

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

**St. Petersburg, FL – Aug. 26, 2015**

**Principals:**

Mimi A. Drew, State of Florida  
Justin Ehrenwerth, RESTORE Council  
Jessica Kondel, Department of Commerce  
Gareth Leonard, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)  
John Bowie, Environmental Protection Agency  
Gib Owen, U.S. Army, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works  
Ron Howard, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Karen Hyun, Department of the Interior

**Additional Support**

Kendra Parson, RESTORE Council  
Alyssa Dausman, RESTORE Council  
April Patterson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Jacksonville Office  
Debbie DeVore, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Gregory Steyer, U.S. Geological Survey  
Phil Coram, FDEP  
Heather Thomas, FDEP  
Kelly Samek, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

*The meeting started at 6:32 p.m. and lasted approximately 1 hr. and 40 mins. There were approximately 60 people in attendance, not including Council representatives, staff and support.*

**Introductory remarks:**

Mimi A. Drew: Thanks for coming, I see a lot of familiar faces. This is our first public meeting. We have a limited amount of funding, and we have worked with the funding that we have. We are a council made up of five states and six federal agencies. We worked hard and were able to come up with great projects. There was a lot of hard work that went into the last year, but I am pleased with the projects that we were able to put together.

*The public comment began at 7:16 p.m. and lasted about 55 min.*

**Public comments (19 speakers):**

- Mr. Mark Alderson, Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program: Would like to see funding for South Florida in the future, as there was no funding for the area in the draft FPL.
- Mr. John Hood, Clearwater Audubon: Observed that there are currently no land acquisition projects in the area and would like to see them added. Would like to

see projects in the Peninsula, and south of Tampa Bay. Also, would like the Council to consider wildlife management projects.

- Mr. Dave Kandz, St. Petersburg Audubon: Feels the draft FPL is a good start and appreciates the leveraging aspect. Would like to see land acquisitions in the uplands of Florida, specifically in and around Egmont Key.
- Mr. Robert Keim, Hernando Audubon: Feels the Council has done a good job leveraging. Thinks the draft FPL fails to list the watersheds that are critical to the coast, regarding seal level rise, hurricane impacts and other challenges. Would like future FPLs to fund habitat restoration; and look at the whole environment and ecosystem.
- Ms. Janet Bowman, The Nature Conservancy: Appreciates the use of leveraged funds in the draft FPL and the watershed approach. Would like the Council to consider the management of private lands, water quality and land acquisition in future FPLs.
- Mr. John Hosey, The Corps Network: The draft FPL is a good first step in a long-term process. In favor of the concept of the corps program.
- Mr. Joe Taylor, Conservation Corp of The Forgotten Coast: Appreciate the Council recognizing the needs in Apalachicola Bay and youth. Supportive of the conservation corps program.
- Ms. Holly Greening, Tampa Bay Estuary Program: Happy to see the Tampa Bay Estuary Program as one of the proposed funded program. Encouraged by the watershed approach and feels it is a solid science-based way to select projects. Would like to see projects proposed in priority watersheds in Southwest Florida, and would like more discussion about the economic benefit of restoration.
- Mr. Keith Wilkins, Escambia County: Appreciates the proposed projects in the Pensacola Bay watershed. Supportive of the Pensacola Bay Living Shoreline project, and would like to see an Estuary Program in Pensacola Bay.
- Mr. Paul Johnson, Ecology and Environment, Inc.: Has followed the Council very closely, and feels the Council has done an excellent job with selection, and is supportive of the draft FPL.
- Ms. Julie Wraithmell, Audubon Florida: Happy to see a focus on watersheds and building on existing investments. Excited about Robinson Preserve and the pilot NEP project. Would like to see habitat protection, land acquisition projects in the future, and more projects in the Peninsula. Also, would like to see more information on how all projects are being coordinated and to ensure projects are additive and not competitive.
- Mr. Charlie Hunsicker, Manatee County: Appreciates the Robinson Preserve project benefitting Manatee County. Appreciates seeing projects in the Tampa Bay watershed.
- Mr. Jay Liles, Florida Wildlife Federation: Appreciates the Council's focus on watershed approach and projects focusing on water quality. Would like to see land acquisitions in future FPLs. Appreciates the leadership of Mimi Drew and Justin Ehrenwerth throughout this process.

- Mr. Patrick Barnes, BFA Environmental and Limitless Vistas, Inc.: Appreciates the Council's work balancing environmental and community needs. Appreciates the inclusion of the Conservation Corps program.
- Ms. Amanda War, National Wildlife Federation: Appreciates the hard work of the Council. Feels the Council left out many critical watersheds, and that the draft FPL should represent implementation and not just planning. Future FPLs should include land acquisition and habitat restoration.
- Mr. Jack Mariano, Pasco County: Appreciates the projects in the draft FPL, and the focus on the environment.
- Ms. Peggy Arvanitas, Self: Disappointed that only a small part of the money going to Tampa Bay watershed is in Category 1. Is confused about how other projects in Pensacola Bay are ready for funding, but the ones in Tampa Bay are not.
- Ms. Sue Mullins, National Wildlife Refuge Association: Appreciates the Council's hard work, and appreciates the work in Pensacola Bay. Would like to see land acquisition projects, benefiting water quality and habitat, in Florida.
- Mr. Grover Robinson, Escambia County Commissioner: Appreciates the work of the Council; very excited about the Estuary Program and restoration in Bayou Chico. Would like to see more estuary plans funded in the future.

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.
- Would like to see more projects proposed in Southwest Florida (South of Tampa); would like to see more land acquisitions and habitat restoration in Florida.