

**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Public Meeting for Draft Initial Funded Priorities List**

Mobile AL - Sept. 1, 2015

Principals:

Commissioner N. Gunter Guy, Jr., State of Alabama
Justin Ehrenwerth, RESTORE Council
Teresa Christopher, Department of Commerce
Patti Powell, State of Alabama
Susan Rees, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Homer Wilkes, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Ebonye Allen, Environmental Protection Agency
Robbie Kroger, State of Mississippi
Elizabeth Washburn, Department of the Interior

Additional Support:

Kendra Parson, RESTORE Council
Alyssa Dausman, RESTORE Council
David Elliott, RESTORE Council
Jeremiah Kolb, State of Alabama
Betty McArthur, State of Alabama
Eliska Morgan, State of Alabama
John Bowie, Environmental Protection Agency
Debbie DeVore, Department of the Interior

The meeting started at 6:30 p.m. and lasted approximately 1 hr. and 40 mins. There were approximately 85 people in attendance, not including Council representatives, staff and support.

Introductory remarks:

Commissioner Guy: Thank you for coming this evening. We look forward to hearing from you tonight.

The public comment began at 7:30 p.m. and lasted about 30 min.

Public comments (6 speakers):

- Mr. Glenn Coffee, Mobile Bay Group of Sierra Club: Stated that his organization is supportive of almost all projects, but would like more information and public involvement with the proposed Upper Bay Marsh Creation project. Indicated support of barrier island restoration projects in Mississippi Sound, but cautioned that the long term success of rebuilding these islands is directly tied to addressing the adverse, ongoing erosion of Dauphin Island (which he noted is currently being studied via NFWF funding).
- Mr. Walter Ernest, Pelican Coast Conservancy: Stated that he is excited that Texas and Mississippi have included land acquisition projects and he is happy that private

land trusts are involved. Suggested that watershed management plans identify land acquisition components. Said he is concerned about the five-year timeframe to complete watershed management planning. He suggested that long term stewardship and monitoring funding be set aside to take care of lands that are purchased through RESTORE.

- Ms. Casi Callaway, Mobile BayKeeper: Thanked the Council for the hard work and the process used to develop the FPL. Very thankful for the Community Conversations that were held. Supportive of the Gulf-wide projects. Wants to see the Council hire locally for implementation. Suggested there be more focus on land acquisition and an effort to put all of the planning efforts together into something comprehensive. Would like to see more implementation funding in Alabama.
- Ms. Jill Mastrototaro, National Wildlife Federation: Stated that National Wildlife Federation enthusiastically supports the framework of watersheds and estuaries put forth in the FPL. Supports the projects proposed in the Mobile Bay watershed. Supports the foundational work that will set the stage for future investments. Suggested that the Council set aside funds to implement the watershed studies in Alabama. Suggested that the Living Shorelines Monitoring Program could serve as a model for Gulf-wide use. Pleased with the scientific review and efforts to leverage other funding sources. Hopes to see this level of transparency going forward.
- Mr. Keith Wilkins, Escambia County Florida: Supportive of the estuary programs being proposed and would like to see that implemented in Perdido Bay watershed. Indicated that this area has ongoing efforts to support such a program, including: the establishment of a stakeholder group in the watershed; cooperative efforts between two states to develop a joint HCP for the Perdido Key Beach Mouse; and the ongoing efforts of the Bay Area Resource Council. Feels that an estuary program could pull all these efforts together to focus on Perdido Bay.
- Mr. John Hosey, The Corps Network: Excited by what is possible and is very supportive of the Conservation Corps proposal in the FPL. The Corps Network represents 125 organizations across the US that work with at-risk youth and veterans to provide conservation job training. The work that is being proposed will demand a labor force and his organizations are training people to do this kind of work and creating eco-advocates in the process. Asked the Council to support the Conservation Corps proposal and offered thanks to the Department of Commerce for its vision.

Summary:

The meeting attendees expressed the following comments throughout the meeting:

- The comments were mostly positive, and expressed an overall appreciation of the work that went into publishing the draft FPL.
- Appreciate the Council leveraging funds, using the watershed approach and focus on water quality projects, appreciate the Conservation Corps, and public engagement approach.

- Would like to see the estuary program funded in the Perdido Bay watershed, more land acquisition and conservation, and a closer look at beneficial use projects for restoration.