

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

**Biloxi, MS – Sept. 10, 2015**

**Principals:**

Gary Rikard, State of Mississippi  
Justin Ehrenwerth, RESTORE Council  
Teresa Christopher, Department of Commerce  
Mark Wyatt, State of Mississippi  
Gib Owen, U.S. Army, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works  
Under Secretary Ann Mills, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Ben Scaggs, Environmental Protection Agency  
Ben Milakofsky, Department of the Interior

**Additional Support:**

Kendra Parson, RESTORE Council  
Alyssa Dausman, RESTORE Council  
David Elliott, RESTORE Council  
John Ettinger, RESTORE Council  
Buck Sutter, RESTORE Council  
Kim Smith, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Toni Martin, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Renee Odom, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
LaTrina Williams, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Robin Carter, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Robbie Wilbur, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Marc Wyatt, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Robbie Kroger, State of Mississippi  
Hank Burch, State of Alabama  
Homer Wilkes, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Michele Laur, USDA  
Nadine Siak, Department of the Interior (DOI)  
Nancianne Regalado, DOI  
Linda Walker, DOI  
Ebonye Allen, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
John Bowie, EPA

*The meeting started at 6:00 p.m. and lasted approximately 2 hours. There were approximately 125 people in attendance, not including Council representatives, staff and support.*

**Introductory remarks:**

Mr. Gary Rikard: Thank you for coming this evening. We look forward to hearing from you tonight.

*The public comment began at 6:30 p.m. and lasted about 1 hr. and 15 min.*

## Public comments (21 speakers):

- Mr. Gilbert Ramsy, Self: Supportive of partnership programs, and encourages the Council to use them.
- Ms. Sharon Hayes, Self: The Council has selected terrific projects. Happy to see the Mississippi Sound Estuary and Beneficial Use projects. Would like to see projects for water quality, which is a concern for the area.
- Mr. Peter Hoar, BFA Environmental: Supportive of the Gulf Conservation Core Program.
- Mr. Gerald Blessey, City of Biloxi: Appreciates the Council coming to the area, and the draft FPL.
- Mr. Andrew Whitehurst, Gulf Restoration Network: Draft represents a good first draft for gulf restoration. Supportive of River Flow Gulf-wide project. More money should go to SeaGrant in future rounds.
- Ms. Cathy Shropshire, Mississippi Wildlife Federation: Thanks the Council for preparing the draft FPL for public review. Look forward to working with the Council to achieve its goals. Pleased to see the emphasis on estuary habitats.
- Mr. Jim Hancock, Mississippi Forestry Commission: Would like to see funds for forestlands, especially those for private landowners.
- Ms. Sarah Walker, Vision of Hope: Would like to see funds to help displaced workers and youth to obtain the skills need to participate in the restoration process. Would like the Council to tap into the community organizations before moving forward in the process.
- Mr. Bien Van Do, Self: Would like the Council to prioritize fisheries restoration, especially for crab and oysters. Supportive of the Council Monitoring and Assessment Program, and encourages the council to work with/utilize local fishing communities to collect the data. Would like similar projects to be funded.
- Ms. Thao Vu, MSCVAFF: Request the Council to extend the public comment deadline to Oct. 12, and work with local organization to hold focus group meetings. Would like to see the full draft FPL (244 pages) be translated to Vietnamese. Urge the Council to appoint a designee to work with the Vietnamese population. Does not believe the Council should fund the plugging of oil wells. Supports the Conservation Corps program.
- Ms. Kara Lankford, Ocean Conservancy: First draft FPL represents a good start to the restoration process. The Council should strengthen the relationship between project objects and how they address damages being restored. The Council should identify a strategy to address restoration needs in the marine environment. Appreciate the investment in a broader monitoring effort. Improve pre-submission

of project submissions between members and other funding opportunities. The Council should update its Initial Comprehensive Plan.

- Mr. Joseph Ferguson, Self: Would like to focus on the front line workers and their health. Concerned about the safety of consuming Gulf Seafood.
- Ms. Rosa Herrin, OxFam America: Supportive of the Conservation Core Program. Encourages the Council to work with existing organizations, and finalize a rule to hire local workers to implement restoration projects.
- Mr. Howard Page, Steps Coalition: Would like the details on land acquisitions and would like to see more land acquisitions and conservation in Mississippi; specifically in the Turkey Creek area.
- Mr. John Hosey, The Corp Network: Supportive of the Conservation Core program.
- Mr. David Resor, Self: Concern about flounder catch going down following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Feels Mississippi has a water quality problem, and would like to see projects focusing on water quality and urban runoff.
- Mr. Chris Lagarde, Self: Applaud the Council for the time and effort putting into this effort. Concerned about water quality in Bay St. Louis. Encouraging local government to stop permitting to fill local wetlands.
- Mr. F.J. Eicke, GCCA: Would like to see ecosystem restoration projects. Does not agree with the Council's use of ecosystem projects.
- Mr. Walter Ernest, Pelican Coast Conservancy: Appreciates seeing proposals in Mississippi and Texas that include land acquisitions. Hopes the other states will do more land acquisitions in future FPLs.
- Mr. Robert Smith, Wildlife Mississippi: Pleased to see gulf-wide proposals coming from Mississippi. Excited to see the land conservation projects, and would like to see a focus on private lands.
- Ms. Jill Mastrototaro, National Wildlife Federation: Appreciation to the Council staff and members and public for the first step in meaningful environmental restoration. Appreciates the State of Mississippi for submitting three multi-jurisdictional projects. Support the focus on watersheds and estuaries on this initial draft FPL. Support the land conservation projects. Would like to see land management dollars for land acquisitions throughout the Gulf Coast regions.
- Ms. Terese Collins, Gulf Islands Conservancy: Feels the priorities for water quality and estuaries are on target, but would like to see more aggressive action to improve water quality in Mississippi. Would like to see future proposals address offshore issues. Need to use some of the money to get more information on the Gulf of Mexico.

Summary:

The meeting attendees expressed the following comments throughout the meeting:

- The comments were mostly positive.
- Appreciate the Council leveraging funds, appreciate the Conservation Corps and outreach and education efforts.
- Would like to see additional water quality projects in Mississippi as well as more funding to work with private landowners on forest lands.
- Would like additional land conservation and land management projects in future FPLs, especially in other states in addition to MS.
- Would like more details on the projects and an update to the Initial Comprehensive Plan.