

State of Mississippi

The Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program: A programmatic vision for bridging coastal restoration

Mississippi is the only Gulf state that currently does not have a National Estuarine Program (NEP) nor any other comprehensive estuarine like program. This proposal aims to provide funding to establish a Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program (MSEP). The program would geographically encompass the Pearl River on the west to the Escatawpa River in the east. The proposal would initially fund the strategic development of a restoration action plan, and initial coordination efforts that would look across all current funding horizons (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resource Damage Assessment, and RESTORE), leverage existing efforts (Mississippi Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration Tool) and provide an avenue of strategic coordination of coastal restoration investment. The proposal has the following objectives:

1. Develop a strategic comprehensive restoration action plan for sustainable coastal restoration with input from all the respective state, federal, NGO, and CBO organizations within the Mississippi Gulf Coast, as well as adjacent states.
2. Convene advisory teams that will be charged with respective engagement roles towards sustainable restoration and the finalization and adoption of the MSEP structural framework
3. Initiate a coordinated and collaborative effort to create a coupled river – to Mississippi Sound hydrodynamic model as a foundation for sustainable coastal restoration.
4. Host annual restoration planning discussions that would highlight coastal restoration specific work in the MSEP area of interest and the Mississippi Sound
5. Create and project 10 year funding strategy for MSEP

Funding such a program is not only necessary for systemically guiding the restoration of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, it is vital as a bridge program between Louisiana and Alabama. Ecologically it is a bridge between blue water and upland restoration and will allow better decisions to be made as it relates to coastal restoration in the future long after the oil spill funding and for future unforeseen events. Requested funding amount: \$2,270,000.