winthrop M. Hallett, III
President



July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

On behalf of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and its more than 800,000 members and supporters, we are providing comments on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's (the Council) recently released *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy* (the *Draft Plan*). Since 1919, NPCA has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System and preserving our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for our children and grandchildren.

The health of the national parks around the Gulf of Mexico is directly linked to the health of the entire Gulf. As noted in the *Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment* that accompanies the *Draft Plan*, there are ten national park units in the Gulf region, including Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Dry Tortugas National Park, Padre Island National Seashore, Gulf Islands National Seashore, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, Big Thicket National Preserve, and DeSoto National Memorial. According to the National Park Service (NPS), in 2011, these national parks attracted more than 9 million visitors who contributed nearly \$540 million to local economies. In addition to national parks, there are other protected lands and waters of national significance along the Gulf coast, which include national wildlife refuges, national forests, and marine protected areas. These places are integral to the region's natural systems and economic and cultural fabric.

The 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent oil spill brought tremendous environmental and economic damage to the national parks, natural ecosystems, and communities scattered across America's Gulf Coast. Not only did this tragedy affect coastal wetlands and the wildlife that inhabit them, it had a

detrimental effect on the communities that depend on these lands and waters to support fisheries and tourism-based economies that sustain them. In the months after the oil spill, NPS deployed 600 staff from 120 national parks to assist in Gulf Coast cleanup efforts, in addition to the thousands of others from federal agencies, national and local organizations, and nearby communities. Gulf Islands National Seashore, known for its blue waters, white beaches, coastal marshes, and beautiful winding nature trails, was the most directly impacted of the national parks. Cleanup crews there courageously fought the steady flow of oil and tarballs that invaded the once-pristine shoreline. Today they are still coping with the effects of the spill on plants, wildlife, and archeological resources.

NPCA believes that the RESTORE Act, which directs 80 percent of the Clean Water Act penalty payments stemming from the oil spill towards environmental restoration and economic development, provides an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that responsible parties are held accountable and that financial penalties are returned to the damaged Gulf ecosystem. By viewing the entire Gulf as one large ecosystem, we can look at ways to improve the health of places like the Mississippi Delta, Galveston Bay, Mobile Bay, and Florida Bay, which support vibrant fisheries, wildlife habitat, and livelihoods throughout the Gulf region.

The Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

NPCA applauds the Council's *Draft Plan* for reaffirming the legislative intent of the RESTORE Act, which calls for an ecosystem-based, landscape-scale approach for restoring the long-term health of the Gulf Coast region. Sections III and IV discuss Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation Criteria, which if implemented as described, can lead to the recovery and restoration of the Gulf Coast region. However, to understand how these concepts will be implemented, a critical next step for the Council is to release the "Ten-Year Funding Strategy" to show how the funds will be allocated for the next ten years and the "Funded Priorities List" to show what will be funded over the next three years.

NPCA endorses the Council's "commitments" in Section II of the *Draft Plan* for science-based decision making, broad participation from diverse stakeholders, partnership leveraging, and the importance of measuring outcomes and impacts to ensure funds are invested meaningfully. We applaud the commitment to regional ecosystem restoration based on the recognition that "upland, estuarine, and marine habitats are intrinsically connected," and that "a regional approach to restoration more effectively leverages the resources of the Gulf Coast and promotes holistic Gulf Coast recovery" (p. 6). NPCA's work to protect and restore national parks shows us that most activities that negatively impact park resources, such as those affecting waterways and wetlands, take place beyond parks boundaries so it is critical that upstream and surrounding activities are fully understood to achieve ecosystem restoration. NPCA strongly recommends that the Council ensures that these commitments are fulfilled as the "Ten-Year Funding Strategy" and "Funded Priorities List" are developed and implemented.

Sections III and IV of the *Draft Plan* discuss the Goals, as adopted by the Council in *The Path Forward to Restoring the Gulf Coast* released in January 2013, and the Council-Selected Restoration Component, which is 30 percent of the total trust fund. NPCA appreciates the Council's affirmation that the purpose of the Council-Selected Restoration Component is to fund ecosystem restoration projects that contribute to the health and resiliency of the entire Gulf Coast ecosystem. The seven Objectives further define the types of activities that could be funded under the Council's Restoration Component. Each of these objectives are important components of ecosystem restoration and are appropriate for selecting and funding projects that will "restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region" (p.11).

The RESTORE Act and the *Draft Plan* provide guidelines for evaluating restoration projects and programs that call for the Council to utilize the best available science and prioritize projects based on the four Priority Criteria for at least the first three years. NPCA applauds the Council for using the same criteria as written in the RESTORE Act and believes that they provide sufficient guidance for the Council to select projects that will restore the Gulf ecosystem. The Priority Criteria are as follows:

"(I) 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.

"(II) 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.

"(III) 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.

"(IV) 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."¹

The Council must ensure that the Priority Criteria are strongly reflected in the "Ten-Year Funding Strategy" and "Funded Priorities List" when they are released.

To ensure that holistic ecosystem restoration is achieved and that projects selected for implementation fulfill the Goals, Objectives, and Priority Criteria, NPCA recommends the establishment of a science advisory committee to provide input

¹ Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, H.R. 4348, § 1603 (t)(2)(D)(iii), 126 Stat. 405, at 599-600, 112th Congress (2012).

and recommendations to the Council. By establishing a science advisory committee, the Council could seek recommendations and expertise to help select projects that contribute to restoring the Gulf of Mexico while proactively ensuring that funds are best spent. NPCA works to restore America's Great Waters, such as the Everglades and the Great Lakes. These aquatic ecosystems have large-scale restoration plans being implemented that are a result of years of input from diverse stakeholders, many of whom are scientists, and are based on the best-available science. The Gulf ecosystem encompasses a very large geographic area, and the funds that will be coming from the RESTORE Act and other financial settlements, such as those from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, are an unprecedented amount of money to be used for environmental restoration. People in this country and beyond are watching how these funds will be spent and if the projects will actually improve ecological conditions in the Gulf. A science advisory committee could improve the quality of projects and decisions made on how to spend the funds so that we are taking full advantage of this opportunity.

Potential projects to benefit national parks and Gulf restoration

NPCA supports a variety of restoration and preservation projects with a goal of recovering from the oil spill disaster and improving the overall health of the Gulf to allow it to be more resilient in the future. Projects in the areas that were directly affected by oil on the shores, in the wetlands, and otherwise are critical to support. Beyond that, the negative effects to water quality and habitat in the Gulf have occurred in many places, ranging from Florida Bay, through the Florida Panhandle, across the southern Gulf states, and all the way to the Texas-Mexico border.

NPCA supports the following projects, which would benefit national park sites, resources, and interests and meet the Goals and fulfill many of the Objectives and Priority Criteria as described in the *Draft Plan*. We recommend that these, along with others, be part of the "Ten-Year Funding Strategy" and "Funded Priorities List," as they are developed and implemented.

- In Florida at Gulf Islands National Seashore, a proposed project would remove asphalt and road-base debris from areas that were once pristine sugar-white sand, but have been damaged by years of storm events that have strewn gravel and asphalt into dunes. Another proposed project is to purchase passenger ferry boats to implement ferry service to Fort Pickens, which would reduce traffic congestions, fuel consumption, and pollution. At some point the Fort Pickens Road will be destroyed again by a major storm event, and this ferry service would serve as the primary means of access for the public to the park's most heavily visited location.
- In Florida at Everglades National Park, a Congressionally-authorized project calls for bridging portions of Tamiami Trail, allowing water to flow back into the park and out to Florida Bay, which is a highly productive Gulf estuary that has experienced a decline in fisheries and wading birds due to the lack of freshwater. Bridging Tamiami Trail also will reduce the devastating fresh water flows that are forced into the Caloosahatchee and

St. Lucie Rivers, thus killing the coastal estuaries and fueling red tides that create many adverse consequences such as the significant number of manatee deaths that have been reported this year.

- In Florida Bay, part of Everglades National Park, there are several proposed projects, which include the Fisheries Independent Monitoring Project to provide an evaluation of abundance and distribution of species in the catch data and an analysis of trends in abundance and population age structure; a citizen scientists' partnership to study elevation change and understand the vulnerability of Florida Bay mud banks to sea-level rise and boat impacts; and the repairing of the dams on the canals at Cape Sable that are breached or eroded, causing degraded fish habitat and water quality in Florida Bay and the greater Gulf ecosystem.
- In the Greater Everglades Ecosystem in Florida, the proposed Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Storage Reservoir, a component of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, will capture and store stormwater runoff and water releases from Lake Okeechobee so that salinity balances and other estuary needs can be properly met during wet and dry seasons.
- In Alabama, potential projects could include land acquisitions and/or the restoration of wetlands and other habitats in locations around the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, which has been proposed for decades as a potential national park unit. The Mobile-Tensaw Delta is one of the most ecologically diverse places in North America, and its protection would contribute significantly to both the natural and cultural heritage of the Gulf Coast region and to regional economic growth.
- In Mississippi at Gulf Islands National Seashore, proposed projects would restore and rehabilitate beaches that have unnaturally eroded by the dredging of shipping channels. Other potential projects could be land acquisitions at Cat Island and Horn Island, the latter in the heart of the Congressionally-designated wilderness, requiring the public either trespass or swim in the ocean to get from one side of the NPS-owned portion of the island to the other.
- In Louisiana at Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, a proposed project would restore wetlands that are damaged by old oil exploration and drilling canals, levees, and platforms in the Barataria Preserve portion of the park. Other potential projects include land acquisition from willing sellers including those in Mississippi Delta wetlands.
- In Texas at Big Thicket National Preserve, proposed projects could provide restoration of abandoned oil well sites within the park boundary. Approximately 200 oil wells have been drilled in the preserve, most of which were plugged and abandoned before the preserve was established, yet staff do not know the extent of soil and water contamination at most of these sites. Restoration work would encompass everything from infrastructure removal to soil contamination mitigation.
- In Texas at Padre Island National Seashore, proposed projects could strengthen the park's sea turtle stranding network and nest detection

programs. Padre Island NS is the most important Kemp's Ridley nesting beach in the nation, and understanding the health of one of the most iconic animals of the Gulf and short- and long-term effects from the oil spill is critical for its survival.

- In Texas, proposed projects would enhance and support the goals of a proposed new national park unit, the Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area (LSCNRA), located in and around Galveston and Matagorda Bays. In particular, [Appendix A](#) includes LSCNRA partners' projects to acquire, restore, and protect habitat, and restore and protect shorelines such as those proposed by Texas Parks & Wildlife, Brazoria County, Galveston County, Artist Boat, Galveston Bay Foundation, Scenic Galveston, and USFWS Texas Chenier Plain Complex. The LSCNRA project area along the Upper Texas Coast includes the nation's second most productive estuarine bay system and an essential nursery for Gulf aquatic life, as well as critical habitat for some of the nation's largest populations of shorebirds and migratory neotropical songbirds.

With five of America's Great Waters including Coastal Louisiana and Galveston Bay and the ten existing national park units located in the Gulf region, we must not forget how these cherished places suffered, either by direct impacts from the oil or indirect effects such as lost revenues from spring and summer tourism seasons. NPCA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Plan* and looks forward to working with the Council over the coming months as it develops the final comprehensive plan that includes the "Ten-Year Funding Strategy" and the "Funded Priorities List." Please contact Sarah Barmeyer at 202-454-3311 or sbarmeyer@npca.org if you have any questions about the proposed projects or would like additional details about them.

Sincerely,



Ron Tipton
Senior Vice President for Policy

July 8, 2013

Secretary Penny Pritzker
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

Ocean Conservancy, in partnership with many organizations across the Gulf region, continues to work to ensure that the intent of Congress—restoring the Gulf ecosystem after the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster and reversing decades of ecosystem decline—is realized. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan (Plan). We respectfully offer the following recommendations for your consideration.

Given the additional detail that must be included for the Plan to be implemented from a practical standpoint, we request that the public be given an opportunity to comment on the final initial plan and project list that the Council will release prior to beginning project implementation. The ability of stakeholders to comment on this project list before the final plan is adopted is critical. We appreciate the time you have spent thus far soliciting feedback from residents and businesses across the Gulf Coast, and we urge you to continue to incorporate meaningful public engagement moving forward.

The Plan serves a critical role in providing a blueprint that will help guide restoration of the region and ensure a healthy and sustainable future for the Gulf. In order to fulfill this role and be fully effective, restoration decisions must adhere to clearly defined principles and criteria. Ocean Conservancy bases our comments to the Council on the following principles and makes additional recommendations, which are further described in the attached document:

- Principle: Sound management
Recommended Actions:
 - Restoration is conducted on an ecosystem scale and is comprehensive in scope, addressing coastal and marine environments, as well as coastal communities
 - Develop project selection sideboards guided by specific, objective criteria
- Principle: Predictable and coordinated funding for restoration projects and monitoring programs
Recommended Actions:
 - Creation of an endowment to support long-term ecosystem-scale research and monitoring
 - Project budgets include funding for monitoring and evaluation of results
- Principle: Feasible objectives for projects
Recommended Actions:

- Require project objectives that are specific, measurable and achievable
- Identify restoration benchmarks at the program level to continually gauge success and make changes as necessary
- Principle: Coordination among partners to maximize results
Recommended Actions:
 - Identify additional partnership opportunities for local, state and federal stakeholders to align and coordinate efforts
- Principle: Integration of science—including monitoring and research—throughout the process
Recommended Actions:
 - Create a science advisory board to inform program-level decision-making
 - Subject all projects to independent scientific peer review
 - Identify mechanisms and activities to facilitate coordination of science across various processes and funding sources (e.g., RESTORE Act, NRDA and NFWF)
- Principle: Public engagement
Recommended Actions:
 - Provide continued opportunities for public participation in shaping the program, setting milestones and specific outcomes
 - Identify opportunities for coastal residents to take part in the creation of a restoration economy
 - Conduct Council meetings in public

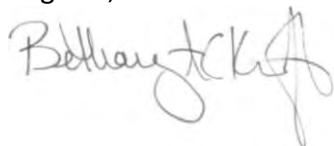
We have organized our detailed comments by the sections of the Plan and address the specific questions the Council asks regarding next steps in the appropriate section. Our comments provide additional considerations that will help the Council members develop a final initial plan that meets the criteria above and that encourages and facilitates coordination across political boundaries to move the Gulf ecosystem forward to its rightful place as a national treasure.

Ocean Conservancy submits these comments with the aim of helping the Council develop an effective and enduring restoration strategy. Council members have a historic opportunity to advance restoration of the Gulf of Mexico, which will significantly improve the health of our coastal and marine environments as well as the health of coastal communities.

We look forward to continuing to engage with you and other Council members as the final initial plan is developed and implementation of restoration projects begin. I am happy to discuss any of these recommendations or provide additional detail to you at your convenience. I can be reached at 504-208-5814.

Again, thank you for your commitment to the Gulf Coast and for your continued efforts to engage the community in shaping the future of the Gulf.

Regards,



Bethany Kraft
 Director, Gulf Restoration Program
 Ocean Conservancy

Enclosures (online):

Restoring the Gulf of Mexico: A Framework for Ecosystem Restoration in the Gulf of Mexico
<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/places/gulf-of-mexico/restoring-the-gulf-of-mexico.pdf>

The Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem: A Coastal and Marine Atlas
<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/gulfatlas>

CC: Justin Ehrenwerth

Harris Sherman

Rachel Jacobson

Jo Ellen Darcy

Vice Admiral John Currier

Ken Kopocis

Mimi Drew

N. Gunter Guy, Jr.

Garret Graves

Trudy Fisher

Toby Baker

Ocean Conservancy Comments and Recommendations for the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

Overarching Comments

We commend the Council members and staff on their efforts to create a plan that is comprehensive in scope, recognizing that a fully functioning Gulf ecosystem requires addressing systemic stressors and restoration needs in both coastal and marine environments. The interlinked nature of coastal and marine resources, combined with the fact that environmental stressors are associated with both land- and ocean-based activities, underscores the importance of a holistic approach to restoration, which is essential to ensure that the Gulf of Mexico is able to provide the services essential to the region and the nation.

The Council's emphasis on using the best available science (see Appendix I for additional information on the use of best available science) and adaptive management principles to inform decision-making and restoration planning is critical to achieving long-term success. To achieve desired restoration outcomes, it is imperative that decision-makers and the public have the best possible information to guide project planning, implementation and refinement. The importance of meaningful investments in science to support an effective restoration program is one important lesson learned from past restoration processes. To this end, the Council should dedicate a portion of its operating budget to internal science capacity and consider funding high-priority science activities in its 3-year funding cycle consistent with its Comprehensive Plan or a companion science plan.

Section 1604 of the RESTORE Act, which provides 2.5% of RESTORE Act dollars to a long-term science, observation and fisheries monitoring program, is a stand-alone program that was neither intended to be the Council's supporting science arm, nor will be sufficiently funded to meet the Council and region's science needs. We believe the staff administering the 1604 program should coordinate with the Council to avoid duplication of investments, leverage resources and ensure scientific findings are communicated to the Council for integration into decision making. However, the Council should establish and rely on its own internal science capacity for day-to-day operations support.

Ocean Conservancy recommends the Council develop and implement a science plan to support the Council's goals of achieving Gulf ecosystem recovery using the best available science. It is a good practice for a restoration body like the Council to use a science plan that clearly establishes how science will be structured and used to support decision-making and priority-setting at the program level. A science plan will help the Council establish internal and external review processes, identify performance benchmarks, develop monitoring-consistent protocols for projects, evaluate progress at the project and program levels, and identify and prioritize gaps in knowledge key to funding Council science projects. The Council should ask the National Research Council (NRC) to review the initial science plan and have the NRC independently review the science plan on a periodic basis (e.g., every five years). The role and feedback provided by NRC would support the Council's commitment to a science-based approach to restoration.

The Plan recognizes that the work of the Council is related to the ongoing work of the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustee Council and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Taken together, these three processes represent an opportunity to fund efforts to better understand the Gulf ecosystem and undertake a broader effort to restore and protect these vital natural resources. We recognize that this Plan cannot possibly address the entire suite of restoration needs in this vast ecosystem, but rather, we believe that the Plan can and should serve as a guide to help shift our focus from a localized and issue-specific perspective to one that recognizes the interdependence of communities and coastal and marine resources.

As the restoration process moves from the planning phase to the implementation phase, the rigorous application of project selection criteria will ensure that only the best and most appropriate projects are funded. It is incumbent upon the Council to develop those criteria before restoration begins in earnest.

A program of this scale must be supported by a core staff independent of any participating agencies. To that end, in addition to the selection of an Executive Director, Ocean Conservancy recommends the Council hire a Chief Scientist, who would lead development and implementation of the science-related aspects of the Council's program, such as hiring other supporting science staff, forming a scientific advisory body (see Appendix II), developing a science plan, establishing and managing a peer review process for projects, and liaising with other restoration science programs. The Chief Scientist should be independent of the Council member agencies and serve the Executive Director and Council at a senior level. The Chief Scientist would work closely with the scientific advisory body, participate in its meetings and draw on its experts to address and make recommendations on key issues.

Additional Administrative Recommendations:

- All participating agencies should devote adequate resources, including a full-time staff person dedicated to the Council from each agency, to enable robust participation and to function as a liaison between the independent staff and the agency.
- The Council should set forth clear policies for how it will govern itself and should have the authority to hold participating agencies accountable for project implementation.
- The federal agencies should establish a procedure to ensure that the actions and votes of the chair take into account and reflect the views of the relevant federal agencies.
- The Council should establish or adopt a conflict resolution mechanism.

Finally, we thank the Council for its efforts to engage the public regarding their vision for restoration throughout the process of developing this document. Public support for a lasting restoration initiative will ensure that decision-makers continue to have the support they need to implement restoration projects. Investing time and effort to engage citizens in meaningful ways throughout the implementation process will increase public buy-in and contribute to the long-term success of projects. As you prepare the final initial plan, please continue to identify opportunities to engage the public and ask them to invest their time, energy and talents in the effort to preserve and protect our Gulf resources.

Section by section comments

Section II Overview

Commitment to Science-Based Decision Making

We commend the Council's commitment to fund projects that "implement or improve: science-based adaptive management and project-level and regional ecosystem monitoring; including the coordination and interoperability of ecosystem monitoring programs..." However, the specific process and objectives needed to achieve this goal are missing from the Plan. As science and adaptive management are the core underpinnings of a successful restoration program, the Council must articulate in the final plan how science will inform restoration decision-making and measure project success over time.

The importance of adaptive management to successful restoration through the scientific activities of monitoring, modeling and research (i.e., restoration science) cannot be overstated. However, without a significant and sustained funding source for restoration science, agencies implementing restoration measures will not have the resources to measure project or program performance, and key environmental changes may go undetected, which will affect ecosystem services and impact livelihoods.

Recommendation: The Council should devote the necessary resources to provide or obtain the science needed to support effective restoration, as well as to promote long-term sustainable use of the Gulf ecosystem. This program should be cooperative in nature, taking advantage of existing and new efforts, including but not limited to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring and Technology Program and the Centers of Excellence, both established under the RESTORE Act, as well as any ongoing science program related to the Deepwater Horizon NRDA process. Use of the best available science is paramount. This should include environmental science, social science and the incorporation of local and tribal knowledge, regardless of official federal or state recognition.

Ocean Conservancy supports the Council's inclusion of the need for adaptive management as a key factor of restoration planning and implementation. It is important to make the distinction between sufficient funding needed to support and implement science associated with the Council's work and an endowment for funding monitoring and research on a permanent basis. A meaningful and effective science-based adaptive management framework must have sufficient funding. In addition, an endowment would provide a reliable source of funding for recommended monitoring, modeling and scientific research. Such an endowment would be one of the positive legacies resulting from the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Recommendation: Include in your initial Funded Priorities List a project to endow a Gulf of Mexico ecosystem monitoring, modeling and applied research program. A significant and sustained source of funding is critical to the timely evaluation of restoration projects on a long-term basis, so that progress toward overall restoration goals is maintained. Taking the pulse of the Gulf through monitoring and research will improve predictions of ecosystem function, support adaptive management and give coastal communities more warning when ocean conditions change and related ecosystem services (e.g., fisheries) might be affected.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a science plan to support the Council's goals of achieving Gulf ecosystem recovery using the best available science. It is good practice for a restoration body like the Council to use a science plan that clearly establishes how science will be structured and used to support decision-making and priority setting at the program level. A science plan will help the Council establish internal and external peer review processes, identify performance benchmarks, develop monitoring-consistent protocols for projects, evaluate progress at the project and program levels, and identify and prioritize gaps in knowledge key to funding Council science projects. The Council should ask the National Research Council (NRC) to review the initial science plan and have the NRC independently review the science plan on a periodic basis (every five years). The role and feedback provided by NRC would support the Council's commitment to a science-based approach to restoration.

Recommendation: Ocean Conservancy recommends the Council establish a scientific advisory body (see Appendix II) to serve in an independent, scientific advisory capacity, providing program-level, ecosystem-wide perspectives. In close cooperation with the Chief Scientist, the scientific advisory body should help shape the science plan, provide input on restoration plans and programs, evaluate progress toward restoration goals, identify gaps and conflicts, and otherwise address issues important to successful restoration efforts. Ocean Conservancy recommends the scientific advisory body integrate new science into the Council process by reviewing the science plan and restoration plan before the end of the first three

years. The body would take stock of the latest science, identifying emerging issues, science gaps and research needs and recommend that the Council consider these in setting restoration priorities and projects for the next three-year cycle. The body should review projects on an annual basis as well, identifying problems and recommending adjustments. Both of these represent adaptive management in practice.

Commitment to a Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration

We commend the Council's commitment to an ecosystem-based approach to restoration. To accomplish this goal, the Plan must demonstrate an integrated, regional approach and include specific objectives and detailed information on how progress will be monitored to ensure that projects are contributing to an overall approach that addresses restoration of both coastal and marine environments as well as coastal communities.

Recommendation: The Council should enter into a formal agreement with the BP Deepwater Horizon NRDA Trustee Council, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NOAA (1604 Program), North American Wetlands Conservation Fund and the National Academy of Sciences to link and coordinate restoration efforts in response to the oil disaster, as well as to the decades of degradation in the Gulf.

Commitment to Engagement, Inclusion and Transparency

Sustained, meaningful public participation is critical to the long-term success of the Council's goals and objectives. Meaningful public participation includes: meetings open to the public (except for occasional executive sessions when necessary), advance public notice of meetings, opportunities for public comment at meetings, and opportunities for comment on draft strategies, plans and projects. Council meetings should be rotated across the Gulf states to afford opportunities for the public to attend meetings in person. Additionally, adequate notice (a minimum of 15 business days) of meeting dates and locations must be provided to ensure meaningful public participation and input.

The Council should ensure transparency in terms of its project selection process, grant and contracting procedures and awards, and project status. Preferably, an easily accessible online data source should be created to track the Council's decisions and their progress.

Establishment of Advisory Committees

The Council should establish the following advisory committees: a scientific advisory committee (see Appendix II) to provide advice on the best available science and on restoration at a programmatic level; a public policy committee to address issues of existing policy impeding restoration; and a public advisory committee (see Appendix III) with regional stakeholder representation to ensure public participation and transparency in decision-making.

Commitment to Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

Utilizing existing partnerships and building new relationships will be essential if we are to achieve long-term success in implementing a restoration plan. In the Gulf region, there are several bodies that are important partners in the restoration effort, including: the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), the NRDA Trustee Council,

NFWF, the Hypoxia Task Force, the National Ocean Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC).

Recommendation: Include specific language in the Plan that details how the Council plans to interact, coordinate and share information across the various bodies engaged in Gulf restoration efforts.

Recommendation: The Council should seek to leverage existing federal, state and local discretionary funding and interagency, intergovernmental or public-private partnerships to promote job and skills training opportunities to help local workers find economic opportunities in the restoration economy, particularly among underemployed and socially vulnerable populations. The Council should utilize its authority to develop appropriate preferences in procurement and grant policies that promote the hiring of local workers and collaboration between grant recipients and/or contractors with local workforce development agencies and programs to promote the training and placement of local workers, particularly those from disadvantaged, underserved and resource-constrained communities.

Commitment to Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

Recommendations:

- All projects should be monitored for performance and results using standard methods and as much integration and efficiency as possible.
- The status of the entire ecosystem should be monitored, synthesized and communicated to the public every 5 years, with biennial symposia reporting out on projects and program progress in coordination with other restoration programs (NFWF, NAS, NRDA, NOAA/1604, etc.)
- Monitoring results should inform restoration actions and priorities at both programmatic and project levels.

Section III Goals

The Council's Plan recognizes five overarching goals for the Comprehensive Restoration Plan, four of which focus on environmental restoration and one on economic recovery. Ecosystem restoration projects benefit the economy and communities by generating demand for goods and services provided by local contractors or by supporting local jobs. However, economic development projects might not be compatible with environmental restoration goals, with some potentially resulting in undesirable environmental impacts. Therefore, the Council should select projects for funding with the intent of maximizing environmental benefits and avoiding or minimizing project impacts on natural resources it aims to restore. This requires the commitment of all of the Council members to think beyond political boundaries to ensure that restoration projects are coordinated to create an outcome that is larger than the sum of the individual projects.

Section IV Council-Selected Restoration Component

Objectives

Ocean Conservancy believes the objectives outlined in the plan are the right ones. The task before the Council is to identify specific outcomes and milestones in the Plan to ensure that we are moving towards achieving one or more objectives with every project. We look forward to working with Council members in

that effort, because a restoration strategy without specific measures of success or timelines for implementation will not be a sufficient guide to drive restoration planning and implementation.

Recommendation: Develop a matrix to track projects from both a geographic and ecosystem perspective to ensure that each Project List contains a number of projects that meet multiple objectives from the freshwater to offshore environments and across the entire Gulf Region.

Evaluation Criteria

As we move from the development of overarching goals to the planning and implementation of restoration projects, success—which must be measured by the health and resilience of the ecosystem—relies on the selection, implementation and evaluation of a series of integrated projects, consistent with a Gulf-wide plan and rigorous application of criteria to ensure that only the best and most appropriate projects are funded.

The Council is in a strong position to make recommendations as to how best prioritize projects that will accomplish our restoration goals. The criteria described below can be applied at the strategic level, as well as at the level of individual projects. They are based in part on those developed and tested by the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (1994).

Recommendation: The Council should adopt additional selection criteria. See Appendix IV for our recommended project selection criteria.

Submittal of Proposals to the Council

Section V State Expenditure Plans

There is some concern the Plan does not include clear definition from the Council as to what qualifies as economic restoration, particularly when it comes to infrastructure—funding for which is limited under the RESTORE Act. Economic restoration in the context of RESTORE must consider project sustainability and environmental impact. Since RESTORE Act funds will flow through penalties for violation of an environmental law, the Council must commit to ensuring that economic restoration projects, whether funded through the Council-controlled or state impact components, will not degrade the environment nor negatively impact ecosystem restoration projects funded under the RESTORE Act, NRDA or NFWF.

We have several concerns about the Plan’s proposed process for soliciting and evaluating project proposals (p. 16), as explained in detail below.

1. There is a lack of specificity in the Plan regarding the project submission sponsorship requirement. The word “sponsorship” as used on page 16 of the Plan is not defined within the RESTORE Act. As such, we encourage the Council to clearly describe what duties and obligations project sponsorship entails, including the following clarifications:
 - The extent to which sponsorship conveys responsibility for long-term monitoring, evaluation, and stewardship of projects, including the acquisition of land or other rights and adaptive management measures;

- The extent to which sponsorship requires the same agency that sponsors a project or program to implement it;
 - If sponsorship necessitates any level of local, state or other matching requirements;
 - The extent to which sponsorship affects pass-through grant or subcontracting requirements.
2. Requiring proposed projects to be sponsored by individual Council members may restrict the implementation of large-scale, collaborative, and/or regional projects. We are concerned that requiring that projects or programs be sponsored by a single Council member may, in essence, pigeonhole potential projects/programs into single agencies' geographic regions or priorities and thereby impede the Council's ability to realize its stated commitment to "promot[ing] ecosystem-based and landscape-scale restoration without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region." To address this concern, we recommend that the Council consider the following:
- Allowing for projects or programs to have one or more agency "sponsors," thereby enabling two or more Council members to work together to propose and implement large-scale, cross-boundary projects; and/or
 - Allowing for the responsibility for the implementation and/or the long-term monitoring, evaluation and stewardship of projects or programs to be delegated by the project sponsor to another appropriate entity with mutually agreed upon terms of commitment.
3. Varying requirements and standards among project sponsors may lead to inconsistent practices relating to project subcontractors, grantees, and/or project partners. To address this concern, we propose:
- Including provisions in the final plan that require any policies or requirements associated with pass-through grants and subcontracting opportunities to be consistent among all the agencies involved in the restoration of the Gulf Coast; and
 - Including provisions in the final plan which require that any policies or requirements associated with matching requirements should be applied uniformly among all implementers and projects/programs involved in the restoration of the Gulf Coast; and
 - Considering the possibility of appointing a lead agency from the Council members' affiliations to administer all restoration programs and serve as a single point of contact and central support unit throughout the project selection and implementation processes. Administration would include ensuring projects/programs are implemented according to the Final Comprehensive Plan, benchmarks and completion occur on schedule, budgets are evaluated for accountability, and general oversight is provided throughout the process.
4. There is a lack of specificity in the Plan regarding the timing of project solicitations. The current text of the Plan indicates that the Council will "periodically request proposals from its eleven state and federal members." We urge the Council to specify in its final plan the following:

- The general time frame for which the Council will solicit project and program proposals (annually, semi-annually, etc.). We recommend that project solicitations be made at least semi-annually and follow a schedule similar to established federal restoration grant programs that have been successfully proven over time, such as the NOAA Community Restoration Program or the USFWS Coastal Program.
- The timeline of review for project or program selection.
- A schedule for scientific and public input and review.

Environmental Assessment

Given the uncertainties at this early stage of the restoration process and the generality of the PEA's impact analysis, it will be critical to perform additional NEPA analysis as restoration efforts begin to solidify. The PEA itself appropriately recognizes that additional "NEPA analysis will be performed on subsequent updates to the Plan." (p. 44). The Council should make clear that a PEA-level analysis may not be sufficient. As the Plan is updated, NEPA may require the Council to prepare a more comprehensive Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to fully assess potential impacts.

The PEA also acknowledges that specific proposed projects will require their own NEPA analyses. The PEA rightly points out that future NEPA analyses for individual projects must "take into account site-specific conditions and identify the environmentally preferable alternative, as applicable." (p. 8). In particular, analyses of future projects must include careful evaluation of potential direct impacts, as the PEA does not even attempt to cover this category of impacts. Analysis of future projects must also include a much more detailed analysis of indirect and cumulative impacts than that which is found in the PEA. While NEPA regulations allow for subsequent analyses to "tier" to a programmatic assessment to avoid duplicative assessments, it would be inappropriate to tier to the extremely generalized analysis contained in the PEA. As more and more information about potential projects becomes available, the cursory impact analyses in this PEA will quickly become outdated, and more detailed analyses will be required.

Appendix I: Best Available Science in the RESTORE Act

(27) the term ‘best available science’ means science that—(A) maximizes the quality, objectivity, and integrity of information, including statistical information; (B) uses peer-reviewed and publicly available data; and (C) clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis for such projects;

(1) STATE ALLOCATION AND EXPENDITURES.—(E) CONDITIONS.—As a condition of receiving amounts from the Trust Fund, a Gulf Coast State, including the entities described in subparagraph (F), or a coastal political subdivision shall—(ii) certify in such form and in such manner as the Secretary of the Treasury determines necessary that the project or program for which the Gulf Coast State or coastal political subdivision is requesting amounts—(IV) in the case of a natural resource protection or restoration project, is based on the best available science;

(2) COUNCIL ESTABLISHMENT AND ALLOCATION.—(B) COUNCIL EXPENDITURES.—(i) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with this paragraph, the Council shall expend funds made available from the Trust Fund to undertake projects and programs, using the best available science, that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast.

(D) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.—(iii) RESTORATION PRIORITIES- Except for projects and programs described in subclause (ii) (IV)(bb), in selecting projects and programs to include on the 3- year list described in subclause (ii) (IV)(dd), based on the best available science, the Council shall give highest priority to projects that address 1 or more of the following criteria:...

Best Available Science in various statutes

MSA

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires that “[c]onservation and management measures shall be based upon the best scientific information available.” 16 U.S.C. § 1851(a)(2).

According to case law, “[i]t is well settled ... that the Secretary can act when the available science is incomplete or imperfect, even where concerns have been raised about the accuracy of the methods or models employed.” *General Category Scallop Fishermen v. Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Commerce*, 635 F.3d 106, 115 (3rd Cir.2011) (citing *North Carolina Fisheries Association, Inc. v. Gutierrez*, 518 F.Supp.2d 62, 85 (D.D.C. 2007)).

ESA

The Endangered Species Act requires the Secretary to make determinations as to listing species as endangered or threatened “based solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available.” 16 U.S.C. § 1533(b)(1)(A).

The Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has found that under the ESA’s “best data available” standard, agencies have no obligation to conduct independent studies, and are entitled to rely upon the best data available to it. In *Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. Babbitt*, the court found it acceptable that the agency relied on existing scientific estimates of the species' population, rather than conducting its own population count in order to determine whether a species is endangered. The requirement for best data available “merely prohibits the Secretary from disregarding available scientific evidence that is in some way better than the evidence he relies on.” *Friends of Blackwater v. Salazar*, 691 F.3d 428, 435 (D.C. Cir. 2012)

(citing *Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. Babbitt*, 215 F.3d 58, 60–61 (D.C. Cir. 2000) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)).

Other

Holly Doremus, *Listing Decisions Under the Endangered Species Act: Why Better Science Isn't Always Better Policy*, 75 Wash. U. L.Q. 1029, 1033–34, FN 9 (1997) (internal citations omitted):

This phrase [best available science], or a close variant, occurs in the following statutes: the ESA, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Salmon and Steelhead Conservation & Enhancement Act of 1980, the Pacific Salmon Treaty Act of 1985, the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990, the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992, the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, and the National Fishing Enhancement Act of 1984.

Although they occur with particular frequency in conservation statutes, best available science requirements are not limited to that context. A provision of the Toxic Substances Control Act concerning removal of asbestos from school buildings requires consideration of the best available scientific evidence. The Safe Drinking Water Amendments of 1996 require that the Environmental Protection Agency use “the best available, peer-reviewed science.” A Clinton Administration executive order detailing general procedures for internal executive branch review of proposed regulations requires that agencies base regulatory decisions on the best reasonably obtainable scientific and other information.

Courts give deference to the expertise of the agency

In deciding whether scientific information is the “best available,” substantial deference is accorded to the Agency’s assessment of the quality of what is available. See *General Category Scallop Fishermen v. Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Commerce*, 635 F.3d 106, 115 (3rd Cir. 2011); *Washington Crab Producers, Inc. v. Mosbacher*, 924 F.2d 1438, 1448–1449 (9th Cir. 1990); *C & W Fish Co., Inc. v. Fox*, 931 F.2d 1556, 1562 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (a court’s task on review is simply “to determine whether the Secretary’s conclusion that the standards have been satisfied is rational and supported by the record.”).

Law Review Articles on Best Available Science

- Robert L. Glicksman, *Bridging Data Gaps Through Modeling and Evaluation of Surrogates: Use of the Best Available Science to Protect Biological Diversity Under the National Forest Management Act*, 83 Ind. L.J. 465, 472–474 (2008) (internal citations omitted):

Some of the federal environmental laws require that agencies base their decisions on the “best available science,” thereby recognizing that complete information may never be available. In such situations, the statutes charge the agencies with doing the best they can to mine the information that it is practical to obtain before discharging their statutory responsibilities. Some agencies, including the Forest Service, have interpreted statutory provisions requiring that decisions be based on science as permitting decision making based on the best available science.

...

Provisions requiring that federal environmental and natural resource management agencies base their decisions on consideration of the “best available science” are common. Perhaps the best known of these is the provision of the ESA requiring the Interior and Commerce Departments to base their decisions on whether or not to list a species as endangered or threatened “solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available.” 16 U.S.C. § 1533(b)(1)(A). But Congress has used the same or similar language in a variety of other pollution control and natural resource management statutes.

Although Congress has never defined the term “best available science” in any of the environmental statutes in which that term is used, it has explicitly recognized that, in directing that agencies make

decisions on that basis, the optimal amount of scientific evidence for making the decision involved may not be available. As Holly Doremus has explained, a “best available science” mandate may serve multiple purposes. These include ensuring that an agency's decisions accurately reflect known scientific information, imposing a mandate on the agency to make its best efforts to ferret out available information, placing an imprimatur of objectivity on agency decisions to increase public trust and enhance the agency's credibility, and creating a basis for resolving judicial challenges to agency decisions. Ultimately, it is possible for the adoption of a statutory or regulatory mandate that an agency base its decisions solely on the “best available science” to make it harder for environmental agencies to weaken environmental and natural resource protection mechanisms by relying on political opposition or on factors, such as economic considerations, that tend to cut against stringent pollution control requirements or meaningful constraints on natural resource development.

- Holly Doremus, *The Purposes, Effects, and Future of the Endangered Species Act's Best Available Science Mandate*, 34 Env'tl. L. 397, 424-426 (2004) (internal citations omitted):

In terms of improving decision making, the ESA's best available science mandate might impose at least one thing that the APA and other background requirements do not--an affirmative obligation to find data, rather than to simply evaluate what others present. A few courts have interpreted the best available science mandate to impose precisely such an obligation. For example, in *Roosevelt Campobello International Park Commission v. EPA*, the First Circuit read the ESA's best available science mandate to require real time simulation studies of navigation in an area proposed for an oil refinery and tanker terminal before a permit allowing construction could be granted. All parties agreed that such studies “would contribute a more precise appreciation of risks of collision and grounding,” which could result in an oil spill harmful to listed species. The court concluded that the simulations were feasible, could be financed by the permit applicant, and would provide information needed to assess the risks of a catastrophic oil spill. Those studies and others, the court wrote, “obviously represent as yet untapped sources of ‘best scientific and commercial data.’” Similarly, the Ninth Circuit held in *Connor v. Burford* that ESA section 7 required the agency to develop projections of the impacts of oil and gas development, even if those projections would be imprecise estimates.

Following *Roosevelt Campobello*, the district court for the District of Massachusetts required that a biological opinion await the results of ongoing, “demonstrably feasible” studies bearing directly on the impacts of a proposed action in *Conservation Law Foundation v. Watt*. Similarly, noting that a congressional report on 1978 amendments to the ESA explained that the best available science mandate requires that biological opinions prepared under section 7 be based on the best evidence “that is available or can be developed during consultation,” a federal district court concluded in *Village of False Pass v. Watt*, that the action agency has a duty “to continue acquiring information until an affirmative finding of no jeopardy can be made.”

A more recent decision, however, rejects the claim that the best available science mandate requires development of new information. In *Southwest Center for Biological Diversity v. Babbitt*, the D.C. Circuit overturned a trial court's requirement that FWS conduct a population census before deciding whether or not to list the Queen Charlotte goshawk. According to the appellate court, “The ‘best available data’ requirement makes it clear that the Secretary has no obligation to conduct independent studies.” Despite that broad language, the *Southwest Center* decision can be distinguished from the earlier ones on two bases. First, there was no claim in *Southwest Center* that the study demanded by the trial court was feasible. Second, *Roosevelt Campobello* and the decisions that follow it deal with the section 7 duty not to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species, whereas *Southwest Center* deals with the listing requirements of section 4. The two are different in important respects. Section 7 requires that the action agency “insure” that its actions are not likely to cause jeopardy. That word, which does not appear in section 4, can be read to impose a stronger duty to gather information. The purposes of the two sections support that distinction. Listing provides protection for species thought to be dwindling. If existing

information indicates that the species needs protection, it should be listed. Demands for additional information should not stand in the way of listing, which will provide an incentive for affected parties to gather and reveal information that might show that the species does not in fact need protection. Section 7, on the other hand, protects species already shown to be in critical condition from extinction. Requiring the collection and analysis of reasonably obtainable information will enhance, not undermine, conservation efforts.

- Michael J. Brennan, et al., *Square Pegs and Round Holes: Application of the “Best Scientific Data Available” Standard in the Endangered Species Act*, 16 Tul. Env'tl. L.J. 387, 402-404 (2003) (internal citations omitted):

Standards similar to the best scientific data available standard have been utilized in a number of statutes other than the ESA. Indeed, the concept of best scientific data available (with some permutations) recurs throughout the United States Code. Standards similar to the best scientific data available standard are found in several federal acts, including the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Perhaps the most interesting example from other federal acts for our current discussion is the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Section 300g-1 of the SDWA establishes the framework for national drinking water regulations, which form a water quality baseline. A critical part of the water quality baseline is the establishment of National Primary Drinking Water Regulations and National Secondary Drinking Water Regulations. Because both sets of regulations are keyed to human health, the process of developing the regulations involves an analysis of potential health risks. While the SDWA requires that the science employed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is “the best available,” the Act goes on to further require that the science be “peer reviewed” and “in accordance with sound and objective scientific practices.” Accordingly, unlike the stand-alone best scientific data available standard in the ESA, the SDWA standard attempts to impose objective criteria on utilized science.

Appendix II: Establishment of a science advisory body

Ocean Conservancy recommends the Council establish a scientific advisory body to serve in an independent, scientific advisory capacity, providing program-level, ecosystem-wide perspectives. In close cooperation with the Chief Scientist, the scientific advisory group would help shape the science plan, provide input on restoration plans and programs, evaluate progress toward restoration goals, identify gaps and conflicts, and otherwise address issues important to successful restoration efforts. See the attached Graphic, Page 4. To be effective and credible, a scientific advisory body should be representative of different scientific disciplines and have expertise from both within and beyond the Gulf region. The Council should take the necessary steps to avoid perceived or real conflicts of interest.

A key responsibility for the scientific advisory body is to obtain input on the restoration plan and groups of project proposals as they are advanced through the decision-making process. Members can look at the overall Comprehensive Restoration Plan and comment on its sufficiency from the standpoint of the Gulf ecosystem, and they can look at groups of projects to consider how they do or don't fit the Plan, serve the ecosystem in a comprehensive way. This body reviews the major scientific thrust and elements of a science plan and guides development of monitoring and performance benchmarks at the project and program level. Advisory body members can identify gaps and priorities, looking through their scientists' lenses. They also can point out needs and opportunities for coordination between and among programs.

a. Science advisory body development, membership and relationship to the Council

Ocean Conservancy recommends the Council adopt the following elements when considering the scientific advisory body's development, membership and relationship to the Council:

- i. The Council should appoint 12 to 15 members to the science advisory body to provide independent, scientific advice to the Council. Members of the scientific advisory body should not be affiliated with any agency (or its bureaus) represented on the Council (this is critical for avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining the advisory body's integrity and credibility.);
- ii. The Council should establish a third-party process by which candidate members are nominated for Council appointment. The Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC) may be able to nominate individuals from the Gulf region and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)¹ a few individuals from outside the region. Some members should be selected from outside the Gulf region to provide a different perspective that could be beneficial;
- iii. Members' expertise should reflect the full range of scientific disciplines required to restore the Gulf ecosystem from the coast to the offshore environment; and
- iv. The scientific advisory body should report directly to the ED.

b. Composition of scientific advisory body

Ocean Conservancy recommends the scientific advisory body have the full complement of technical expertise needed to help the Council implement its commitment to a "regional ecosystem-based approach to restoration." In general, this means having a body capable of advising the Council on issues and projects as diverse as upland, estuarine and marine resource

¹ Specifically, the Restore Council might explore with Chris Elfring, Director, NAS Gulf Program, the role her program might have in helping the Council establish a scientific advisory body. CElfring@nas.edu

restoration, while helping the Council take an ecologically integrated, landscape-level and coast to offshore approach to ensure restoration has the broadest possible impact. Specifically, the following disciplines should be represented on the body:

- I. Physical oceanography
- II. Plankton ecology (biological oceanography)
- III. Fisheries science (finfish and shellfish)
- IV. Hydrology
- V. Marsh/estuarine ecology
- VI. Ornithology
- VII. Marine mammal expert
- VIII. Conservation biology
- IX. Restoration science
- X. Resource economics
- XI. Social science

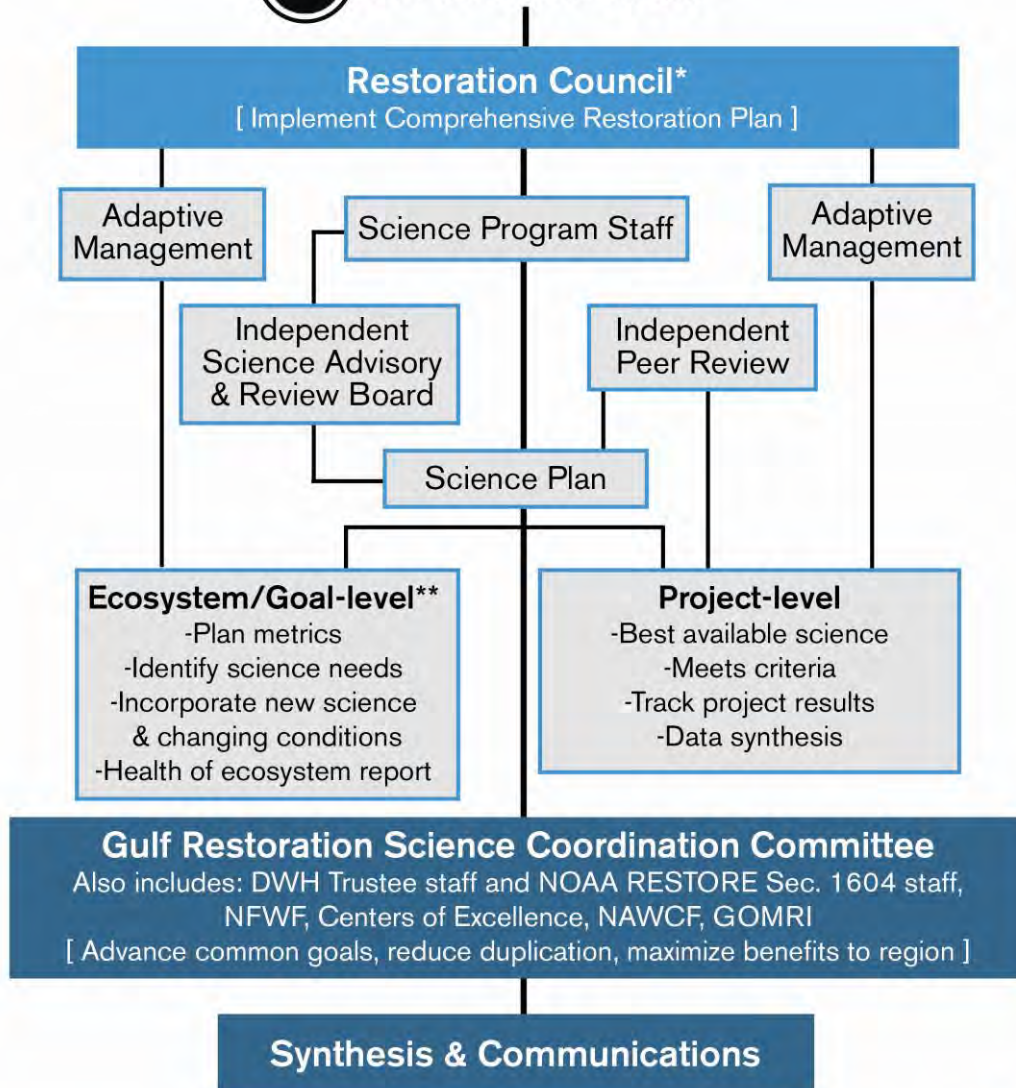
Defining Restoration Science under the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

DRAFT

04/05/2013



RESTORE Act



* Public Input on Plan and Projects

** Based on overarching goals identified in the *Path Forward*



Appendix III: Public Advisory Committee Structure

I. Commercial Fishing (Five members: One representing each state)

1. Representative of a regional commercial shrimping association (not processors);
2. Representative of a regional commercial oyster harvesting association (not processors);
3. Representative of minorities in the commercial fishing/processing enterprise;
4. Representative of small family owned commercial fishing/processing enterprise; and
5. Representative of a multi-cultural fisher owned cooperative.

II. Conservation/Environmental Advocates (Five members: One representing each state)

1. Representative of a nonprofit with expertise advocating for marine habitat conservation;
2. Representative of a nonprofit with expertise advocating for addressing coastal land loss or with expertise in wetlands ecology and restoration;
3. Representative of a nonprofit with expertise advocating on behalf of water quality/quantity;
4. Representative of a nonprofit with expertise advocating for land acquisition and habitat conservation; and
5. Representative of a nonprofit with expertise in climate change and coastal resiliency.

III. Socially Vulnerable/Community-based Organizations/Affected Community (Five members: One representing each state)

1. Representative of a community-based nonprofit representing an affected coastal Southeast Asian American Community;
2. Representative of a community-based nonprofit representing an affected coastal African American community;
3. Representative of a community-based nonprofit representing an affected rural coastal community;
4. Representative with expertise in environmental justice and land use; and
5. Representative with expertise in community-based workforce and economic development.

IV. Recreational Water Use/Tourism/Business (Five members: One representing each state)

1. Representative of charter boat operator association or recreational fishing;
2. Representative of coastal real estate owners;
3. Representative of coastal ecotourism operators;
4. Representative of recreational water use community, other than recreational fishing, with experience in habitat restoration; and
5. Representative of regional coastal business association.

V. At Large Members (Five members: One representing each state)

1. Tribal/Indigenous and cultural/historical/traditional communities;
2. Expert in social resiliency;
3. Scientist or Academic either chosen from the general public or representing a nongovernmental organization with expertise in marine restoration/marine biology;
4. Scientist or Academic either chosen from the general public or representing a nongovernmental organization with expertise in coastal ecology / coastal restoration; and
5. Scientist or Academic either chosen from the general public or representing a nongovernmental organization with expertise in ecosystem services valuation.

Caveats:

1. Exclude from membership any person, including but not limited to anyone who benefits from oil and gas development or any contractor involved in wetland restoration, who has a financial interest

or a regulatory conflict relative to any activities or projects upon which the CAC would provide advice.

2. Consider attorneys with knowledge in these fields to provide broader understanding of the policy or legislation behind the issues;
3. Fishing is defined as crabbers, shrimpers, trappers, oyster harvesters, fin-fishing at a minimum and there is a strong request to ensure the fishing component includes as many actual family fishers as possible as opposed to a larger contingent of processors;
4. CAC representatives should have knowledge about the importance of wetlands and the best methods to protect them.
5. Since elected officials are adequately represented elsewhere in the process, there is no reason for them to be represented on the Citizens Advisory Committee. Ensure impacted communities are well represented across all five states. In large & diverse coastal states like Florida and Texas, council members should come from areas that had the greatest ecosystem damages;
6. Ensure citizens are drawn from and connected to the community; and
7. Selected candidates should have the ability to speak for his/her specific community and state, but also have at least a general understanding and of the broader Gulf Coast issues, e.g. by being connected through networks.

Appendix IV: Criteria for Defining the Restoration Program and Selecting Projects under the Gulf of Mexico Comprehensive Restoration Plan

Introduction

The RESTORE Act specifies that 30 percent of the total amount made available to the Trust Fund each year shall be disbursed to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) to carry out the Comprehensive Restoration Plan (Plan). The Council will also have responsibility for administering another 30 percent of Trust Fund funds that are to be spent in accordance with individual state expenditure plans consistent with the Plan. The Plan will define the program and guide development of the types of projects, using the best available science, to be implemented with the Council's portion of Trust Funds, focusing on restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast.

To help the Council restore and protect the Gulf ecosystem, the RESTORE Act directs the Council to use the "best available science" in defining the restoration program and selecting and undertaking relevant projects. The RESTORE Act also states that the Council shall give preference to projects that address one or more criteria addressing key restoration priorities. Therefore, the Plan should: 1) serve as a guide for selecting preferred projects; and 2) contain science-based criteria to ensure that only the best and most appropriate projects are funded by the Council.

The ultimate success of the restoration program and the projects selected to implement it—which must be measured by the recovery and resilience of the ecosystem—rests on selection, implementation, evaluation, and adaptive management of a series of integrated projects. The Council has an unprecedented opportunity to develop a Plan that embraces a comprehensive, integrated ecosystem approach to restoration and that strives for results that are greater than the sum of the individual projects.

Guidance for Selecting Preferred Restoration Projects

- The proposed project addresses at least one of the following criteria specified in the RESTORE Act aimed at restoring or protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region:
 - Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region;
 - Large-scale projects and programs projected to contribute substantially to Gulf ecosystem recovery;
 - Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans; and
 - Projects that restore long-term resiliency based on impacts resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Science-based Project Selection Criteria

The criteria listed below are based in part on the Council's duties as specified in the RESTORE Act or were adapted from other natural resource restoration plans. The criteria can be applied at the strategic and programmatic level as well as at the level of individual projects. *Threshold* criteria represent a minimum standard, and all threshold criteria must be met in order for individual projects to be considered further. *Supplemental* criteria are those intended to help decision makers further prioritize projects based on benefit and other attributes. That is, the greater the number of supplemental criteria met, the greater the contribution of projects to ecosystem recovery and to the local economies and communities.

Threshold Criteria

Restoration Benefit Defined

- The proposed project clearly defines the expected benefits and is consistent with and contributes to fulfilling comprehensive ecosystem restoration plans and objectives.

Feasible

- The proposed project is appropriate under federal and state law, technically feasible and can realistically be implemented within a reasonable timeframe;

Meets Minimum Design Standards

- Project sponsors demonstrate due diligence that includes scientific, technical, economic and social evaluation of design, design alternatives and implementation;
- Restoration activities should have clear, measurable and achievable end points;
- The proposed project incorporates a monitoring plan that will enable evaluation of its progress and ultimate success;

Likely to Succeed

- The proposed project is likely to result in a successful outcome, measurably contribute (even if indirectly) at an appropriate scale to the recovery of a natural resource or ecosystem service, or is a small-scale pilot intended to demonstrate effectiveness before larger scale funding or implementation is considered;

Cost Effective

- The cost to carry out and monitor the proposed project or program is reasonable relative to benefits and available funds; and

Implementation Impacts

- *Environmental restoration projects:* Any potential harmful effects on non-target resources and services are evaluated and deemed as acceptable given the project's benefits or can be mitigated by restoring, replacing, rehabilitating or acquiring the equivalent of the same or similar resources harmed by the project;
- *Economic recovery projects:* Any possible harmful effects on natural resources are identified upfront or can be avoided or mitigated by restoring, replacing, rehabilitating or acquiring the equivalent of the same or similar resources harmed by the project;

Supplemental Criteria

Benefits Multiple Resources

- Priority will be given to projects or programs that benefit multiple species or resources; and
- The project contributes to an ecologically balanced (coast to offshore environment), integrated approach to restoration.

Benefits to Economy, People and Communities

- Priority will be given to projects or programs that:

- give a preference to individuals and companies that reside in, are headquartered in, or are principally engaged in business in a Gulf Coast State;
- protect or restore livelihoods in any of the following economic sectors: tourism, fisheries, maritime, and recreation; and
- build community resiliency and benefit communities vulnerable to disasters.

Addresses Root Causes of Degradation

- The project addresses underlying sources of environmental stress and seeks long-term approaches and solutions to restoring natural processes rather than addressing the symptoms of environmental degradation through short-term fixes.

Climate change

- The project should yield long-term ecological benefits commensurate with investment and with due consideration of sea-level rise; and
- The project would enhance resilience and adaptation of coastal and marine environments and species with respect to climate change impacts;

Proposal Quality and Scope

- Competitive, innovative, collaborative and cost effective proposals for restoration projects or programs will be encouraged;
- Projects or programs that leverage funding from public or private sources outside the restoration process will be encouraged; and
- Projects or programs that are scalable may be funded in part, provided that the funded component stands alone in terms of its benefits, even if the rest of the project is not funded.

Public Support

- The project represents a restoration approach for which the public has expressed support or would likely support based on previous public comment or input; and
- The project contains a public education component such as on-site interpretation, signage or some other means to inform the public about the project's importance and results.

13-031225



OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TERREBONNE PARISH CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT
P. O. Box 6097
HOUMA, LOUISIANA 70361-6097



MICHEL H. CLAUDET
PARISH PRESIDENT

(985) 873-6401
FAX: (985) 873-6409
E-MAIL: mhclaudet@tpcg.org

May 31, 2013

Dr. Rebecca Blank, Chair
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

2013 JUN 17 PM 2:55
05 EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

RE: Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy

Dr. Blank:

I would first like to congratulate your council and employees on the composition of your Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan related to the RESTORE Act. As president of Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, I fully understand the devastation the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent oil spill had on the environment and the economy of the Gulf States. Here in Terrebonne we have experienced direct impacts of oiled water, marsh, and barrier island habitats, as well as impacts to our commercial and recreational fishing industries, to our tourism industry, and to our oil and gas production and service industries. We have eagerly anticipated the arrival of financial assistance to help alleviate the burdens felt by these impacts, and look forward to the opportunities that will be afforded to us by the RESTORE Act and by the work of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. With this in mind, I would like to offer a few comments on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy on behalf of Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government.

The goals of the plan are well-structured and, overall, address the broad range of impacts we have experienced as a result of this disaster. The first goal to Restore and Conserve Habitat is absolutely essential to the survival of the region, and Terrebonne Parish, in particular. According to recent data compiled by the United States Geological Survey for its 2011 publication *Land Area Change in Coastal Louisiana from 1932 to 2010*, Terrebonne Parish has lost an average of approximately one football field of wetlands every five hours between 1932 and 2010. The impacts related to the 2010 oil spill to our already fragile environment have exacerbated this problem, and we must utilize the opportunity afforded by the RESTORE Act and this plan to address this emergency.

The second goal to Restore Water Quality, along with the third to Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources will work together to revitalize our aquatic organism populations, which were impacted by not only the spill, itself, but also by the subsequent

recovery and clean-up efforts. As our entire parish lies within the Louisiana Coastal Zone, it is not surprising that a considerable percentage of our population benefits from the commercial and/or recreational fishing opportunities afforded to us by our geography. Terrebonne Parish is home to many seafood processors and distributors, as well as several charter fishing businesses and lodging accommodations near vibrant fishing areas. We appreciate the ability to help these businesses restore productivity to pre-spill levels, and beyond, through the RESTORE Act and related funding opportunities.

The fourth goal of the plan to Enhance Community Resilience is a high priority shared locally by Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government and its residents. Terrebonne Parish has been extremely active in assisting its residents in elevating their homes to safe and resilient elevations, in order to combat the devastation experienced in tropical storm and hurricane events. The Terrebonne Levee and Conservation District has worked tirelessly to provide an added level of defense for our residents by constructing interim levee and flood control features along the proposed Morganza-to-the-Gulf Hurricane Protection System alignment, which is anticipated to be authorized by Congress in the very near future. While the RESTORE Act does not seem to have the authority to approve structural projects, such as levees, there are many opportunities within Terrebonne Parish where our locally-led non-structural efforts can be bolstered by funds from Clean Water Act fines, which would work together with our other flood and storm surge protection measures.

Finally, the fifth goal to Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy is crucial to all areas of the Gulf harmed by the oil spill, and Terrebonne Parish is no exception. Between the spill, itself, and the drilling moratorium that followed, our local economy experienced a crippling blow that is still being felt by many of our local businesses and industries. As we are home to the Port of Terrebonne, a large offshore oil & gas service port located on the Houma Navigation Canal and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, the lack of activity in the gulf initiated a trickle-down effect that dealt a blow to all areas of our economy, from shipyards to grocery stores. Many of our local companies were driven to paycheck cuts and/or lay-offs. The ability to implement workforce development and job creation programs on the state level would be very beneficial to our local economies and would help our businesses get back to their pre-spill levels of productivity.

On the matter of State Expenditure Plans, we appreciate the wording chosen in the draft plan that outlines general categories of eligible uses, without being overly limiting in individual project types. The Louisiana 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast was very aggressive in promoting regional restoration and preservation projects that are projected to help Louisiana gain, rather than lose land at target year 50, but from a local perspective, several high priority areas and projects were left out of this plan, leaving Terrebonne Parish habitats and residents at great risk. We appreciate that the Council's plan is currently worded to allow local political subdivisions like Terrebonne Parish to utilize any direct allocations we are to receive in such a way that these high priority, vulnerable areas can be revitalized, restored, and preserved in a way that meets the needs of the local communities and the goals of the Council's plan. I strongly encourage the Council to keep this level of freedom for local funding recipients to be able to implement important projects that would otherwise be left out of state-wide plans.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft plan, and look forward to working with the Council in any way we can to restore our community back to its pre-spill conditions. Should you need any further information, or would like to contact our office for any reason, please direct correspondence and questions to Nicholas Matherne, Director of Coastal Restoration and Preservation for Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government at (985) 873-6889 or by email at nmatherne@tpcg.org.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michel H. Claudet
Parish President



July 3, 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce and
Chair, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

On behalf of all the members of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, we offer the following comments on the "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan" (the draft Plan) that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council issued on May 23, 2013.

Our Commission emphasized the importance of restoring the health and sustainability of the Gulf ecosystems and made the proposal that 80 percent of the Clean Water Act Funds be allocated to this effort. From the Commission's perspective, the compelling rationale for doing this was the need to reverse the long term degradation of Gulf of Mexico ecosystems. Long before the BP spill, the federal government was an active partner in the destruction of this productive resource, allowing the destruction or degradation of wetlands and other coastal environments to promote shipping, oil and gas development, agriculture, and other economic activities.

We appreciate that the Council's responsibilities for implementing the RESTORE Act are extremely complex and there are a number of questions about what Congress intended and how the legislation should be implemented. We also realize that Congress established some unrealistic deadlines for getting the process under way, particularly since no resources have been made available to support these efforts. Given these difficulties and limitations, we are very impressed by what the Council has accomplished to date, even though it has not been able to meet all of the deadlines set forth in the legislation.

Nevertheless, we do have some concerns about what we have seen so far, and more about what directions this effort may take in the future. Our concerns pertain not only to the Council's efforts but to the NRDA (Natural Resource Damage Assessment) processes, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation program and the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund as well. In our report *Assessing Progress: Three Years Later* that we released in April, we set forth seven questions pertaining to the Gulf restoration efforts. We intend to monitor and evaluate all the restoration efforts with a continued focus on these seven questions.

Will the different programs be coordinated and how?

With separate organizations attempting to disburse such large sums of money for restoration, there could be substantial overlap or duplication or divergent interests that need to be reconciled. The draft Plan recognizes the need for coordination but sets forth no specific proposals for how this will be accomplished. We understand that some efforts are being made to coordinate the different efforts, but fear that, in the rush to get programs underway, this is not being given as much attention as it needs. Later in these comments we recommend that the Council, in cooperation with the other restoration efforts, establish two panels – a science advisory panel and a citizens advisory panel – to oversee these several programs. These panels could substantially help in the coordination effort.

Will the programs have clear goals and will there be robust monitoring of how well they are achieving those goals?

Before beginning such massive expenditures, it is essential that all parties agree on what they are trying to accomplish. It may be that the goals may differ somewhat among the programs – the RESTORE Act has a particular diversity of “eligible activities”. Nevertheless, it is important that all the programs establish clear, measurable goals, and that these goals be coherent and consistent among the programs. And for each goal there should be clear, quantitative metrics for measuring progress being made in achieving the goal, clear milestones to which this progress can be compared, and a robust monitoring program to measure and guide progress toward these goals.

The draft Plan recognizes the desirability for establishing objectives that are “more specific and measurable” than those set forth in that report. We believe that it is important that this process begin as soon as possible.

We recommend that the Council work with the other programs and with the National Academy of Sciences to define these goals and establish the milestones and monitoring programs. The Academy, which is now engaged through its newly endowed Gulf Program, has undertaken such efforts for a number of other programs and would provide a respected, independent venue for this effort.

Will the projects selected under the programs be based on the best available science?

Although the RESTORE Act and the draft Plan emphasize that the restoration projects should be “based on the best available science” none of the several restoration programs has established a scientific advisory committee. Whether the Council should establish such a committee is one of the questions raised in the request for comments.

Our response is an emphatic yes. Sustainable restoration in the Gulf is complicated scientifically and technically and the programs would benefit from having a standing committee of scientists to review proposed projects and ensure the rigor of their design. We recommend that the Council work with the other restoration programs to establish a scientific advisory process that would review all the restoration efforts to ensure that they are all based on the best available science.

Here again, the Council should seek advice from the National Academies about how that oversight might best be provided. And, as we said above, having an overarching review process could substantially help coordinate the various efforts and ensure they remained focused on the restoration goals.

The draft Plan is silent on coordination by the Council on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program and Centers of Excellence in Research Grants Program supported by the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. We realize that the Council lacks direct authority for these programs. However, the RESTORE Act does indicate some expectations for consultation and coordination among these elements, and the federal agencies and states represented on the Council do have some responsibility for these science programs. The Plan should be more explicit and innovative on how the two science programs will work to achieve synergies with the Council's activities, particularly with regard to how the programs can support the research, monitoring and observations to ensure the "best available science" is used in effective project design and adaptive management.

To what degree will the RESTORE Act funds be used to restore the resilience of Gulf of Mexico ecosystems degraded over the long term as a result of national policies?

From the Commission's perspective, this was the compelling rationale for allocating Clean Water Act fines to a Gulf Coast restoration trust fund in the first place. While the RESTORE Act allows use of these funds for economic development and infrastructure improvements as well as ecosystem restoration, it would be tragically short-sighted if the primary emphasis were not on rebuilding resilience in the natural systems that are critical to the regional economy and well-being. Furthermore, there should be diligence against using these funds for unrelated purposes such as to balance budgets or replace revenue sources for ongoing expenditures.

The RESTORE Act divides the money it makes available for restoration into three components. The first is the Direct Component in which the monies are allocated directly to the states. Although the Council has no responsibility for overseeing the expenditure of these funds, we believe that it should be fully aware of how these funds are being used so that the projects the Council supports can be coordinated with the Direct Component projects. For instance, if the Direct Component funds are spent predominately on economic development projects, the Council would have less need to consider such projects when considering proposals for the other two components.

The second component is the Council-Selected Restoration Component. We strongly believe that this component should be restricted to ecosystem restoration as is implied by your conversion of the four priorities set forth in the legislation into your four "evaluation criteria". These four criteria appropriately refer only to ecosystem related improvements, and this indeed should be the sole focus of the second component.

The Council's role regarding the third component, the Spill Impact Component, is murkier. A broader array of activities is eligible, and therein lies the risk of loss of emphasis on restoring the degraded ecosystems. The draft Plan states that projects, programs and activities included in State Expenditure Plans must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan

although the draft Plan identifies the “objectives” as pertaining to the Council-Selected Restoration Component, not to the third component. Frankly we found the distinction between goals and objectives confusing. Several of the objectives are only minor restatements of the goals while others seem only loosely if at all related to the goals. It is also unclear how the approval process for State Expenditure plans will work. Will each plan be voted up or down as a whole or could there be objections to specific projects, programs, or activities included in a plan?

Will there be adequate financial controls and auditing of expenditures to ensure the funds are well spent and to minimize the potential for waste or fraud?

There have already been several cases of fraud tied to payments made pursuant to the spill. We recognize that the RESTORE Act tasks the U.S. Department of the Treasury with developing rules to ensure that funds are spent appropriately, but were dismayed to read the Inspector General’s report indicating that it is disagreements among the federal agencies that has delayed these rules. Avoiding waste, fraud, and abuse is likely to be a major challenge, but meeting this challenge will be critical to the success of the program.

We would recommend that the Council make two modifications in the draft Plan to address these issues.

The first is to require that certain information be provided by the sponsor for each project before it is considered for approval. The draft Plan provides a list of information that “may” be provided for projects in the State Impact Plans. We recommend that the same information be provided for Council approved projects, and in both cases the provision of this information be mandatory not discretionary. Under the discretionary approach in the draft Plan, the Council could be expected to approve state plans with no information about what they will cost or what they will accomplish.

The second modification we recommend is that all the projects in the second and third components should be evaluated on the basis of how well they fulfill all five of the goals set forth at the beginning of the draft Plan, not on whether they respond to any one goal. Projects which help implement several goals should result in a more effective restoration program. Including independent evaluation to inform Council decisions would improve the credibility, transparency and accountability of these decisions.

Will the projects be selected and implemented expeditiously?

We are concerned about the delays that we have already observed in implementing the programs. We recognize, of course, that Congress provided the Council with no resources to carry out its preparatory work, that it is impossible to prepare a meaningful “comprehensive plan” before the amount of funds available for implementing the plan has been determined, and that Louisiana and Florida appear to be the only states to so far have prepared a proposed list of projects to be included in such a plan. We also recognize that some of our other recommendations such as establishing clear goals for the program and coordinating the Council’s efforts with the other programs may cause further delays. Nevertheless, it is important that restoration efforts be started as quickly as they can. As you know, the Gulf is continuing to lose wetlands at a distressingly high

rate. It will be much easier to try to prevent additional losses than to try to bring back those that have already occurred.


Will there be adequate opportunity for public review and comment?

We believe that it is important for the restoration programs to adopt transparent operating procedures and be open to public comment, and commend the Council on the initiative you have demonstrated in holding public meetings throughout the gulf coast. We recommend, again in response to one of the questions raised in the request for comments, that the Council continue this effort at transparency by establishing a public advisory committee. Here again it would make sense for such a committee to provide advice on the several restoration programs. This would help in their coordination in such a way that the public could obtain a full and clear view of all the efforts and how they fit together.

We also recommend that, once the Council has taken account of the comments submitted during the current review period and assembled all of the components the law specifies should be included in the Initial Comprehensive Plan, including the three-year project and program list and ten-year funding strategy, that you reissue the complete draft plan for public review and comment rather than finalizing it in pieces. Given the importance of the Council's activities and the amount of money that will be involved, it is more important that the initial plan be done well rather than it be issued according to arbitrary deadlines.

Several of our comments focus on the need for coordination among the programs. One excellent mechanism for accomplishing this would be for the programs to sponsor a coherent, well-crafted comprehensive planning process for the Gulf (sometimes called marine spatial planning), as the Commission recommended in its final report. This would substantially advance the development of sustainable management and coordinated restoration.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Council's draft comprehensive plan and would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Again, we congratulate the Council on what it has accomplished and we stand ready to assist you in your efforts to implement an effective ecosystem restoration program in any way we can.



Senator Bob Graham



William K. Reilly

ORGANIZED SEAFOOD ASSOCIATION OF ALABAMA



P.O. BOX 338
Bayou La Batre, AL 36509
Telephone (251) 824-1672
Fax (251) 825-1715

July 8, 2013

Secretary Penny Pritzker
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

Organized Seafood Association of Alabama (OSAA) was established in 2002 to promote greater efficiency in meeting the marketing, infrastructure and policy/regulatory needs of the local seafood industry. OSAA currently serves over 900 shrimpers, oystermen, crabbers, fishermen, seafood processors and their support industries.

The explosions of the Deepwater Horizon fouled marine life, deep sea and shoreline habitats, resulting in the closure of economically critical fisheries and oiling of beaches across the Gulf Coast. OSAA joins others across the Gulf region to ensure the intent of the Restore Act of 2012 regional approach to restoring the long-term health of the valuable natural ecosystems and economy of the Gulf Coast region be implemented in a timely, practical, and fair manner. Thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan.

We respectfully offer the following recommendations for your consideration.

- 1) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – ensures projects have the support needed for implementation, will increase public buy-in, and contribute to the long-term success of projects. Meaningful public participation is critical to the long-term success of the Council's goals and objectives.
 - a. Recommend the public be given an opportunity to comment of the final initial plan and project list that the Council will release PRIOR to beginning project implementation. We urge you to incorporate meaningful public engagement moving forward.
 - b. Establishment of a Public Advisory Committee with regional stakeholder representation to ensure public participation and transparency in decision-making
 - c. Provide continued opportunities for public participation in shaping and designing the program, including setting goals, milestones and specific outcomes.
 - d. Council meetings open to the public rotated along the Gulf Coast with adequate notice (10 business days) of meeting dates/times/locations
 - e. Opportunities for public comment at meetings, on draft strategies, plans and projects
 - f. Continue to identify opportunities to engage the public and ask them to invest their time and talents

- 2) COUNCIL TRANSPARENCY- in terms of project selection process, grant and contracting procedures and awards, and project status.
 - a. Provide a mechanism to track the Council's decisions and their progress, recommend using an online method
- 3) LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS - will be vital in achieving a successful restoration implementation plan.
 - a. Align and Coordinate with other federal, state and local stakeholders to prevent duplication of effort and waste of funds
 - b. Seek to leverage existing federal, state, and local stakeholders to spread the funds
 - c. Seek to leverage existing federal, state, local, interagency, intergovernmental or public-private partnership to promote job and skills training opportunities to help local workers find opportunities in the restoration process.
 - d. Develop appropriate preferences in procurement and grant policies that promote hiring of local workers, training and placement of local workers, particularly those from disadvantaged, underserved and resource limited communities.
 - e. Plan needs specific details on how the Council plans to interact, share, and coordinate information with all the entities/agencies involved in Gulf restoration efforts.
- 4) DELIVERING RESULTS AND MEASURING IMPACTS – Plan must include a way to show project results, and measure outcomes/impacts.
 - a. Coordinate with other Restoration Programs (NFWF, NOAA, NRDA, ADCNR-MRD, etc) to track results, outcomes and impact.
- 5) GOALS – The Plan includes five goals, four of which focus on environment restoration and one on economic recovery. There is the potential that some economic recovery projects may have a negative environment impact that isn't compatible with the restoration goals.
 - a. Economic Recovery – Council should avoid or minimize projects with impacts on the natural resources the Council is trying to restore.
- 6) SUBMITTAL OF PROPOSALS TO THE COUNCIL –plan states the Council will “periodically request proposals from its eleven state and federal members”, Plan needs specific time for project solicitations.
 - a. Project solicitations be made at least semi-annually
 - b. Provide a timeline for review of project selections
 - c. Provide a schedule for public input and project review

We look forward to future opportunities to comment and make recommendations that will help the Council develop effective implementation and restoration plans. Thank you for your commitment and continue efforts as we move forward with restoring our Gulf Coast.

Regards,



Ernie Anderson,
President, Organized Seafood Association of Alabama

WEGMANN & ADAMS, L.L.C.
Attorneys and Counselors at Law
110 Veterans Memorial Boulevard, Suite 440
Metairie, Louisiana 70005

William J. Wegmann (1923-2011)

William J. Wegmann, Jr.
Orr Adams, Jr.

E-mail: orradams@wegmannadams.com

Telephone: (504) 833-3800

Facsimile: (504) 833-3950

July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Comments on Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

I provide the following comments on your Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, May 2013 ("Plan").

The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill ("DHOS") was first and foremost a marine catastrophe. The DHOS occurred approximately fifty (50) miles off the coast of Louisiana in federal waters. Thousands of square miles of marine bottom, surface, and water column were polluted. Crude oil remains mixed in the bottom sediments and the harmful effects on marine life are only barely understood at this time. I request that you give careful consideration to these facts and make the marine environment a priority in your decisions.

The long term effect of the DHOS on the marine environment is largely unknown. Marine sediments in many square miles surrounding the Macondo well were oiled and still contain harmful hydrocarbons. Marine living resources already appear to be showing the effects of the DHOS. On the other hand, the long term effects of the DHOS are not known and extensive testing, monitoring, and study will be required to understand the long-term effect of the DHOS on marine habitats and marine living resources. While the Plan includes marine habitats and living resources in its goals and objectives, it is not clear that the Council will prioritize the marine environment for testing, monitoring, study, preservation and restoration. I request that the Plan prioritize the marine environment, including marine habitats, and include provisions to ensure that sufficient funds are set aside to address the contingencies that will arise in the marine environment.

The Plan indicates that the Council intends to adopt a comprehensive, landscape scale, ecosystem approach. In order to do so, the Council must give appropriate attention to the marine environment. While the coast is important, the marine environment is no less important. I respectfully request that the Council clearly indicate in the Plan that proportional funding will be provided for marine protection and restoration.

An ecosystem-based plan must consider what is best for the entire ecosystem. Programs and projects must bear a rational relationship to ecosystem damage. It is important to remember that the Spill happened fifty miles away from the coast and that most of the DHOS oil never reached state waters. It is only reasonable to assume that a significant amount of damage to habitat and living resources occurred in the marine environment and the Plan should reflect these facts.

While the Plan does not address restoration and protection at the level of specific programs or projects, the Council should be aware that there are many projects and programs that would benefit the marine environment, including by way of example: comprehensive long-term monitoring, marine sanctuaries and conservation zones, acquisition of fishing rights, development of long-term governance structures, creation of marine protected areas, research and development of marine law and policy, and marine education.

I agree that the Council should focus on ecosystem restoration and protection in the first three years, and further believe that the circumstances require that most or all of the funds within the Council's control should be devoted to ecosystem protection and restoration, with a significant proportion of those funds devoted to the marine environment.

The Plan states that the Council is committed to engagement, inclusion and transparency. Consistent with that commitment, I would request that the Council provide timely access to meaningful, detailed information regarding the Council's activities. In particular, I would request that the Council provide the public with access to the administrative record as it develops, the opportunity to attend Council meetings in person, contemporaneous and archived internet access to Council meetings, and reasonable access to the resources the Council has available to it in making its decisions. While I understand that complete access to all Council resources and communications may not be appropriate in every case, I believe that very limited access at occasional public meetings and the opportunity to comment on draft plans is less than transparent.

In conclusion, an ecosystem collapse may be underway in the marine environment. Ocean warming and acidification are having and will continue to have long term, systemic effects. Dead zones are huge and getting bigger every year. Ninety percent of large fish have been taken from the sea. Fifty percent of corals are dead or dying. Now is the time and the

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

July 9, 2013

Page 3

Restore Act is the opportunity to do something meaningful about it. I ask that the Council give due consideration to the marine environment and direct a fair portion of Restore Act funds under its control to restoration and preservation of the marine environment.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please contact me at (504) 833-3800 should you have any questions or require additional information.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Orr Adams, Jr.", with a large, stylized initial "O" and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Orr Adams, Jr.



PARISH OF JEFFERSON
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

JOHN F. YOUNG, JR.
PARISH PRESIDENT

July 8, 2013

Dr. Rebecca Blank, Chair
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

**Re: Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:
*Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy***

Dear Dr. Blank:

The following is to supplement my public comments at the June 12, 2013, Public Meeting in Belle Chasse, Louisiana regarding the above-captioned matter, and my letter of even date. Since that date, I have received significant input from the constituent base in Jefferson Parish.

Attached for your review and inspection is a list of additional Jefferson Parish projects that should be included in the final Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Comprehensive Plan. The attached project list is appropriately comprehensive, considering that Jefferson Parish is in the Barataria Basin which experienced some of the highest land loss rates world-wide, and received the most significant oiled shoreline from the Deep Water Horizon Incident. Accordingly, the significant portion of the Council's projects should be located in this most impacted coastal ecosystem.

These projects are likewise to be included in the 2013 proposed updates to Jefferson Parish's Coastal Wetland Conservation and Restoration Plan. Developed in 1993, and updated in 2003, the 2013 proposed updates include those plans and project lists that have been developed with input and concurrence from our coastal stakeholders.

Thank you, in advance, for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

John F. Young, Jr.
Jefferson Parish President

Attachment

13-031303



PARISH OF JEFFERSON

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

JOHN F. YOUNG, JR.
PARISH PRESIDENT

June 12, 2013

Dr. Rebecca Blank, Chair
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o US Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

2013 JUN 21 AM 9:40
O-S-EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

**RE Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:
*Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy***

Dear Dr. Blank:

As President of Jefferson Parish, I thank the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council for hosting the public meeting for the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan in Louisiana, and specifically in the Barataria Basin. The Barataria Basin is home to many coastal communities including the Town of Jean Lafitte, Crown Point, Barataria and the Town of Grand Isle. It is this watershed that received the most "heavily oiled" coastline in the Gulf Coast Region due to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. It is also in this Basin that oil attributed to the Deepwater Spill continues to be removed from Jefferson Parish marshes and beaches. Further, with the threat of hurricanes and tropical storms upon us, I fear there is more oil to be discovered and revealed.

Jefferson Parish is a coastal parish located in the center of the Barataria Basin. It stretches from the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain to the Gulf of Mexico and incorporates many unique cultural fishing communities with rich heritages, including the City of Westwego, the Town of Jean Lafitte, and the Town of Grand Isle, which is the only inhabited barrier island in the State of Louisiana. It is with these coastal communities in mind that I express my gratitude and pleasure that you have included "Enhancing Community Resilience" as one of the 5 Goals of your Initial Comprehensive Plan. Jefferson Parish urges that the Lafitte Area Ring Levee Project be one of the projects included in your plan to achieve enhanced community resilience. This project is included in the State's Comprehensive Master Plan, and it is critical to providing the Lafitte community sustainability, through the ability to adapt to both short and long-term changes impacting the area, particularly flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors.

Upon review of your "Draft" Initial Comprehensive Plan, I fully support the 5 Goals and 7 Objectives; however, Jefferson Parish requests that "coastal communities' resiliency projects" be added to the list of project types in the Evaluation Criteria. We also urge you to include a set of requirements that would push projects and programs toward expedited implementation. Louisiana loses land the approximate

size of a football field every fifty (50) minutes, so there is no time to spare. Accordingly, bringing projects and programs not only to fruition, but also to completion is of the utmost importance.

With that said, on behalf of Jefferson Parish, I respectfully request that the following projects be included in your Final Project List:

(1) Projects that follow the Multiple Lines of Defense strategies adopted by the State of Louisiana in its Comprehensive Master Plan, including:

- (a) Completion of the restoration of our Barrier Islands (already underway) from the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Caminada Headlands;
- (b) Completion of Phase II of the Barataria Basin Long Distance Sediment Pipeline Project, which has already been initiated with Phase I going to bid just yesterday; and
- (c) The Lake Pontchartrain Barrier Project.

(2) Shoreline Protection Projects, including:

- (a) The Bayside Segmented Breakwater at Grand Isle which is a NRDA Early Restoration Candidate, (but not currently funded or approved); and
- (b) The Alligator Bend Shoreline Protection Project in the Pontchartrain Basin along the East New Orleans Landbridge, submitted to you by the NRCS.

(3) Coastal Community Resiliency Projects, including:

- (a) The Lafitte Area Ring Levee Project; and
- (b) The FiFi Island Forested Wetland Restoration Project.

(4) Marsh Creation and Sediment Delivery Projects, including:

- (a) The Barataria Landbridge Marsh Creation Project, submitted to you by the US Army Corps of Engineers; and
- (b) The Bayou Dupont Sediment Delivery Project - a Marsh Creation Project, submitted to you by the EPA.

In closing, I thank you again for giving us the opportunity to voice our support for the projects and programs that our coastal communities, marshes and shorelines require, however I would be remiss in not stating that Deepwater Horizon Spill oil continues to wash up daily on our marshes and beaches, and I hope that this Council will require BP and the US Coast Guard to complete the removal and clean-up of remaining oil, buried tar mats, and tar balls that litter our coastline.

It has been 3 years and 53 days since the BP's Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, and it is time that BP delivers on their promise to "make it right".

Sincerely,

John F. Young, Jr.
Jefferson Parish President

The following comments are submitted by Robert G. Thrower, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Atmore, Alabama, with regard to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:

Of primary Tribal concern is the establishment of meaningful government-to-government consultation between affected American Indian Tribes and all lead federal and state agencies under the RESTORE Act. As the Draft Comprehensive Plan indicates "... the United States has a unique legal relationship with federally-recognized Tribes as set forth in United States treaties, statutes, executive orders, and court decisions...the Council recognizes the value of Tribal input in the region's restoration activities". While Tribal participation has been stated very broadly in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, it is important to begin to specify and delineate appropriate protocols and mechanisms that will ensure successful future Tribal consultation under the RESTORE Act.

Tribal sovereignty must be respected throughout this process. Tribes should be involved in all phases of planning, especially those in the beginning. While various forms of "engagement" (conference calls, webinars, public meetings, etc.) have been utilized in the communication of valuable information, these efforts cannot be used as a substitution for formal face-to-face meetings with Tribal officials. With respect to the sovereign status of American Indian Tribes, it should be noted, for future reference, that public comment meetings are not appropriate vehicles for direct communications with Tribal governments. It is imperative that Tribal meetings be established on a regular basis to ensure that effective and meaningful Tribal communication and consultation is being conducted. It is also imperative that mechanisms be developed to ensure meaningful and effective communications between affected American Indian Tribes and the RESTORE Council.

To facilitate productive communication between Tribes and the RESTORE Council, we support the establishment of an American Indian Advisory Committee to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. The American Indian Advisory Committee should be comprised of Tribal Leadership, and designated representatives from both the Tribal Environmental/Natural Resource Departments and Cultural/Historic Preservation Departments of each affected Tribe. This Advisory Committee will be the primary point of collective Tribal contact. When appropriate, Tribes could elect to be consulted collectively through this Advisory Committee, or, they may choose to retain their sovereign rights to individual government-to-government consultation. The unique composition of this American Indian Advisory Committee would ensure an effective and holistic representation of Tribal concerns and expertise, and, overall, contribute to the progression of efforts through the RESTORE Act.

We also support the establishment of scientific advisory committees to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and the inclusion of Tribal representatives within these scientific committees. The inclusion of this Tribal representation will enhance RESTORE Act efforts by utilizing both the scientific expertise of Tribes and the appropriate inclusion of traditional cultural/ecological knowledge. While this provision would enhance the draft plan's commitment to "... incorporate new science, information, and changing conditions..." into the constantly evolving comprehensive plan, it should be noted that Tribe's

have had thousands of years of continuous habitation along the Gulf Coast, and possess unique knowledge and wisdom about these areas.

With respect to RESTORE Act funding apportionments which are under the direct administration of affected states, (the 35% evenly distributed among the affected states) we want early Tribal consultation with the lead agency responsible for this funding. At this point, an assumption has been made that this agency might be the U.S. Treasury. We want early consultation with whomever is designated as the lead agency. It is vital that affected American Indian Tribes have a voice in all aspects of RESTORE Act funding. This is especially true with regard to the comprehensive plan's reference to the development of state expenditure plans (these plans are specific descriptions of the process that the States will use to ensure appropriate public and tribal participation and transparency in the project, program, and activity selection process, in compliance with the RESTORE Act and applicable regulations). Within their respective states, Tribes should have active representation and participation in the development of state expenditure plans. Whether or not this is facilitated, proposed state expenditure plans must ultimately be provided to the affected Tribes, be approved by the RESTORE Act Council and as stated in the Draft Comprehensive Plan "...must comply with the RESTORE Act and applicable laws and regulations.". With respect to the sovereign rights of Tribal participation in all aspects of the RESTORE Act, measures should be taken to safeguard against any exclusion of Tribal participation and future perceptions of "statecentric" focus in the development and implementation of state expenditure plans.

The four priority evaluation criteria as specified in the Comprehensive Plan (to evaluate and select proposals to achieve comprehensive ecosystem restoration) provide a good foundation for future project selection. Certainly, as time progresses, the need for additional criteria will become necessary.

This concludes my comments with regard to the Gulf Coast Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan.

Robert G. Thrower
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Comments Submitted July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council – Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy

The Council is due congratulations on the production of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment, and its contribution to the development of the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan for restoring the Gulf Coast's ecosystem and economy.

Initially I would note the **Introduction** to recognize that the Gulf of Mexico is bounded by three countries, including the United States, Mexico and Cuba. The blowout itself primarily affected only the U.S. waters of the Gulf, and the issues relating to Cuba for purposes of the plan are relatively minor and problematic because of political concerns. However, the United States and Mexico have shared Gulf resources and cooperation on the stewardship of these resources would benefit both nations. The Council should consider how such cooperation may be enhanced through implementation of the Plan.

In these comments I will focus on the restoration regarding the abundance and diversity of the biological diversity, particularly the species diversity of the Gulf of Mexico. I would emphasize that the Gulf's ecosystem is primarily comprised of species and the associated abiotic characteristics. While the primary emphasis on restoration effort is the catastrophic impacts of the Deep Water Horizon blowout, with focus on additional catastrophic and chronic pollution events, the Gulf's ecosystem is also subject to ongoing impacts from global change, including those resulting in erosion of the coast and changes to the marine environment. The ecosystem and associated species habitats are experiencing ongoing change, and it is important that the species be conserved to preserve our options for a productive ecosystem in the future. Restoring current habitats may not adequately preserve those options.

The emphasis on species recovery in the draft should be expanded, not only to ensure recoveries for priority species in restoration efforts, but to ensure also that restoration efforts do not adversely impact species recoveries. Species currently protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act are not the only species that have been impacted by the blowout or other Gulf environmental impacts, and are not the only species legally subject to recovery efforts, including restoration of their habitats. For example, many species of migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act may be subject to legal requirements associated with the restoration program. As may be Gulf species that are biologically determined to be threatened with extinction through Red List Assessments managed by the International Union of the Conservation of Nature. Attached is a *BioScience* article that summarized species considered as threatened with extinction under the Red List compared to species protected by Federal law, including ESA. I would emphasize that the species assessments conducted under the IUCN Red List provide a global standard on the conservation status of species.

Specifically I would recommend that the draft Plan and the draft PEA be clear that the Plan could apply to all impacted species in the Gulf. While species are included in a number of references to natural resources and otherwise in both documents, it should be clear that species not currently subject to exploitation or specifically protected by Federal law may be subject to the Plan.

The Council should also be aware that the IUCN and the Harte Research Institute in Corpus Christi have initiated a new data base to summarize information regarding marine species in the Gulf of Mexico, including all vertebrates and selected invertebrates and plants. The data base will include distribution maps and spatial planning capacity as well as other information concerning research and stewardship of Gulf species. We hope this effort will benefit the Council's plan of work, and further recovery and stewardship of the Gulf's rich biological diversity.

Sincerely,

Roger E. McManus

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

P. O. Box 1393
San Marcos, Tx 78667
July 8, 2013

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for all your good work thus far---we can see that you have incorporated many of the public's recommendations in recent months. We are looking forward to having the 10 year funding strategy and also the 3 year priority project list as soon as we can, to review that and comment, too.

We especially appreciate your focus on the need for fresh water to maintain a healthy Gulf ecosystem, as this is especially critical in Texas, and in our region around San Antonio and Aransas bays. Without serious attention to the issue of adequate fresh water, our Texas bays will not be able to provide good nursery habitat in the future for all the Gulf's shellfish, fish and wildlife. Restoration is good for our economy, and for our citizens who depend on these coastal resources.

We agree with your use of science-based decisions, and also the adaptive management approach for plans and projects. Please do use the existing document that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Task Force produced in April 2012 to establish a similar foundation of science. And please set up a scientific advisory committee to provide advice on the best available science and restoration. Such a committee was very useful in the successful Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan that we participated in, here in central Texas, over the past seven years.

As part of the Science Advisory Committee process, the Council may want to appoint a chief scientist to serve as chair and coordinate the science objectives and activities, while ensuring the connection between the NOAA RESTORE Science Program and the Centers for Excellence in each Gulf State.

Then we hope the final plan will show how science informs restoration decisions, and how project success is measured over time. It is wonderful that the Council has committed to using a regional, ecosystem-based, landscape-scale restoration approach, since the entire Gulf of Mexico is one interconnected ecosystem.

(Page 2, comment letter from SMRF to Restoration Council)

We do feel that an integrated and coordinated effort, more than just the “encouragement” mentioned in the plan, must be used to ensure that efforts funded through NRDA and NFWF are complementary to this work. Leveraging multiple sources like this is very important to getting maximum restoration results out of the precious RESTORE dollars.

Regarding public participation, we hope you will include meetings that are open to the public, with advance notice of meetings (at least 15 business days), opportunities for comment at the meetings, and then opportunities for comment on draft strategies, plans and projects. If Council meetings are rotated across the Gulf states, then the public might be able to attend a meeting in person.

We hope that a Texas specific website will be set up very soon for RESTORE. And finally, we are very happy to see the wording “projects and programs that promote community resilience should be tied to ecosystem restoration or protection” on page 13 of the draft plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and thank you for your work on making sure this money is spent efficiently, and for real restoration of our valuable coastal resources that so many Texans depend on for their livelihoods.

Sincerely,

Dianne H. Wassenich, Program Manager

San Marcos River Foundation

wassenich@grandecom.net

512-353-4628 or cell 512-787-6392



June 10, 2013

Comments for the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

From the Gulf Coast Office of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project
Submitted by Official Representatives Carole H. Allen, Gulf Office Director
and Joanie Steinhaus, Assistant Campaign Director

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to again request funding for the restoration of the Gulf of Mexico and especially the Kemp's Ridley sea turtles that died by the thousands as a result of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.

On May 23, 2011, the Sea Turtle Restoration Project submitted a request for actions that would help the Kemp's ridleys and other sea turtle species recover and make plans to assure growing populations in the Gulf of Mexico. (The confirmation number of this request was 4FVU2H1M.) We asked for permanent funding for expanded patrols on the Upper Texas Coast, an incubation facility to negate the hours needed to transfer fragile sea turtle eggs to the Padre Island National Seashore and a rehabilitation facility and clinic for treatment of sea turtles at present and in the event of a future oil spill in Texas waters. Many sea turtles are brought to the Galveston facility of National Marine Fisheries Service after being caught in shrimp trawls and ghost nets, hit by propeller boats and caught on hook and line.

Needless to say, it is exceedingly disappointing to read through the "Preliminary List of Authorized but Not Commenced Projects and Programs" and see the mention of the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle one time and only then to continue a program of egg transfer away from Galveston Island which does not recognize the requests of the Galveston Island Commissioners Court, the Galveston City Council and the people of

Galveston to retain Kemp's ridley eggs for incubation and release of hatchlings on the Upper Texas Coast.

At this hearing, we are asking again for funding and actions that will prevent the killing of thousands of Kemp's ridleys and support the increase of the population of nesters on the Upper Texas Coast with educational opportunities for Galveston and surrounding counties and Houston students as well.

Frankly, the Kemp's Ridley sea turtles on the Upper Texas Coast are being ignored by the current list of "Authorized but Not Commenced Projects." The lack of mention of this endangered sea turtle is proof that very little attention is being paid to their plight. We are asking for policy changes and actions that will demonstrate that the Official Sea Turtle of the State of Texas deserves a lot more concern than presently receiving. The following will Kemp's ridleys in the Galveston area:

-
1. Build a Sea Turtle Education Center with a clinic to treat injured sea turtles and allow the public to see them;
 2. Stop transporting fragile Kemp's ridley eggs to the Padre Island National Seashore, incubate them in the Galveston area and then release nearby. Later, the eggs can be left in place with protection by some of Galveston's many volunteers before they hatch out as nature intended. (Corrals have been approved in far South Texas; why not Galveston?)
 3. Stop near shore trawling similar to the ban in place in south Texas and Mexico but extend it to all year. A recent paper written by Dr. Donna Shaver states that the "nearshore Gulf of Mexico waters serve as prime foraging habitat for post nesting Kemp's ridley turtles." The paper also recognizes a "foraging corridor" and calls for "international cooperation for conservation of this imperiled species."
 4. Manage beach-raking activities on Galveston beaches so that hatchlings or eggs are not buried under tons of sand and sargassum by heavy machinery.
 5. Fund a Visitor Center in Galveston for Sea Turtle Restoration Project with educational films and materials for tourists, residents and teachers to build public awareness.
 6. Provide funding for pamphlets, bookmarks, posters and beach signs for tourists and coastal residents.

-
7. Restore dunes on Bolivar Peninsula and elsewhere to encourage nesting sea turtles.
 8. Recognize the coalition of businesses and entities now working for the Kemp's ridley recovery including the Houston Zoo, Moody Gardens, Galveston Bay Master Naturalists, West Galveston Island Property Owners Association, Texas A&M University at Galveston, Galveston City Council, Galveston County Commissioners and the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council.
 9. We must not miss the opportunity to participate in the proposed Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area which would include sites spanning four Upper Texas Coast coastal counties: Matagorda, Brazoria, Galveston, and Chambers. This region has natural areas, outdoor recreation opportunities, historical sites and nesting Kemp's ridley sea turtles. The steering committee includes former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, John L. Nau III, and life-long Galvestonian Doug McLeod.
-

Thank you for this opportunity to add some extremely important projects and programs to your current list.

Sincerely,



Carole H. Allen, Gulf Office Director

Joanie Steinhaus, Associate Campaign Director

SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

Telephone 404-521-9900

THE CANDLER BUILDING
127 PEACHTREE STREET NE, SUITE 605
ATLANTA, GA 30303-1840

Facsimile 404-521-9909

July 8, 2013

Via Email and First Class Mail

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o Acting Secretary Cameron F. Kerry, Chair
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Comments on Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

Dear Secretary Kerry,

The Restoration Council has an important task ahead of it. The Gulf Coast was devastated by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. And although the coastal communities have begun to heal, the work of the Restoration Council will be at the center of ensuring that this healing continues in the most effective way possible.

The Southern Environmental Law Center, which has offices throughout the Southeast, provides free legal services to other environmental organizations. We do this to help ensure that the communities throughout this region have the clean air, water, and open spaces that they need to thrive. Like the many other commenters on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, the Southern Environmental Law Center is intent on seeing that the civil penalties from the Deepwater Horizon settlement are spent in a way that will most benefit the communities on the Gulf Coast that were hit so hard by the spill.

As the Council has recognized, “environmental restoration is key to economic recovery.” That could not be more true in this case. The natural environment is a large component of what makes the Gulf Coast so special. The marsh, sea grass beds, maritime forests, and coastal wetlands play an important role in drawing people to the coast. Aside from providing stunning vistas, they also provide the shrimp, crabs, oysters, and fin fish that visitors to the coast come to catch, cook, and eat.

It is for this reason, and others, that we need to protect these natural resources that many coastal economies depend on. The Draft Plan suggests that part of the penalty money should be spent on purchasing conservation easements on natural areas. Following the lead of the Weeks Bay Foundation, many environmental groups and scientists are now proposing that the Council should require in its final plan that a nickel out of every penalty dollar be spent to purchase such conservation easements. In many cases, conservation easements are the only way to adequately protect such areas from poorly planned development and transportation projects.

Acting Secretary Cameron F. Kerry

July 8, 2013

Page 2

These natural areas are also under threat from sea itself. As the sea continues to rise, Gulf Coast communities are suffering from higher erosion rates. Research is showing that in many cases the traditional approaches to coastal erosion—bulkheads and seawalls—are exacerbating such erosion. And they are destroying the coastal ecosystems in the process. Any sea grass beds or saltwater marsh seaward of a bulkhead or seawall will eventually disappear as the sea bed in front of these structures erodes away. When the marsh or sea grass beds disappear, so too does the fish, crabs, and clams that inhabit them.

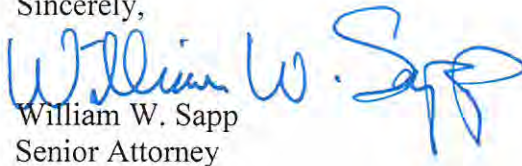
Over the last two decades up and down the Eastern seaboard and along the Gulf, states have been working hard to refine an alternative to bulkheads and sea walls. Under this “living shoreline” approach, erosion is addressed by using oyster reefs to slow down ocean waves and then using native vegetation to stabilize the shoreline. Alabama has demonstrated leadership in this area by moving forward with an ambitious plan to construct one hundred miles of living shorelines along the Alabama coast. Federal agencies, state agencies, and local governments in Alabama have also moved forward with their own living shoreline projects. Other states along the Gulf Coast from Texas to Florida are doing the same.

These projects require money for conducting further research and for implementing specific projects. Therefore, in addition to the “nickel” for every penalty dollar that should go towards purchasing conservation easements for saltmarsh, sea grass beds, maritime forest, and freshwater wetlands, we also ask that penalty money be directed towards encouraging living shorelines.

Finally, the natural areas along the coast are dependent on the freshwater that feeds them. Further study is needed to determine whether the salt marsh, freshwater wetlands, maritime forests, and sea grass beds are receiving a sufficient quantity and quality of fresh water to ensure their survival. Thus, penalty dollars also should be directed towards such vital research.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,


William W. Sapp
Senior Attorney



▪ 610 Water Street, Biloxi, MS 39530 ▪ Phone: 228-435-3113 ▪ Fax: 228-435-3137 ▪ admin@stepscoalition.org ▪ www.stepscoalition.org

July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

To the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council):

This letter serves as the combined comments from several concerned Gulf Coast non-profit agencies on the Initial Draft Plan released by the Council in May of this year. On June 18th, close to forty members of the Biloxi Gulf Coast community came together to voice their suggestions and concerns about the Initial Draft Plan directly to members of the Council. This meeting was organized and facilitated by Gulf Regional Network, Sierra Club and the MS Collaborative which includes Steps Coalition, Asians American for Change MS Coalition of Vietnamese- American Fisher Folk and Families. Boat People SOS, Hijra House, and Mississippi Center for Justice. Organizations in the MS Collaborative reached out to community members to attend this meeting and provided translation services to those residents who were not English proficient. The names of community members are listed below; however, they represent only a small fraction of the multitudes of concerned individuals from our community who are invested and care deeply about the future of the Gulf Coast.

Group 1

Richly Duong	100 Winnie Ct. Gulfport, MS 39503
Ya Sin Shabazz	PO Box 927, Biloxi, MS 39533 (Hijra House)
Amy Ji Carter	403 Maginnis Ave. OS, MS 396564 (Asians Americans for Change)
Kara Lankford	PO Box 7891 Spanish Fort, AL 36577 (Ocean Conservancy.org)

Group 2

Andrew Schill	1525 E Pass Rd. Gulfport, MS (Mississippi Center for Justice) MCJ
Irene McIntosh	3047 Chatham Rd, D'Iberville MS 39540 (D'Iberville Volunteer Foundation)
Ed Cake	2510 Ridgewood Rd, Ocean Springs, MS 39564 (Gulf Environmental Associates and DVF)
Avery Bates	8260 N Meadow Ln. Irvington, AL 36544 (Organized Seafood Assoc. of AL)

Group 3

Victoria Phaneuf	3924 Idaho St. New Orleans, LA 70114
------------------	--------------------------------------

Jackie Antalan	(University of Arizona)
Don Blancher	ophomecare@yahoo.com (Operative Home Care)
Jackie Washington-Danzie	330 Fern Hill Ct. Mobile, AL 36608 (MDEQ)
	223 Nixon St, Biloxi 39530 (Harrison Co. Federation of Women)
John Jopling	1309 Father Ryan Ave. Biloxi, MS (MCJ)

Group 4

Kelly Lucas	1411 Bayview Ave, Biloxi, MS 39530 (MDMR)
Joseph Ferguson	14624 John Smith Rd, Vancleave, MS 39565
Charisse Gordon	963 Division St. Biloxi, MS 39530 (MCJ)
Divya Subrahmanyam	963 Division St. Biloxi, MS 39530 (MCJ)
Jennifer Johnson	PO Box 4686, Jackson, MS 39296-4686(Oxfam America)
Stephen Teague	963 Division St, Biloxi, MS 39530 (MCJ)
Roberta Avila	610 Water St., Biloxi, MS 39530 (Steps Coalition)
Howard Page, Facilitator	610 Water St., Biloxi, MS 39530 (Steps Coalition)

Group 5

Suong Pham	6020 W Greene St, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Thu Van Huynh	6159 E. Jackson St. Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Nghieu Tran	100 Espana Park, Waveland, MS 39576
No Van Nguyen	3074 Big Ridge Rd #4, D'Iberville, MS, 39540
Ut Thang Nguyen	277 Nichols Dr, Biloxi, MS 39530
Tuan Dang	7613 Reston Dr, Biloxi, MS 39532
Kaitlin Truong, Facilitator	2112 Bienville Blvd., Suite LI, Oceans Springs, MS 39564 AAC (Asian Americans for Change)
Nam Van Nguyen	3600 Jo Beth Terrace, Gautier, MS 39553
Dong, Le Van	1905 Porpoise Dr., Ocean Springs, MS 39564
Thao Vu. Facilitator	1636 Popp's Ferry Rd. Suite 223, Biloxi, MS 39532 Facilitator – (MS Coalition of Vietnamese-American Fisherfolk and Families)

The following comments were in response to questions solicited by the Council when the Draft Plan was released, and are taken directly from the notes of the facilitators assigned to each group.

1st) Input on what Priority Criteria the Council should use when evaluating projects

- The current suggested criteria used by the Council is far too broad and needs to be narrowed significantly to be workable as an evaluation tool. Specifically, there should be numerically weighted criteria that each potential project is evaluated by and this weighted rubric should be available for public viewing.
- One of the main criteria for evaluation should be a potential project's impact on community resilience and workforce development. Projects that benefit the long term resiliency should be geared towards the resiliency of minority, distressed, and fishing populations of the Gulf Coast.
- Criteria should also include hard numbers about the percentage of local workforce, including local fisherman that will be utilized in the implementation of a project

2nd) Input on the Initial Draft's listed Funding Objectives

- The funding objectives are also too broad and must be refined to clear and specific objectives by which each project will be evaluated.
- Continued environmental education and stewardship must be an active objective of the RESTORE Council, especially concerning education about the impact of potential future disasters.
- There must also be an emphasis on local workforce development and contracting as an objective; this will create employment by the local workforce in the communities where restoration projects will occur.

3rd) Both the Citizen and Science Advisory Committees are urgently needed by the Gulf Coast community and both must be a part of the Council selection process

- Advisory committees must include locals from the Gulf Coast, including but not limited to those from formal and informal education backgrounds such as fisher folk who make their living from the Gulf waters, social scientists, and representatives of the numerous environmental justice groups on the Gulf Coast.
- Both committees should be utilized as secondary project oversight groups and be given real power to recommend or veto certain projects that will affect their local community.

We believe the following three areas of focus are essential to ensuring the continued health of the Gulf Coast region both ecologically and economically. **FIRST**, we want to see a commitment to local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project. Projects selected by the Council must be implemented by local Gulf Coast workers and fisher folk, and when necessary sub contracted by way of larger contractors. **SECOND**, there must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee as well as a Science Advisory Committee that can realistically influence which restoration projects are inevitably chosen for implementation. **THIRD**, while we acknowledge that ecological restoration projects will inherently have elements of economic restoration, we must have a commitment from the council that no project will promote purely economic growth in the community at the cost of ecological restoration.

Thank you in advance for your serious attention to these comments.

Sincerely,

Roberta Avila
Executive Director
Steps Coalition
on behalf of the MS Collaborative- Racial Equity Initiative.

cc: MS Collaborative- Racial Equity Initiative
Asian Americans for Change
Boat People SOS
MS Coalition of Vietnamese- American Fisherfolks and Families
MS Center for Justice
Hijra House

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

1655 N. Fort Myer Drive
Suite 1300
Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: 703-525-6300
www.conservationfund.org

July 3, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Council Members:

The Conservation Fund (the Fund) has led land conservation efforts for nearly 30 years. During this time, we've protected more than 7 million acres across America, including wild areas, historic lands, and national parks and wildlife refuges throughout the Gulf region. We work hand-in-hand with community and government leaders, landowners, and our agency partners to save the places that matter most and accomplish top public conservation priorities.

The Fund commends the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council for the development of the *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy* (the Plan) and appreciates the opportunity to comment. The Council provides a strong framework for restoring and protecting the habitats that are home to countless species of fish, birds, and other wildlife that contribute to a healthy ecosystem and a thriving Gulf Coast economy.

As we move forward, we urge the Council to consider the following recommendations:

- (1) In recognition that *perpetual* protection is integral to restoration and protection efforts, **we recommend making perpetual land protection a priority in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill restoration effort by modifying the definition of restoration, the objectives and the priority criteria.** We appreciate the inclusion of “protecting and conserving ecosystems” in the Plan’s definition of restoration (pp. 11), however, **we urge the Council to provide further clarity and emphasis on the importance of perpetual protection by:**
 - a. adding “conservation easement and land acquisition,” specifically, to the Council’s definition of restoration in the Plan (pp. 11);
 - b. retaining language in Objective 1 (Restore, Enhance and Protecting Habitats) referencing acquisition and conservation easements; and
 - c. adding fee acquisition and conservation easements to the type of projects and programs listed under Objective 2 (Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Quality), Objective 3 (Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources), Objective 4 (Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines), and Objective 5 (Promote Community Resilience).

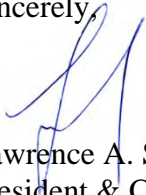
Decades of research has shown that perpetual protection restores and protects habitats, watersheds/water quality, and marine resources, and promotes community resilience. Perpetual protection can be accomplished by either fee title land acquisition or conservation easement purchase from willing sellers by government and non-profit organizations.

- (2) The Fund supports the establishment of advisory committees as recommended in the Plan's "Next Steps" section (pp. 20). **We encourage the Council to establish a science advisory committee, a citizens' advisory committee, and a lands advisory committee** to provide input to the Council in carrying out its responsibilities under the RESTORE Act. The lands committee would be charged with reviewing and making recommendations on land acquisition and conservation strategies and should include representatives from government agencies, natural resource experts, and the non-profit conservation and land protection organizations.
- (3) In order to accomplish the regional, ecosystem-based approach to restoration highlighted in the Plan, **we recommend that the Council ensure a broad interpretation of the "Gulf Coast region" and adhere to pursuing restoration and acquisition "without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region."** We are concerned that while the Plan outlines the definition of the "Gulf Coast region" as it is defined in the RESTORE Act, that the actual boundaries remain unclear to many project developers and Gulf Coast citizens. For example, the region should not be incorrectly limited to the area within 25 miles of the coast, but rather should include a more expansive area consisting of a state's coastal zone plus the land, water, and watersheds that extend 25 miles beyond that zone. In Florida, the coastal zone is the entire state of Florida so there should be no geographic limitations. In other states, the coastal zones vary. We strongly recommend **a Council map outlining the geographic boundaries of the defined "Gulf Coast region" for use by all project developers**, and to ensure that all qualifying projects within the region are put forward for consideration by the Council. Additionally, while the Plan states several times that projects will be evaluated "without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region" (pp. 14, Evaluation Criteria; pp. 6, Overview), the **Plan should ensure there are no biases, for example, by expanding the list of habitats under Objective 1** (Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats) to include additional priority freshwater and upland habitats, whose restoration and protection provide critical benefits to downstream functionality, resiliency, and sustainability.
- (4) **Finally, the Fund recommends that the Council adopt a transparent process by which non-Council members can propose projects.** Conservation groups across the Gulf are working hard in tandem with federal, state, and local partners on projects that will make significant contributions to the restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, and wildlife habitats of the Gulf Coast region. We would like to see a transparent process put into place for all projects that allows the Council to evaluate future projects that will protect and restore the natural resources most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. We have attached the Fund's Gulf Coast Partner Acquisition Priorities map and look forward to meeting with Council staff to provide specific details on the projects the Fund and our partners have developed for consideration. Some of

these projects are already on the preliminary list published alongside the Plan and we hope to see these on the Funded Priorities List.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the *Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan*. The Conservation Fund is committed to a partnership approach to conservation in the Gulf Coast region and looks forward to working with the Council on the further development of the Plan and the restoration of the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

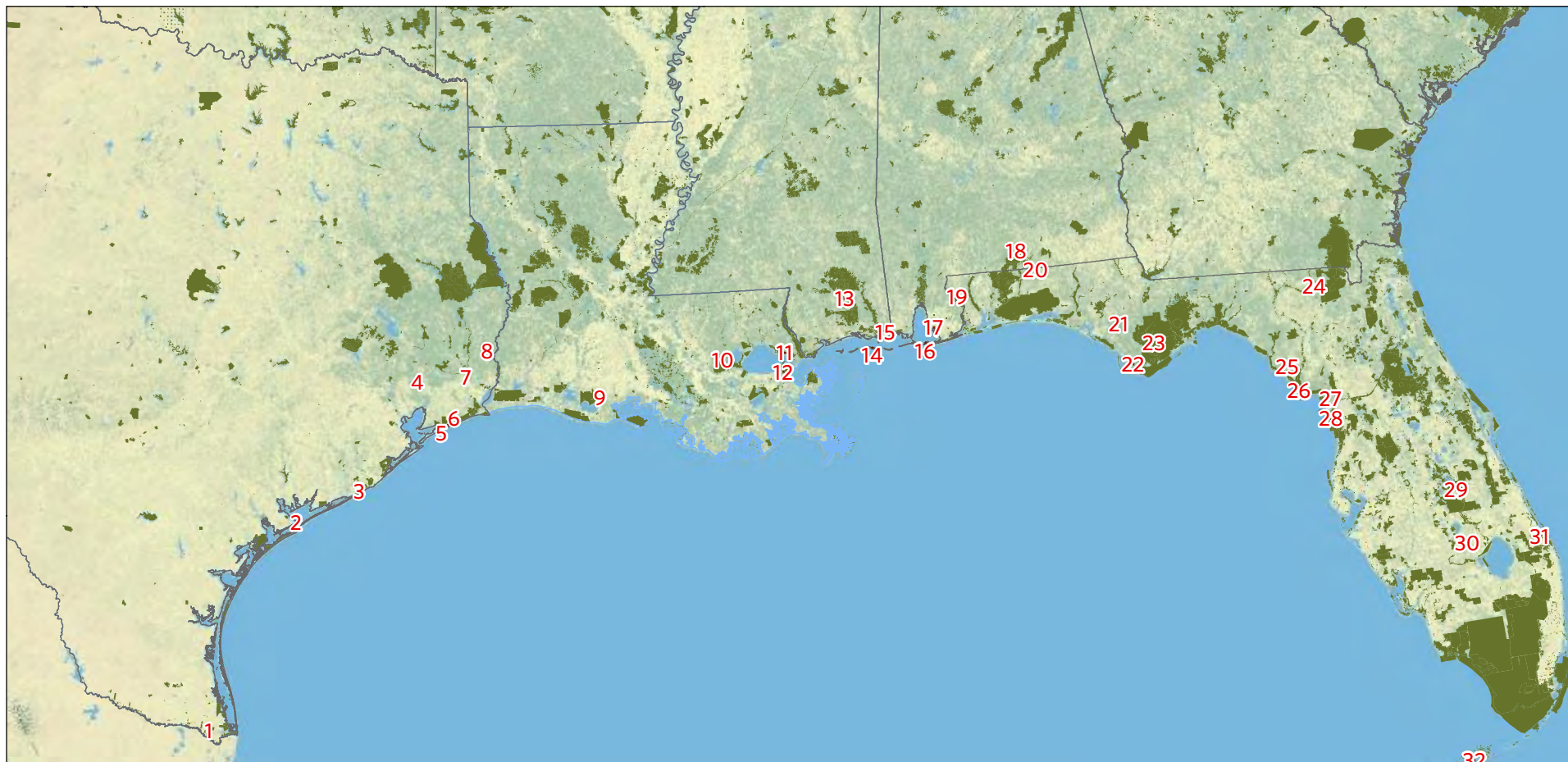


Lawrence A. Selzer
President & CEO

Enclosure: The Conservation Fund's "Gulf Coast Partner Acquisition Priorities" map

The Conservation Fund - Gulf Coast Partner Acquisition Priorities

Updated:
4/10/2013



ID	State	Project	Acres	Value (\$)	ID	State	Project	Acres	Value (\$)
1	TX	Laguna Atascosa NWR	40,000	120,000,000	17	AL	Weeks Bay NERR	200	2,000,000
2	TX	Powderhorn Ranch	18,000	36,000,000	18	AL	Conecuh National Forest	4,000	6,000,000
3	TX	Columbia Bottomlands	18,473	45,599,000	19	AL+FL	Headwaters Coastal Forest	196,560	105,000,000
4	TX	Trinity River NWR	28,194	49,339,500	20	AL+FL	Natural Bridge	3,500	13,000,000
5	TX	Cade Ranch	2,614	13,000,000	21	FL	Bear Creek	100,400	160,000,000
6	TX	Chenier Plain Refuge Complex	33,590	50,475,000	22	FL	St. Vincent Sound to Lake Wimico	40,000	40,000,000
7	TX	Orange Bottomlands & Marshes	10,000	11,000,000	23	FL	Apalachicola NF	320	640,000
8	TX	Lower Sabine River	14,000	25,000,000	24	FL	Osceola National Forest	36,700	36,000,000
9	LA	Atchafalaya Basin	5,000	5,000,000	25	FL	Lower Suwannee CE	46,500	25,000,000
10	LA	Lake Maurepas	9,000	9,000,000	26	FL	Cedar Key - Waccasassa Bay	9,800	49,000,000
11	LA	Big Branch NWR	1,500	2,500,000	27	FL	Chambers Island	120	1,000,000
12	LA	Chef Menteur to Rigolets	16,500	11,500,000	28	FL	Crystal River NWR	3	2,000,000
13	MS	DeSoto National Forest	1,000	3,000,000	29	FL	Everglades Headwaters NWR	3,000	30,000,000
14	MS	Gulf Islands National Seashore	250	10,000,000	30	FL	Buck Island Ranch	10,300	30,900,000
15	MS+AL	Grand Bay NWR	2,250	3,000,000	31	FL	Hobe Sound NWR	5	5,000,000
16	AL	Bon Secour NWR	488	11,000,000	32	FL	Johnson Tract	1,300	6,000,000

Existing Protected Lands

0 50 100 200 Miles



THE
CONSERVATION FUND

GULF COAST RESTORATION CORPS



**The
CorpsNetwork**

Strengthening America through
service and conservation

Project Summary

The Corps Network (TCN) stands ready and willing to assist the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) with the ecosystem and economic restoration of the Gulf Coast while promoting natural resource stewardship of its young people and veterans. TCN proposes to build Conservation Corps capacity in the Gulf Coast through a five-year project designed to provide ecosystem restoration and build the infrastructure necessary to sustain existing and establish new Conservation Corps programs in underserved areas across the gulf coast. Specifically, the Gulf Coast Restoration Corps project will employ over 700 local young people (between the ages of 18-25) and veterans (up to age 35) to complete important and necessary restoration projects across the Gulf over a five year period and leave at least three new local Conservation Corps in the region to continue providing opportunities to embark on pathways leading to promising careers and productive lives while significantly investing in their communities.

Statement of Need

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 was the largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry, releasing 4.9 million barrels of crude oil and causing extensive damage to marine and wildlife habitats and to the Gulf's fishing and tourism industries. Moreover, the Gulf Coast's economy has been battered over the last decade from economic recessions and both natural and man-made disasters.



A Solution

The Council can begin to repair and revitalize the Gulf Coast's ecosystem, provide training to local young people, create jobs, and stimulate economic development by investing in a multi-year Restoration Corps program.

Conservation Corps mobilize young adults and veterans, under the leadership and supervision of well-trained crew leaders, to make up self-contained workforce units that are able to complete significant ecological and restoration work. Built on the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of the 1930s, Corps operate nationwide and creates win-win situations by addressing several pressing needs at the same time. They provide young people with opportunities to advance their education and obtain important life and job skills. They offer a stipend or wage that can stimulate the local economy, and they complete important and necessary projects in a high-quality, cost-effective manner. According to a recent cost analysis by Booz Allen and the National Park Service, Corps can complete projects for a fraction of the cost of other types of labor (average project savings of more than 50 percent).

Also, like its predecessor the CCC, which played a major role in responding to natural disasters that occurred during that time including several forest fires and floods, modern Corps have continued this legacy of disaster response. In 2006 and 2007, following Hurricane Katrina, TCN coordinated a Gulf Coast Recovery Corps in Waveland and Biloxi, MS, that engaged more than 216 AmeriCorps members and 54 crew leaders from Corps across the Country. Corps have also responded to other disasters, including the floods in Iowa, numerous tornados across the Midwest, and many forest fires in the West. Most recently, Corps crews from across the country assisted with response to Super Storm Sandy.

Conservation Corps provide self-contained crews and individual placements to meet project needs (e.g. crew leaders, crew members, vehicles, tools, project expertise, insurance, risk management, etc.) They have a long history of partnering with federal, tribal, state and local land and water management agencies. Engaging Conservation Corps can help meet the long term recovery goals (ecological restoration, employment and economic development) of the gulf region in a cost effective manner while addressing youth unemployment, and preparing a diverse group of young people to be the next generation of workers, leaders, and environmental stewards.

Conservation Corps prepare young people for jobs and careers. Since the time of the CCC going forward to modern day, preparing young people for jobs and careers has been one of the principal goals of Corps programs. Through the crew-based Corps model, Corpsmembers receive mentoship, learn how to work together, and develop work and leadership skills.

In the Corps Model, adult leaders, who serve as mentors as well as technical trainers and supervisors, guide crews of up to 8-12 Corpsmembers as they carry out a wide range of service and conservation projects. In return for their efforts to restore and strengthen communities, Corpsmembers receive a living allowance, and, if needed, classroom training to improve academic competencies and secure a high school diploma or GED, college credit, and a wide range of supportive services. They also participate in experiential and service-learning, receive general and technical skills training, are taught leadership skills, and are encouraged to become civically engaged. Many receive an AmeriCorps post-service educational award.

Regardless of the type of the project, Corps provide opportunities for young people to:

- Gain industry recognized credentials and technical skills applicable to future employment;
- Take initiative—growing as leaders and accountable, responsible colleagues;
- Grow in self-efficacy and self-esteem through pride in creating visible and valued improvements to community and the environment; and
- Attain academic achievement through learning by doing—relating classroom studies to experience in the field (and those that need to, gain educationally by making progress toward a high school diploma or GED).

Project Design

TCN proposes a Gulf Coast Restoration Corps project that will employ over 700 local young people and veterans on restoration projects across the Gulf over a five-year period, and leave at least three new local Conservation Corps in the Gulf to continue providing opportunities for young men and women to embark on pathways that lead to promising careers and productive lives while significantly investing in their communities.

In each stage of the project, Conservation Corps can complete a wide and broad range of projects that restore and protect natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands.

Stage 1

TCN will coordinate a large scale Conservation Corps response to assist in the restoration effort, similar to many of the other disaster response efforts described above. Established Corps located in Texas, Florida, and Louisiana will respond immediately with a focus on hiring local

young people and veterans. TCN will issue a multiyear Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify the seven additional Conservation Corps from outside the Gulf Coast region to assist in the effort. The non-local Conservation Corps will provide capacity and corps expertise while engaging primarily local recruits as Corpsmembers. Stage 1 will last one year, involve up to ten Conservation Corps in ten-week residential sessions. Stage 1 will include extensive crew leader training with partnering organizations on gulf specific restoration projects. (January – December 2014)

Stage 2

The ten national and local Conservation Corps that TCN selected in the initial RFP will continue to assist in Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration projects while transitioning to engaging only locally recruited Corpsmembers. TCN will develop a system to recruit local young people and veterans to work for the ten Conservation Corps. Corpsmembers will continue to work under seasoned crew leaders from across the nation, with the goal of transitioning regional Corpsmembers to crew leaders to lead

subsequent crews. TCN will issue a second RFP to select three organizations to operate permanent Conservation Corps in the Gulf Region, which has historically been underserved by conservation and workforce programs. TCN will provide technical assistance to the three selected organizations. In addition, the three organizations will begin working with initial ten Corps and project partners to gain on the ground experience. The Corpsmember service period will extend in length as the program transforms from “spike” crews to local Corpsmembers. This stage will last two years (January 2015 – December 2016).

Stage 3

TCN will support the development of the three to five new permanent Corps programs in traditionally underserved areas across the Gulf Coast. At this point, all project funding would go solely to the new startup Corps. These Corps will scale up from four crews each in the first year to six crews in the second year. TCN will continue to provide training and technical

assistance on technical projects, youth development practices, and organizational capacity. These new programs will focus solely on Gulf restoration activities and then slowly expand to include system monitoring and sustainability. These expanded and new permanent Corps would be a lasting legacy to the engagement of Corps to restore the Gulf. This stage is expected to last two years (January 2017 – December 2018).

A recent study by Texas A&M and Brigham Young Universities found that Conservation Corps programs resulted in the following impacts on Corpsmembers:

- A positive attitude toward public lands was 11 times higher for Corpsmembers than members of a comparison group;
- Teamwork was six times higher for Corpsmembers than members of the comparison group;
- Leadership was six times higher for Corpsmembers than members of the comparison group;
- Responsibility was three times higher for Corpsmembers than members of the comparison group;
- Positive communication indicators were four times higher for Corpsmembers than members of the comparison group; and
- Critical Thinking was four times higher for Corpsmembers than members of the comparison group.

Gulf Coast Restoration Project Types

Conservation Corps have completed a wide and broad range of projects that restore and protect natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands:

Coastal Restoration

- Bank Stabilization
- Barrier Island Restoration
- Marsh Creation
- Monitoring/Surveying to Support Sediment Diversion and Hydrologic Restoration
- Oyster Barrier Reef Seeding
- Ridge Restoration
- Riparian Habitat Restoration
- Shoreline Protection

Assesments, Studies, Inventories

- Boundary Surveys and Marking
- Ecological and Restoration Planning
- Environmental Sampling
- Hydro-biological data collection
- Population Studies and GIS Inventories
- Research Assistance
- Species Inventory and Monitoring

Emergency Response

- Debris and Hazardous Trees Removal
- Hazardous & Toxic Materials Clean Up
- Levee Protection
- Tree Removal

Maintenance and Monitoring

- Volunteer Management
- Abandoned Lot Clean-Up
- Construction (Shelters, Kiosks, Cabins, etc.)
- Construction of Nesting Boxes, Fishing Piers, Boat Docks and Fish Crib
- Decommissioning of Structures
- Erosion Control
- Fencing Installation and Removal
- Irrigation Systems
- Re-vegetation
- Trail Construction and Maintenance
- Weatherization

The Council and partners will identify Corps-appropriate projects from the “funded priority list” that will focus on restoring and protecting natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and the economy across the Gulf Coast region. The Council will have the option to select large-scale projects that the Corps can contribute to over multiple years or select portions of larger projects that contain Corps-appropriate work. As the council plans and implements these projects, TCN will assist in identifying federal, state, and local partners and proposals to incorporate the Corps into Restore projects.

In addition to providing crews, Corps have extensive experience providing individual placement interns that deliver support in areas of assessment, planning, research assistance and species and habitat monitoring. Corps also have the capacity and experience to lead large volunteer projects, mobilize and manage local volunteers and donations, and engage residents of affected communities and local business.

Training & Partnerships

TCN will work with Council members, federal, state, and local land and water managers, conservation organizations, and foundations to design and coordinate regional training sessions throughout each stage of the project. TCN will engage national and regional foundations and partners to help develop the training curriculum and cover the cost associated with trainings.

TCN will partner with the Corporation for National and Community Service to offer AmeriCorps Education Awards to all of the Corpsmembers upon successful completion of the program.

In addition, TCN will partner with state workforce agencies and regional / local Workforce Investment Boards to build local recruiting networks and provide Corpsmembers with access to employers and jobs following their terms of service. In the effort to develop local recruits, TCN will also partner with state and private universities, community colleges, and historically black colleges and universities, and seek capacity-building support from national and regional foundations.

The Corps Network Project Oversight

TCN will provide project management, administration, and training and technical assistance throughout the entire project. TCN will provide grant / agreements and financial oversight from the Washington, DC office and plan to hire two field staff- ideally housed with a local partner organization- to provide on the ground management and monitoring.

The first RFP will support up to ten Conservation Corps organizations from both the Gulf Coast region and national scope to engage 160 Corpsmembers and Crew Leaders. The funding will include a negotiated weekly rate for each organization participating and related travel expenses to the project site(s). TCN will manage training and technical assistance for the projects. The second RFP will be for the final three years (including a one year overlap with the first RFP). This RFP will establish three new local Conservation Corps in the Gulf region to continue providing opportunities for young men and women to embark on pathways that lead to promising careers and productive lives.



For each of the three new Corps, TCN will provide:

- Technical assistance in program design and management;
- Funding for a Program Manager and Coordinator on site;
- Agreed upon weekly project rate for Crewleaders' wages and Corpsmembers' stipends;
- An AmeriCorps VISTA on site to assist site staff and The Corps Network's staff in developing a program-wide sustainability plan and in collecting documentation for the purposes of promotion and evaluation;
- Up to \$25,000 per year for project startup costs and site support based on organizational need.

Project Schedule

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total Corps Members and Crew Leaders	80	160	240	96	144
Conservation Corps	10	10	10	3	3
RFP 1 (10 Established Corps)					
RFP 2 (3 New Corps)					
Stage	1	2	2	3	3

Year 3 will include the 10 established Conservation Corps and the 3 new organizations chosen in the second RFP. The three new Corps will work with 10 established Conservation Corps to gain on-the-ground-project, youth development, and administrative/organizational experience.

The Corps Network Organization Capacity

Founded in 1985, with a mission to “promote the growth, quality, and sustainability of Corps” and support “well-funded, high-quality Corps in every community,” TCN represents more than 127 state, local, and non-profit organizations, many of which have been in existence and changing lives and communities through service for several decades. Since it was established, TCN member Corps have engaged more than 750,000 young people in service. At present, TCN member Corps enroll more than 27,000 Corpsmembers a year, the majority of whom come from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, many of whom are looking for a second chance to succeed in life. Corpsmembers receive

a wide range of personal and professional development opportunities and services including, but not limited to: guidance from adult leaders who serve as mentors and role models, academic programming designed to lead to a high school diploma or GED, opportunities to pursue in-demand certificates and credentials, and a modest stipend – all to prepare them for postsecondary education and labor market success.

The founders of what is now TCN (formerly the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps) drew their inspiration from the CCC, the Depression-era program that engaged and supported three and a half million young men in natural resource conservation and development. Similarly, today's Service and Conservation Corps – the heirs of the CCC – engage youth and young adults in community service and service learning; provide training, education, and full scope of supportive services; and set young people on a defined pathway leading to post-secondary education, sustainable employment, and a lifetime of civic engagement.

TCN advocates for policies and resources, establishes and develops partnerships, provides technical assistance and training, facilitates a peer review process and regular learning exchanges of best practices, and administers pilot and national programs (including an Educational Award Program), for the primary purpose of improving the quality and increasing the capacity of existing Corps, and helping establish new Corps in underserved communities.

TCN has managed multiple major federal awards involving collaboration at sub-sites, most recently a \$5.7M National Emergency Grant from the US DOL, requiring detailed evaluation data tracking as well as detailed fiscal reporting and reimbursements. The Corps Network has managed requirements and complex reimbursements for awards including US DOL, CNCS, Bureau of Reclamation ARRA funding, and the second largest Education Award program in the AmeriCorps portfolio. Findings in over a decade of A-133 audits have been none to minimal. The result is strong internal controls and trusted support to sub-grantees ensuring all reporting is clean and accurate.

Conclusion

TCN stands ready and willing to assist the Council with the ecosystem and economic restoration of the Gulf Coast. TCN's proposed Gulf Coast Restoration Corps will provide ecosystem restoration and build the infrastructure necessary to establish and sustain Conservation Corps programs in underserved areas across the gulf coast. The Gulf Coast Restoration Corps will complete important and necessary restoration projects across the gulf while providing opportunities for young men and women to embark on pathways that lead to promising careers and productive lives.

July 3, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on the Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. The Nature Conservancy is a national and global non-profit conservation organization whose mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our on-the-ground conservation work is carried out in all 50 states and over 30 foreign countries and is supported by approximately one million members. In the Gulf of Mexico region, we have been active for more than 40 years, and have state programs with local Boards of Trustees, land holdings, and coastal restoration projects in all of the Gulf Coast states. Our work is supported by a team of scientists who ensure that our conservation practices are grounded in the best and most current scientific understanding of coastal processes and ecosystems.

As a result of the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, the people of the country and the Gulf have a once in a lifetime opportunity to work together and leave a legacy for our children that we and they will be proud of – a hale and hearty Gulf of Mexico. To make the most of this opportunity, we must join together and fulfill the Congressional charge of this Council, to “. . . undertake projects and programs, using the best available science, that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast.” After reviewing the Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan (“Draft Plan”), we are optimistic that the Council is creating a framework that will help us meet this mandate. Further, we appreciate the extensive opportunities for public involvement in the development this Draft Plan and the consideration given to the input received thus far.

The comments herein are organized according to our recommendations on the following five elements of the Draft Plan and other areas around which the Council has solicited feedback:

- I. Comments on the proposed criteria for Council-selected restoration projects and programs, including expanded Priority Criteria and consideration of feasibility criteria;
- II. Comments on the proposed objectives for Council-selected restoration projects and programs;
- III. Recommendations regarding how the Council should consider and evaluate project proposals;
- IV. Comments on the proposed guidelines for the development of State Expenditure Plans;

- V. Comments on regional approaches to restoration and science-based decision-making, including the formation of a Science and Technical Advisory Committee.

I. Evaluation Criteria for Council-Selected Restoration Component

We recommend three sets of criteria for evaluation of Council-selected restoration projects. They should be used in sequence to identify those projects that will have the most significant restoration impact and are most likely to produce tangible and lasting results. The three sets of criteria are:

- Elaboration of the statutory criteria to better allow them to be used to evaluate specific projects
- The addition of six over-arching ecosystem restoration sub-criteria
- The further evaluation of the threshold feasibility of projects that meet statutory and ecosystem sub-criteria

These three sets of criteria are further explained as follows:

A. Elaboration of the statutory criteria

There are specific evaluation criteria that are unique to each of the four RESTORE Act “Priority Criteria” that are highlighted in bold type below. The bullets appearing under the bolded evaluation factor show the full list of detailed criteria that are relevant to each of the four evaluation factors.

1. *Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.*

- The extent to which the project or program benefits more than one natural resource or ecosystem service.
- The extent to which the project or program produces or contributes to watershed or landscape scale benefits.
- The extent to which the project or program provides lasting environmental and ecosystem service benefits.
- The return on investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested in a project, including societal benefits from ecosystem services.

2. *Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.*

- The extent to which the large-scale project or program produces watershed or landscape scale benefits that are measurable and systemic, such as water quality

and quantity improvement to freshwater flows in estuaries that support oyster reef restoration.

- The extent to which the large-scale project or program enhances or complements existing or future restoration activities (including other *Deepwater Horizon* penalty-funded restoration projects) to leverage restoration investment.
- The extent to which the large-scale project or program creates benefits that are lasting and contribute to the long-term health of the Gulf of Mexico; and
- The return on investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested in a large-scale project, including societal benefits from ecosystem services.

3. *Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.*

- Consideration that the project or program is contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans, including watershed-based resource protection and restoration plans, state wildlife habitat protection plans, coastal zone management plans, marine protected area plans, and estuary protection plans.
- Consideration that the project or program is contained in Gulf Coast State plans developed following the enactment of the RESTORE Act, for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches and coastal wetlands.
- The extent to which the large-scale project or program produces watershed or landscape scale benefits in terms of the provision of ecosystem services which are measurable and systemic.
- The extent to which the projects enhance or complement existing restoration projects or other *Deepwater Horizon* penalty restoration activities in order to leverage restoration investment.
- The return on investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested in a project, including societal benefit from ecosystem services.

4. *Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.*

- The extent to which the project or program preserves or restores natural processes and produces lasting results in the face of sea level rise.
- The extent to which the project or program reduces recovery times for natural resources and ecosystems in response to storm-surge, flooding, drought and other weather related events with minimal human intervention or maintenance.

- The extent to which the project or program provides environmental services that reduce the risk of hazards to communities along the Gulf Coast.
- The extent to which the project or program enhances or complements existing restoration projects or other *Deepwater Horizon* penalty restoration activities to leverage restoration investment.
- The return on investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested in a project, including societal benefits from ecosystem services.

B. Over-arching Ecosystem Restoration Criteria

We recommend that projects meeting the statutory criteria be further evaluated in light of the following six overarching ecosystem restoration sub-criteria. These were derived from the four Priority Criteria within the RESTORE Act. We believe that the sub-criteria do not change but rather further refine the Priority Criteria, therefore considering them together with the Priority Criteria will enable the Council to best prioritize projects and programs that will achieve the greatest long-term restoration of the Gulf of Mexico.

The six sub-criteria that we recommend for consideration in conjunction with the Priority Criteria include:

1. ***Multiple Ecosystem Services Benefits.*** The extent to which the project or program contributes multiple benefits in the form of improvement or creation of ecosystem services associated with the seven ecosystem restoration objectives listed on pages 11-13 of the Draft Plan. The ecosystem services provided by a project or program focused on the seven ecosystem restoration objectives may include, for example:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| -Habitat value | -Benefits to other wildlife |
| -Support for migratory species | -Wildlife corridors |
| -Fisheries, freshwater and saltwater | -Nature-based tourism |
| -Accumulation of sediments | -Sediment delivery |
| -Water quality | -Carbon sequestration |
| -Freshwater delivery | -Freshwater availability |
| -Storm surge and wave attenuation | -Flood protection |

2. ***Leveraging Existing Restoration Projects and Plans.*** The extent to which the project or program complements other watershed or large landscape restoration plans and existing projects to leverage and maximize restoration efforts;
3. ***Lasting Benefits.*** The extent to which the project or program creates lasting ecological benefits which contribute to the long-term health of the Gulf of Mexico;
4. ***Contributes to Resiliency to Climate Change and Sea Level Rise.*** The extent to which the project or program increases the capacity of coastal ecosystems and communities to adapt to the effects of sea level rise and changing climate.

5. ***Return on Investment.*** The return on investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested in a project or program, including societal benefits from ecosystem services; and
6. ***Measurable Outcomes.*** The extent to which the project or program delivers clearly defined, measurable outcomes and benefits.

To illustrate how the proposed sub-criteria can be considered in conjunction with the four Priority Criteria, see **Appendix 1**.

C. Addition of Threshold Feasibility Criteria to Evaluation Criteria

In addition to the Evaluation Criteria above which are focused on the ecosystem restoration benefit of projects or programs, we respectfully recommend that the Final Plan contain a set of Threshold Feasibility Criteria by which projects and programs will be evaluated for completeness and technical viability, as well as to ensure consistent information is provided to the Council for project evaluation. These criteria should at minimum include:

- Quality and completeness of project design
- Technical feasibility and readiness for implementation
- Best available science supporting benefit(s) of project
- Estimated project costs are reasonable given anticipated benefits and include long-term maintenance costs
- Measurable environmental benefits defined in terms of the Priority Criteria
- Economic benefits, including jobs created and ecosystem service benefits
- Relationship to other existing or planned Gulf restoration efforts
- Extent to which there has been an opportunity for public discussion and input into project
- Public outreach and environmental education associated with project
- Long-term maintenance and monitoring plan for project

II. Objectives for Council-Selected Restoration Component

In addition to the project evaluation criteria, we appreciate your solicitation for feedback on the proposed objectives for the Council-selected Restoration Component in the Draft Plan. We offer the following comments on the proposed objectives:

- In general, we believe that the objectives in the Draft Plan correctly capture the types of ecosystem restoration projects, programs, and activities that should be funded by the Council.
- We suggest that Objective 2, *Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Quality*, be modified to *Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Quality Resources*, to reflect that the scope of the objective includes improving the quantity of freshwater flows and connections in addition to water quality improvements.

- We were pleased that the Council included as an example of potential project types, in its water quality objective, “implementation of best watershed management practices.” We strongly support the notion of maximizing the impact of ecosystem restoration funds by directing them toward the restoration of “whole systems,” such as critical watersheds. For example, in Florida, we have worked closely with counties and other stakeholders to identify integrated sets of projects and programs that will restore and protect critical watersheds from the basins to the beaches. Many of the public comments have revolved around using the watershed approach to identify the right projects to address the right issues. Implementing similar system-wide approaches across the Gulf will result in the best possible solutions by identifying a set of integrated projects and/or programs that will produce tangible long lasting environmental results for the entire region.
- We are pleased that Objective 6, *Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education*, recognizes the importance of “professional development and training . . . for all ages” to further ecosystem restoration and protection, and support the Council working with the states and other partners to develop and promote these types of programs (such as workforce development and job training programs for restoration projects and the establishment of a Gulf Conservation Corps to train and mobilize youth and military veterans to engage in restoration work).

III. Procedures for Project Selection and Implementation

As one of the few conservation organizations that designs and implements on-the-ground restoration projects in all five Gulf States, we believe we have important insight to share with the Council regarding the Draft Plan’s proposed guidelines for project evaluation, selection, and implementation. Below we offer several recommendations regarding the submittal of proposals to the Council and resultant agency implementation of the projects or programs.

A. Submittal of Proposals to the Council

We have several concerns about the Draft Plan’s proposed process for soliciting and evaluating project proposals (p. 16), as explained in detail below.

1. ***There is a lack of specificity in the Draft Plan regarding the project submission sponsorship requirement.*** The word “sponsorship” as used on Page 16 of the Draft Plan is not defined within the RESTORE Act. As such, we encourage the Council to clearly describe what duties and obligations project sponsorship entails, including the following clarifications:
 - The extent to which sponsorship conveys responsibility for long-term monitoring, evaluation, and stewardship of projects, including the acquisition of land or other rights and adaptive management measures;
 - The extent to which sponsorship requires the same agency that sponsors a project or program to implement it;

- If sponsorship necessitates any level of local, state or other matching requirements;
- The extent to which sponsorship affects pass-through grant or subcontracting requirements.

2. *Requiring proposed projects to be sponsored by individual Council members may restrict the implementation of large-scale, collaborative, and/or regional projects.* We are concerned that requiring that projects or programs be sponsored by a single Council member may, in essence, pigeonhole potential projects/programs into single agencies' geographic regions or priorities and thereby impede the Council's ability to realize its stated commitment to "promot[ing] ecosystem-based and landscape-scale restoration without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region." To address this concern, we recommend that the Council consider the following:

- Allowing for projects or programs to have one or more agency "sponsors," thereby enabling two or more Council members to work together to propose and implement large-scale, cross-boundary projects; and/or
- Allowing for the responsibility for the implementation and/or the long-term monitoring, evaluation and stewardship of projects or programs to be delegated by the project sponsor to another appropriate entity with mutually agreed upon terms of commitment.

3. *Varying requirements and standards among project sponsors may lead to inconsistent practices relating to project subcontractors, grantees, and/or project partners.* To address this concern, we propose:

- Including provisions in the Final Plan that require any policies or requirements associated with pass-through grants and subcontracting opportunities to be consistent among all the agencies involved in the restoration of the Gulf Coast; and
- Including provisions in the Final Plan which require that any policies or requirements associated with matching requirements should be applied uniformly among all implementers and projects/programs involved in the restoration of the Gulf Coast; and
- Considering the possibility of appointing a lead agency from the Council Members' affiliations to administer all restoration programs and serve as a single point of contact and central support unit throughout the project selection and implementation processes. Administration would include ensuring projects/programs are implemented according to the Final Comprehensive Plan, benchmarks and completion occur on schedule, budgets are evaluated for accountability, and general oversight is provided throughout the process.

4. ***There is a lack of specificity in the Draft Plan regarding the timing of project solicitations.*** The current text of the Draft Plan indicates that the Council will “periodically request proposals from its eleven State and Federal Members.” We urge the Council to specify in its Final Plan the following:

- The general time frame for which the Council will solicit project and program proposals (annually, semi-annually, etc.). We recommend that project solicitations be made at least semi-annually and follow a schedule similar to established federal restoration grant programs that have been successfully proven over time, such as the NOAA Community Restoration Program or the USFWS Coastal Program.
- The timeline of review for project or program selection.
- A schedule for scientific and public input and review.

B. Procedural Recommendations for Project Selection and Implementation

The Conservancy recommends that procedures surrounding restoration project or program implementation adhere to the highest levels of transparency and accountability in respect to selection and implementation of projects and programs. To this end, we recommend the Council implement the following procedures:

- Develop a mechanism for robust scientific oversight throughout implementation to ensure that all restoration efforts have a strong scientific foundation and include the necessary monitoring, modeling, evaluation and adaptive management. (See section below regarding Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.)
- Provide a single source of information for the public about the status of projects selected for funding under the RESTORE Act, such as an online database that includes information about the projects, funding received to date, and the status of their design and/or implementation. The database should be updated frequently and user-friendly. (One example of such a database is the database of CWPPRA projects available at <http://lacoast.gov/new/Projects/List.aspx>).
- Develop a mechanism to systematically share best practices across projects, programs, and state borders. This could be accomplished by the creation of standardized programmatic progress reports for rigor and consistency on a regional scale.
- Provide adequate, meaningful public notice for all meetings, deadlines (including project submission deadlines), and opportunities for comment on draft strategies, plans and projects. Notice should be given, at a minimum, through the Council’s email list serve, individual Council member websites, and the Restorethegulf.gov website.
- Provide opportunities for public participation in future public hearings via webcast or other virtual means.
- Provide opportunities for culturally appropriate engagement to diverse communities, including providing translations of important documents into other languages spoken widely across the Gulf Coast, such as Vietnamese, French, and Spanish.

- Partner with non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and community organizations throughout the project selection and implementation process to take advantage of their vast experience, local expertise, and connection to local stakeholders.

C. Emphasizing a Regional Approach to Restoration

We commend the Council for its commitment to taking a regional, ecosystem-based, and landscape-scale approach to restoration, “without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region” (p. 6). In addition to recommendations we have made regarding project sponsorship, above, we believe that the Council can further support a regional approach to restoration by including guidance in the Final Plan of how regional projects shall be coordinated to ensure the long-term and cumulative success of every investment and realize the best, most appropriate ecosystem restoration projects as possible throughout the Gulf Coast. This approach ensures that the entire coastal and marine system receives restoration benefits, not just those within a particular state boundary or within the immediate area around an individual project. As with every procedural recommendation listed in these comments, we encourage the Council to incorporate best practices learned from other regional interagency recovery and restoration projects, including (but not limited to):

- Project integration enhances overall project success without creating additional work by utilizing the additional capacity provided by a central support team. In many cases, and for good reasons, project managers are almost entirely focused on implementation. Additional capacity coming from a central support team saves time, keeps the focus on project implementation and raises the visibility of each project.
- Project teams are willing to pull together to coordinate and share information and create efficiencies when they do so. A central support team works with each project to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and staff so that project managers can collaborate on lessons learned.
- A central point of coordination allows lessons from each project to be shared and successfully implemented in other projects. Integration allows for greater ease of receiving and disseminating information, which in turn leverages more support.
- Working across large-scale restoration projects requires more than large-scale funding. It also takes demonstration, innovation, knowledge sharing, partnerships and leverage.

IV. Proposed Guidelines for the Development of State Expenditure Plans

The Conservancy supports the Council’s stated commitment in the Draft Plan to ensure that the “projects, programs, and activities [in the State Expenditure Plans] will be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the RESTORE Act as well as the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan” (p. 17). We understand that Congress intended for the eligible activities under the state plans to be broader than those within the Comprehensive Plan, and support the use of state expenditure funds for projects that are not purely ecosystem-restoration-focused. However, we believe that, because the overall intent of the RESTORE Act is to restore the long-term health of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, the projects and programs in the State Expenditure Plans should not negatively impact the Gulf ecosystem. Accordingly, we recommend that the Council change its definition of “consistent” to the following:

The Council views “consistent” to mean that the Gulf Coast States will implement eligible projects, programs, and activities that will further one or more of the five Goals and will be implemented in a manner that does not have a [net] negative impact on the Gulf Coast ecosystem ~~restoration projects and programs selected for implementation by the Council.~~

In addition to including the above language, the Final Plan should include clear guidance to states on the criteria that they will use to make this “consistency” determination. We also propose that the Council require State Expenditure Plans to:

- Contain a description of how the projects or programs therein leverage existing and proposed Gulf restoration activities (including from other related sources of funding) in order to maximize the ecosystem and economic value of these activities.
- Be developed with the opportunity for meaningful public comment. The Council should make clear in its Final Plan that it will not approve a State Expenditure Plan unless it is developed using a transparent process that includes stakeholder engagement and meaningful opportunities public comment.

Finally, we recommend that the Council clearly delineate a process and timeline for its own approval of State Expenditure Plans. This process should also include an opportunity for meaningful public comment.

V. Guiding Principles: Regional Approach to Restoration and Commitment to Science

Finally, we commend the Council for including in the Draft Plan several guiding principles that will guide its activities in its implementation of the RESTORE Act, including commitments to regional approaches to restoration and science-based decision-making. We respectfully offer the following suggestions as to how the Council can help ensure that those commitments are realized in its Final Plan and beyond:

D. Creation of a Science Advisory Council

The Conservancy recommends the creation of a Science Advisory Committee to guide and advise the Council in major decisions in carrying out its statutory mandate. The Science Advisory Committee should be regional in approach and its composition representative of the entire Gulf Coast region as defined by the RESTORE Act. Committee members should be comprised of both theoretical and applied scientists, along with educators who can serve as community liaisons to share and explain progress of the Final Comprehensive Plan to the public. In addition, the Science Advisory Committee would include a representative from each of the Centers of Excellence established under the RESTORE Act. A single Senior Scientist would serve as chair.

We further recommend that Scientific Advisory Committee members be selected based on expertise that is directly relevant to the Gulf ecosystem and the challenges specific to the watersheds and estuaries within the five Gulf States. The Final Plan should include a section on

how the Council will incorporate the “Best Available Science” into its evaluation of both the Council-selected Restoration Component as well as the State-Expenditure Plan-Spill Impact Component. Using the best available scientific data, decision support tools models, and polls, the Science Advisory Committee will ensure that all ecosystem restoration projects are held accountable to the Evaluation Criteria ultimately adopted by the Council.

We recommend that the Council take steps to ensure that the Science Advisory Committee is actively engaged in the implementation of the Final Plan at every step: evaluating technical feasibility, benefits, and monitoring plans; prioritizing projects; determining sequential steps to completion; and lastly, informing final selection decision making. As a part of every RESTORE Council meeting agenda, the Science Advisory Committee should also be available to provide an update on its activities and answer questions presented to it by the Council. Finally, the Scientific Advisory Committee should coordinate regularly with NRDA and NFWF, so that all of the scientific lessons generated from these concurrent ecosystem restoration processes will work together and complement each other.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan. Please consider us a resource as you move forward in formulating a Final Plan and Project List; we welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback, data, and guidance throughout this worthy and highly iterative process.

Sincerely,



Robert Bendick
Director, U.S. Government Relations
Incoming Director, Gulf of Mexico Program
The Nature Conservancy

cc: Justin Ehrenwerth, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

Appendix 1: EXPANDED RESTORE EVALUATION CRITERIA

PROJECT TYPE/ EVALUATION CRITERIA	Provides multiple benefits in terms of ecosystem services.	Complements other watershed or large landscape restoration plans maximize restoration efforts.	Creates benefits that are lasting/contribute to long-term health.	Increases resiliency of coastal ecosystems to effects of sea level rise and climate change.	Provides Return on Investment in terms of benefits provided per dollar invested, including societal benefits from ecosystem services	Delivers clearly defined, measurable outcomes and benefits.
<i>Projects proposed to make greatest contribution.....</i>						
<i>Large-scale projects & programs projected to substantially contribute...</i>						
<i>Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State Comprehensive Plans...</i>						
<i>Projects that restore long-term resiliency....</i>						



SHERWIN ALUMINA COMPANY, LLC

July 3, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Electronic filing: RestoreCouncil@doc.gov

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and participate in the Restore Act Planning and Implementation process.

The Sherwin Alumina Company, LLC is a large Gulf Coast waterside industry absolutely dependent on marine commerce. We import approximately 3.5 million metric tons of Bauxite ore and export approximately 1.5 million metric tons of alumina products to worldwide markets annually. Sherwin Alumina employs approximately 625 people directly and more than 250 through on-site contractors. Each of our manufacturing jobs is estimated to support 3-5 more service jobs in our community. Our annual sales approach one half billion dollars each year. Our people live, work and raise families on the Gulf coast and enjoy its seafood, beaches, clean air and clean water. Sherwin Alumina and its people work hard to protect our air, water and land. Our company owns and protects more than 10,000 acres of coastal property, including more than 2500 acres of protected wetlands, marsh and critical upland habitat.

The Draft RESTORE Plan is a very good plan. Its brevity will allow the necessary flexibility we will need in the future, while its strong position on a limited, but important set of goals and well defined project selection criteria will provide clear guidance as projects emerge to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity provided by the Restore Act in response to the Depp Horizon disaster. The Draft Programmatic EIS is also an extraordinarily well written and clear document which also provides thoughtful guidance and an interesting array of useful information for project selection and parameters. We can find no fault with the EIS.

The Draft Plan, while very good and clearly written, could use additional emphasis on the priority of the goals. Upon methodical reading, we believe the authors listed the goals in their particular order because the Deepwater Horizon disaster (preceded by centuries of other human use) impacted the natural and human environment in that order, and the plan should emphasize that the selection process for projects will evaluate proposed projects for selection priority against the goals in the order the goals are listed in the plan. Beyond the Deepwater Horizon disaster, humans, in general, have impacted the natural environment in the Gulf Coast area in the same order, and the funds available should be used in the same priority to restore and protect habitats, clean water, fisheries, community resilience first, and only then should they be used for "economic" projects. While there is no question the economies of many coastal communities were seriously impacted by the spill and following disaster, BP has already compensated most, if not all those communities and citizens for most, if not all their losses. Natural resources damages, from all human activities, should have the highest priority in distribution of these funds.

Beyond emphasizing the clear priority of the goals in project selections the Plan should even more clearly emphasize the application of the stated criteria:

Sherwin Alumina Company, LLC

P. O. Box 9911 · Corpus Christi, Texas 78469 · www.sherwinalumina.com

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

In the selection process, projects which seek to put economics ahead of environmental impacts should not qualify for funding under the Act.

One omission from the Plan which we believe stemmed from the actual statute which was silent, was that of advisory groups which include citizens and local government. Federal and state agencies and state Governors are well represented on the council(s), but local government and citizens are not. Nor is Business and Industry which can bring much to the table in the way of project evaluation, development and execution. Industry in particular is very experienced in selecting and evaluating large capital improvement and reconstruction projects within our own fences and beyond. Advisory groups should require the inclusion of business and industry representatives for their experience and guidance, as well as their unique view of the resources that will be restored and protected.

Our comments are not intended as criticism of the Draft Plan, but rather as suggestions for improved emphasis. We look forward to participating in project selection and execution over the years to come through our local Bay and Estuary Program, the Gulf Alliance Business and Commerce Committee, our statutory boards and our state commissions involved in this process, as well as directly with the Council.

Thanks again for the opportunity to Participate.

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Russell
President and CEO

3 June 2013

Dear Council Members —



Mr. Walter McClatchey
203 Terra Ave.
Alexandria, LA 71303-2237

I am writing to comment on the draft initial comprehensive plan for spending Clean Water Act fines.

The draft plan fails to include a priority list or spending allocation plan for projects that will restore the Gulf's ecosystem and economy.

I propose the these projects be ~~sup~~ implemented quickly to restore the Gulf Coast:

① Create a Beneficial Use Trust Fund to use dredged sediments beneficially and rebuild barrier islands like Deer Island and Ship Island;

② Restore oyster reefs or place designed reefs for habitat in Mississippi Sound;

③ Restore seagrass beds to historic levels, and

④ Create a Coastal Preserve Trust Fund to acquire private marshes and shorelines or to manage public lands for preservation. Thank you.

W. Mc