

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 1

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 05/23/2013 Date Received: 05/23/2013
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Correspondence Text

I was prompted to write because it occurred to me that the gulf was experiencing problems long before the deep horizon disaster for non-point pollution sources creating a 100 mile dead zone in the gulf - so when we say 'restore' we should ask ourselves the question "To what restore point?"

I sincerely hope that some of the funding will go towards innovative clean up methods that will be an example to the rest of the world.

The first thing that comes to mind is related to research done where floating nets of seaweed and plant life such as tullees would be employed to take up oxygen depriving nutrients and restore the natural habitat of sea life in the gulf. Secondly, there could be a great economic benefit from this activity by harvesting these biodegradable products (once they've done their job) for use in biofuels and many other applications. Did you know that 1 acre of reeds (tullees) can produce up to 7,000 gallons of ethanol fuel.

You know, there's a real danger that these funds could be spent off without any real change happening. Now! is the chance to do something meaningful that reveals a shining example to the world.

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Date Sent: 05/24/2013 Date Received: 05/24/2013
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Correspondence Text

Subject : Presentation of our company Momar Sport:

We also Environmental Protection: Anti-pollution barrier, Barriers Ecological , Floating Barrier Protection , Navy, Coast, Beaches, Bathing Establishments, Lido, Marine Parks, Port Pollution, Lakes, Rivers, Inland Water, Algae, Jellyfish , Marine Protection , Water Purification black, Anti-Dredging, Barrier Anti-Flood , Flood., Full of Rivers, Floods, also of design.

All of our production MADE IN ITALY Our accessories are made with care and quality:

Sincerely

For Informazioni Techniques and Estimates, please visit our website: momarsport.it - e-mail: info@momarsport.it

Video Anti-pollution barriers :
youtube.com/watch?v=AZN1-EemLO8

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Correspondence: 3

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Date Sent: 05/24/2013 Date Received: 05/24/2013
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Correspondence Text

I want to focus my public comment on Objective 7 (page 13). Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes – Improve science-based decision-making processes used by the Council.

The Draft Plan falls short of considering more than 20 years of scientific investigations conducted by NOAA and numerous government-funded university and agency programs on the status, effect and forecasted impacts of atmospheric Green House Gases (GHG) on the Gulf of Mexico and the World Oceans. For the Council not to recognize these facts as the priority objective with the goal of reducing GHG atmospheric concentration to below 350 ppm of CO₂ is negligent and a dis-service to all citizens of our great coastal states.

Oceanographers around the planet have presented copious scientific data on the extreme threat that ocean acidification (OA) presents to the sustainability of not only all marine species but also to the global human society. Well-established models predict OA to reach critical pH by 2030 resulting in a loss of most of the global coral reefs and triggering a break-down in marine food webs.

The Florida Climate Institute is a collective scientific body of the state's best minds from five universities. Their predictive models for sea level rise are to be taken seriously by government planners and politicians. For example, a recent FDOT-funded report (2012) forecasts a Seal Level Rise (SLR) of 24 inches by 2060 will result in a 100 percent loss of the transportation infrastructure for the Florida Keys - destroying that economy. Similarly, NOAA's-GIS predictive viewer shows that three of the state's nuclear power plants are imperiled by SLR, becoming islands in the open ocean at a rise of 72 inches. All of the tourist beaches are completely inundated and developments on the many barrier islands essentially become artificial reefs.

Both NOAA and Scripps I.O. have documented that atmospheric concentration of CO₂ reached 400 ppm in April
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2013, a condition last known to exist in the Pliocene Epoch over 3 million years ago when sea levels were 90 feet higher. These government-funded scientists stress the seriousness of the existing trend and that it will be very difficult to halt a CO2 rise at 500 ppm, which will result in an eventual SLR of over 200 feet and serious acid pH in the oceans.

Today's decisions of the RESTORE Council weigh heavily on the future quality of life of our grandchildren - just a mere 60 years into the future.

I want to recommend to the Council that 100 percent of the funds to be received for the Gulf Restoration be authorized to address reversing GHG emissions, stopping ocean acidification and dramatically slowing sea level rise. If you fail in this critical mission and award funds to more trivial projects, all of your efforts and valuable investments will waste away within 25 years. And, the Gulf will still face tremendous challenges to sustaining a desirable quality of life as they now know it.

Possible Corrective Projects for the 5 Gulf States:

1. End all state government support and subsidies to the fossil fuel industries and issue no new permits for expansion facilities; do promote the continued and expanded use of these raw materials for plastics, coatings, etc. that have lasting product value.
2. Adopt state legislation to allow any certified renewable energy generation to supply power to the electric grid through a non-restrictive, Feed-In-Tariff program.
3. Use 100 percent of all tax revenues and royalties received from the BP settlement, fossil fuel sector and transportation taxes to promote rapid and prolonged expansion of the renewable energy sector.
4. Immediately place state government purchase orders for purchase and deployment of a fleet of offshore platforms for Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC-Lockheed design) to produce electricity, hydrogen and methanol - thereby, rapidly replacing decommissioned offshore oil rigs.
5. Immediately place large state government purchase orders for electricity generated by turbines installed in the Gulfstream off the Florida Atlantic Coast and authorize significant, long-term incentives for commercial development and deployment.
6. Curtail commercial fishing in state coastal waters for 10 to 20 years to allow dissolved carbon to move into the biomass of expanding marine species populations; establish vast, protected essential fish habitats and offshore-deep water fish attractors.
7. Support large projects that rapidly restore and manage estuaries so these aquatic nurseries can provide optimum recruitment of juvenile species into marine stocks and food webs.

These will not be easy decisions to make and implement. However, we are at war with ourselves and many difficult decisions will be expected from our leaders over the coming decades. Now is the time for the Council to make these difficult decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan and to make this plea to the Council to not only restore but to preserve the greater Gulf of Mexico for centuries to come.

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Correspondence: 4

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
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Correspondence Text

Dear all,
For those not knowing what action GeneSys took about the GoM:
Step1: Stopping the oilflow out of the broken pipe.
Step2: Cleansweep Gulfwaters downto ppt level.
Step3: Disintegrate tropical storm Bonny heading straight towards the spill area.
This cleansweeping took about 8 to 9 months.
Then GeneSys stopped working on the GoM item, because the US-government and BP refused to reward this extraordinary, above all existing levels, performance.
There are today remaining 2 unfinished cleanup areas:
1) Chantaleur Sound - Breton National Refuge ----> BP spill
2) Barataria Bay ----> US Barge Incident
Spill (2) is already, some time, exciting Barataria Bay.
It is of no use to start a " Plan to restore the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region " as long as the cleanup ins't completed.
The remaining spills have, first, to be handled because they will spoil all expensive recovery efforts.
Regards.

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Correspondence: 5

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

There are so many organizations and programs handling some portion of the funding that it is not possible to understand their relationships without extensive independent research. I suggest that prior to the Introduction there be a section to address the background as it relates to at least the following five large funded programs:

- National Academy of Sciences. \$500 million. It appears that they will run a 30 year program with \$350 million coming from the settlement of a criminal case with BP in November 2012; and \$150 million coming from the settlement of a criminal case with Transocean Deepwater Inc in November.
- Gulf of Mexico Alliance. \$500 million. I understand this money is a gift from BP and is not the result of any legal action. It appears this is a new organization that was established just for the purpose of conducting scientific research over the next ten years.
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency. \$1 billion for early restoration projects to be managed through a program called the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). It appears that this funding is not tied to a specific court case; but it is not clear if it will be taken into account when the RESTORE Act case is settled.
- North American Wetlands Conservation Fund. \$100 million. The Initial Draft Comprehensive Plan is the first time I have seen reference to this program.
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. \$2.5 billion. This is funding a five year program with the dollar values allotted to the five states recently announced. Louisiana received the largest allotment which makes sense but I did not see the logic for assigning identical values to Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. It leads one to suspect that some arbitrariness may have been at play; or perhaps because none of the other states have a plan as good as that from Louisiana. Also the funding was reported as coming from the settlement of court cases with BP and Transocean but that settlement totaled \$5.4 billion. The \$500 million for the NAS also came out of these settlements. That still leaves \$2.4 billion unaccounted for.

Four of these five programs are discussed briefly on page 9 of the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. It would help Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

the reader's understanding if these explanations were expanded and inserted prior to the Introduction.

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Correspondence: 6

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Correspondence Text

Section III GOALS

Suggest delete the first 12 lines and insert a simple statement that you have elected to adopt the goals established in 2011 by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force; the national group that published the Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy in December 2011.

The goals are listed succinctly but then there is a long paragraph addressing only the fifth goal. The longer explanation for this and the other goals is included only later in Section IV where they are called OBJECTIVES. Some of this is a good explanation of each goal (not objectives) and so should be moved up and included with the goal as was done in the national Strategy. That would also provide an advantage for anyone comparing your explanation with the one in the national Strategy. They are not the same. This seems fine since this draft plan is coming 17 months after the national Strategy.

Section IV COUNCIL-SELECTED RESTORATION COMPONENT

This section includes, inter alia, the objectives. Unfortunately they are not objectives. They are goals. Five of them are the same or similar to those mentioned earlier. Two are new and should be considered for moving up to the GOALS section. Goals are broad-based ideas in time and substance. Objectives are narrow-based with measurable values; such as with schedule, cost, and technical results. The objectives in this case should be the projects to be implemented. In keeping with the intent of the statute at least the first three years of implementing projects should be identified here as the objectives.

Section IV also contains a subsection on EVALUATION CRITERIA. It is so generic as to be useless. Specific cost, schedule, and technical criteria should be established for each project. Will the projects be awarded on a fixed price basis, or cost plus, or time and materials? Will evaluations be conducted monthly or quarterly? Will there be bonus or

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penalty incentives? Some of the projects will be of a nature that requires independent evaluation of the results at some time after completion, such as a year or more. What provisions are being made for these evaluations.

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Correspondence: 7

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

The RESTORE committee for Escambia County and the City of Pensacola was appointed by county and city leaders. Not one of the members represents the educational or health aspects of the ACT.

The members consist of investors, realtors, a member of a non-clean energy company and one member is a key participant in a chemical company that produces oil and gas emulsions for drilling.

Other issues the community is facing with this make-up of the members are:

1. The lack of transparency;
2. The refusal to have information translated into Vietnamese or Spanish;
3. The refusal to reach out to any of the above communities thru any source including their churches or organizations.
4. Non-profits that represent the disenfranchised are not at the table. The non-profit health community is absent.

All of these issues are also present in the NRAD projects that include money for projects that have allocations from state, county or city budgets. None of the approved projects had public input or a rating scale. The very fact that this money was available was limited to a few in the community.

These are only a few of the issues facing our community with regards to the make-up of the RESTORE committee. Oversight, transparency and a place at the table for our disenfranchised communities must be addressed.

Sincerely,

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Gloria G. Horning, Ph.D.
CATE (Citizens Against Toxic Exposure)
Public Information Officer
Board of Directors

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 8

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

TODAY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS EXXON MOBILE SHAREHOLDERS REJECT CLIMATE PROPOSAL 3 TO 1. MY COMMENT IS THIS. DO WE TRUST EXXON MOBIL AND THE OIL AND GAS COMPANIES TO LIVE UP TO ANY LONG TERM DRAFT AGREEMENT SO SIGNED BY ALL PARTIES? THEY KNOW THE GOLDEN RULE THAT GOLD RULES. WE OVERLOOKED AT GREAT EXPENSE IN THE GREAT RECESSION WHAT BERNARD MADOFF DID AND HIS KIND AS HE DID NOT LIVE UP TO ANY SIGNED AGREEMENT. LONG TERM WILL EXXON MOBILE SIGN AN AGREEMENT AND THEN TRY TO INFLUENCE CONGRESS DOWN THE LINE TO CHANGE THE AGREEMENT. I DO NOT FEEL LUCKY.
DR. KAMANSKY

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Correspondence: 9

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Dear Sirs,

Our proposal submitted by mail june 27. 2010 is still valid. The technology has been proved in many cases, and will help to clean the Gulf efficiently, economically and in a sustainable way - by using air!

Please have a look to the proposal and inform us about your judgment.

Best regards

Nikolaus Weth
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The attachment has been sent to you separate mail.

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Correspondence: 10

Author Information

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

This is what the money was intended for to restoremake pristine....the shoreline. We have an opportunity here to correct and improve the health of our shore/gulf This is not something that we can ignore for another generation. Time is running out. We ARE the stewards of nature....it can no longer be delayed. For our children's children. For ourselves. PLEASE....BE WISE.

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Correspondence: 11

Author Information

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Date Sent: 05/31/2013 Date Received: 05/31/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

Dear members of the RESTORE Council:

The three Florida National Estuary Program directors were very pleased to see that eight of our twelve regional projects have been included in the Council's 'Preliminary list of authorized but not yet commenced projects and programs.' These projects have been vetted through publicly-noticed and well-attended meetings, and ranked and approved by the more than 40 elected officials and environmental managers serving on our three Policy Boards. All twelve of the regional projects directly address one or more of the Council's objectives.

We would like to request that the remaining four regional projects developed through our public process also be included in the Council's Preliminary list of authorized but not yet commenced projects. Descriptions and maps of these four projects were submitted today to RestoreCouncil@doc.gov, and are:

1. The Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Plan includes 14 water quality monitoring programs to enhance understanding and tracking of water quality conditions in coastal waterbodies, located in 11 counties stretching from Levy County south to Collier County on Florida's west coast. Southwest Florida Regional Ambient Monitoring Plan.

2. The Southwest Florida Regional Education Plan includes 20 education projects to improve water quality, habitat and stewardship.

3. The Analytic Tools for Planning project will improve knowledge of the economic value of environmental services provided by the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) resources in terms of long-term community sustainability, growth and
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resilience.

4. The Southwest Florida Regional Monitoring and Assessment of Sentinel Species Plan includes 13 projects designed to coordinate and expand existing Gulf monitoring efforts to track sentinel species and sites. Combined, these projects will result in better understanding of status and trends of critical species and resources.

The Florida NEPs stand ready to assist the Council in further refining projects within Southwest Florida; implementation of projects submitted for consideration; public involvement; and any other way we can help you with the restoration and protection of the Gulf and our coastal areas. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions, comments or requests-we look forward to working with the Council in making significant progress towards Gulf restoration.

We expect to develop additional comments and recommendations for submittal to the Council prior to the due date, but want to congratulate the Council on the carefully constructed framework outlined in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

Lisa Beever, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program
Mark Alderson, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program
Holly Greening , Tampa Bay Estuary Program

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Correspondence: 12

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

The list of projects is difficult to use. Suggest:

- Assign a number to each project as is done on the NRDA program but different than any numbers used on that program.
- Provide the report in Excel format so that it can be sorted and reformatted
- Identify a point of contact by name, telephone number, and email address,so that comments on a particular project may be submitted.
- Identify projects which on the surface do not appear to meet the minimum requirements.
- Identify the projects planned for initiation during the first three years.
- Who will identify which of these projects will be pulled forward for incorporation in the NFWF program?

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Correspondence: 13

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

Thank you for this forum. I will also offer to send this information by certified mail/return receipt to indicate sincerity.

Proposal: The courts require British Petroleum to 100% finance one to several major Hollywood environmental movies for global audiences. I attended the "Screenwriter's Summit" in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2012. Please inform me if I can help on major movie projects.

Proposal: The courts require British Petroleum to pay punitive damages. The last time that I heard about the U.S. federal deficit it was up to 16.7 trillion.

Propoal: The courts require British Petroleum to pay significantly on this \$16.7 trillion dollar deficit--give BP a timetable for all downpayments on 16.7 trillion dollar total.

Thank you for this forum.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Salmon, Jr.

jsalmon403@gmail.com

(434)793-1659

P.O. Box 1434

Danville, Virginia 24543-1434

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Correspondence: 14

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

In response to your 30 May email questions regarding Priority Criteria:

1. I would suggest some weight for sustainability. For those under the water surface it would be good to have some reasonable expectation that nature will take over once a project is completed. For the shoreline there should be some reasonable expectation that the restoration will survive storms.
2. Where the large project criteria applies I would suggest that many smaller projects of the same type be treated as a large project. This would also seem to make economic sense.
3. It seems to me that most of the project ideas are somewhat independent. I would broaden a few to adjust two or more adjoining areas with differing requirements so that the needs of both can be addressed at the interface barrier. One challenge is a coastal industrial complex surrounded by lowlands, marshes, wetlands, and water tributaries.

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Correspondence: 15

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/03/2013 Date Received: 06/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

Proposal: The courts legally require British Petroleum to make downpayments on the \$16.7 trillion deficit, on a timetable established by the court.

Proposal: The courts legally require British Petroleum to finance one to several major environmental Hollywood movie projects. I attended the "Screenwriter's Summit" in Las Vegas, Nevada in December, 2012. I believe that I can help develop major movie projects.

Sincerely,
Joseph A. Salmon, Jr.
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 16

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

We must not forget the Brownfield areas in Pensacola. There are numerous people who have suffered health and death due to the environmental toxic dumping. Our children are now faced with these same chemicals. ARSENIC, ETC.

Yes, our beach needs cleaning still from the oil, but please consider restoration along our bays and around our schools. We need to close down some neighborhoods and relocate people, but no one wants to discuss this because it's affecting people of color. There also should be another piece educating and involving young people in the process of restoration so that they may learn what to fight for and how to keep it environmentally safe, and not mention how to preserve our wetlands etc.

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Correspondence Text

I was quite shocked to read the plan and list of projects only to find a handful of projects from the counties disproportionately affected by the oil spill. Most of the projects are located in Tallahassee or South Florida. There are a list of projects that have accumulated since the oil spill in Northwest Florida. It is the area of the state that was most affected and has been the area of the state which has received the least amount of money. Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana clearly understand those counties hardest hit and have proposed projects in the coastal counties affected by the oil spill.

The process for submission of the project in Florida is broken. Please do not fund projects that take away from the much needed restoration of the counties disproportionately affected by the oil spill. There are good projects in Northwest Florida to restore both the environment and the economy. Please just publish a fair process and review to submit for the money.

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Correspondence: 18

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Correspondence Text

I am in the Pensacola public meeting as I write these comments.

Need a cultural heritage advisory committee since all of the objectives involve or may impact cultural (including archaeological) heritage, and because cultural heritage tourism is a sleeping giant of economic development on the Gulf Coast and relates directly to the ecosystem.

General comment: seems like you have a randomly generated stack of public proposals responding to very vague guidelines (RFP) and the question is how to select. Seems like selection may not be the problem so much as how proposals were solicited.

Very much a trickle down approach, presuming ecosystem restoration does equal economic development - this is naive in regards to tourism and especially cultural tourism, and also to ecosystem restoration (point also made by rep from Florida Park Service). There needs to have been comprehensive planning prior to proposal solicitation, a point I am hearing in other verbal public comments.

Sorry for,the random comments-just thoughts during the meeting. I was very impressed with the quality of the verbal comments. Listen to them!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 19

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/03/2013 Date Received: 06/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

I want to sincerely Thank You for allowing me to address the council. Naturally of course it is most difficult to express my concerns in a 2 minute time period, therefore, I'm following up with this written document.

My concerns as a citizen with some observations of the Restore Act. First, I do not represent any project or program. I understand how the funds, if any, may be distributed with regards to bucket/pots #1,#2, but still somewhat confused on #3.

I am only looking for fairness to what many Americans feel the Restore Act fine monies should be used for if it comes about.

If you asked the typical American citizen what the Restore Act is for. I would dare say the most common answer from anyone with knowledge is that the "Intention is for BP fine monies be used on projects in those areas directly impacted by the spill."

With regards only to bucket #2 and your DRAFT INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:
Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration

So when reviewing your APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION
Preliminary list of authorized but not yet commenced projects and programs.
Being a Florida resident I looked objectively at only those projects. Out of the 85 Florida projects listed, only 9 projects listed to 7 counties of the 8 , which were directly impacted. Santa Rosa County being one of the 8 impacted counties was not listed nor mentioned.

Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

I applaud your comment on page one, "Over the next few years, development and implementation of this Plan will be an iterative process leading to a comprehensive, region-wide, multi-objective restoration plan based on the best available science".

I like the fact you will be using "Best Available Science", which is dealing with a body of facts and truths.

It's a fact there was an oil spill and this oil came ashore along the gulf coast region. That means for Florida, those 8 counties that had oil come ashore were directly impacted. This includes the Gulf Islands National Seashores of Perdido Key, Fort Pickens, Opal Beach, and Naval Live Oaks.

I was very surprised none of these National Parks were listed as a project by the Department of the Interior for Restoration under your "Preliminary list of authorized but not yet commenced projects and programs".

These National Parks as well as, State and local seaside parks meet 3 of the 4 Objectives stated in your plan;

- 1- Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
- 2- Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- 3- Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines

Evaluation Criteria;

I am somewhat confused on this;

Item 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.

Item 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 term "Most Impacted" could be questionable. Case in point, Collection data of contaminated oil debris from Santa Rosa County was not taken into account until November 2011, according to local Florida DEP office in Pensacola. Navarre Beach clean up was being performed by crews from Escambia County and apparently that data was lumped in to the record data for Escambia County until November of 2011. By November 2011, not all, but the vast majority of the oil had been cleaned up off those beaches.

My humble opinion, I would like to see more projects meeting your Objectives on page 11 of your plan in those areas that were directly impacted. Especially the Gulf Islands National Seashore and those state/local parks on the gulf.

Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats – Restore, enhance and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats. These include *barrier islands, beaches, dunes,* coastal wetlands, coastal forests, pine savannahs, coastal prairies, submerged aquatic vegetation, *oyster reefs*, and shallow and deepwater corals.

Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines – Restore and enhance ecosystem resilience, sustainability, and natural defenses through the restoration of natural coastal, estuarine, and riverine processes, and/or the *restoration of natural shorelines.*

Yes, I feel there should be some local Advisory Boards to keep the Council aware of projects that are started in a particular region or area.

I wish to Thank You again for your service in this area. I do not envy your position, I realize the extreme challenges

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

you will have to make.

Sincerely,
Ralph Agnew
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 20

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/04/2013 Date Received: 06/04/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

I plan to present oral testimony at Spanish Fort tomorrow. I have a video that I will deliver at the event.

The thrust of my presentation is that a long-term, TVA-type of organization needs to be established to oversee a 200-year plan for restoring the Mississippi River Delta that would be established in Louisiana, receive independent funding, and have significant input from city, parish, state governments as well as Federal Agencies and NGOs.

I see the Restoration Council's most appropriate action is to fund the establishment of a study group to structure the organization and draft enabling legislation that has sufficient local support to pass through Congress at the next appropriate time, which would likely be after the next catastrophic event.

Wm. Hovey Smith
Professional Geologist (GA No. 622)

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 21

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/04/2013 Date Received: 06/04/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Alabama expects to receive a windfall of approximately \$100 million as part of the Phase 3 settlement of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. These funds are allocated through the NRDA, or Natural Resource Damage Assessment, Restoration Program. Our government officials have decided that the vast majority of this funding will be used to "enhance" Gulf State Park, by building a luxury hotel and convention center on the park beach. Such use does not result in coastal restoration and is a violation of both the letter and the spirit of the NRDA Restoration Program. The hotel/convention center will not benefit most Alabamians but instead will make a significant part of our coastal beaches unavailable to visitors not paying to stay at the hotel. It will also be competition for other private hotels along the coast. And most likely it will one day be destroyed just like its predecessor by the next Hurricane Ivan to strike our coast. We would be better served if the funds were used for true natural resource restoration projects, such as acquiring additional beach-front lands for public access and coastal protection.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 22

Author Information

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|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/04/2013 | Date Received: 06/04/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I'm not sure that building a convention center is the best way of restoring the damaged area from the oil spill. Maybe we could use some of the money to protect the endangered wildlife in the area or preserve the sands for our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 23

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/04/2013 Date Received: 06/04/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Recreational boaters in Harrison and Hancock counties have very limited launching options for Wolf and Jordan rivers. More importantly, these two rivers only have a couple of small beaches for family enjoyment which are miles north of Bay St. Louis and packed full of boats due to such limited options. Creation of a few beaches on the south end of the rivers would be a huge benefit and overwhelmingly utilized.

Similarly, Cat Island has a long cultural tradition for many many campers and day-trip boaters enjoying Smuggler's Cove. The sandbar has eroded severaly leaving only a small beach with muddy bottom. Restoration of the sand would be an outstanding project which would benefit all boaters along the MS Coast.

Please inform if a petition would be helpful in advocating for these projects.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 24

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/05/2013 Date Received: 06/05/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

To whom it may concern:

As a property owner on Dauphin Island, Alabama for the last 18 years I have witnessed the relentless degradation/erosion of beaches on the entire island. My own property, fouled significantly by the Deepwater oil spill, has eroded two hundred feet (200') in depth since purchasing it in 1995. My once dune and pine forest protected home was forced to be moved this year to prevent undermining from ocean surf lapping around it's foundation pilings.

Dauphin Island is not the giant overdeveloped tourist mecca as is other areas of the Gulf Coast, possibly not giving it as much visibility afforded other more visited areas, and therefore not warranting immediacy of action. Hopefully, this is not the case because the island is of monumental importance to the health and vitality of the Mississippi Sound and Mobile Bay ecosystem. Funding for maintenance and restoration of its shoreline should most certainly be based on this ecological significance and not its overall popularity with sunbathers.

I urgently solicit your help in funding restoration of Dauphin Island's coastline before damage from manmade constructions and disasters coupled with natural actions permanently cripples the island's ecological function.

Sincerely,

Susan B Riddell
519 E Peace St.
Canton, MS 39046

Dauphin Island:

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

323 Audubon Place

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 25

Author Information

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| | |
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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/05/2013 | Date Received: 06/05/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I am a property owner on Dauphin Island, AL. The RESTORE Act and NRDA funding is needed to create private sector jobs and reclaim the vital natural resources and commercial assets that are important to the Gulf Coast. This funding is critical to our efforts to recover from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Please do all you can to help make our community whole by approving funding to restore and stabilize the southern shoreline of Dauphin.

Barbera Schmedes

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 26

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/06/2013 Date Received: 06/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dear Sirs,

I attended the Council's hearing in Spanish Fort, Alabama, yesterday; but 3-minutes were not nearly sufficient to fully explain my evolving concepts on a 200-Year Plan for the Management of the Mississippi River Delta.

Written comments and a CD were submitted at this event, and E-mail links to a YouTube version are available. These documents explain why a new Federally mandated TVA-type of organization needs to be founded that would be based in Louisiana with the mission of managing the restoration of the Mississippi River Delta.

The ideal organization would be:

- 1 Have Delta restoration and management as its primary mission.
2. Derive funding from independent resources.
3. Have its own staff.
4. Be able to make and get approved contingency plans to take management steps when conditions were appropriate (as during floods).
5. Coordinate with stakeholders in all levels of government, with energy companies, commercial fishermen and NGOs to pre-approve long-term action plans.
6. Have the ability and equipment to rapidly respond in crisis situations.

No such organization presently exist, and it would be very unlikely for the present Congress to enact it until we have the next Katrina or similar event.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Much of this was previously presented at the Gulf Restoration Task Force meetings in 2011, a copy of which was given to the Council.

New at the Spanish Fort event was a proposal that the Council set aside some money as prizes to be competed for by environmental departments in State universities and colleges throughout the impacted states for the best design of a new organization that would have as its mission the management and restoration of the Mississippi River Delta.

An annual judged competition could be held with prizes awarded to the university department who submitted the best efforts towards a piece of draft legislation for submission to Congress when conditions were most appropriate. This contest would go on for five years, and perhaps longer with each effort building on the comments and criticisms of the previous attempts.

This way inputs could be obtained from those on the ground as a necessary part of the process, key elements could be identified; and the organization actually designed by the best young minds in the nation by participating in a crowd-sourced exercise.

This on-going sustained effort should receive inputs from local governments, NGOs and Federal agencies and garner the support from State Senitors and Congressmen who whose support would be vital to introduce this measure and get it passed at the Federal level.

This annual contest would keep attention focused on the Mississippi River Delta, give excellent training to students participating in environmental programs and help accomplish an extremely complex task by sounding out and drafting proposed legislation over a period of some years, instead of whipping something out in a few weeks.

The prize money would be say, \$10,000 for five years with an additional \$30,000 for administrative costs over the same period.

Please feel free to contact me about this or other aspects of my present and past proposals for long-term Delta management.

Wm. Hovey Smith
Professional Geologist

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 27

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/06/2013 Date Received: 06/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Hon. Members of the Restore Council-

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. You are facing a very big and job, but the potential impact to the Gulf coast is tremendous. The RESTORE program is a unique opportunity to cause long term positive change and the decisions you make will have a lasting effect on millions of people.

There has been a great deal of discussion about which projects should or should not be implemented, and many of the proposed projects have been on the shelves of various agencies for many years. But I am asking that you take a step back from the "canned" projects that many groups are proposing; especially the acquisition projects. While acquisitions can be very good projects that are often created with noble intent, they will in effect be taking funds away from areas that are impacted daily by the offshore oil and gas industry and are also subjected to constant erosional forces. Often these acquisition projects are located away from the gulf shoreline, but the areas to be acquired rely on the protection of a wide beach or healthy dune system to preserve their integrity. Without this protection over time the acquisition properties will become submerged and lost to future generations.

When considering which projects to fund, priority should be given to those projects that have important environmental and species benefits, as well as those projects that restore habitat for endangered species and provide upland protection. Wide beaches provide foraging habitat for many species including the Piping Plover; and healthy dunes provide nesting habitat for the endangered Kemps Ridley sea turtle and both provide protection to upland areas.

Additionally, when the oil from the Deepwater Horizon tragedy was washing ashore it was not in a vast majority of Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

cases landing on areas that are now being considered for acquisition; instead it washed ashore on the beach. There are many funding mechanisms to acquire properties for preservation, but the funding stream for beach and dune restoration projects is much smaller.

Coastal communities are economic engines that often generate large tax revenues for State and federal governments as supported by Dr. James Houston's work to track the benefits provided by coastal restoration projects.

Stated simply- Beach restoration projects and dune restoration projects should be given priority consideration for funding. The upper Texas coast is a critically eroding area and following Hurricane Ike the Bolivar peninsula is in dire need of coastal restoration.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide these comments.

John Lee Jr.
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 28

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/07/2013 | Date Received: 06/07/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

The Plan shows no direct involvement with the Counties of Texas. Local governments are ultimately the stewards of their respective environments and should be heavily involved in the decision making process of what projects are funded.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 29

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/08/2013 Date Received: 06/08/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Funding the restoration of the Gulf Coast should begin by using the RESTORE Act, which dedicates 80 percent of Clean Water Act administrative and civil penalties.

By ensuring that we have the right criteria, meaningful public participation and a transparent process that employs the best possible science, you'll help make Texas' coast more resilient so that it will continue to be a safe home for our communities and the backbone of our state's economy. The strength of Texas economy depends on a healthy environment. The state relies on more that 17.9 billion spent annually by tourists visiting the Gulf Coast. This can best be implemented by using funds from the penalties associated with the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 30

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/08/2013 Date Received: 06/08/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Thank you for considering two overlooked campaign as a direct effect of oil production.
And run off from industrialization

ReDUCE and REUSE gets lost in recycle. Basic math of one time usage of disable plastics littering coastlines around the globe gets lost in the recycle shuffle
Plastic disposables pushed on consumers coastal high wind areas are directly from the by product of petroleum making it cheap for retailers and amiss for parenting and outlandish for school cafeterias. Signs clogg up view with dont litter around coast lines while plastic bags hang from palm trees.

A paper takes 3 days on an ocean floor tp biodegrade
A plastic 10 years wreaking havoc on ocean life
Styrofoam insulation for highrise buildings for heating on is getting proported as green for heat insulating and bluurred that humid hot climates in south a different bird as they pebbles blow for months out of construction projects for critters to breathe in. First hand experience.

Grocers stock fisherman with plastic disposables finding a share of trash over board.

Oil rigs hire transport of the one time used trash to be shippws back to shore with contracted companies too often depending on the integrity of the crew of what gets back to shore.

Not one mention of addressing this crisis in your plan is baffling.

The Dead Zone of fertilizer run off is best researched fr LSU marine biology reports.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Not directly relates to the oil companies but the ethanol from corn subsidies killing the soil with ammonia style fertilizer leaves rural america outlawing the proximity of livestock fertilizer to public places pigeon holing the industrialized markets profit and gains eroding soil and depleting oxygen for marine life

Add the commercial fishing gammet it is no wonder Mother Earth churns with drought and hurricianes to re infuse the oxygen and slow the run off.

The solutions area many but starting with oberzealous health regulations perpetuating the crisis is a place to begin the wave of awareness.

Lots of ideas how to address the many ways to solve

Let me know how I CAN further assist this overlooked epidemic. Second place is to stop styrofoam usage im school plates

A no brainer.

Last buy forest up beating the housing tearing down and creating pervious covering.

Best buy on Earth is Earth itself.

Coastal cities need small tract conservation throughout the coastal cities

Large tract securing is great but getting through for migrating species seems to say big lots outter market proce ok but booming areas with small tracts off Rivers are getting the shaft as st. Augustine gets planted and driveways get laid and trees get trimmed and migrating birds get left to fend for themselves for small source stop overs.

Ask me how I can help

Thanks for asking.

Sincerely,

Diane Dickson

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 31

Author Information

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/08/2013 | Date Received: 06/08/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

My name is Linda Smith, and my company was part of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill the seafood I was selling in my restaurant was purchase in Louisiana. I am having problems with payments me and my employees. Please give me a call at 713-360-7779 o email me at lindasmith1026@yahoo.com.

Linda Smith

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 32

Author Information

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/09/2013 | Date Received: 06/09/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

The strength of Texas economy depends on a healthy environment. The state relies on more that \$17.9 billion spent annually by tourists visiting the Gulf Coast.

To retain and improve the economic vitality along the Gulf Coast, we need to use RESTORE funds to support environmental restoration projects that bring specific economic and community benefits to the region.

To this end, we need additional criteria in the comprehensive plan to ensure that RESTORE funds go to projects that restore the health of the Gulf Coast as well as the economies and communities that depend on it.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 33

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/09/2013 Date Received: 06/09/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dear Sirs/Ms:

I believe it is crucial to protect and restore the coastal habitat, to secure freshwater inflows for the bays and estuaries, to restore the oyster reefs, to sustain the fisheries, to protect the vulnerable and endangered marine species, and to enhance monitoring and research on critical ecosystems and species. I believe our marine and estuarine ecosystems are on the verge of collapse as a result, primarily, of anthropogenic causes. This must be reversed if we are to have a viable system in the future.

Thank you.

William T. Smith

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 34

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/09/2013 Date Received: 06/09/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

As a resident of the Lower Texas Gulf Coast, an avid nature enthusiast and birder, and member of several environmental groups, I wish to submit the following comments for your consideration:

- The strength of Texas economy depends on a healthy environment. The state relies on more that 17.9 billion spent annually by tourists visiting the Gulf Coast.
- To keep Texas' economy strong we need to use RESTORE funds to support environmental restoration projects that bring specific economic and community benefits to the region.
- We need additional criteria in the comprehensive plan to ensure that RESTORE funds go to projects that restore the health of the Gulf Coast as well as the economies and communities that depend on it.
- By ensuring that we have the right criteria, meaningful public participation and a transparent process that employs the best possible science, you'll help make Texas' coast more resilient so that it will continue to be a safe home for our communities and the backbone of our state's economy.

I have seen, and continue to see, first-hand how important the environment is to our economy here on the lower Gulf Coast. Although we were spared from the most severe damage resulting from the BP Oil spill, we are acutely aware and agree that we must do everything possible to ensure these funds go to restore the health of the Gulf Coast.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,
Madeleine Sandefur

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 35

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/10/2013 Date Received: 06/10/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

NO piecemealing - a continuity of selected projects.

"compatibility with other State Expenditure Plans when evaluating issues that cross Gulf Coast State boundaries."

the state plan should be 'compatibilitable' within the state and across all states.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 36

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/10/2013 Date Received: 06/10/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

First, please allow me to introduce myself. I am the Maurice Ewing Professor of Oceanography at Rice University and Director of the Center for Sustainability at Rice University. I am writing as a member of the Gulf Coastal Science Consortium, which is an organization composed of the most widely published and cited (peer-reviewed literature) scientist focused on Gulf coastal issues, including but not limited to impacts of accelerated sea-level rise, natural and human induced subsidence, natural and anthropogenic alterations in sediment supply to coasts, and severe storm impacts. The members of this group have conducted research in all Gulf coastal states and all have extensive public outreach experience. Our first workshop was held at Rice University in April 2012 and resulted in a set of consensus statements on several issues. Our second gathering was associated with an international meeting held in Galveston Texas in April of 2013 "Coastal Processes and Environments Under Sea-Level Rise and Changing Climate: Science to Inform Management. This conference was sponsored by the American Geophysical Union (AGU), Geological Society of America (GSA), Geologocial Society of London, Society for Sedimentary Research and the Shell Center for Sustainability of Rice University. It was attended by 84 scientists from 12 countries and resulted in a number of consensus statements to be published by both AGU and GSA in the next several weeks.

My objective in writing is to inform you of the existence of the Gulf Coastal Science Consortium and our interest in assisting the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council by providing scientific input. I was present at the June 10 meeting in Galveston and impressed by the recognition that science should provide the framework for this program.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 37

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/11/2013 Date Received: 06/11/2013
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Correspondence Text

I would like to recommend additional coastal restoration projects that, in my opinion, would be much more cost effective and longer lasting. My main recommendation is to build spillway diversions from the Mississippi River to the Barataria Basin. Spillways located between the Avondale area and the Port Sulphur area would be more effective than the existing pipeline siphons that are currently in place, not affect commercial traffic on the river and strategically place much needed silt and fresh water into the rapidly disappearing wetlands.

Spillways could easily be constructed from the river to Hero Canal, Wilkerson Canal, Jefferson Lake Canal as well as a dozen other sites. This would return the Barataria Basin closer to the state of replenishment that it experienced prior to the construction of the Mississippi River levees, minimize the need for higher levels of defensive type flood protection after wetlands are being revitalized and recreated and lower the effects of hurricane damage which, currently is increasing each year with smaller, weaker storms. The flood walls and flood gates would become unnecessary as the marsh is rebuilt.

This type of wetlands regeneration would continue for centuries as long as the river continues to carry any amount of silt with minimum maintenance.

Currently the cost of flood gates and flood barriers, higher levees, pumping dredge spoils in attempts to create wetlands, increased costs of storm damages along with loss of businesses in the Plaquemines Parish area would be well offset by construction of spillways. Spillways would incur a one time construction cost and minimum maintenance of the structures after construction. I can only see this as an all around win for taxpayers, residents, local, state and federal governments. The only downside would be to the oyster fisherman who may lose some of their beds but the upside far offsets damages done to oyster beds in the area and in the long term would also benefit oyster fishermen as well as all other wildlife and fisheries.

I urge you to seriously consider this proposal as part of a comprehensive coastal restoration project for southeast LA. Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

We have been discussing the impact of the loss of wetlands in the Barataria Basin for far too long while we, instead, need to be taking action of this type to rebuild what has been lost and provide a much higher level of flood protection and storm surge protection than can ever be done with floodwalls, gates and levees.

Sincerely;
Michael A. Roy

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 38

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

My name is Dana Larson and today I have the honor of representing the Gulf Coast Council of Dive Clubs in making comments on RESTORE.

I have been told that the world's four most productive ecosystems are: marine marshes, Iowa cornfields, tropical rain forests, and offshore platforms. Almost 40 years ago, Congress recognized the multiple values of our platforms by unanimously passing the Fishing Enhancement Act. It is sometimes referred to as the Rigs To Reef Act. One of its earliest modifications was the change in its title from "Fish" to "Fishing". This change was done in the recognition that the platforms's fish populations attracted fishers who generated economic growth to the coastal communities.

About the time of the bill's passage, the Gulf offshore Alabama was generally considered a biologic desert. Consequently, there was virtually no fishing activity of any kind off its shores. Now, more than 40% of the entire Gulf's recreational red snapper catch is caught off its 65-mile shoreline. The one and only reason for this tremendous change is Alabama's artificial reef program. One of their studies show that each red snapper caught in the Gulf generates some \$100 to the adjacent community. Another study shows that each cubic meter of artificial reef generates approximately \$100 to the adjacent community for each year of the reef's existence.

At about the time of the Act's passage, the underwater surface area of the "average" offshore platform was calculated to be about 2 to 3 acres. In a monumental assumption, let us temporarily assume that the underwater volume, not surface area, of each average offshore platform is approximately 2 cubic acres. Under this assumption, the average platform of 2 surface acres encompasses some 500,000 cubic meters ($63.6 \text{ m} * 63.6 \text{ m} * 63.6 \text{ m} * 2 = 516,949$) of marine habitat. Under this same cubic assumption, let us also assume that all of the estimated 12,000 - 30,000 fish around the average platform permanently reside within the platform legs and never go outside. Using Alabama's \$100 value per cubic meter of a-reefs, the inside economic value of the average platform is about \$50 million

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

(516,949 * \$100) per each year of its existence.

Right now, about 550 platforms are listed as Idle Iron. Historically, about 1 platform in 10 has become a Rigs to Reef conversion. If this ratio continues, then about 500 Essential Fish Habitats, each worth about \$50 million, will be intentionally destroyed. This would also mean that about \$25 billion ($\$50,000,000 * 500$) of Essential Fish Habitats will be destroyed and some 6 million reef fish ($12,000 * 500$) will lose their reef habitat. Most of these reefless reef fish, along with all platform encrusting marine life (including protected coral), will perish. This means the recreational fishermen will either find another fishing hole or stay home and sit on their wallets. Commercial fishers will hurt a little more.

It should not be necessary for the Gulf Coast Council of Dive Clubs to explain that the consequences of this preventable environmental and economic demolition is not a temporary event. These damages will be permanent. However, even if the consequences of these demolitions were only a temporary or only a one-time event like the BP Spill, the adverse economic consequences will still be more than 50 times the estimated \$1 billion damage caused by the BP Spill.

The Decision Makers should also realize that the estimate of 2 to 3 surface acre of the average platform is erroneous. This 40-year-old estimate was heavily based on near shore shallow water single well platforms installed prior to 1984. Most of the Idle Iron structures are multi well deep-water structures. It would not surprise the Dive Council to learn that their submerged acreage of the average Idle Iron structure was at least 3 to 4 acres. If so, we are looking at \$50 billion losses for many years. By comparison, the damages caused the BP Spill become only a rounding error.

If our Nation's laws were truly applicable to all individuals and appropriate circumstances, the ecosystems on and around platforms would be recognized not only as Essential or Critical Habitat but also as the equivalent of wetlands. If our Nation's laws were fully enforced, the loss of these valuable platform wetland habitats would then be mitigated both in-kind and nearby by a factor of 5 by the entity (DOI?) causing the wetland damage. The mitigation ratio factor requirement would increase the greater the distance and/or the greater the difference from original colonization from point of damage.

It is the Dive Council's wish that selected Idle Iron will be selected for protection and enhancement. However, there are several members of the Dive Council who believe that ignorance, prejudice, emotions, and politics will cause the worst to happen to the Idle Iron's Essential Fish Habitat with absolutely no penalty and no mitigation. If they are correct, our environmental and economic losses will be immense, cumulative, and permanent.

We also believe that the Idle Iron's (read Gulf of Mexico habitat and economy) best salvation will begin to occur if (1) the majority of the decision members "Get Wet" and then (2) apply some of the \$1 BP billion penalty funds to conversion and enhancement of selected Idle Iron structures to Rigs to Reefs.

Dana Larson

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 39

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Correspondence Text

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. We are mindful of the Council's staff's limited resources and the tight timeframes you are working with to meeting the statutory deadline of July 6. We think the plan is good; we like the goals, objectives and criteria.

But we need time to digest this. We do have questions and concerns. It would be hugely beneficial to extend the timeframes to give this process the thoughtful and considered approach it deserves and requires, rather than be beholden to an arbitrary deadline date. Also, importantly, since this plan is the umbrella plan to which the State and Local plans must be consistent, time must be given to state and local stakeholders to fully understand and appreciate what this plan is laying out for all of us.

Therefore, we would ask that at the very least, the public comment period be extended to give your stakeholders the time to process the plan, the implications of the plan's outlines, and to formulate thoughtful feedback.

Understanding that an extension may not be granted and in an effort to meet the June 24th cutoff for public comment we will try to share some of our concerns now.

1. We understand that the published project list is not "THE LIST", but there are projects on the list that should not be, and projects that should be. And even though this is not the list, we are concerned that there is a message and perception that gets formed when looking at these projects. This list, for better or worse, was included in the federal register publication. So, we remain concerned about this list of projects. Also, we urge the council to work with the State representatives to coordinate project selection with them.

2. The Plan states that the Council will further review the projects and programs on this list to determine whether Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

each project or program meets all applicable requirements of the RESTORE Act. It would be helpful for all stakeholders if the plan could outline the specific process that will be used to evaluate, prioritize, and select ecosystem restoration projects and how the "further review" will take place to determine whether or not the currently listed projects will continue to be included in the Council's planning process. Additionally, it would be helpful for the plan to provide the "chain of command" for making those decisions.

(As a local government we need to know how and when that review will take place so we can put our planning process in motion and be consistent and complimentary with the Council's. Also, given the Council's appropriate concern for duplication, we need to know what projects will actually be funded thru the Federal Council.)

3. We are uncertain about project authorization and commencement. For example, the if a local government is currently implementing a federally authorized wastewater program (that has broken ground) but will still require the several years (and several tens of millions of dollars) to complete, is this project considered "commenced" and therefore rendered ineligible for inclusion in the Council's project list? Also, what if a project gets on the Council Plan list, but then is completed before RESTORE Act monies actually flow, would the project be ineligible for federal council funds?

4. The draft plan makes mention of projects that are rooted within approved state plans, please consider adding language that recognizes the importance of projects rooted within approved federal plans as well.

Thanks again.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 40

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Correspondence Text

First of all, this entire process is undemocratic. People drive for miles, sometimes quite far, to attend your public meetings, and are limited to three minutes. Why not have all day meetings for folks who have unusual schedules or work at night? Also, the meetings are structured in a way in which it is obvious the final decisions will be made in an undemocratic fashion with no real, local control as to the effects of these decisions. In addition, the subject of Corexit is not a key component of the "plan". Banning Corexit and all dispersants is imperative. It is because of the toxicity of the Corexit that the damage to our Gulf and marshes was far and above if the oil had been left to rise to the surface as much as possible, and collected mechanically. In addition, the oil coming out at that depth was already being dispersed by the pressure and cold temperatures of the depth, yet millions of gallons of dispersants were sprayed. A simple observation underwater could have, and I'm sure did, note that the oil was already being dispersed by depth pressure. Bioremediation is not being used on the dying marshes. Why is the vast research on the issue by LSU scientists and others not being utilized to assist our dying and oiled marshes? In addition, any fisheries damaged from fresh water diversions should lead to additional compensation from already hurting fisher folk. Also, when Secretary Mabus first proposed the Gulf Restoration Task Force, he made it clear health impacts and access to timely health care and compensation should be a part of the plan. Why was this issue not included in the Restore Act? We need additional legislation that provides adequate and timely health care to all who were exposed to the toxic chemicals, and compensation for any medical bills. The plaintiff's settlement that capped the medical claims at \$69,000 is inhumane and an insult to the people who worked to protect their communities from the oil that was pouring in, and to the people who also happen to live near the coast. In summary, I think you should start this process over, hold round table discussions that are ongoing until the money is actually spent for projects. Further, I urge the people of the Gulf coast to organize together, independently of the NGOs whose primary mission is for funding sources. If the people don't organize to take on this undemocratic process, injuries to their way of life will continue to occur.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 41

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The "authorized but not commenced" term will continue to generate confusion and questions. Either revise the wording in the statute or add your own category of "proposed." The term "authorized" should be limited to the normal meaning. After a project is authorized it should merely be a matter of time until the contracts are placed for implementation.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 42

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Correspondence Text

the restore act for louisiana bp fines
i believe this money should be spent on long term protection of the coast!
look at every place that has a bulkhead! the land is still there! start at one
end and keep going leaving inlets for all the species to still get in to spawn! but fill in with river silt where we used
to have land! also we should purchase our own dredges instead of leasing companies to do this work! our parishes
and state spend way too much money on contracts to have things done while paying for deadheads to stand on the
side of the road and throw a shovel of black top right in front of a car passing for the car to pack it in!!!! we should
also use that dredge to start dredging the local bayous again giving people back their mud and if they dont want it
put it in a barge to bring down where we need it behind the new bulkhead on the coast!! what ever dont waste it on
studies! otherwise if its gonna be wasted anyways spread the wealth to all the fishermen and low lying areas that
will have to relocate to live and make a living! this is my rant as a fisherwoman i dont see a future here anymore and
the coast is creeping up on bourg which is where i already relocated to!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 43

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

To Whom it may Concern,

I have been up and down the coast of Florida, Alabama, and we have a huge problem. We have fish die offs, people who are ill from the effects of the incessant leaking of the gulf floor and the Dispersants.

I am an RN and a Biologist. I have spoken independently before the Pensacola task force. We need clinics for these people and the water needs bio remediated. This can only be achieved by working in Unison.

I work with Sustainable Agriculture, Water Bioremediation and with the people of the Gulf. If we do not acknowledge that there is a problem and do something about this problem then it is only going to get worse with each passing day.

Now the state of Florida wants to Frack and drill some more. When is this insanity going to stop? It is only going to stop if we Move to Amend, Change Campaign finance laws and term limit and know that Corporations are not working for the best interests of the People and our Fragile Ecosystem.

There are solutions and I intend to be part of that solution. I would not be righting this letter if there were not.

How many Oyster Colony Collapses, Fish Die offs, Humans and Animals dying are we going to have for people to wake up and realize that we have hit a tipping point.

I would suggest that you refer to my to my friends in the Gulf and finally listen to what they have to say. We are the people and we know our terrain and the disconnect between our Elected Officials is palpable.

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I would respectfully submit that you listen to we the people, for if you do not have we the people and the activists input then your are missing out on some very incredible discourses.

We have a chance to support alcohol based fuel, Wind, Solar power, cisterns for Potable water. This could create far more jobs and far more Green jobs which potentially could change the world.

Let us be part of that change. It is not a Republican issue, a Democratic issue it is a Humanitarian issue. I ask you to help us put the Kind, back into Man Kind.

Lastly GMO's are making people sick and it is GMO's, Our Polluted waters, seas, air and sky that is in trouble. Chemicals are destroying people's lives lets get them well and recognize that when you do the right thing you have the loyalty of the people.

As a Resident of Florida, for 24 years I ask you with all gratitude to let us help the people and Save this Gulf, our waters and our lives.

Please stop the spraying of Harmful Dispersants. I do not have another planet to go to, Do You?

Sincerely and Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia R Springstead RN MS

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 44

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

Dear Sirs,

I submitted testimony at Spanish Fort and planned to provide a link to a video presentation of the event that directly relates to that testimony and a written list of my recommendations. The video may be seen posted on the wmhoveysmith channel on YouTube. It is titled something like "Gulf Coast Restoration Council Meeting at Spanish Fort, Alabama, June 5, 2013."

I found that three minutes were insufficient to begin to describe the scope of what I proposed and its implementation. The basics are:

A. Establish a new TVA-type of organization with independent funding with the mission of restoring the Mississippi River Delta over the next 200 years.

B. This organization would act on pre-approved plans so that it could respond rapidly in the midst of a crisis to not only save lives, but also to divert waters-sediments to help nourish the Delta in the midst of flood events and not waste these free resources.

C. Planning for such an organization could be done by crowd-sourcing by promoting an annual contest that would judge proposed draft legislations produced by environmental departments at various Colleges and Universities in the Coastal States.

D. The council organize such a contest and reserve a part of the settlement money as prizes for the winners.

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E. This legislation once it is fairly well advanced would seek input and approval by the states' Congressional delegations.

F. When the Congress is more likely to pass this type of legislation after the next catastrophic event, it would be ready to present to the entire congress and this new organization actually put into place.

There are hundreds of related minor points that I have thought through concerning the implementation of such a plan, that I would be pleased to present to the Council; but it is impossible to do it in 3-minute segments.

Wm. Hovey Smith
Professional Geologist

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 45

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

Thank you for your efforts to restore the Gulf of Mexico in the aftermath of the BP oil disaster. As a tackle-store owner who earns a living fishing thanks to fishing in the Gulf, I have a large stake in the success of restoration. Though we were not directly affected by the oil or dispersants in southwest Florida-at least as far as we can tell yet-the bad PR hurt business. And the magnitude of the disaster confirmed my conviction that it without a healthy gulf, I am out of a job.

My biggest concern is how you will implement restoration. I do not see structured, thought-out guidelines for how you will process and decide what projects will be chosen and implemented. Please generate a clear course that I can then navigate to be part of a good decision making process aimed at making the Gulf a healthier place. You need look no further for a model than the fishery management councils. These decision-making bodies reflect diverse interests and deliberate over science-based conservation and restoration options. This process is clearly defined, I know how to participate in it and have multiple opportunities to engage and assist in working toward the best regulatory action necessary to protect our fisheries. Such a multi-step process will ensure that a restoration program emerges that strives for greater health to the Gulf than any individual project could produce on its own.

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ID: 47484

Another related concern is where the balance of the efforts will take place. Restoration efforts should be focused in the marine environment where the spill occurred and in the coastal areas that support the Gulf. The Gulf is a large body of water with many different types of habitats that must be restored since each plays a key role in the life stages of many species.

Once again, thank you for your efforts. As you continue to move restoration forward, I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to develop a clear road map I can navigate and productively participate in. I need your efforts to succeed in improving the overall health of the Gulf that my business depends on. Please look to existing bodies, like the Fisheries Management Council, not only for a template to develop your road map but also as a guide in setting up criteria for your decision-making.

Sincerely,

Norm Zeigler

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 46

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
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Correspondence Text

Please give some weight/priority to areas closer to the Gulf. Please don't let this be a political wish list for those not directly affected by the spill. Dauphin Island (Alabama's only barrier island) needs help.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 47

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/18/2013 Date Received: 06/18/2013
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Correspondence Text

I have seen that the number of head-started Kemp's Ridley turtles that return to the Texas beaches to nest is down a bit YTD. Has anybody looked at the nest numbers for Rancho Nuevo beach in Mexico for the Kemp's Ridleys to compare? I would expect that for at least the first X number of years of the headstart program, the numbers would increase every year. Does anybody have a theory about why the numbers might be down thus far this season?

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 48

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 06/19/2013 | Date Received: 06/19/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
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Correspondence Text

Zero money should be spent on infrastructure such as buildings and conference centers. ALL the money should be spent on restoring wetlands and facilitating the ecosystems in the natural barriers. Permastructure!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 49

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Correspondence Text

The Restoration Council is to be commended on their work creating the Draft Initial Plan. A quick scan of Appendix A reflects a heartwrenching list of historic needs which, if they could be funded, would make real strides in restoring the health of the Gulf.

The real amount of money to be received will not be enough to fund even a fraction of these needs. The Restoration Council should tightly tie available funds to wetland protection and restoration, leaving off civil projects which are more appropriately funded through other means. 50% of all available funds should be dedicated to direct purchasing or establishing conservation easements on surviving wetlands. Healthy wetlands are the primary means of ensuring a healthy gulf.

Particular to Louisiana, any monies spent on construction should be spent on furthering the languishing river diversions that have been planned for upwards of 20 years, as a restoration and protection measure for her dying wetlands.

Thanks,

Thais Perkins
Ecologist

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 50

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

Statement by Dr. E.W. "Ed" Cake, Jr., Ph.D., regarding the

Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:
Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive plan.

I am very concerned that no rubric is in place for determining the validity and appropriateness of projects proposed for funding under the Mississippi's Restoration Components (projects).

The draft initial plan lists five broad and nebulous Goals (section III), but fails to prioritize those goals or assign values thereto for validating proposed restoration projects. If we consider their simple listing in the draft initial plan, one could assume that they are listed in descending order of importance. Please help the public to understanding the importance of each goal by giving some weighted importance factor to each Goal.

The seven Objectives listed in the section IV of the draft initial plan should be used in a rubric to objectively assess the validity, importance, appropriateness, and potential for success of all projects proposed by the public, the agencies, and other entities including the Council. Only by assigning a numerical value to the various components of the proposed restoration projects can the public understand and support the restoration projects chosen by the Council in each state.

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The four Evaluation Criteria (section IV) are not prioritized, per se. Again, these proposed criteria should be include in a decision-making rubric and applied to all proposed restoration projects evaluated by the Council. It is imperative that the Council's decisions as well as those of each state Trustee regarding the final selection of restoration projects be transparent and immune from undue political influence. I am very concerned about the evaluation process for the proposed restoration projects in Mississippi and who will make the final decision on which projects to fund.

As Trustee Fisher is very aware I submitted a proposal to restore oyster reef habitats in Point aux Chenes Bay in the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in eastern Jackson County, Mississippi, early on in the process. (See accompanying proposal.) That proposal meets all of five of the Goals (section III) and six of the seven Objectives (section IV). However, there has been no feedback from Ms. Fisher or the Council regarding that proposed project. That multi-million dollar project will help restore and preserve the estuarine habitats of GBNERR and provide oysters and other estuarine-dependent fishery resources to the residents of Jackson County and adjacent Mobile County.

Personally and professionally, it does not matter to me who or what agency prepares the final proposal or conducts the project so long as the project moves forward through the selection process to the implementation phase and on to completion. But until and unless Trustee Fisher or the Council applies the evaluation criteria and rubric, no addition action is warranted at this time. If the Council does not have staff scientists with comprehensive knowledge of oyster restoration projects, who will make the final determination of the validity of this proposal to restore the oyster habitats in Point aux Chenes Bay?

The Proposal Evaluation and Selection statement in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan provides a three-step process including (a) Eligibility Verification, (b) Coordination Review, and (c) Evaluation. Has a minimum set of requirements under applicable law (state or federal) been published or sent to the entities that submitted restoration proposals as stated in subsection a? If not, why not?

I would like the record to reflect that I favor both the Citizens and Scientific Advisory groups to assist the Council with its deliberations. I suggest that each of the five of the Gulf States constitute their own advisory groups so that the advisory process does not become too burdensome and complex. I urge the Council to adopt the Advisory Group concept and invite citizens and scientists from the public to serve on those groups ASAP.

This statement, along with the following proposal constitute by formal response to the Draft Initial Plan for Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystems and Economy.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Cake

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A Proposal to Restore the Oyster Habitats in Point aux Chenes Bay, in
Eastern Jackson County, Mississippi, Using RESTORE Act Funds

Prepared by:
Gulf Environmental Associates
Ocean Springs, Mississippi

INTRODUCTION: The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force is completing its review of restoration projects to be considered in Mississippi and elsewhere along the oil-impacted coastline of the Gulf of Mexico. The following preliminary proposal to restore the oyster habitats in Point aux Chenes Bay in eastern Jackson County, Mississippi, is herewith submitted to the Task Force and other state and federal agencies for further consideration.

The known impacts of the BP oil spill in April 2010 and its aftermath in 2011 in the state waters of Mississippi include, but are not limited to (1) the loss of all sizes of the American oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, from state oyster reefs in western Mississippi Sound; (2) a state-wide reduction of or absence of successful post-oil-spill oyster spatsets; (3) the demise of the Mississippi oyster fishery; and (4) the loss of oyster habitats that support other important commercial and recreational fisheries. The loss of productive oyster reefs in western Mississippi Sound will necessitate not only the restoration of those damaged reefs but other oyster habitats elsewhere in Mississippi that could support the struggling oyster fishing industry. Oyster resources and habitats elsewhere including those in Jackson County furnish the planktonic oyster larvae that become the oyster spat on the now-dead reefs in the western Sound. Those reefs in Biloxi Bay, Graveline Bayou, and Pascagoula Bay could also supply relaying stocks for repopulating reefs in the western Sound should that become necessary.

In the 1900s productive natural oyster reefs existed in the bayous inshore of Point aux Chenes Bay east of Pascagoula and west of the Mississippi-Alabama state line and in the bay itself. [See attached topographic map.] In the early 1900s a 3-mile segment of the Grande Batture Islands, formed the southern boundary of the approximate 4,000-acre Point aux Chenes Bay, protecting it from storm waves and the intrusion of high-salinity, Gulf waters. Those islands also helped to hold the lower-salinity waters from the bayous that brought freshwater into the bay and created the estuarine conditions necessary for oyster settlement and growth and protected them from voracious high-salinity predators such as the southern oyster drill or "conch," *Thais* [*Stramonita*] *haemastoma*. Although the State of Mississippi, Department of Marine Resources has attempted to restore oyster habitats in the bay, those attempts failed because of several factors discussed below.

A series of natural and artificial events that began in the recent geological past ended oyster production in Point aux Chenes Bay. Those events included (1) the prehistoric "pirating" of the Escatawpa River by the Pascagoula River that severely reduced the inflow of freshwater, nutrients, and sediments into the waterways that emptied into Point aux Chenes Bay. The freshwater was required to maintain estuarine conditions; the nutrients were necessary to foster growth of all estuarine organisms including fish, oysters, shrimp, etc.; and the sediments were absolutely necessary to maintain the Grande Batture Islands at the mouth of the bay. Those islands were constantly be eroded by storm waves and tidal currents. (2) The natural westerly migration of the adjacent offshore barrier island of Petit Bois widened Petit Bois Pass and long-period waves entering eastern Mississippi Sound from the Gulf of Mexico helped to erode the sediment-starved Grande Batture Islands.

The reduction of freshwater resources to the bay was exacerbated by (3) the construction of three artificial, east-west "levees" north of the bay during the early to mid-1900s. Those "levees" include the current CSX Railroad bed and the "old" and "new" US Highway 90 road beds. Those man-made "levees" which are breached by inadequate openings prevent sufficient flows of freshwater, nutrients, and sediments from the Escatawpa River Basin into Point aux Chenes Bay. (4) Fresh water use by the now-closed International Paper Company facility in Moss Point further reduced the availability of inflows to the basin. (5) Human population growth along in the area drained by Bayou Heron and Bayou Cumbest eventually led to the closure of shellfish beds in those waterways from the inflow of improperly treated human sewage.

And finally, (6) the spill of highly-acidic effluents from Mississippi Phosphate Company's waste gypsum pile that broke containment in 2005 just before Hurricane Katrina ended oyster production in Bangs Lake, a small embayment, and Bangs Bayou at the northwestern side of Point aux Chenes Bay. In the past Bangs Lake has served as a relaying area for oysters from Pascagoula Bay and elsewhere with assistance from and benefit accruing to local oyster fishermen.

The restoration of oyster habitats in Point aux Chenes Bay is appropriate and justified because of the loss of oysters and oyster habitats in western Mississippi Sound. It will require many years to re-establish productive oyster reefs and commercial oyster harvesting in the western Sound at least in part because of BP's dispersed oil and Nalco's Corexit dispersants and the "blackwater" events that killed virtually all oysters and other benthic organisms in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Thirty-one years after the Ixtoc-1 oil spill in the Bay of Campeche in Mexico in 1979 the oysters in the oil-polluted Laguna de Terminos have still not recovered in their former habitats and to their pre-spill abundance levels. Until and unless full oyster production and restored oyster habitats exist in western Mississippi Sound, additional oyster habitats should be created to aid the oyster fishery and to restore the benefits that oyster reefs provide to Mississippi's coastal ecosystem ... habitats for myriads of associated organisms in the Sound's food webs, substrate for attached organisms, water filtration and sediment-cleansing features, stabilization of benthic habitats, fish habitats and sportsfishing reefs ... to mention a few.

RESTORATION PLAN: The term "restoration" begins with the prefix "re-." The restoration of oyster habitats and oyster production in the Point aux Chenes Bay and adjacent waterway will require the use of many other concepts and activities that also begin with the prefix "re-." This restoration plan may seem simple, but it is very complex and costly and will require the cooperation of several state and federal agencies to "make it happen. The advent of the BP oil spill and the restoration funds that will be provided to Mississippi and the federal government as a result of that disaster will provide an exceptional opportunity to restore oyster habitats in eastern Jackson County. The restoration plan outlined below will require considerable pre-impact studies and post-impact evaluation. It may also require an Environmental Assessment or "EA" by one or more state or federal agencies. Its limited scope and beneficial outcomes will hopefully preclude a formal Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS") process, given the fact that no federal funds need to be expended since BP should fund the entire project.

PROJECT GOALS:

1. **REBUILD** the Mississippi segment of the Grande Batture Islands with sediments dredged from nearby channels (e.g., Bayou Casotte) or from Mississippi Sound.
2. **REMOVE** or open sections of the Highway 90 and CSX Railroad "levees" so as to,
3. **RESTORE** freshwater inflow to Point aux Chenes Bay and its tributaries (Bayou Cumbest & Bayou Heron).
4. **RE-ESTABLISH** proper water-bottom conditions by planting cultch materials.
5. **RELAY** oysters from Graveline Bayou and/or Pascagoula Bay to **REPOPULATE** the **REPLACEMENT** oyster habitats.
6. **REMOVE** the sources of human and industrial pollution so as to permit,

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7. RECLASSIFICATION of the Point aux Chenes Bay area as "approved" or "conditional approved" shellfish-growing waters.
8. REQUIRE Mississippi Phosphate Company to RESTORE Bangs Lake to its pre-acid-spill conditions, including, but not limited to, the REPLANTING of oysters in that lake.
9. REIMBURSE the oyster fishermen of east Jackson County for assisting with the RELAYING and REPLANTING oysters in Point aux Chenes Bay and Bangs Lake.
10. REMIND the oyster fishermen of east Jackson County of their RESPONSIBILITY to care for and enhance the oyster populations of the Point aux Chenes Bay area.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 51

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I represent a Florida non-profit organization (Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge) that is engaged in rescue, rehabilitation, and reintroduction of injured native wildlife in the Panhandle region. We have been in operation as a wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organization since 1994 and we routinely respond to and treat over 2000 animals of a large variety of wildlife species each year. Our organization is the principle response organization for rescue and salvage of dolphins and whales for the Walton County to Escambia County region of Northwest Florida working under NOAA authorization. We have consistently been involved with marine mammal, sea turtle, and sea bird response in this region of the Panhandle since our beginning.

The Deepwater Horizon spill resulted in significant impacts to marine wildlife in the Florida Panhandle. Our organization was a participant in the DWH wildlife response unit and conducted rescue, recovery, and salvage of stranded marine animals during the crisis. In total, over 1200 birds, 86 sea turtles, and 7 dolphins were recovered in Northwest Florida during the active spill response phase(Consolidated Wildlife Table 2011). Of the affected Gulf states, Florida had the lowest survival rate of rescued birds as most died in transit to treatment; only 6 of 17 live sea turtles survived; and all 4 live stranded dolphins died. Following the end of the response phase in Nov 2010, countless other marine mammals stranded; four were alive but had to be euthanized for lack of treatment pools. Deceased sea turtles, birds, and fish also were found in abnormally high numbers. These statistics indicate that wildlife rescue/rehab capacity in Northwest Florida, as well as the rest of the Gulf Coast, was inadequate. Monitoring the long-term impacts on marine wildlife is a major concern, and recovery of those species should be a priority for restoration funding.

I wish to provide comments on your three major questions for this meeting from the viewpoint of our local wildlife response needs (the overarching goal #3 "living resources of the Gulf").

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1) Define the Priority Criteria:

Restoration funds should not be used as a replacement for the mandated long-term planned maintenance functions that are the responsibility of municipalities and State or Federal governments. Infrastructure maintenance was originally incorporated into the long-term design of public service projects through fees and tax allocation, and cannot simply depend on windfall funding derived from Clean Water Act or Oil Pollution Act fines.

The priority criteria:

- must have a defined comprehensive ecosystem restoration benefit
- should address root causes of ecosystem degradation and wildlife impact
- be likely to succeed and technically appropriate under federal and state law
- be implementable within a reasonable time-frame
- demonstrate Cost Effectiveness – provide technical, scientific, economic and social evaluation of project design
- consider Implementation Impacts - Design alternatives addressed to mitigate any project impacts on wildlife both short term and over generations
- have clear, measurable and achievable end points
- contain a monitoring plan able to evaluate progress and success, especially to provide measures of wildlife recovery and conservation of essential habitats

2) Other objectives and how to prioritize:

The council should develop a restoration plan with objectives that are adaptive and able to adjust with changes that will most certainly occur in the next decade (e.g. storms, pollution events, climate change)

The council should consider including objectives for monitoring of wildlife populations with scientifically based sample procedures as an important tool to determine the status of native species and their habitats. This would include studies on migratory species as well as resident populations of native wildlife. Target species for this monitoring should be finfish, sea birds, sea turtles, marine mammals, and other aquatic species that likely were directly affected by the oil spill.

Prioritizing the objectives should be made in conjunction with determining the basis of the priority criteria – these concepts are not mutually exclusive.

3) Advisory committees:

Utilize local knowledge whenever possible. This would include, for example, local NGOs, state and federal agency personnel familiar with the ecosystem services being restored or enhanced, and scientific research capacity existing in state colleges and universities in the region.

Advisory committees should be composed of individuals that are appropriately qualified to provide guidance and recommendations on needs for restoration projects that will recover, enhance, and monitor the status of the ecological health of the focal region.

Scientific advisory committees should first establish the question of needs: 1) What was injured or lost? 2) What ecosystem functions would benefit the greatest from enhancement and restoration? 3) What are most appropriate means to provide those benefits through science-based restoration and monitoring programs?

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The advisory committees must have a transparent and collaborative method of communicating their findings / recommendations to the Council as well as the public.

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Correspondence: 52

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Correspondence Text

To whom it may concern:

Re: Dauphin Island, Alabama Shoreline Restoration

We are writing this letter as very concerned Dauphin Island property owners. Dauphin Island forms part of the barrier chain of Mississippi Sound and is of significant importance to the estuarine habitats of this area. This neglected barrier Island always seems to be in the front line of protecting not only the Mobile City and port but also the wider Alabama and Mississippi coastal communities. In spite of the continued deprivation of its sand supply from the Mobile Bay channel and the seemingly lack of governance enforcing that the dredged sand is returned to its natural flow, it still continues to provide much needed protection. The protection it provides is not only evident every hurricane season but also in the tragic events of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

This barrier island so desperately needs beach re-nourishment, failure to do so in the immediate future could result in the permanent destruction of this amazing Alabama land mark which provides so much, not only to the people of Alabama but to the whole of the US. If this island disappears due to lack of suitable stewardship it will be a defining moment that Alabama will regret and will unfortunately never be able to recover from. What will happen the next time an oil spill occurs? What will stand in the way to protect the people and commerce of the Mobil Bay and neighboring coastlines? How can this even be an idea that can be conceived when other states seem to be eagerly re-nourishing their barrier islands?

The Island needs help!! This may be the last opportunity that help can arrive.

Please consider the benefits from the heritage, commerce, protection and legacy viewpoints of returning this Island to the jewel in the crown of Alabama's coastline.

How can we explain to future generations the reason for the demise of the historic Dauphin Island is through our lack of action?

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Paul and Sarah Vincent
Slidell Court, Dauphin Island, AL

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Correspondence: 53

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Correspondence Text

Dear Committee Members,

As a home owner on Dauphin Island for more than 40 years, I have seen many changes both good and bad. With the diminished coastline, I have a fear for the loss of the balance of our ecosystem which is vital to each citizen regardless of where they live. We depend on the gulf and our oceans for part of our total environment. Now our coastline is eroded, our marshlands threatened and our marine creatures endangered.

I have seen mullet over fished and its habitat destroyed and well as the blue crabs that used to be so abundant. These may not be the most important products of the gulf, but are just examples that I can clearly see have been diminished. It doesn't take much to notice the low numbers of the jumping mullet and the crabs. I used to keep records of the thousands of birds that would fly each night to roost on what we called Sand Island. Today you see a few hundred maybe.

I have also watched the shoreline recede as each dredged sand particle, that would naturally migrate to the island, has been dumped too far off-shore to benefit the island.

The plan seems well developed. However, the true test will be in how efficiently, prudently, and urgently the committee can operate. Time is not on our side. Each storm creates more damage to the fragile ecosystem. We need shoreline renourishment, not with man-made dunes but with sand deposited along the shoreline to make the beach deeper as nature would naturally do and as it was before the dredging.

For future development, I would like to see a state park developed on the island. I would like to see more employment opportunities on the island, and for those nearby, in the areas of tourism, fishing and through the Sea Lab. I would like to see more funding for the Sea Lab and Estuarium for marine life study and protection and to educate the public about the delicate gulf ecosystem.

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I wish great success to this committee. Much of the life of our area depends on you.

Sincerely,
Ron Musgrove

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Correspondence: 54

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Correspondence Text

As many entities are coming to the table to glean money from the oil spill, I firmly believe those of us on the front lines should be given the FOREMOST consideration of the funds to attempt our Recovery.

As a full time island resident, I saw first hand the impact the spill had on our island and our way of life.

Just bear in mind . . . we were there for them when they needed us, now it is time for the same consideration be given back.

Please do not turn this into a political arena where only the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but give it proportionately to the areas that suffered the severe impact from this tragedy!!

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Correspondence: 55

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Correspondence Text

To Whom It May Concern,

I don't want to bore you with details of the history of the south west beach of Dauphin Island, Alabama but am open to questions as I have been affiliated since 1956. I am requesting strong consideration being given to restoration as an engineered beach extending the distance southward as was before Hurricane Frederick. Berms do not function well because they cause resistance to the natural washing of waves.

Thank You,
Sincerely,

Richard Schmohl
Property owner

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 56

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Correspondence Text

I just want to add my voice in support of the proposal by Ben Raines in his op-ed column in the N.Y. Times ("Surviving the Next Gulf Oil Spill") that at least a nickel of every dollar from the Restore Act be used to protect and restore coastal marshes and wetlands along the Gulf. Over-development puts towns and cities at greater risk from both oil spills and storms. The marshes and wetlands are crucial for both wildlife and people. I urge you to accept this sensible proposal.

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Correspondence Text

Thank you for the opportunity to comment for the City of Galveston. My name is Michael Kovacs, City Manager. I spoke at the public hearing in Galveston earlier in June. Thank you for coming to Galveston. We were impacted by tar balls and negative press that cost the City millions in direct tax revenues and our businesses tens of millions in lost business. The City, our Port, Parks Board, and a number of our large and small businesses are involved in active or settled litigation against BP. As Texans, we are supportive of our energy sector and feel that responsible environmental management is part of being a coastal steward.

We are supportive of your draft plans for the Restoration Trust Fund. We support ecosystem restoration efforts and direct programs and projects using traditional and proven environmental improvements to be undertaken by cities with the assistance of our states. EPA has mandated and suggested a number of pollution prevention measures that municipalities can undertake in the areas of wastewater treatment, water supply, and stormwater quality, based on solid proven science that will yield direct environmental benefits. Additionally, environmental education and dealing with coastal shoreline erosion are areas of investment that will produce major dividends.

By all standards, the best return on investment both environmentally, economically, and socially is the restoration of our beaches. Our coastal inlets, man-made harbors and passes that have to be kept open for navigation and commerce, have largely caused coastal erosion. This creates the need for beach nourishment.

People love beaches, and domestic, low-cost tourism is important for most Americans as we made over 2.2 billion annual beach visits last year. Travel and tourism is the world's largest industry, a key to jobs in America, and there is fierce international competition. I believe our beaches are the key to our success. The return on investment in a beach nourishment project is amazing. I have seen it first hand in managing a small city near Myrtle Beach in South
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Carolina when our dune restoration project stopped surge from Hurricane Charley in 2004. In California, the federal government avoids tax losses of \$41 to \$62 for every \$1 in federal funds invested in shore protection. All statistics taken from "The Economic Value of Beaches - a 2013 Update", Shore & Beach, James Houston, 2013). A wide beach with a strong dune line is the best defense against hurricane surge and the best way to deal with rising sea levels instead of retreating from our coasts.

Municipal projects to reduce septic tank uses by running sewer lines and better treating wastewater discharge will make great environmental improvements. Rehabing old sewer lines will stop leakage into sandy water tables and preserve streets. Sea water desalination would increase supplies of fresh water, enabling more water to be released into bays and estuaries.

A number of good projects could be undertaken in coastal cities to yield major benefits.

In Galveston, I would lay out the following environmental projects:

Beach/Dune restoration \$110 M
East End Lagoon (environmental education) \$20 M
Sewer lines and plant improvements \$50 M
Sea water desalination - need state partnership on operating costs

We look forward to working with all the groups and partners for the best set of projects possible to yield the best possible lasting benefits to future generations of Americans.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael W. Kovacs
City Manager
City of Galveston, Texas

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 58

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Correspondence Text

My plea to the council is that social scientists be consulted in making sure that community interests are protected throughout this process. Although natural science is very important, especially to the interests of people and communities, projects should be considered through the lens of how they will affect community economic development, housing patterns, cultural resources, and other significant areas. There is so much money that will be pouring into Louisiana and the rest of the gulf for restoration, and we must make sure that any project that is implemented will lift up the entire community; let's make sure we put people to work (especially through minority and local hiring standards) and strengthen the economy.

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Correspondence Text

Hey Ya'll:

Can we mandate that BP set aside like a Billion in some kind of "trust" or other fund and the monies generated by the interest only...from that fund are used forever to generate jobs and recovery.

In other words the original money will never be touched and only interest will be used for proects.

Say for example a beach recovery center on Mustang Island Texas:

1. Which employs people
2. Has a marine science center or use the one at Aransas (University of Texas)
3. Tells the story of BPs stupid in an interpretive center (so it never goes away like the Exxon Valdez...which as I understand has never made that right...
4. And works as well on ecosystem recovery for perpetuity...is that a word...Aggie after all...

Just thinking outloud...

Brumby Judkins
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Correspondence Text

Will all projects which are either fully or partially implemented with RESTORE funds go through the NEPA process regardless of needing a 404 wetlands permit? Are these funds considered "Federal", i.e., that the use of these funds would trigger the need to perform an environmental analysis under NEPA?

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 61

Author Information

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Date Sent: 06/20/2013 Date Received: 06/20/2013
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Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am commercial fisherman, boat owner and captain for the vessels, Lee Bien I & Lee Bien II. I have been dredging oysters & shrimping for decades on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The BP Oil Drilling Disaster has devastated the fisheries with closed fisheries and greatly reduced landings. As a result, for the past three years, I have experienced great economic hardship and very concerned about livelihood sustainability.

The following are my comments regarding process, policies, and recommended projects.

It's critically important that language barriers are addressed, all important documents should be translated into the Vietnamese language in timely manner and there should be targeted outreach. Many of us are not fluent in English (we did not have an opportunity to attain a higher education), lack computers, and do not have an email account. Public meetings notices should be in Vietnamese and we need to be informed in advance. All public meetings should have qualified interpreters. The Council should work with local non-profit organizations such as the MS Coalition for Vietnamese-American Fisher Folks and Families to address these issues. In the future, do not hold public meetings during the summer months/ shrimping season.

Based on my experience, oyster reef restoration projects must have a dredging, and/or oyster relay, transplant element in order to be successful. Placing new cultch material on a damaged reef will not produce spat sets that will become harvestable adult oysters.

I strongly support the development of a community-based monitoring program of the fisheries whereby trained fishermen work alongside with scientists.

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I also highly recommend the creation of a fishing contingency program whereby trained fishermen have clean-up equipment (booms, etc.) on their vessels and are prepared to respond to future oil spills and simultaneously hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring alongside scientists/researchers.

While fishing, many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the sediments. I strongly support additional clean-up remediation, clean-up work. The Council can support projects that hire vessels (skimmers) to do the clean-up work. I support clean-up work in the marshes (too much oil & dispersants remain in marshes & this is adversely impacting the ability of shrimp and crabs to spawn).

I support the Small Craft Gulfport Harbor being converted into a larger commercial fishing dock, with fuel and ice facilities.

Regarding objectives and criteria, the Council should prioritize fisheries restoration (oysters, shrimp, crabs), and habitats that critically support those fisheries. It's vitally important to prioritize restoring the natural resources that our livelihoods are critically dependent on.

It is critically important, as local workforce criteria, that with additional training, experienced fishermen should be prioritized in the contracting and hiring to work on restoration projects such as the above referenced projects. I fully support the creation of a Steering Committee that consist of commercial fishermen and/or their designees, and have voting privileges. Further, I also fully support the development of a Scientific Committee that consists of fisheries researchers/experts and social scientists who understand the economic and cultural value of fishing.

Coastal Restoration thoughtfully prioritized, planned, and implemented is vitally important to the Gulf, its ecosystem, marine habitats, and my livelihood. It's critical, please strongly consider and incorporate my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to make comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 62

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

June 20, 2013

Greetings,..?!

During the rush to get the Gulf clean up, and, operational,..?! Many plans and, proposals also Resumes were submitted. Some for offers to lend help in the clean up,..! Others were for an offer to introduce plans for operations,..!?

I saw a problem in the collection of OIL process - afret the drilling work,..!
They would need a way to reach the depth of nearly one MILE (5520 feet and deeper,..?!)

I submitted the plan that could have been deployed/employed for the collection of OIL,.. The currently used platforms would be replaced by Floaters (Giant Barge(s)) Barges measuring in certain set ups 1000 feet by 500 feet,..! The Barges will be of Floatation incased in Concrete, Aluminum and Steel. Made unsinkable, fire proofed and with massive living quarters,..?!

The BP folks were going to respond to all submitted offers,..?! When, they received workable plans those were to be given special attention,..

By that they could see and, compare they possesses no positively logical

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plan to bring the OILs up,.?! what were the using to collect the OILs,.?!

They needed nearly 6,000 feet of Piping - which they'd see in comparison
lend no real relief,.? All metals would require atationary set ups,.?
And, all metals will rust,.unless they be coated against rusting,.!? The
plan they ought to had received from UTO/TIFP & Eliasiah Yahwehei would
be PLASTICS that would be bendable,.! Durable,..and,. strong to support fr-
ictions,.?! Is there a possibility - the plans got intercepete,.? Meanwh-
ile, the plans were sent to three (3) locations,.? The Texas, Illinios
and, London addresses,.?!

I'm certain the BP folk would build at least an Experimental Floater/Barge
if they'd gotten the submitted materials,.?!!

Eliasiah Yahwehei, Coord. f / UTO

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 63

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Correspondence Text

I am a long-time commercial crabber. The BP Oil Drilling Disaster greatly devastated my fishing livelihood and caused tremendous hardship. For the past three years, I have seen a sharp decline in the crab fisheries, particularly female crabs. Critically important criteria should be prioritizing and implementing ongoing, frequent monitoring, and data collection of the fisheries. With additional training and technical support, local, experienced fishers can be hired to work with scientists to implement such projects.

Please strongly consider my recommendations and thank you for the opportunity to make comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 64

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Correspondence Text

To Council Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make comments.

My family has been commercial fishermen, vessel owners and captains (oyster harvesting, crabbing & shrimping) for many years. As a result of the BP Oil Disaster, in the past three years, fishing communities whose livelihoods, culture/tradition and way of living depend on healthy, natural resources have suffered great economic and social impacts. The Council should prioritize the restoration of natural habitats for key fisheries/species that my community relies on and should promote local hiring practices in contracting, such as hiring experienced fishermen to help restore the damaged, natural resources.

Thank you for reviewing and considering my comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 65

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Notes:

Correspondence Text

The information I reviewed in the preliminary draft and appendix is comprehensive, but I do want to mention something I did not specifically identify -- the damage which was done to the food chain within the Gulf of Mexico, which I believe to be directly related to the BP oil disaster beginning in April, 2010.

In December, 2012, my husband and I attended a presentation sponsored by The Sierra Club where scientists presented findings which indicated that an entire layer of the food chain appears to be missing on initial studies conducted after the BP oil disaster. The presentations were extremely technical, but the bottom line was that the environment has been severely impacted.

Based upon that information, we have assumed and concluded that this is likely due to the use of dispersants by BP in the Gulf of Mexico.

We have lived in Baldwin County since 2005, so we are familiar with the area prior to the BP oil disaster. Since the BP oil disaster in 2010, our lives have changed dramatically -- we no longer feel safe submerging our bodies into the local waters, and we no longer eat ANY fish or seafood from waters in the Gulf of Mexico. We still fish, but we NEVER keep ANY of the fish we catch in our local waters. We do NOT believe any of the propaganda released (and sponsored by BP) indicating that "everything is back to normal." BP's money has been able to buy a great deal of marketing, and tourists are arriving in great numbers thinking that all is well. Those of us that live our lives on the gulf coast are painfully aware of the dramatic decrease in the quality of life in this region.

Just a few days ago, we drove to Birmingham to meet with a bicycle retailer. During our discussions with the shop owner, he told us that one of the paints on the bikes he sells tends to bubble and corrode on bikes that he sells to individuals who live ONLY on the gulf coast. He said that this very same problem does NOT occur in other areas or

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any other coastal region -- including the Atlantic/east coast and the Pacific/west coast! His theory is that there is something uniquely "in the air" in the gulf coast causing this corrosive action on this particular paint!

While reviewing the proposed plan, I did note a section specifically addressing the development of a ten-year funding strategy. I am concerned that ten-years is way too short of a time to monitor the damage done as a result of the BP oil disaster. Personally, I believe 50 years would not be adequate to determine the "final" catastrophic impact of the BP oil disaster.

Thank you for your review and consideration of our concerns.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 66

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a commercial fishermen (dredging oyster and shrimping) and own the vessel, Lee Bien III, and boat captain as well. I come from a family of long-time commercial fishermen.

Since the BP Oil Drilling Disaster, I have experienced significant economic hardship because of closed fisheries and significantly reduced landings. I am extremely worried about my livelihood.

Please review the following comments/recommendations:

I highly advise the Council to work with local organizations such as the MSCVAFF to address access needs in the Vietnamese-American community. It's very important that public meetings notices is translated and conveyed in an accessible manner. Further, all documents are translated, and disseminated to the community in a timely manner. And all public meetings should have experienced interpreters. And I recommend that the Council schedule meetings that are more feasible for commercial fishermen.

I highly recommend that the Council develop a fishing contingency program where trained fishermen are prepared to respond to future oil drilling disasters and simultaneously hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring with scientists.

I would like to reiterate, based on experience, an oyster reef restoration project should involve dredging or an oyster relay/transplant component. Based on my experience, it is critically important that all future oyster reef restoration projects should include dredging or transplant to be successful and to hire experienced fishermen to conduct the Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

work. I do not believe placing cultch material on a contaminated reef without any dredging will produce a healthy reef with the necessary spat sets.

Post the BP Oil Drilling Disaster, many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the Gulf. I strongly support clean-up, remediation work (particularly, in Louisiana, there is too much oil/dispersants that remain in marshes and I think this is greatly impacting the fisheries). The Council can support projects that train and hire vessels to do the clean-up work.

I support the development of fishing cooperative and think the Small Craft Harbor in Gulfport should be expanded into a larger commercial fishing dock, with fuel & ice facilities.

I am also interested in further exploring shrimp and crab aquaculture projects.

Regarding objectives/criteria, it is vitally important that the Council prioritize fisheries restoration (oysters, shrimp, crabs), and, habitats that crucially support those fisheries.

It is critically important, as local workforce criteria, that with additional training, experienced fishermen should be prioritized in the contracting and hiring to work on restoration projects such as the above, listed projects. We have spent decades fishing on the Gulf and can greatly assist with restoration efforts.

I too fully support the creation of a Steering Committee that consist of commercial fishermen and/or their designees, and have voting privileges. Further, I also fully support the development of a Scientific Committee that consists of fisheries experts and social scientists who understand the economic and cultural value of fishing.

My and many other fishermen's livelihoods are at stake; please strongly consider incorporating my comments. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 67

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Correspondence Text

The Council's mission is to prepare and implement a "Comprehensive Plan that provides a framework to implement a coordinated region-wide restoration effort in a way that restores, protects, and revitalizes the Gulf Coast region".

Out of the 61 pages of potential projects, only one stands out as actually contributing to the long-term goal of "Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration": EPA's Gulf of Mexico Water Quality Initiative Emission Control Area (ECA) Study. The rest of the projects have no lasting value or potential of ever achieving the assigned mission. Therefore, the Draft Plan should be scrapped and re-written to ensure the mission can be accomplished.

The Council members are encouraged to examine NOAA's GIS tool for viewing the coastal impacts from sea level rise at: [//csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/slrviewer](http://csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/slrviewer) and the 2012 Sea Level Rise forecast report through 2060 prepared by FAU for FDOT. dot.state.fl.us/research-center/Completed_Proj/Summary_PL/FDOT_BDK79_977-01_rpt.pdf. A mere 24 inches of SLR will result in the destruction of the presently-proposed Gulf "restoration" projects. Any attempt at performing a benefit-cost analysis at the individual project level is futile without including the effects forecasted by a 2 foot SLR by 2060.

The Council is strongly encouraged to coordinate closely with the Bicameral Task Force on Climate Change (Rep. Waxman & Sen. Whitehouse) to ensure all expenditures are wisely directed to averting significant coastal and Gulf waters damages forecasted to result from SLR and ocean acidification.

Projects that the Council should include for consideration may be:

- Rapid phase-out of the offshore Gulf oil & gas production platforms.
- Eliminate all forms of subsidies, credits, allowances, etc. that contribute to maintaining the fossil fuel infrastructure. Redirect this revenue stream to efforts that accomplish the Council's mission.

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- Rapid development of the Gulf of Mexico renewable energy sector: OTEC, hydrothermal, current, tide, wave, wind, etc. by re-directing 80 percent of the oil & gas sector labor, knowledge, skills and abilities to the new ocean renewable energy sector.
- Fund all R & D efforts that offer scalable projects to sequester carbon dioxide and reduce ocean acidification.
- Assist all five Gulf coastal states with adopting state and local laws to facilitate a standard Feed-in-tariff program to permit all certified renewable energy electric production systems to deliver power to the electric grid.
- Strict enforcement of all commercial and recreational fishery regulations in State and Federal Zones to aid the rapid recovery of all marine species populations so dissolved carbon is sequestered in the expanding oceanic biomass.
- Design, construct and operate/maintain large (square kilometers) offshore fish attractors to facilitate recovery of pelagic marine species.
- Designate all Gulf reefs (shallow & deep) as exceptional/critical habitat and off-limits to any exploitation.
- Restore all Gulf coast estuaries: hydrology, water quality, salinity profile, tidal prism, vegetation, and species diversity in order to re-establish optimum recruitment of juveniles into ocean stocks.
- Halt all development and reconstruction on coastal land that features a land elevation of less than 5 feet above mean sea level.
- Remove all sources of hazardous materials (new products and wastes) that exist on coastal land elevation of less than 10 feet above mean sea level.
- Implement long-term monitoring/reporting programs for each of the above projects to ensure they are performing according to specifications and contributing to the Council's mission to Restore the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment of the Draft Plan and to offer large-scale projects that will contribute to achieving a long-term restoration.

Respectfully,

Bruce French
Florida

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 68

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Restoring the Gulf Coast Ecosystem will not only help my state it will help the rest of the country by filtering water and reducing land erosion but the restored wetlands mitigate hurricane damage further inland.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 69

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

Alabama's plan to utilize the majority of this first installment of funds for ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION is an embarrassment. A complete and total embarrassment. The proposed project to build a hotel on state beach front property was in the works and caught up in legal protest years before the BP oil spill happened. With excessive development on the beach front our wildlife already suffers from lack of appropriate habitat that isn't littered with wooden beach chairs, concrete foundations, boardwalks and artificial lighting.

Louisiana is setting a proper example by using the money to actually help restore the environment while Alabama government proposes to destroy the environment. Disgusting, greedy, good-ole-boy politics are work in my home state. It is shameful and should NOT be allowed!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 70

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Notes:

Correspondence Text

j We are a registered patent in the United States that offers a reduced oxidation of hydrocarbons with different bodies that are being patented to clean surface water, congenital, sands, soils, forests. Is a non-toxic product that allows the survival of plants and animals in contaminated water by petroleum, treated with biograssEXTRA.

No heavy metals are concentrated, it's all plant extracts, but it is the most efficient patent, with an excellent effectiveness and results. When we speak of the oxidation and reduction that biograssEXTRA offers, this means that we break the molecular structure of the hydrocarbon chain wherever the problem is, that cause a separation and loses the union which remains individual chains as calcium, iron, nitrogen, hydrogen, etc, which is an excellent fertilizer base, and this is called remediation.

For these features this product is part of the National contingency plan for oil spills of hazardous substances in the U.S, so this product is ready for use in your program.

If necessary I could put in touch with you immediately for this magnificent information, if you could please tell us who to contact or talk to please, we are relatively close to you, our states are neighbors.

Regards.

Lic. Pedro Murillo
Director

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ID: 47484

Química BGEM S.A. de C.V.
Subsidiaria de bioGRASS EXTRA MEXICANA S.A. de C.V.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 71

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Consideration should be made for cleanup of dispersing agents used and not only the oil that was spilled.

Dr. Patrick M. Brown, PhD

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 72

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Correspondence Text

At your December meeting in Mobile Alabama you said that the money was not go to go to things like conventions centers and bridges. Are you going to approve Alabama's \$85,000,000 million dollars for a convention center that was not even built or affected by the oil.

Why aren't there any amounts with each project and what are the location of the projects? There are many projects that do not have a detailed explanation of what it is

I thought this process was supposed to be transparent. It looks like you are hiding many things to me. It looks like you are hiding where the money is going by not showing the details.

Are you going to show how each project was affected by the oil?

Why are you not announcing future dates of the meetings earlier?

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 73

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

The Need for Effective Public Participation at all Levels

There is empirical, validated evidence that meaningful public participation results in better plans (Brody, S.R., Godschalk, D.R., and R.J. Burby. 2003. Mandating citizen participation in plan making: Six strategic planning choices. Journal of the American Planning Association. 69:245-264).

Meaningful public participation is more than officials standing up before a crowd, taking comments from the most vociferous citizens present. Meaningful participation and input can occur at a variety of levels, perhaps most importantly for this project would be citizen and science advisory panels. In addition, there are a host of participatory technologies that could enable widespread participation where needed, things like crowd sourcing, for example.

Texas A&M Sea Grant would be pleased to assist the Restore Council in developing meaning participation plans, as well as implementing those plans.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 74

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Correspondence Text

Endanger Salt water fish eggs hatching incubator traps that release fish on Hatching a line of defence on bottoms
feeders hatching incubators the chain of recovering endanger industry the next step

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 75

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

JP Eco Solutions
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In restoring the Coast, trees that are saline tolerant "must be used", as Climate Change and land subsistence bring the Gulf closer to Hwy 49 by 2050. We can grow a forest with 20 foot trees within five years that will build, bind, and save our land. This can be done not with the Cypress or Tupelo trees, which have low saline tolerance, but the mongrel Willow.

The Willow tree has been used by man for various reasons for over 10,000 years, and will be around long after man, just like the cockroach. Willows can live on all kinds of soil and most climates. As willows are water-loving trees often found along riverbanks, they are associated throughout the world with the element of water. Bayer Aspirin were formulated from the willow tree, whose pain killing properties were known even to Hippocrates.

Most of the research quoted in this study can be found in a report done by YULIA A. KUZOVKINA and MARTIN F. QUIGLEY* Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, Ohio State University. They put together studies done by dozens of Scientists over many decades.

1) Problem product Solves
WEeping WILLOW
a) Fast growing.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

- b) Economical - affordable planting, replacement, and maintenance.
- c) Tolerate 100mph. Winds and can bounce around in the wind.
- d) Self-perpetuating
- e) Fire resistant to some degree because of higher water uptake.
- f) Tolerate drought conditions, having deep roots that can reach water.
- g) Carbon Sequestration.(10mt of co2/acre of 300 trees)
- h) tolerate storm surges of salt water and has a higher saline tolerance than most trees.
- i) Soil Stabilization for new marshes being built because roots spread out and go deep
- j) Hurricane protection barriers, as they can be grown now and form a barrier within 3-5 years.
- k) Seeing an end result for the \$100's of millions being spent within a short period.
- l)Can sit in water for long periods, and can therefore tolerate heavy rains and flooding.
- m)Resistance of willows to some metals (Cd, Cu, Zn, Ni, Pb, Fe)
- n) nutria destruction – 6ft. high plantings, large number, and fast growth will outpace them.

Due to the high use of fertilizer in the Mississippi Water Shed, there is a high level of nitrates and phosphates in the river as it reaches us. With all the diversions planned, much of this contamination will end up in our marshes. Willow trees have a high capacity to clean the water of its nitrates and phosphates. Willow trees can destroy an average of 60% of the harmful nitrogenous matter.

Willows can be easily planted from 200 to 300 trees per acre, more if desired, overwhelming the nutria. As the trees grow about 6 to 8ft. per year, the new branch shoots of so many trees will be out of reach and 90% of them should survive. If 6ft. stocks are used, the top shoots will be out of reach of browsing nutria.

The primary factors controlling the native distribution and abundance are the availability of moisture for seed germination and seedling establishment, an absence of early competitors, and availability of full sunlight. All these factors are in our favor.

Colonization of disturbed sites by willow species can "anchor" a pioneer community, accelerating the recovery of damaged ecosystems and re-establishment of natural ecological complexity. Micro-climate changes following the appearance willows include an increase of surface shade, annual production of leaf debris, root action and formation of humus, thus improving the soil structure and nutrient status.(Stott-1992) The fine fibrous root system of willows is more effective in erosion control than most other trees.(Wilkinson,1999).

The current federal wetland policy of "no net loss," based on mitigation of damaged and destroyed natural sites with sites of equivalent ecological complexity is aimed at habitat replacement, enhancement of downstream surface water quality, and decreased risk of flooding. Willow is an effective genus for ecological restoration of wetlands, in both structure and function and commonly installed in restoration programs as a nursery crop for the establishment of larger and longer-lived species.

Willows have a high wildlife value, providing rich habitat and food for diverse organisms (Hightshoe, 1998; Sommerville, 1992). There is evidence for a rich insect fauna (up to 450 species) associated with willows (Kennedy and Southwood, 1984). Numerous invertebrate herbivores from aphids to caterpillars feed on willows, and support a large food-web of higher trophic level organisms. Many animals depend on willows for food (mostly leaf, stem and bud tissue) and shelter; willows provide browse for deer, elk, moose and livestock, caribou, muskrats, porcupines and willow wood is a preferred food and building material for beavers (Smith et al., 1978). Willow stands support a high density of breeding bird communities and wetland willow thickets provide stopover sites for about sixty bird species, the highest number for all studied habitats (Bates, 1951). Their overhanging crowns above streams supply cover, shade, and a source of food in the form of insects for fish. Opportunities for viewing moose as well as elk, deer, songbirds and waterfowl

add to the recreational value of willow associations (Kowalchik, 2001).

Willows have been traditionally used for biological engineering based on its ability to provide mechanical functions for water and wind soil erosion, as well as to form protective structures (windbreaks, shelters and living walls). Important attributes defining the suitability of willows for these projects include high rooting capacity, extensive root system, tolerance to flooding and deposition, high availability and habitat value.(Quigley)

Customers

Government Coastal Restoration Projects – lowest cost there is.

Army Corps of Engineers

Wetland Mitigation for commercial, residential, levee, and highway construction.

Parish governments for canal and coastal erosion

Tourism organizations & businesses – preserving the wetland ecosystem.

Companies(cement, glass, petroleum,etc.) that have refined their co2 emissions to the best extent technologically possible at the present and need co2 offsets, which will be required in the future.

According to the Coastal Protection and restoration Authority, 300 sq. miles of new land will be created by sediment diversion projects, some much larger than in the past that are designed to capture greater amounts of sediment during high river events. They also stated that after the hurricanes of 2005, studies of wetlands flooded by diversions concluded that high erosion rates during and after storms were linked to the effects of high levels of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, carried by the diversion water. More of these nutrients will be carried by higher river events and diversions. Not only can willow trees help remove these chemicals from the soil, but they can also bind the soil with their deep, intertwined root system. A six foot high "forest" could be grown within 2 years, preventing major erosion. After five years, these forest trees should be at least twenty feet high, helping to create a buffer zone for coastal communities against hurricane storm surges. The Master Plan also calls for dredging to create another 200 sq. miles, which will dump more nutrients that must be removed in order for root systems to grow on plants and the land created is washed away.

The Army Corps have presented mitigation projects for the environmental impact caused by the West Bank flood-control ring of levees. These would restore 885 acres of wetlands at a cost of \$252 million. This comes to \$285,000 per acre!!! At that rate, the money will be gone in no time. For what they spend on 10 acres, we could build a forest of 300 acres. 100 acres would be 3000 acre forest. We need to get more bang for the buck if we are to see any effect by 2050, when sea level might have risen by over a foot, including subsistence.

Who we are.

Our family has been in the furniture business for three generations. We know our wood and trees. Most of our manufacturing was done in Nicaragua, where we developed our own plantation and experimented with trees in the 70's. After the Sandanista Revolution, I move to New Orleans. In the 1990's, I read a book called "Limits to Growth", which reawakened my interest in trees, and I once more started experimenting with them. My efforts led me to the lowly willow tree and all its benefits listed here-in.

What we can do.

We can grow any size forest of Willow trees at \$10,000 per acre, containing at least 250-300 trees/acre. This would include growing the trees, maintenance for five years, replacing any that should die, and controlling the nutria. This would be at 1/3rd. the cost of most other mitigation costs out there.

Willows can build land.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

When Isaac toppled our 40ft. high Pine tree on my 15 year old Willow tree, I made an important discovery. When I cut the tree into 2ft. sections for weighing and studying it, I discovered that it was mostly made of clean, rich earth. Termites had eaten the whole center of the tree, from the base to about 12 feet, and turned it into soil. This one tree contained 18 cubic feet of soil. Imagine an acre of 300 trees, if after 15 years, only the solid trees are harvested and the ones containing termite soil cut apart and the soil left on site. The remainder of the tree could be made into charcoal. The stump would regenerate into a new tree. Sustainable land building by nature itself, as it has done for millions of years!!!

Added Benefit;

Point Bio Energy, LLC is building a \$100 million wood pellet-making plant at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge . Using woody biomass from timber harvested within a 150-mile radius, the plant will create small pellets to be sold in bulk to Europe. Wood-pellet burning stoves are common in European homes. Also, high-priced coal is driving England to double its electricity generation from biomass in the next two years. Large enough forests could be harvested in ten years, leaving sections to still buffer communities. As the tree roots would remain and regenerate, there would be a continuous growth of trees for erosion prevention and biomass. As we are crisscrossed by canals, transport to the mill would also be cheaper.

In Conclusion

Willows represent a promising resource in mitigating impacts of environmental degradation. The versatility of the willow tree for remediation in environmental projects is emphasized by the following fact that of 15 types of soil chemical degradation listed by Logan(1992), willows offer remediation of 10 (erosion, mine spoil, industrial waste, dredge spoil, ore smelters, sewage sludge, petroleum spills, oil shale waste disposal, nuclear waste and landfills). Developing applications are designed to alleviate the major environmental pollutants: mineral nutrients, heavy metals and organic compounds addressing major environmental issues such as soil degradation, water eutrophication, habitat destruction and accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.(Quigley &

Remediation by willow plantations can clean or mitigate hazardous waste, stabilize and restore a site and produce wood for fuel. Willows planted as vegetation filters will facilitate excess nutrient uptake, reduce soil erosion, provide habitat for numerous organisms above and below the water level, and enhance a site's visual characteristics.

I have studied willows for 25 years, and they thrive in almost any environment. Please give them serious consideration, as they are the best trees for our times.

Rainer M Schmidt

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 76

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Correspondence Text

Dear Sirs,
You can use capillary tubes to devide petrol and water and to clean gulf eco system.I hope your specialist can explore and develop it.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 77

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Correspondence Text

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

June 24, 2013

Dear Secretary Blank:

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute recognizes and appreciates the dedication of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council and we commend you for your hard work. The Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy Is a thoughtful and strong plan that will serve as the guide for restoring the Gulf of Mexico ecosystems and economy.

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI), located in Port Aransas, has been studying our coastal waters for over 70 years. The University's role in the Gulf has continued to grow. UTMSI is now partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in managing the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), one of five Reserves in the Gulf of Mexico and the only one west of the Mississippi river. The NERR creates the local, regional, and national connections to help implement cutting edge science into policy and resource management. Thus, UTMSI is poised and ready with experience and expertise to implement the intent and depth of the RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act of 2011. The University of Texas Marine Science Institute's research and outreach directly aligns with the goals of the Council's Plan (enclosure).

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Critical to the Plan is implementing best available science into the project selection criteria. We would like to propose the creation of a scientific advisory board made up of recognized Gulf and Ecosystem scientists and resource managers to assist the Council in the selection of the funded priorities. The review of projects by established and active research scientists will ensure that the projects are using the best-available science while the review of projects by experienced resource managers will ensure that the projects have the ability to make a sustainable difference to our ecosystem and economy.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. The University of Texas Marine Science Institute is committed to an understanding and conservation of the Gulf Coast region. We look forward to working with the Council as we follow this exciting road map for the Gulf's future. Please do not hesitate to call on us for assistance or guidance. If you would like additional information about the mission and activities of the UTMSI, please feel free to contact me at: (361) 749-6716.

Sincerely,
Dr. G. Joan Holt
Director, University of Texas Marine Science Institute

ENCLOSURE

ENCLOSURE

The University of Texas Marine Science Institute is the oldest marine lab in the Gulf of Mexico and is a flagship research institute for the State of Texas. As such, our researchers are ready to implement the RESTORE Act. The Marine Science Institute has a wealth of expertise that meets the RESTORE priorities. The following is a small sampling of what we can achieve together to benefit the Coastal Bend Region, Texas, and the nation:

Restore and Conserve Habitat

- Reopen Cedar Bayou
- Autonomous Vehicle Network to Help Conserve Habitat
- Implement the Texas Seagrass Monitoring Plan

Restore Water Quality

- System-Wide Monitoring Program
- Research to Support Fresh Water Inflows

Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources

- Technologies for Spawning and Rearing Fisheries
- Developing Blue Crab Rearing/Stock Enhancement Protocols
- Understanding Effects of Oil on Microorganisms
- Monitoring the Health of Sports & Commercial Marine Fishes
- Animal Rehabilitation Keep

Enhance Community Resilience

- Resilience Training Program
- Teacher Training

Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

- Monitor Local Fish Stocks to Alert Resource Managers of Dangers
- Ecotourism Education of Wetlands
- Ecotourism Education of Marine Environment

ADDITIONAL DETAIL

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

RESTORE AND CONSERVE HABITAT

- Reopen Cedar Bayou

Reopening Cedar Bayou will help alleviate habitat degradation due to drought, improve water quality, and increase recruitment of fish and shellfish to the area of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The area surrounding ANWR can become hypersaline during periods of extended droughts (Mission-Aransas NERR water quality data), which in turn can have negative effects on numerous estuarine dependent species, including blue crabs, an essential component of the diet of Whooping Cranes that winter at ANWR and of the endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle. By reopening Cedar Bayou, hypersaline waters can be exchanged with less saline waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Larval forms of commercial and recreational fish and shellfish will also have a more direct route to recruit to the shallow waters.

- Autonomous Vehicle Network to Help Conserve Habitat

Technology for long term surveys of the coastal and open ocean by autonomous vehicles is now operational in both east and west coasts of the U.S. The Gulf of Mexico needs a similar program. These vehicles have endurance of months and can support numerous environmental sensors including oil, oxygen, nutrients, meteorological and wave conditions, as well as other specialized sensors. UTMSI can serve as the node for deploying, operating, and archiving the data from a fleet of 3-6 autonomous vehicles for the Gulf of Mexico. This would interface very well with existing data streams from the National Ocean Observing system; provide adaptive capability to developing problems (i.e. could have responded quickly to the Deepwater Horizon spill, can track red tides, provide data sampling inside hurricanes).

- Implement the Texas Seagrass Monitoring Plan

A state-wide program to monitor seagrasses to address questions of loss and strategies for effective restoration. This program will implement established protocols to evaluate seagrass condition and water quality parameters to preserve a critical yet threatened resource. The program will take advantage of existing database on landscape-scale dynamics, including a hierarchical strategy for seagrass monitoring in order to establish the quantitative relationships between physical and biotic parameters that control seagrass condition, distribution, and persistence.

RESTORE WATER QUALITY

- System-Wide Monitoring Program

The Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) operates the system-wide monitoring program that is the primer network for measuring water quality in our local bays. This program is a nationally coordinated and standardized program that is maintained at other NERR sites throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the nation. This program measures short and long-term changes in water quality, biotic diversity, and land-use/land-cover that will be used to inform effective coastal zone management. Additional water quality stations in this program would create an extremely robust system for water managers to monitor the water quality in the Coastal Bend Region.

- Research to Support Freshwater Inflow

Estuaries support multi-billion dollar recreational and commercial fisheries, as well as a growing tourist industry. Freshwater is a critical component of estuaries and it is vital to the survival of estuary-dependent organisms, such as fish, shrimp, oysters, and crabs. Growing water demand, combined with land use change and shifting climate patterns, has greatly reduced the amount of freshwater that estuaries along the State's coast receive. The UTMSI and Mission-Aransas NERR will expand upon existing research that uses collaborative methods to bring stakeholders together to identify and fill gaps in knowledge related to freshwater inflows to ensure high values of water quality for our citizens, flora, and fauna.

REPLENISH AND PROTECT LIVING COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

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- Technologies for Spawning and Rearing Fisheries

Support for a consolidated, long-term program of research aimed at developing technologies for spawning and rearing marine fish and shellfish populations. Once developed, these technologies would provide the basis for a stock enhancement program aimed at restoring native stocks of economically and ecologically important species. Responsible marine stock enhancement has been shown to be an effective tool that can help augment natural populations but technologies for spawning and rearing have been developed for very few species. These technologies take many years to develop for each new species. Therefore, the technologies must be established before a crisis arises so that they can be implemented quickly after a disaster to minimize duration of the ecological and economic impact.

- Developing Blue Crab Rearing and Stock Enhancement Protocols

Blue crabs are an important food source for many fish and bird species, but have declined throughout their range. Mariculture and stock enhancement have been proposed to mitigate blue crab declines in other areas. We will develop blue crab rearing protocols appropriate for the region and test the effectiveness of stock enhancement as a means of increasing blue crab populations.

- Understanding Effects of Oil on Microorganisms

Our preliminary research on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill suggests that the weathering of oil, including evaporation and biodegradation, is pretty fast (in several days) in the Gulf surface waters under the strong irradiance and high temperature. Our data also shows that the nitrifier community in the sediment is subject to a significant and sustained shift once sediment is contaminated with oil, and these microbes are important in nitrogen cycle in coastal environments. We propose mesocosm studies to (1) quantify the weathering of oil in surface seawater under the environmental conditions of the Coastal Bend, such as temperature and light, and (2) examine how the microbial community responds to oil in the Coastal Bend sediments.

- Monitoring the Health of Important Sports and Commercial Marine Fishes

Fish can incorporate unique chemical "fingerprints" from the environment into their tissues that can indicate sublethal exposure to environmental stressors. Oil spills not only introduce large volumes of chemically distinct carbon into coastal food webs, they also can release a variety of dissolved heavy metals into waters inhabited by a range of finfish species. We will use novel growth-increment analyses to develop long-term indicators of fish growth for commercially important species in the northern Gulf of Mexico, including red snapper. Such long-term perspectives (> 30 yr) will allow us to establish effects of climate variability on growth and disentangle those climate effects from human impacts including the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The upper-level predators provide a unique "view from the top" of ecosystem function and serve as integrators of overall productivity.

- Animal Rehabilitation Keep

The primary mission of the Animal Rehabilitation Keep (or ARK) to rescue, rehabilitate, and release sea turtles and marine birds found sick or injured in the areas adjacent to and on Mustang, San Jose, and Padre Islands, and to educate the public about the problems confronting coastal wildlife and the impact of the increasing human population on coastal resources. This valuable and unique program is the only one of its kind in the Coastal Bend Region that protects our living and marine coastal resources.

ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

- Resilience Training Program

This program would provide local communities with the tools needed to respond to a perturbation or disturbance by resisting damage and/or recovering quickly. The Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve and Texas Sea Grant are assisting local communities become better prepared. These organization have the expertise, knowledge and contacts to create a successful training program centered upon resiliency. This program would

involve a workshop series, public lecture series, webinars, and utilize new technologies (we table, coastal planning tools).

- Teacher Training

We propose to design teacher workshops that highlight Gulf of Mexico research and scientific data that demonstrates resiliency. These workshops will help teachers learn how to access scientific data and teach their students how to apply data to solve locally relevant scientific problems. This will help students develop science-based, decision-making skills and to understand how their decisions impact coastal and estuarine environments. This initiative meets both STEM and RESTORE.

RESTORE AND REVITALIZE THE GULF ECONOMY

- Monitor Local Fish Stocks to Alert Resource Managers of Danger

we propose a program to monitor key biomarkers of environmental deterioration in important fish species in order to alert local resource protection managers if local fish stocks are being impacted by environmental stressors such as oil pollution, hypoxia (eutrophication), other anthropogenic toxic chemicals (e.g endocrine disrupting chemicals).

- Ecotourism Education of Wetlands

Wetlands are one of the most ecologically productive habitats on Earth. They cycle nutrients, prevent erosion and stabilize shorelines, purify runoff from upland areas, provide flood control and storm protection, and provide food and habitat for plants and animals. We propose working with Nueces County to extend the nature trail of the UTMSI Wetlands Education Center to the Nueces County Beach Park and I.B. Magee Pavilion. This extension would provide educational opportunities for ecotourism and enhance the existing recreational opportunities.

- Ecotourism Education of Marine Environment

The marine ecosystem is essential to a healthy economy in the Gulf of Mexico. We have recently maintained possession of a 15 meter baleen whale skeleton that washed up dead on Mustang Island Gulf Beach. The display of this impressive skeleton with corresponding educational displays on the importance of marine habitats would provide a tremendous ecotourism opportunity for Nueces County and the Coastal Bend Region.

Need more information -----

Dr. G. Joan Holt

Director, University of Texas Marine Science Institute

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 78

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Correspondence Text

Thousands of homes were destroyed in Hurricanes Ivan, Dennis and Katrina in 2004 and 2005 from north Florida to Louisiana. Thousands more were severely damaged. Many of those were located on barrier islands or on ecologically sensitive lands (gulf front, bayfront, etc.), yet these people have been allowed to rebuild over and over. Can we come up with a plan to buy back these lands after owners have had their homes destroyed twice? Three times? Four? Obviously if a home is destroyed more than once by a weather event, it is probably located in a place where a home should not be built. Dauphin Island in Alabama is a prime example. The homeowners on one end of the island are flooded out over and over, yet continually rebuild, even though landscaping is consistently washed away. Does this not make sense? Turn one end of Dauphin Island into a conservation area by buying this land back from the homeowners, here and in innumerable other places along the Gulf Coast.

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Correspondence Text

As i have followed this disaster from the start i would like to congratulate all the people involved in this cleanup operation. My main concern now as it has been from the start was the FOODCHAIN. I feel that the samples from the gulf creatures/fish etc. must be very thorough FOR MANY YEARS so we can find the effects of the and understand the consequences on the human body. Unfortunataly for BP they made a big poop, now they must clean their act and pay. Keep up the GOOD WORK.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 80

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Correspondence Text

As a property owner on Dauphin Island for more that 17 years I have seen this tiny barrier Island past over for funds and assistance over and over again, in favor of larger communities and Towns. This has always left us to fend for ourselves and be placed at the bottom of the priority lists. It is time for that to come to an end with this Restore Act funding!!!! We, the residents of Dauphin and the Town of Dauphin Island as a whole, were used for over 2 years by BP as their staging area to conduct their clean up effort along the entire Gulf Coast. Clearly BP saw us as their biggest hurdle as they were forced to overwhelm our Island with thousands of workers and machinery. BUT when they felt they had completed their efforts, they picked up and left, leaving us with untold millions of dollars in damage to deal with ourselves. NOTHING was done by BP or the government to assist us in the recovery process. The revenue alone lost by business owners and homeowners all but crippled us. No one has a clue how long it will take any of us to recover those losses or if that will even be possible. I respectfully request that special attention be given to Dauphin Island by this Restore Act committee, and that Jeff Collier, our honorable Mayor be heard. He has been the one person we have looked to for help in all of the devastating events such as Storms, Hurricanes, and now the BP disaster. For over 25 years this man has fought for us and helped us to recover from these catastrophic events. You would do well to listen carefully to his wisdom and insight as you move forward. Thank you in advance for giving us the opportunity to move forward.

Sandi Sands, Property owner and resident of Dauphin Island

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

If at the end of this suggestion anyone wants to speak to me my name and number is listed at the end of this email.

surely this is a long shot and this suggestion is for Terrebonne Parish only from the ship channel west to the Atchafalaya. This area is one of the worst areas of land loss due to salt water intrusion. If you will look at satellite images you will note that both the Atchafalaya delta and the Wax lake "Atchafalaya" project are growing deltas. very healthy.

That being said, Terrebonne Parish borders the Atchafalaya and could dearly use the fresh water.

If a very large channel was to be dug from just south of Honey Island all the way to just south of Lake Decade and then all the way to the ship channel near Cocodrie, sediment rich fresh water would be fed the entire way.

The soil being removed to dig the channel could be used to make a levy on the south side with cuts made at every major historic waterway as the new channel makes it's way east south east. Each cut marking a historic channel would need to be Rocked. The Northern side of the channel would be best served not built up as it would allow overflow of land building sediment rich fresh water. The south levy side would ward off salt water and the rock cut channel would allow fresh water to be pushed south and start the process of building land southerly.

The scenario would be one part of a complex rebuilding process. It could solve our issues between the two points which could bring fresh water between the two.

After the channel is complete and water is flowing, barges could be used to bring sediment build up at Morgan City and build continuing southeast levies past Cocodrie and repair levy breaches to its new channel and even Morganza
Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

to the Gulf levy projects could use the barge in sediment to maintain newly built levies.

If you see this as a viable solution and would like to view this plan on a map, please call me at 985-876-6200. My Name is Greg Fakier.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Please remember to include the small community and fragile coastline of Dauphin Island, AL. This inviting resort town is perfect for family vacations, retirees, and anyone wanting to live or visit in a peaceful area where there is little, if any, stress and everyone appreciates the special beauty and uniqueness it offers. Having come from the Dallas/Ft Worth metroplex 6 years ago, this place has been like going back in time where people care and are trustworthy for the most part, and where there is one Stop sign on the main boulevard. Our most pressing issues are keeping the island restored after storms to protect it for those who live and visit here, as well as the mainland of Alabama and the major port of Mobile Bay. It seems Gulf Shores and Orange Beach get much more attention and many more funds allotted for restoration after storms. While Gulf Shores and Orange Beach do bring more tourist dollars to Alabama, the shores of Dauphin Island are just as important, if not more so, to the ecosystem of the Mississippi Sound and Mobile Bay. As permanent residents and proud property owners, we encourage the various committees to remember Dauphin Island. Every day is a gift here. We feel blessed to live here and appreciate your consideration, and thank you for your future help in meeting the needs of Dauphin Island. Sincerely, Steve and Kathy Beasley

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council June 23, 2013

I urge the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to take into account the projected impacts of climate change into all its funding decisions. At a time of rising land and water temperatures, melting ice sheets, and consequent rising seas and stronger storms, our decisions today must be informed by our best understanding of the future threats the gulf ecosystem will face. Restoring habitat such as oyster reefs and improving water quality damaged by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will serve the coastal region well today and in the future. We need to be sure that all projects meet this test of resiliency.

In reviewing the draft Comprehensive Plan, I find much that encourages me that the focus in these efforts will include the long-term--as well as the near-term--impacts we can expect from climate change. The plan's fourth objective--enhance community resilience--speaks to the need to "build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes." And the fifth objective speaks to the need to "enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy." The draft plan's elaboration on this fifth goal--bottom of p. 8-- is encouraging to me as one who believes that it is critically important that we keep in mind the connection between "the sustainability and resiliency" of the natural environment and the region's economic health.

The objectives further clarify this connection. While restoration is the central focus--bringing the ecosystem back to its pre-Deepwater Horizon condition--I want to encourage the council to keep in mind the importance of preparing for future impacts of climate change--the impacts, after all, could undo all the work we might undertake to restore to an earlier state of ecological health. The fifth objective--Promote Community Resilience--is on point in its reference to "man-made hazards"--global warming being, in part, "man-made."

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In January, The National Climate Assessment focused on the need for coastal communities to develop strategies for managing existing stresses on the coastal areas as well as additional stresses placed on these areas by rising seas and stronger storms. The assessment estimates that, in Escambia County, the value of land placed at risk because of sea-level rise is just under \$211 million.

To get some idea of the magnitude of this risk, I hope many of you involved in the restore effort will take note of the work of Climate Central, a team of scientists that issued a key report last year--Surging Seas. According to this report, by 2030 Pensacola Bay has an 85% chance of a 4-ft. flood and a 1-in-5 chance of a 14 ft. flood (formerly considered a 100-year flood). If anything close to these projections is realized, 20 years from now we will have a very different understanding of our efforts to restore the gulf ecosystem.

Finally, I want to urge the council and all involved in this effort to know that part of your mission is to educate the public. We humans who inhabit this region, the oil-smeared Pelicans, and the Perdido beach mice are all a part of the web of life. What affects one affects all. If we are to have a sustainable future, it is critical that all citizens understand this connection.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 84

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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council: Here is an idea and approach that we believe needs to be vetted, as the Gulf Coast area should be the area in the USA that needs a program to educate more of the brightest STEM scholars to become STEM professionals. We look forward to being allowed to share more about how this amazing program can work as we have a similar program in Texas currently. Please advise as we await the opportunity to share more details.

To the Restore The Gulf Council:

Restore the Gulf Coast with Gulf Coast STEM Scholar Award

Good afternoon, my name is Ronnie Vandiver Managing Partner Program of Vandiver Maverick Marketing Group. I would like to introduce you to a program we believe is a great fit for the Restore The Gulf efforts ... an educational platform that offers monetary awards to Gulf Coast STEM scholars. It's a well known the USA is not producing enough STEM professionals to keep up with the demand from oil/gas companies etc. We purpose that Restore The Gulf take under consideration a program called The Gulf Coast STEM Award™ Program. This program is designed to find, recognize and award money to deserving STEM scholars to attend college. This is not a new program but one born from the successful Texas Scholar Award Program (TSA), which has been on going for seven years. The Gulf Coast STEM Award™ emulates the TSA except now we are offering a new division dedicated to finding the best STEM talent, track them, and nurturing the relationship until they are ready to be recruited by oil, gas and energy company. To get a glimpse at what we have in mind go to this site to review:

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www.texascholaraward.co

Energizing the youth of the Gulf Coast to become STEM scholars is an investment we believe will have the best return of your investment of all the projects Restore The Gulf will undertake. We would love the opportunity to talk with your group in private or in an open forum to we can share how other programs similar have preformed and how we envision the STEM Award Program

Sincerely

Ronnie Vandiver

Managing Partner

Vandiver Maverick Marketing G

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 85

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Thank you for sharing a preliminary draft of the assessment.

Given the significant changes we are seeing in the environment in recent years (more frequent and destructive storms), it would seem that a "no action" alternative would only result in further damage, increasing destruction and loss of property. Instead, adopting an action plan that supports rebuilding barrier islands, dunes, beaches and the other natural protections that have served to reduce and absorb the devastating effects of the storms would serve the public interest and safety of all.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

- 1a) How do you interpret "science-based decision making"? Please define that term.
1b) What is the "scientific community"? Please define that term.

I suggest that the RESTORE Council establish an evaluation system - perhaps an evaluation committee - for grading scientific ideas "A+" through "F-" in terms of their success out in the field post-funding, and post-application. For instance, if a scientific idea does NOT work well, then this evaluation committee gives that idea an "F" and recommends to the RESTORE Council and the Council's science community for the creation of an alternative approach.

- 2) When money is granted to projects, and some projects do better than others, what follow-up mechanisms will be put in place to evaluate these projects' successes? For instance, what rewards will there be for successful projects? Similarly, what consequences will there be for failed projects? Will the money just be spent all at once without a need to see close to 100% success rates?

I suggest that the RESTORE Council think about ways to creative business incentives for the emerging "Restoration Industry" that is perking up around the Deepwater Horizon settlement. To explain, in normal business arenas, the wasting of \$100 billion dollars on an unsuccessful project would be a bad day for a business, and a bad day for the country. But under the RESTORE plan, it appears that money will be granted to businesses and those businesses will receive the same consequences no matter the end result, success or failure. How about making conditions for funding? One idea is to fund projects in phases, where phase 2 is only funded if phase 1 proves to be successful. Protect your money! This settlement needs to help the Gulf Coast for at least 100 years. Don't just spend it all blindly in the first few years.

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Thank you.

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Correspondence: 87

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Notes:

Correspondence Text

The DRAFT INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN is indeed comprehensive. The five goals described on page 8 of the draft plan cover all conceivable areas needed for restoration.

One concern I have is the apparent imbalance among these 5 goals in the number and diversity of projects being submitted for consideration. I've looked at projects listed on RESTORE websites in several gulf states and notice a lot of coastal habitat restoration projects but few aimed at restoring living marine resources offshore, but also in coastal areas. Providing habitat is important, but even with habitat present, heavily impacted populations of living marine resources cannot return quickly on their own. Yet, stock enhancement can be effective, as demonstrated by the stock enhancement programs for sport fish already underway in Texas and Florida. Therefore, projects need to be supported to implement restocking efforts for impacted populations for which hatchery methods have been establish. In addition, projects need to be supported that will develop hatchery methods for other important species. This work needs to be done BEFORE a disaster so that restocking can begin as soon as it is needed.

Quite a few projects posted on RESTORE Act websites in various Gulf states deal with economic recovery of coastal business and industry. Certainly, much of the tourist industry relies on clean beaches and water. But a lot of the impact of a major oil spill on coastal economies comes indirectly through damage to populations of living marine resources. Specifically, restaurants and other seafood-related businesses depend on a supply of safe seafood, which an oil spill jeopardizes. In addition, sport fishing and commercial fishing is directly impacted by impacts on populations of living marine resources. More concentrated efforts to promote rapid replenishment of these populations will also support a more rapid economic recover.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Notes:

Correspondence Text

Recommend the following additions:

- 1) In the Overview, add to the ecosystem impacts the dredging of port ship channels (i.e. Mobile Bay, etc.), which has adverse consequences.
- 2) Add the dredging of port ship channels to the last sentence on page 8.
- 3) Add the dredging of port ship channels to Objective 1 on pages 11 and 12, and Objective 4 on page 12.

Art Zieske
Owner, Unit 1D
Sandcastle Condominiums
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 89

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Which Federal Agency will lead the NEPA process for the RESTORE Council or will NEPA authority be delegated to a State agency? For example, in Louisiana, CPRA and the parishes will implement RESTORE projects.

What Federal Agency will be the lead for, or will oversee, the NEPA process in Louisiana? All Federal agencies including USACE and FHWA have extensive guidance and interpretations of NEPA.

Will NEPA guidance from the Dept of Commerce, or perhaps NOAA or another Federal agency within the Council be followed for RESTORE NEPA clearance? Or will States issue their own NEPA guidance?

NOAA is in the process of developing a PEIS for NRDA. Would this PEIS be the basis for all other RESTORE NEPA documents?

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Correspondence: 90

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

Please consider the importance of restoration related to the human experience. The long term effect of persistent stress is evident in the increasing demographics related to abuse, substance abuse, unemployment etc. My suggestion is that monies are made available for community health to non profits to provide education and opportunities for individuals and families to improve their wellness.

Prior to the Deep Water Horizon event, the Gulf Coast Communities had a normal cycle of stress related to disasters. June 1-November 30 constituted times of watchfulness and anxiety related to possible hurricanes. However after April 2010 our watchful period is now 12 months, 365 days a year. Each day could be "The Day" when an event like Deep Water Horizon will impact employment, and life.

As often the case, failure occurs when focus on restoration is limited to environmental without considerable emphasis on the human experience and resulting suffering.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

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Executive Director, PNEUMA Winds of Hope

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 91

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

I am a local individual who has been involved with local conservation efforts and issues for over 35 years. While I am happy that this program is under way, I already see what I have seen too many time in the past; which is the bureaucrats and technical people will have a field day with this resulting in nothing much getting done for YEARS. Plenty of buzz words here. RESTORE, PROTECT, PROMOTE, IMPROVE, EVALUATE, ADVANCE. It makes me sad to think about the millions of dollars and years that will be spent in writing reports, having seminars and meetings, ect.

I understand a certain amount of this is necessary, but in every instance where the Federal Government or some off shoot of it is one of the front runners, in the end not much happens except that alot of money and time gets frittered away. It would be nice for once to see a sense of urgency applied to actually getting into the field and doing something.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 92

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I have lived on the shore of Mobile Bay for almost 60 years and watched its destruction. It looks to me like all of the RESTORE money is being spent on tourism and nothing is being done to restore the environment. Without the natural beauty there will be no tourism. I don't want to TV ads telling me to go to the Gulf Coast or Mississippi or Florida on vacation. Please bring back the oysters and build living shore lines. Thank you.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 93

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Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

As an informed citizen, I understand that one in six rivers in the U.S. are so polluted that a health advisory warns against swimming in them or eating fish taken from these waterways. The Southeast has 374 species of plants and marine life that are considered threatened by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, yet the agency's backlog has delayed listing them.

Our area of Alabama is home to 62 percent of the nation's fish species and 66 percent of all crawfish. Some 123 species in Alabama merit protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Therefore, it is unthinkable that oil from Canadian tar sands should be transported in pipelines that cross any of our rivers in Alabama. Given the oil companies dismal track record, the risk of spillage is simply too great.

J. Nolan White, President
Baldwin Writers Group

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 94

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 06/28/2013 Date Received: 06/28/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

I own a couple hundred acres of land on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain a couple miles west of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway. The property has about 1/2 mile of beachfront. It adjoins a couple thousand acres of fresh and brackish water marsh and swamp and miles of undeveloped beachfront. The property harbored an immense population of shore and wading birds including both resident and migratory species such as gulls, white and brown pelicans, egrets, herons, ibis and ducks. There was also a large and visible population of mammals such as deer, raccoon, nutria, pigs, rabbit and squirrel. There were also large numbers of fiddler crabs, alligators and crawfish and minnows. On July 7, 2010, during the passage of Hurricane Lee, a strong southeast wind and high tide brought a sheen unto my property along with numerous tar balls on the beach. I reported this to the Horizon Response hotline and filmed the entire incident. I received an email response saying it was not necessary to call back, the report would be investigated. After a week or so I was told that no one from the Coast Guard came out so a meeting was scheduled and some tar balls were collected that supposedly were not from the Macondo well. By this time the sheen had dissipated and my marsh began turning brown from the high water line downwards. Certain types of my marsh died to the soils and subsequently disappeared by erosion from wave action. Beginning a short time after this sheen impacted my property I noticed a rapid decline in the wildlife populations. The first thing to go we're the fiddler crabs. These were everywhere before the sheen but are nowhere to be found now. The I saw a family of otters that were healthy and a month or so later the mother was carrying one of the sick or dead cubs in her mouth. A week or two after that the other cub was never seen again and the mother was weak and sickly and allowed me to approach very close to her before she slowly entered the water and went away never to be seen again. By December of 2010, my healthy deer herd of 14 was reduced to 6. The first to go were the fawns born that year. They would always be with their mothers in a clearing where I fed them daily. Then the yearlings disappeared and finally a couple of the healthy looking does and bucks were gone. I found several of the deer dead in the woods with no sign of injury and reported this to the La. Wildlife and Fisheries to no avail. There is a bald eagle nest in the northern part of my property but the eagles avoided the southern part of my property where this sheen seemed to have killed their

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food supply. The alligators do not appear to have been affected yet. Their population seems to have remained constant but their habits have changed. Whereas they normally spend the winter underground they now just lay out on the banks of the ponds and canals. We have been lucky in that we have not had any hard freezes or they too would have died. The most obvious impact that persists to prove something serious went wrong is the almost total absence of the once plentiful populations of egrets, herons, pelicans and gulls. In the days before the sheen you could in just a couple of hours see hundreds of them feeding on the banks of my inland ponds, sitting in the cypress trees or cruising over the marsh and beach. Now a couple hours of watching will only result in a couple of sightings. I have expressed these concerns to every federal, state, and local entity I could think of that would be concerned about this but have been ignored. The purpose of my writing this is to inform you that spill impacts have occurred in the Lake Pontchartrain area. If possible would someone please assess the damages to my property and wildlife populations. Please test my soils or the blood of animals on the property and help me find out why everything died off and is not returning. I have a sample of the sheen that came ashore that day as well as still photos and videos of it coming ashore with the high surf and collecting in my marsh and ponds. I really don't know exactly who is going to receive this email but would appreciate if someone can email me or call. My email address is rjferran@yahoo.com. My phone number is 504 481 7684.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 95

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I believe a viable project is the removal of the storm drains from the Mississippi beaches across the Coast. It would aid economic development and tourism as it would improve the appearances of the beaches. Also re-routing stormwater away from draining into the Mississippi Sound would decrease the amount of bacteria entering the Sound and improve water quality.

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Correspondence: 96

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Notes:

Correspondence Text

June 28, 2013

Justin Ehrenwerth
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

Dear Director Ehrenwerth:

We are Mobile Baykeeper, a 16-year-old nonprofit organization with the mission of providing citizens a means to protect the beauty, health and heritage of the Mobile Bay watershed, Alabama's waterways and coastal communities. We are writing on behalf of our Board, Officers and more than 4,000 members to express our Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan recommendations as of June 28, 2013.

We want to start these comments by thanking you for opening each of your five state presentations by owning the tagline we have all been using: "Environmental restoration is key to economic recovery."

Mobile Baykeeper has worked over the past three years to find ways to ensure the impacts the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster has had on Coastal Alabama are mitigated well with excellent, meaningful and far-reaching environmental restoration projects. The BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster was an unprecedented event that dealt a

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huge blow to our coastal communities and still affects us currently. Gulf Coast communities now have a unique opportunity to develop and enact significant, generational, transformative changes in the stewardship of our vital coastal resources. The Federal Restore Council has a strong hand in ensuring the next steps are bold and have a lasting effect on sustaining our environment, natural resources and, therefore, our communities and economy.

Our previous comments to both NRDA trustees and the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council included requests for the following:

Increase transparency and expand the inclusion of citizens in the restoration process; the creation of a Citizens Advisory Panel to provide input into and oversight of restoration processes to include the assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring of those efforts; the creation of a Scientific Advisory Panel; and a thorough, rigorous process of proposal evaluation to ensure that restoration projects to be funded have a broad scope of positive environmental impacts on Coastal Alabama, as well as the entire Gulf Coast, and shall bring enduring change to our coastal ecosystems.

We believe the Council should further define the Priority Criteria utilizing a Citizen Advisory Panel and a Scientific Advisory Panel to ensure it is based on scientific evaluation and includes thorough public input. Additional criteria should be created and be more specific. The public needs much more detail to ensure that each project will: (1) use a watershed approach to restoration; (2) improve the environment for generations to come; (3) contain a long-term monitoring plan; (4) define level of workforce development; (5) use best practices; (6) have a significant economic benefit such as improve fisheries, support access, and dampen storm surge; and (7) include public participation, public outreach and education.

Criteria 1 and 2 should also include the marine environment – the area hit hardest and about which we know the least. The Council should add criteria that: (1) consider the project's ability to impact local economies by hiring local workers and developing job training and workforce development programs that will allow local folks to compete for jobs in a restoration economy, and (2) consider projects that conserve high quality habitats through voluntary land acquisition; and seek projects that (3) significantly invest in distressed communities, and (4) invest in green infrastructure and clean, renewable sources of energy.

The sixth of your objectives, "Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes," should be expanded to require projects to have a plan for evaluation and a system for measuring outcomes. Adaptive management of projects is critical. Additionally, we believe the Council should add objectives to: Require full compliance with environmental laws for all projects and programs; ensure RESTORE projects do no environmental harm, and any proposals aiming to bolster the economy while damaging the environment are absolutely unacceptable; and coordinate programs with all other ecosystem restoration efforts in the region to ensure the maximum benefit from funding decisions and to prevent duplicative or ineffective efforts.

Below you will find a table from which we have been selecting our projects. It is inclusive and will ensure the best projects are selected.

Overall Best Practices for Projects

- Projects are self-sustaining
- Projects leverage funds from multiple sources
- Projects are not inconsistent with goals of comprehensive plan
- Projects have regional impact
- Projects meet one or more authorized uses
- Projects have diverse partners

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- Project is feasible and cost-effective

RESTORE Act Criteria

- Does the proposed project contribute to short- or long-term recovery and health of natural resources, habitats or natural resource services?
- Does the proposed project contribute to short- or long-term workforce development?
- Does the proposed project contribute to short- or long-term economic growth, diversification and/or health?
- Does the proposed project contribute to short- or long-term community resilience?
- Is the proposed project consistent with the anticipated long-term needs and anticipated restoration plan?
- Is the proposed project feasible and cost effective?

Economic Benefit Criteria

- Does the project create construction-related short-term economic benefits?
- Does the project contribute to marine fisheries?
- Does the project contribute to tourism or coastal tourism?
- Does the project create or improve recreational access for the public to coastal resources?

Environmental Benefit Criteria

- Does the project restore, rehabilitate or replace priority natural resources or services as identified by AL RESTORE Plan?
- Does the project acquire priority natural resources or services as identified by AL RESTORE Plan/MBNEP Plan for long-term conservation (can include passive recreation activities)?
- Does the project dampen storm surge, wind or tidal energies?
- Does the project reduce coastal erosion?
- Does the project reduce nutrients contributing to poor water quality, the Gulf Dead Zone or Harmful Algal Blooms?
- Does the project restore or enhance natural hydrology and/or drainage, including marine system connectivity and processes?

Workforce Benefit Criteria

- Does the project train local residents for jobs?
- Does the project include plans for hiring local residents?
- Does the project include plans for contracting with local businesses?
- Does the project protect or restore livelihoods in any of the following economic sectors: tourism, fisheries, maritime, recreation?

Other Criteria

- Does the project include a role for involving local residents and nongovernmental organizations in the restoration effort?
- Does the project proposal include public outreach and education?
- Is the project included in or does it support an existing restoration or development plan?
- Does the project include a plan for public input to evaluate the progress of the project implementation and the success of the project in achieving short-term and long-term goals? Does the project leverage other funding sources?

We believe the Council has identified the right objectives and should not eliminate any of them. We do feel that there is room to expand on some of the objectives. The second objective to "Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Quality" should have more focus on watersheds. The fourth objective to "Promote Community Resilience" should aim to protect coastal communities and critical infrastructure. Our coastal communities are some of the most

vulnerable in the nation to flooding so investments in community resilience strategies including non-structural storm protection and climate change adaptation are critical to ensuring people can continue to live and work on the Gulf Coast. Protecting critical infrastructure allows the Gulf Coast to remain a working coast and an economic driver for the nation.

A Gulf Coast Advisory Committee should be established to review and comment on the comprehensive plan and to guide program development and implementation. The Committee will help establish trust between the community and the members of the Council throughout project selection and implementation. In 2011, a broad coalition of organizations submitted a proposed structure for the Citizen Advisory Committee to Administrator Lisa Jackson, then Chair of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. This coalition worked diligently to create a membership slate that would enable the Citizen Advisory Committee to effectively represent diverse issues and priority concerns of Gulf residents and provide essential scientific and other expertise. We recognized the need for each of the five Gulf States to have five representatives and we respectfully request your consideration of the following breakdown for the creation of a Citizen Advisory Committee:

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)

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1. Tribal/Indigenous and cultural/historical/traditional communities;
2. Expert in social resiliency;
3. Scientist with expertise in marine restoration/marine biology;
4. Scientist with expertise in coastal ecology/coastal restoration; and
5. Scientist with expertise in ecosystem services valuation.

It is very likely that candidates will have knowledge, expertise and/or skill in more than one category, which may streamline the selection process. Additionally, we propose the following caveats be added to the selection criteria:

1. Exclude from membership any officer or director of a company, including but not limited to companies involved in oil and gas development or contractors involved in wetland restoration, who have 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 of the broader Gulf Coast issues, e.g. by being connected through networks.

We emphasize the importance of engaging the public through the creation of a Citizen Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Committee. The Scientific Advisory Council should have representatives from each of the five states with multiple disciplines represented. These Councils should assist in the development of criteria, vet all projects, work together (science and citizens and any other committees created), and each member should represent a constituency and gather input from the field.

The most important recommendation we must underscore is public engagement and a focus on true environmental restoration for a resilient Coastal Alabama and Gulf Coast. We must stress that the Federal Council must only enact projects that fit within a broad goal for coastal resiliency, those that address systemic enhancement, restoration and protection of our coastal resources. Mobile Baykeeper supports those restoration projects that realize the optimal potential of each individual Gulf fishery (shrimp, oysters, finfish species, etc.) as well as water quality improvement efforts, with the goal of having water throughout Coastal Alabama that is swimmable, drinkable and fishable. Additionally we must emphasize the importance of equality: considering the communities and ecosystems of both Mobile and Baldwin Counties, the needs of low-income communities as well as wealthier populations. So far in the NRDA selection process, the only process moving so far, 90% of early restoration money has gone to Baldwin County. We need to see greater equality in project selection.

If the Oil Disaster taught us anything, it taught us how dependent Alabama's economy is on our natural resources. Alabama's Tourist and Seafood industries on the Gulf Coast felt the brunt of the blow from oil polluting our waters and shores, but the economic after-effects of this disaster went beyond these industries and beyond the borders of Mobile and Baldwin counties, affecting businesses throughout the state, and indeed nationwide. Environmental

restoration is the defining measure of successful economic recovery, and the most effective way to ensure Coastal Alabama is resilient in the face of future disasters is to properly enact sound environmental restoration.

We need your leadership to show that while investing in the environment promotes economic recovery, there are a multitude of economic projects that could negatively impact the environment. Our intention with the above suggestions for thorough and rigorous criteria, objectives, and public engagement is to demonstrate the far-reaching economic benefits that can come from high-quality environmental restoration projects.

We hope this helps in your challenging efforts to effect great change for Alabama and the Gulf Coast. If we can be of additional service or if you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you so much for your commitment to the protection and restoration of Alabama's natural resources.

Thank you in advance for consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Casi (kc) Callaway
Executive Director & Baykeeper

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 97

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Correspondence Text

Need both a citizens and a scientific committee but each committee should have a vote, not just advisory. Each state is to have a separate citizens and a separate scientific committee. Local government can provide to the council recommendations and qualifications for candidates to each committee. The council makes the final selections.

The project priority criteria: Projects determined by which state occurred the most damage. Projects within the state determine by parish or county having the damage. Priority of projects within the parish or county should be voted on by the public.

Initial priority should be given to projects that protect people's lives and property. For example build 100 year hurricane risk reduction systems, barrier islands, berms and ridges and marsh creation to reduce storm surge (in that order/priority).

Some objectives are to provide flood protection, save communities and their culture. One area that needs to be saved is in Braithwaite, La. on the east bank of Plaquemines Parish. Priority needs to be given to building a 100 year hurricane risk reduction system in the 18 miles area comparable to the New Orleans hurricane risk reduction system. This area was completely devastated by Hurricane Isaac in 2012 due to the construction of a 28 foot "wall" built by the CORP to the north and a 17 foot federal levee to the south. The 18 mile area became a funnel.

The Louisiana state master plan calls for putting 3 large scale diversions on the east bank of Plaquemines Parish at a cost of approximately 1.2 billion dollars. Large scale diversions would not provide immediate protection for the people in this area. These diversions will be destructive and ultimately destroy the entire east bank. Use the money to build the 18 mile levee as well as berms, ridges and marsh creation by dredging.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 98

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Correspondence Text

Thoughts on Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:
Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy

At this stage of knowledge, I generally find the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan structured enough to guide decision-making, yet broad enough to allow the necessary flexibility to successfully implement.

Objectives

Specifically add "amphibians" to the list of living resources in the first paragraph of Objective 3 on page 12. Include an objective that ties the other objectives of using "local" contractors and suppliers (and even helping train and develop such contractors in some cases) to better grow the local gulf economy.

Criteria

Ecosystem benefits, technical feasibility, positive environmental impacts, and social and economic benefits should all be considered as criteria when selecting programs and projects for funding.

Feasibility and likelihood of success should be critical criteria when working with projects and programs of this magnitude.

Duration of ecosystem benefits is also important; while short-term benefits are great, retaining those benefits over decades or more is often more valuable.

A system that encourages funding projects that are in our human populations' and the ecosystems' best long-term interests even if they are politically disfavored should be valued.

Committees

Establishment of a technical advisory committee that is based on state-of-the knowledge science and adaptive

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management is critical.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 99

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Correspondence Text

On Page 15 under "Implementation" of the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, please state that the reporting of outcomes and impacts of restoration activities will be posted on the Restore the Gulf Web Site for public review and knowledge.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 100

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

Restore the Tree Canopy Strategies
Habitat, Water Quality, Community Resilience
Submitted by Donna Yowell, Executive Director of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council
601-672-0755

"Restore the Canopy Strategies" is a project that meets all five of the overarching framework goals of Restore the Gulf. This project will focus on collaborative and sustainable tree planting strategies and activities for local government, citizens, and NGO's. The project will include ways the community and individuals can actively participate, building knowledge, resilience, conservation activities, and ownership. Communities will learn the benefit of connectedness, to a healthy Gulf, based on actions within their own community. Stakeholder engagement and wide spread collaboration would be another focus. Trees have proven their natural capital to tourism and community economic enhancement, as well.

This would be a landscape level restoration effort along coastal streams, targeted shore lines, and watersheds; implementing a strong green component and collaboration for involvement. *Initiate community based efforts to increase the awareness of the importance of coastal resources and the best management practices to support conservation and renewal of the valuable assets. *Restore water quality *Restore ecosystems.

We are currently working on four other projects that this project would tie into to:

1. Storm preparedness and mitigation strategies and plans for coastal communities in regard to landscapes and trees.
2. Environmental Harmony, a coalition of over 69 local government and NGO's working together for a common goal.

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3. Planting orchards and canopies in a small area of Waveland and Bay St. Louis and Beauvoir, combined with an educational unit.
4. We currently work with 34 cities under the Tree City USA project.

This project would also work off the recently completed Gulf Legacy inventory by developing planting strategies for green spaces that will remain perpetually green such as stream riparian, parks, open spaces, easements and other lands in communities as identified in the inventory.

Problems:

- Loss of over 40% of canopy due to hurricanes and continued loss due to redevelopment.
- Little understanding of the value trees and canopies play in the overall health of the gulf and its habitats, especially in water quality.
- Communities learning low cost way to have major impact on the environmental quality.
- Most citizens don't think they as individual can make a difference.
- It's someone else's problem not ours.
- Lack of ways to engage citizens of every income level and business.
- Planting in space that will be forever green- wetlands, right of ways, parks, stream riparian, or other permanent green spaces.

Strategies:

1. Build on past projects –
 - A. Use the new green overlay (inventory of perpetual green areas) that can be forested to replace canopies for improved water quality and improved social and environmental impacts overall.
 - B. Incorporate the Storm Preparedness and Mitigation plans currently being developed for coastal communities.
 - C. Tap into the active network of municipalities, civic groups, citizens, and other local efforts to plant trees.
 - D. Use new technology to place actual value on improved canopies. (i-Tree)
2. Better Strategies for Sustainable Canopies Replacement:
 - A. Increased education- right tree, right place
 - B. Increased coordination between existing organizations, cities and citizens.
 - C. Best tree varieties for storm resistance, native, habitat species.
 - D. Increased maintenance agreements.
 - E. Commitments to planting in green spaces that will be forever green, around land uses, and future building, in appropriate growing spaces.
 - F. Better storm preparedness strategies and planning.
 - G. Local policy development.
 - H. Creates a united NGOs, academic, military, state, city and federal coalition.
 - I. Simple, easy do strategies. Stewardship 101.
 - J. Protection and better conservation of live oaks, natural Mississippi Gulf Coast national treasures.

The Mississippi Urban Forest Council is the lead urban forestry non-profit, formed by the US Farm Bill in 1979. Our mission is to foster and promote proper management of urban forests for social, economic, and environmental benefits to people through innovation, leadership, communication and educational services. The Mississippi Urban Forest Council works in partnership with the Mississippi Forestry Commission, local government, state, federal and other NGO's. The MUFC has a coast office.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 101

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Correspondence Text

July 2, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
C/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Comments on "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy"

The Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club welcomes the opportunity to comment on the "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan" put forward by the Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Council under the RESTORE Act. The stated purpose of the Draft Plan, to serve as "a framework to implement a coordinated region-wide restoration effort in a way that restores, protects, and revitalizes the Gulf Coast region following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill" is critically important.

While the Draft Plan is clearly incomplete, its Objectives and Goals

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are similar to those articulated in the Gulf Restoration Strategy released in 2011. The Preliminary List of projects and programs offered in Appendix A gives some idea of what on the ground action might look like under the process laid out in the RESTORE Act.

Several of the projects submitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are located in our area of focus, East Baton Rouge Parish and surrounding parishes. These are:

"East Baton Rouge Parish... to reduce flood damages from headwater flooding in this watershed. The authorized project calls for improving approximately 66 miles of channels in 5 sub-basins within East Baton Rouge Parish.

"Ascension Parish... Assist in developing and protecting the Parish water and waste water infrastructure.

"East Baton Rouge Parish... Assist the Parish in ongoing planning and rehabilitation efforts to design infrastructure improvements and to construct sewer system modifications.

"Livingston Parish... Assist the Parish in ongoing planning and rehabilitation efforts to design infrastructure improvements and to construct sewer system modifications." (p. 53)

Similar project descriptions are given for a number of other parishes (Iberia, Plaquemines, St. John the Baptist, etc.) The project descriptions are too brief to provide much understanding of what they actually entail. Several are clearly tied to projects authorized in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which includes flood protection, ecosystem restoration, and wastewater projects.

Their inclusion seems to demonstrate an understanding that actions taken upstream have impacts downstream, and that coastal areas and the Gulf are affected by water pollution and hydrological alterations/degradation that occurs further up the watershed. Each of these three parishes (EBR, Ascension, Livingston) is undergoing rapid and largely uncontrolled growth, with pervasive impacts on their waterbodies, wetlands, natural areas, and farmland.

We have similar concerns about an additional project submitted to the list by the Corps, "Amite River and Tributaries Ecosystem Restoration" (p. 54), which is described as a "Feasibility study of structural and non-structural means for reducing environmental impacts to the Amite River Corridor." Flooding in the Amite River basin is a direct result of the development of floodplains and the loss of the natural drainage and buffering system. Control of development in wetlands and the floodplain, as well as integrated planning efforts with parishes and local governments to ensure responsible growth policies, are clearly the solution to this problem, even if "structural" measures are necessary in some places.

We believe that it is critical that all of the Corps of Engineers projects listed here include ecosystem restoration and protection and the requirement that integrated planning take place in those watersheds. The "headwater flooding"

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referred to for the first East Baton Rouge Parish proposed project is not an act of nature but the result of the loss of the natural flood control system (forests, wetlands, etc.) that holds and filters floodwaters, and its replacement with impervious surfaces (roads, roofs, and parking lots.)

It is not clear what precisely "improving... channels in 5 sub-basins within East Baton Rouge Parish" entails, but merely widening channels and expanding drainage systems (culverts, etc.) will not help the water quality and flooding concerns of areas downstream. Ascension Parish in particular has been negatively impacted by the rapid flushing of drainage waters from East Baton Rouge Parish. That "flushing" reflects standard practice of trying to compensate for loss of natural flood holding capacity by draining rainwater/stormwater as rapidly as possible, without consideration of where it goes.

All of the water bodies in East Baton Rouge Parish are biologically impaired because of these trends. Only Bayou Manchac, a historic waterway that forms the boundary between EBR, Ascension, and Iberville Parishes, has a total maximum daily load (TMDL) plan, developed by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality under the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act. Bayou Manchac (for which a State Scenic Stream Management Plan is also being developed) drains into the Amite River, which drains into Lake Maurepas, which is in turn hydrologically connected to the coastal estuary of Lake Pontchartrain.

Ascension and Livingston Parish have similar water quality problems (as do Jefferson, St. Charles, St. Tammany and the other parishes listed in the projects and programs list). The need for the infrastructure and sewer system improvements listed as potential projects is also the direct result of rapid and unplanned development trends, and those projects will help improve water quality both in their particular areas and downstream as the bayous and rivers drain to the coast, especially if they include state of the art nutrient control and monitoring systems. For all of these projects, however, long-lasting effectiveness will require integration with broad planning efforts that include restoration of their watersheds and protection of existing wetlands and natural areas in a coordinated approach.

Sincerely,

Sam Wilcher
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Baton Rouge Group of the Sierra Club
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

I would like to see the formula for distribution of funds. Parishes that were most severely damaged from the oil spill should receive funds commensurate with the % damage calculated.

The criteria Parishes must follow to receive funds and the areas identified as to where these funds can be spent needs to be explained and publicized.

When large State contracts are let for projects, the companies receiving the bid generally excludes local contractors who are qualified to perform the work but are not awarded the contract. If Parishes are given funds for projects within their Parishes it would seem that more local contractors would bid and hopefully receive the contracts. Is this being addressed by the Council?

Thank you for this opportunity

Dr. Stuart J. Guey, Jr.
Plaquemines Parish Council

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 103

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Correspondence Text

It is extremely important to allocate funds to restore the Dauphin Island, Alabama shoreline, mitigate oil spill damage and encourage economic recovery for the island. It is my understanding no funds are allocated Dauphin Island. The barrier island is the first line of defence to the Alabama shoreline. Baldwin County has a strong lobbying program - many residents and groups on the Eastern Shore have been pushing hard for these funds, as evidenced by the \$85 million proposal (believed to be a "done deal") for a new Convention Center in Gulf Shores. Our understanding is that NO funds have been earmarked for Dauphin Island AT ALL! I don't feel the committee is being fair to the residents of Dauphin Island and to the importance of beach restoration. How can it be that Baldwin County gets \$85 Million and Dauphin Island gets nothing? Please help us. Thank You

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

I am writing to ask that you PLEASE include Dauphin Island when funds are allocated for beach restoration. Dauphin Island not only protects the coast of Alabama, it allows the oil and gas exploration right off the coast. The combination of the dredging for the Mobile Bay shipping channel and hurricane damage have caused serious erosion. We need to be included and helped to maintain our barrier island. Thank you very much.

Kindest regards,
Kathy Heacock

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Many people do not realize that this island protects the Mobile area mainland saving the Mobile area mainland year after year during hurricane season, it gets the brunt protecting Mobile every time.

The seafood growing in our estuaries is vital to the entire Gulf Coast area and has to be protected at all costs. This estuary area is a treasure chest of baby shrimp, baby crabs and many types of baby fish.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 106

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Correspondence Text

Dauphin Island needs beach restoration and should receive at least part of the funds available. Tar balls are still washing up on the beach! Please share the funds with all!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 107

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Correspondence Text

My wife owns a lot located at 2700 Bienville Blvd. on Dauphin Island we purchased just before Hurricane Katrina. we have been waiting for years now for the beaches to be restored on the West end of the Island before making plans to build on our lot.

We believe that the Island and the State economy would benefit if Dauphin island's beaches were "engineered beaches" that would qualify for Federal disaster funds like the beaches in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Alabama have. The Island could be enjoyed by thousands more each year and jobs would be created if funds were provided to restore the beaches of Dauphin Island such that they would be qualified as Engineered Beaches. The investment would pay for itself in many ways including economically and environmentally.

Please provide funds at this opportune time to restore the beaches at Dauphin Island.

Thank you!

Catlin Cade

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 108

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Correspondence Text

Please consider giving Dauphin Island some of the funds. The island is a barrier island that protects the mainland to include several oyster beds and other natural habitats.

It would be sad for this protection of natural resources to disappear.

Thank You,
Alice Baker

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 109

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Correspondence Text

It is my understanding that no restoration funds have been earmarked for Dauphin Island, AL. How can that be?? Anyone who knows even a little about Dauphin Island knows it is a VERY important barrier island for the Mobile & southern Alabama coastline. Mobile itself is a very important industrial center with a vital concentration of shipyard facilities and Austel, an important Department of Defense contractor. The importance of Dauphin Island as a barrier island is vastly misunderstood and, therefore, gets lost in the shuffle of big money interests in Baldwin County, AL. The economy of Dauphin Island is solely based on tourism due to its world-class beaches. In addition, Dauphin Island as a barrier island protects the commercial fishing and shipbuilding/repair industries of the Coden/Bayou LaBatre areas. Its ecological importance to wildlife is being overlooked as well and its e Sea Lab's research is one of a kind.

I implore you to take another long look at Dauphin Island's importance to the southern Alabama area. It may be easier to quantify Baldwin County's importance to Alabama than that of Dauphin Island by merely considering revenues from tourists and tax revenues. However, it is my understanding that these funds are to be used for more than just Alabama's chief revenue sources. These funds are to be used for restoration of precious natural resources, wildlife protection, and restoration of important beach areas such as those at Dauphin Island as well. Please do not only listen to those whose voices are more numerous and louder - those big money interests from the more populous Baldwin County area.

As the voice for the Gulf ecosystem restoration, please, please, please go to bat for the survival of Dauphin Island and its ecosystem. Please help Dauphin Island receive its fair share of the pie.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 110

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

All my friends and neighbors, especially the commercial fishermen, need all the help you can give them. This is a true economic need, not a quest for errant monies that may be "floating" around. We don't have a large voting block,just a need to get our island back together.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 111

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

The Gulf Coast has always had a unique opportunity to attract residents from the central United States to partake of the ocean's closeness as compared with the east or west coast. My wife Mary and I have lived many years in New Orleans and now travel south from Michigan during winter months to renew our enjoyment of the gulf coast.

As we see it there has been a neglect of some coastal areas while others have become more and more densely populated, We hereby offer a suggestion that there is a current opportunity to develop a new and appealing attraction, instead of placing more emphasis on already overburdened gulf coastal locations, and that is Dauphin Island, Alabama.

The island has already been well defined for potential residential expansion, and the relative ease of infrastructure expansion can be easily assessed, but Dauphin Island has remained all but neglected due to competing interests along the rest of that coastal strip. A jump start is needed to provide a catalyst for growth. As the possibility is studied for the construction of a convention center, we ask that Dauphin Island would be included when considering the potential for a highly leveraged investment. The number of businesses and the residential growth that would result from selection of Dauphin island as such a location would be better than any other along this area of the Gulf Coast.

I thank you for your consideration of this idea.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 112

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
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Correspondence Text

Money needs to be appropriated for Dauphin Island for restoration of shore line due to BP oil spill. Our beaches are important for the life of the island's tourism business. All of the Gulf coast deserves help, with question. Step up and do what is right.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 113

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

Dear Sir or Madam,

Dauphin Island Alabama is a barrier island which helps to protect the coastline of Alabama. It is a quaint island with homes that have been in local families for decades. My family has owned property on Tecumseh Court on Dauphin Island since 1978. In 2005, hurricane Katrina took our home and due to the lack of proper restoration of the gulf beach we have been unable to build back. The island sustained itself for many years until the corp of engineers started dredging the mouth of the bay and taking the sand many miles offshore to dump. When originally started they simply dumped the dredged sand to the east of the mouth of the bay and it restored the gulf side of the island. The only way to keep the island from washing away is to shoot the beach out about 300 yards so that the waves have something to rebuild. Millions of dollars have been wasted putting berms on the beachfront and they simple wash over the road with the first big storm from the south. If there were beachfront to catch the high waves and surf the island would build back. There is an abundance of sand under the pier at the island which would be well used if dredged and shot eastward down the beach and providing an income base as a fishing pier for the town. I would be grateful for anything which could be done to rebuild our little piece of heaven. Thank you for reading this and thank you for anything you can do to help.

Sincerely,

Melanie O. Houseknecht

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 114

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Correspondence Text

As a property owner on Dauphin Island, AL, I feel compelled to comment in support of efforts to restore this little piece of serenity, an unspoiled little spit of land between the Gulf and Bay. It is home to families who flock to the white sand and blue sea to escape for at least a day, the noise-filled, over busy, over-crowded places on the mainland. They come to a place that gives them nature and will nurture their tired psyches.

A view of the morning sunrise brings hope. The setting sun sparks awe. Watching a thunder storm out over the sea can steal your breath away. The rolling surf soothes away those multitude of anxieties attached to the work-a-day world we inhabit most of the time.

Look up at the stars twinkling on a midnight blue velvet sky. City lights hide the wonder of the night but here one can lay back and drift into the milky way. Hear the call of the gulls. Watch a squadron of pelicans skim over the waves in perfect formation. Pick up shells from the beach and contemplate their journey to the shore. Feel the sun against your face, the breeze against your back. Play in the waves of the salty gulf or float on its gently rolling water. See the dolphins chase the shrimp boat and leap and play in the wake.

There are no carnival rides here. There are no arcades. There are no movie theaters, and nothing to compete with the chief attraction of this little island --its harmony of sun, sea, sand, and the simple pleasure taken in absorbing it all.

Dauphin Island isn't glitzy or glamorous. Its importance lies in its mere existence, first as a barrier island it protects the main Alabama shoreline towns and cities. It gets battered by storms but lessens the effect on the mainland -- and stands as a barrier to greater destruction and damage beyond its narrow body.

But it serves as an even greater barrier; one that people need when they seek to escape life's rough currents and ill Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

winds that beat at them day in and day out. The little barrier island is just a spit of land in the gulf. But that little spit offers great respite to the work weary who come to regain a sense of perspective of just how good life and this world really is.

Being on Dauphin Island reawakens those feelings of awe and serenity, the appreciation of nature and all her creatures. Its worth is more than can be measured in just dollars and cents. Protecting this haven for all of God's creatures who come to bask in its harmony and protecting its continued existence should take precedence. There are precious few havens left. Please keep this one for all who cherish its magic.

Protect it and it will continue to protect part of our precious coast.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 115

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Text

After tar balls and threats of crude oil overwash, an invasion of well meaning sand cleaners and National Guardsmen, and months of stress, Dauphin Island suffered real damage and economic damage which will require a decade of recovery. It is fitting and imperative that restoration funds be allotted to ease the burdens placed on this pristine island and it's hard working residents.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 116

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Correspondence Text

Dauphin Island should be included in Gulf Coast coastal restoration projects. The beach front was damaged by the oil spill clean-up methods, including the deep digging for tar balls. That method loosened packed sand, which had since caused extensive erosion to the entire Gulf side of the Island. In all fairness, funds should be allocated to restore the coastal beach line on Dauphin Island.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 117

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Notes:

Correspondence Text

Our Island community has been seriously harmed by the BP spill in property values and overall quality of life.
Please provide assistance to restore the damage.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 118

Author Information

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I'm shocked that Dauphin Island is not earmarked for restoration funds. Please consider this as a plea for help. The island is a barrier island and as such protects precious fisheries and wetlands. It is also a primary residence for more than 700 people as well as an economic engine for taxes for the State of Alabama. Please consider the residents whose very homes depend on your help.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 119

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Correspondence Text

Growing up in Mobile we enjoyed the beaches, fishing, and boating on Dauphin Island. Our family owns a lot in "the pines" which my father bought in 1959. The uncertainty of the island's future affects the value of this property and our confidence in buiding there. I was at DI last month and was shocked by the condition of the beaches and the flooding of streets 3 days after a rain. DI has more public facilities and educational opportunities than any coastal Alabama area. This is a vital consideration when deciding where to allocate public funds.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 120

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Correspondence Text

Do not forget Alabama's other gulf shoreline, Dauphin Island. It is important to earmark funds to restore its' shoreline and mitigate the oil spill damage there and to encourage economic recovery. Gulf Shores and Orange Beach should not be the only game in town.
It would be a travesty to exclude Dauphine Island.

Ellie Fox

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 121

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Correspondence Text

As the owner of a vacation home on Dauphin Island my concern, and the reason I feel that funds should be earmarked for the continued/future restoration of Dauphin Island beaches from affects of the BP oil spill, is that I fear we have not seen the last of the large of oil that was sunk to the bottom of the gulf by the extensive use of chemical dispersants. These dispersants got the spilled oil "out of sight" but they should not be "out of mind." I fear that when we have the next major hurricane activity in the Gulf...and if/when that hurricane comes ashore...we are going to see hugh amounts of the oil that now rests on the bottom of the Gulf will be stirred up and deposited our our beaches.

Please consider my concern...and ensure that funds will be available for cleaning our beaches if/when this does in fact happen.

Thank you for your serious consideration of my request.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 122

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| Date Sent: 07/03/2013 | Date Received: 07/03/2013 |
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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I couldn't help but notice that Dauphin Island, Alabama didn't receive adequate attention from this fund set up to compensate coastal communities for the negative impacts caused by the oil leak. One of the main attractions to the Island suffered such a loss of tourism during the 2010 leak to cripple and close the golf course and pro shop. This impacted the winter 'snow-bird' season for all business since a majority of the retirees who winter on the island do so to play golf.

This is just one example. It doesn't even consider the expense of local fishermen, bait shops (and bait fishermen), sand piled on the south side of the road to keep oil off (which will cover the road and fill canals during the next hurricane requiring removal).

Bottom line, Baldwin County, AL is NOT the only Alabama coastline that suffered impact but got the lion's share of this fund. It is not fair.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 123

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Correspondence Text

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy and accompanying Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment. As stated, the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan provides a framework to implement a coordinated region-wide restoration effort in a way that restores, protects, and revitalizes the Gulf Coast region following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This disaster caused significant damage to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and to effectively assess the long-term effects of this event, there needs to be a coordinated regional approach in monitoring the status and health of the marine resources in the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) is uniquely poised to provide such an approach.

Established by both state and federal statutes in July 1949, the GSMFC is an organization of the five states (Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida) whose coastal waters are the Gulf of Mexico. It has as its principal objective the conservation, development, and full utilization of the fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico to provide food, employment, income, and recreation to the people of the United States. One of the most important functions of the GSMFC is to serve as a forum for the discussion of various challenges and topics regarding marine resources management, industry, research, etc. and to develop a coordinated approach among state and federal partners to address those issues for the betterment of the resource for all who are concerned.

The GSMFC has a long history of successfully coordinating and administering cooperative, regional programs such as the Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (SEAMAP), Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program (IJF), Sportfish Restoration Program (SFRP), Fisheries Information Network (GulfFIN), Economics Program (EP) and the marketing, traceability and sustainability components of the Oil Disaster Recovery Program (ODRP). One of the reasons the GSMFC has been so successful is that it is a vertically-integrated organization that provides products and services that satisfy a common need to both its state and federal partners throughout the Gulf of Mexico. In Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

addition, the GSMFC has sole-source authority, under the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Title IV, Sec 402(d), which will expedite the distribution of funds and quickly allow these important activities to commence.

Again, thank you for this opportunity and I am looking forward to working with the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to assess the impacts of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (228) 875-5912.

David M. Donaldson
Interim Executive Director
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 124

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Correspondence Text

Public Comments from COMPASS on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

An unprecedented opportunity now exists in the Gulf of Mexico to create a new large-scale ecosystem restoration program from the ground up. Over the past year, COMPASS, a non-profit, non-advocacy organization, has helped the academic research community share their insights on large-scale ecosystem restoration with policymakers from the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, and the Department of Commerce. From their combined expertise in natural and social sciences, and direct experience in the restoration of the California Bay-Delta, Chesapeake Bay, Colorado River, Everglades, Klamath River, and Mississippi River Delta, scientists have identified the following common key elements of effective restoration efforts:

- Integrated monitoring, modeling, and synthesis guided by and regularly adapted to decision needs
- Governance structures that incorporate science and external scientific review to support effective feedback between science and policy
- Adaptive management implemented from the outset, with realistic objectives and expectations, and the ability to experiment and implement mid-course corrections
- Performance metrics tailored to the goals of the restoration effort
- Leadership that uses regulatory levers to make holistic ecosystem restoration a primary goal

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These public comments reflect what we've heard from the research community on the core elements outlined above. Please refer to the end of these comments for a list of experts that COMPASS has interacted with and who can provide further insight on these topics. We direct our comments to the relevant sections specified.

II. OVERVIEW

Commitment to Science-Based Decision-Making

To realize the Gulf Council's commitment to science-based decision making will require a thoughtful approach to a governance structure that supports, for example, robust input from the scientific community. Restoration efforts benefit from a clearly defined space for science in the governance structure. Although there are many organizational strategies for including science in restoration efforts, the Glen Canyon Dam (in the Colorado River system) and the Everglades illustrate two approaches that have shown promise: 1) having a "research czar" (Glen Canyon), in which a single well-experienced person serves as the chief of research for restoration and identifies research needs of decision-makers, coordinates research activities, enables communication of results, and administers research budgets; and 2) having a central committee for science management (Everglades), in which an identifiable administrative unit, including membership from all the federal and state agencies participating in the restoration, communicates as a group to both researchers and decision-makers.

Regardless of how science for restoration is administered, external review provides a mechanism that can help ensure credibility of the research and its application. There are three common approaches for external review of large-scale ecosystem restoration: 1) a broadly based one-time review by an ad hoc panel; 2) a continuing periodic review by a standing committee (e.g. National Research Council Review in the Everglades); and 3) a rapid-response, highly targeted review. Selecting an appropriate type of science-to-policy governance structure or process for external review will depend on the specific context in the Gulf of Mexico, but looking to the above examples can provide helpful insight.

Effective science-based decision-making also benefits from well-defined approaches to adaptive management. When carefully implemented, adaptive management promotes flexible decision-making to modify existing activities, or creates new ones, if existing programs are not meeting their goals or as new circumstances or information arise. Basic elements common to most applications of adaptive management include: 1) a set of management objectives that have been defined by the initiative; 2) model(s) of the system being managed; 3) a range of management options that are evaluated for their effectiveness; 4) a monitoring program that evaluates progress; and 5) a mechanism for incorporating recommended changes into projects or programs.

Adaptive management can be characterized as either passive or active. Active adaptive management might be particularly suitable for the Gulf of Mexico where 1) strong baseline information may be lacking; and 2) management or restoration activities will be undertaken before full study of the system is possible. Active adaptive management experimentally tests multiple hypotheses and explores a range of options during all phases of implementation to select the best path towards achieving objectives. Active adaptive management relies on monitoring and incorporating results from experiments into models or activities that comprise the restoration effort. Active adaptive management is more costly than passive adaptive management, but it can also yield more information about the system being managed and more clearly account for the outcomes of investment. By contrast, passive adaptive management efforts use the information available to choose reasonable management or restoration options at the start, but they also specify future decision points where feedback can be incorporated into a choice of subsequent restoration actions.

Commitment to a Regional Ecosystem-Based Approach to Restoration

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An ecosystem-based approach that explicitly accounts for restoring the flows of ecosystem benefits to people (i.e., ecosystem services) can support the dual goals of ecological and economic restoration for the Gulf of Mexico. An emerging concept (termed 'servicesheds') maps the flows of ecosystem services. Such maps identify the winners and losers of particular policy decisions, revealing changes in distribution and equity that are currently hidden. Servicesheds improve our ability to assess tradeoffs among services and among beneficiaries, allow more explicit assessment of return on investment to specific sectors or groups, and provide an important spatial frame for quantification and valuation of ecosystem services.

Serviceshed maps could inform a project selection framework to support regional scale restoration decisions. To create such policy-relevant maps requires three pieces of information. First, the places where ecological processes produce a service create supply. There may be demand for a service, like protection from coastal storm surge, but if there are no natural habitats in the coastal zone to buffer waves, then there is no supply of that service and therefore no serviceshed or beneficiaries. Second, people must have physical access to that supply. A watershed may be providing clean water, but if people have no wells, pipes, paths to the river, or other means of physically taking water, then that service of clean water is not being provided to people. Finally, people must have institutional access to that supply. This reflects, for example, access rights, which can come in the form of legal rights like use zones, water use rights, fishing permits, etc.

Since projects and programs selected for funding through the processes set forth in Comprehensive Plan may be subject to further NEPA review, there may be an opportunity to use NEPA more holistically to examine the cumulative impacts of suites of projects. NEPA could be interpreted to require an ecosystem services impact assessment by agencies proposing to fund, carry out, or authorize actions as a part of the compliance process. An ecosystem services assessment requirement would help in coordinating federal agency action

Commitment to Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

Specifying desired benefits from ecosystem restoration early in a planning process could help target investment more effectively and identify appropriate performance metrics to assess progress. Synthetic scientific information can also help managers understand the complex ecosystem responses that might result from a single management action or project implementation. In addition, since projects and programs selected for funding through the processes set forth in Plan may be subject to further NEPA review, there may be an opportunity to use NEPA more holistically to examine the cumulative impacts of suites of projects.

Targeted monitoring helps determine whether the system is responding in the desired manner and whether management or restoration goals are being met. An adaptive management component that includes monitoring and modeling at the appropriate scale helps assess effectiveness of local actions and allow learning to occur. A relevant example is the recent and ongoing FLASH (Fall Low Salinity Habitat) study in the California Bay-Delta that allows for purposeful manipulation of the freshwater flows coming into the Delta. The effort is highly coordinated and collaborative – involving 18 scientists from nine state and federal agencies in the design and interpretation – and comparatively inexpensive, making use of ongoing monitoring (about \$4 million per year).

III and IV. GOALS and OBJECTIVES

While the Draft Plan outlines five goals that encompass the ingredients for an integrated and coordinated approach to region-wide restoration, the Plan lacks a clear vision for integration among goals with an eye to holistic ecological and economic recovery in the Gulf. An ecosystem services approach would prove useful coordinating the integration of these goals. For example, restoring and conserving habitat (Goal 1) might also restore water quality (Goal 2)

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ID: 47484

and/or directly enhance community resilience (Goal 4; e.g. replacing wetlands in locations that protect houses or infrastructure from storms or erosion). Likewise, investments to revitalize the Gulf economy (Goal 5) could serve the dual purpose of restoring habitat (Goal 1) or replenishing resources (Goal 3) if the Gulf succeeds in growing a "restoration economy."

To achieve these networked or "bundled" benefits may require a framework and discrete performance metrics that can track how benefits flow across specific goals. More importantly, if this framework helps guide project selection from the outset, it will enable the prioritization of restoration projects that maximizes a suite of benefits, rather than stovepiping benefits within a specific goal.

Similar comments apply to the Objectives section in the Plan. Although the Plan specifies that, "restoration projects and programs may achieve multiple Objectives simultaneously," this does not go so far as saying that achieving multiple objectives is an explicit goal of the restoration effort. Ecological and economic return on investment would benefit from a coordinated framework that specifically aims to maximize suites of benefits across individual objectives.

VI. NEXT STEPS

As the process moves forward, we encourage the Council to connect regularly with the extramural research community. This type of input has been accomplished in the past through Science Advisory Councils, or through other mechanisms such as regular briefings and meetings with extramural researchers. As discussed in these comments, topics of particular interest and relevance to the Council's next phase include: adaptive management, ecosystem services, ecosystem-based management, science-to-policy linkages, and monitoring to support project selection and evaluation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The names below are experts that COMPASS has drawn insight from on ecosystem restoration and ecosystem services that is reflected in these comments. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of experts in these fields.

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/03/2013 Date Received: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments. i am a full time resident of Dauphin Island and would like to express my thoughts on the Restoration process. dauphin Island has probably been impacted as much as any area on the coast with severe erosian issues that have been unfounded in the history of the island. Parts of the island that have been inhabited for hundreds of years, from Native americans to early settlers, have been impacted with these issues in a very short period of time. The audobon Bird sanctuary is in danger and the natural aquafiers of the island will soon be impacted by salt water intrusion, unless the sand barriers are strengthened. Please take this into account when deciding where to disperse the funds. Our property values have suffered not just from natural elements but from the effects of the oil spill. My realtor said i have lost as much as 45% from negative publicity from the oil issues. Please be prudent where this money is spent. As the closest community to the gulf and arguably the most impacted, We have a legitimate need for help. There was a reason the national media and BP chose the island as headquarters for information and repair.

Thank you.

Ed Jones

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 126

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/03/2013 Date Received: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

My husband and I own property at 124 Epinet, Dauphin Island, AL. Dauphin Island has been a part of my life since I first crossed the bridge in 1976. My friends and family from Mobile would get up early every Saturday morning, pack up food, tents, beer, and smiles and head to the ISLAND. We would camp on the West End, along with many others. Waking up listening to the tide coming in was a feeling that I will never forget and wish everyone could experience.

The Island had beautiful sandy beaches all the way to the West End and no problems with a super cut in it or roads the would be covered with water with only a little rain. There was no invisible drop causing the serious rip currents that are now experienced. There was a light at the water tower and if it was red we stayed out of the water, but on a green day we rode waves in on boogy boards for hours.

The pier was a great place to fish or just hang out and watch the pelicans. Now it is sad to see it - it's like the pier to nowhere.

Just recently, we took a stroll through the Audubon Bird Sanctuary. It was quiet and lovely. We heard woodpeckers and all kinds of birds. At the end of the trail, there were people from all over the world. There were couples from England, Baltimore, MD, and my husband even met someone who lives in his Dad's hometown in Tennessee.

Some of these people were staying in the campground on the Island, but most were in hotels in Mobile or Gulf Shores. I remember the Holiday Inn on Bienville and when it was full on weekends in the summer.

Please consider Dauphin Island when you distribute monies for beach restoration, oil clean-up, and other infrastructure needs. Dauphin Island which sits 3 miles out from Mobile is relatively small, and at this time, is not a
Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

booming tourist town, but it is working constantly to survive - not only economically but it wants to keep it's shape and sand-beach stability. It protects the "big city" from hurricanes - as do all barrier Islands and Mobile needs that protection. Mobile's people need a close place to go to the beach, shop for sea-shell trinkets, and eat delicious fresh OIL-FREE seafood that comes right off the boats anchored at the docks of the Island.

As a property owner, we thank you for your consideration and hope that you will find it beneficial to help Dauphin Island regain it's glory from 40 years ago. I am just an Island lover and do not know any technical details on what needs to be done but there are experts out there that do. Please help Dauphin Island.

Thank you.

Sheila and Patrick Whitehead

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 127

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

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|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 07/03/2013 | Date Received: 07/03/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

As a property owner on Dauphin Island, Alabama, funding is desperately needed to restore the shoreline and mitigate oil spill damage to encourage economic recovery for the Island. As I understand, there is NO funding earmarked for Dauphin Island. Funding for these items is critical and will definitely help protect our Island. Please, please consider allocating funding to Dauphin Island to help protect our "little island paradise" in the Gulf.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 128

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New
Date Sent: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1
Contains Request(s): No
Notes:
Park Correspondence Log:
Date Received: 07/03/2013
Form Letter: No
Type: Web Form

Correspondence Text

I have three primary areas of concern that must be addressed. **FIRST**, there must be a clear 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, not hired 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 ecological restoration projects will inherently have elements of economic restoration, there must be a commitment from the council that no project will promote purely economic growth in the community at the cost of ecological restoration. Great things can be accomplished on our gulf coast through these funds; if these three priorities are met, everyone wins.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 129

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/03/2013 Date Received: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dauphin Island is a very special place, but unless we get some of the same kind of help that the Eastern Shore, or the state of Mississippi has been getting to restore, & stabilize our shore line.

We will start losing houses to beach erosion. I wish this were something that we could do for ourselves, but it's just not.

In the past you've had some "band aid" patches, like berms. These are a waste of time, & effort, as they are gone in the first storm.

There are some meaningful plans that have been submitted, but we haven't been able to get them funded.

We need help, & we need it sooner, rather than later.

Thanks for your consideration.

John Chapman

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 130

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/03/2013 Date Received: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

I own a condo at Surf Club on Dauphin Island, AL. Dauphin Island is a much often forgotten , yet very important barrier island that suffers from erosion and is in a constant state of change. It is a beautiful island and home to a bird sanctuary. The waters around the island provide fish and shrimp all along the Gulf Coast. Following the BP environmental disaster, I lost all income from Summer rental on my property as all renters cancelled due to the poor water and beach quality. There was little improvement the next year and basically anyone who made a living on the island went out of business or had huge losses.

The island is trying to come back this season and needs funding to support local businesses and to provide erosion protection for our properties. This island needs funding to rebuild the public pool and golf course at the Isle Dauphine Club so that visitors and residents can enjoy this facility once again. The west end of the island needs road improvement and better drainage to prevent that end of the island from being under water following a bad rain.

If you need more information, please contact me.

Melinda Benson

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 131

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/03/2013 Date Received: 07/03/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Please don't forget about Dauphin Island. It's a wonderful place and needs money to restore our beaches . Please help us ! Thank you , Marjorie Hamilton

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 132

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/04/2013 Date Received: 07/04/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

You asked--- "3.The Council is considering establishing or engaging advisory committees as may be necessary, such as a citizens' advisory committee and/or a science advisory committee, to provide input to the Council in carrying out its responsibilities under the RESTORE Act. °Should the Council establish any advisory committees? °If so, what type of advisory committees should the Council establish? How should the Council structure such advisory committees? What role should such advisory committees play?" My short answer is --- yes!!! Now let me add---

I will volunteer to serve on a science advisory committee, if asked, as long as my expenses are paid or covered. I spent 30 years with the U S Army Corps of Engineers and spent the last 20 in a leadership role at the Corps' lab in Vicksburg.

I am not a scientist but an engineer having worked in both the military engineering and civil works side of basic and applied research. I have been President of the American Society of Civil Engineers (2007) and am a member of the National Academy of Engineering. At one time I served on the National Research Council's Ocean Studies Board. For more info, please contact me. Oh I should add --- I own property on Dauphine Island and therefore have a dog (a small one) in the fight.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 133

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 07/05/2013 | Date Received: 07/05/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Surely Dauphin Island, one of the most affected areas in the BP gulf oil spill and the victim of years of bad dredging practices, will be given some priority in fund allocation for beach restoration. Politics rule often but at some level there must be some level of fair play in our dealings with one another as Americans.

Paul Watson
2818 Bienville
Dauphin Island, AL

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 134

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/05/2013 Date Received: 07/05/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

To the Restore Council,

The overall goals outlined in the Restore Council's draft plan – restoring the Gulf Coast's economy and ecosystem -- are laudable. The Gulf region suffered in multiple ways, and it will take a multi-pronged approach to make our communities and shorelines whole.

But the plan fails in one critical aspect. It does not require that any of the fine money generated by the Restore Act be used to purchase coastal wetlands, marshes, beaches or maritime forests.

Such purchases are referenced in the plan, and cited as possible uses of Restore funds. However, those are simply suggestions. There is no requirement that the states follow through and actually protect a single acre of coastal land.

The undersigned groups propose that the final draft of the Council's plan require that a nickel of every dollar, or five percent, of the Restore money under the council's purview be set aside for buying new coastal lands in every state.

Our marshes and wetlands are the key to the coastal ecosystem, functioning as nurseries for most of the Gulf's signature species. While Louisiana's marshes were devastated by the BP spill, marshes in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Texas were largely untouched. Those marshes are the primary reason the Gulf has rebounded from the spill as well as it has. They will be key to ensuring the Gulf rebounds from the next spill.

Today, the Gulf's marshes are in decline, being slowly whittled away by the competing pressures of development and erosion. More than half have already been lost. The Restore funds represent a once in a lifetime opportunity to secure the best remaining pieces and ensure they will be preserved.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

There is no more important measure the council can take to ensure the future of the Gulf. We must not let this chance slip away.

Sincerely,

Ben Raines
Executive Director
Weeks Bay Foundation

Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Gulf Restoration Network
Southern Environmental Law Center
Mobile Baykeeper
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
Weeks Bay Foundation
SouthWings
Gulf Islands Conservancy
Oasis Earth
Mobile Bay Audubon Society
Birmingham Audubon Society
Alabama Coast United
Sierra Club, Mississippi Chapter

The following scientists endorsed the proposal as well:

John Valentine, Executive Director, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
George Crozier, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, retired Director
Ken Heck, Senior Scientist, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Just Cebrian, Senior Scientist, Dauphin Island Sea Lab
Monty Graham, Chair, Department of Marine Science, University of Southern Mississippi

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 135

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/05/2013 Date Received: 07/05/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Louisiana should rebuild and replenish it's barrier islands which are almost non existent since the seventies. All other project are useless and not do any good to sustain the coast, the eco system and our way of life to continue living here. The barrier islands were our 1st line of protection for years. Without them, all other projects built will be eventually compromised and washed away. It's just common sense.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 136

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/05/2013 Date Received: 07/05/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

To whom it may concern,

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma thanks the Department of Commerce for consultation concerning the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystems and Economy.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is a removed Tribe, but until the 1800s, our ancestors lived in the Gulf Coast area for an unbroken period of time spanning back to the end of the Last Ice Age. Countless archaeological sites, sacred sites, and Traditional Cultural Properties that were created and maintained by our ancestors in the Gulf Coast region continue to have a great importance to our Tribal members today. Some of these sites were affected by the oil spill and cleanup, and it is our hope to work with the federal government to help insure that RESTORE Act-funded projects do not inadvertently cause further damage to our sacred and historic sites.

The Choctaw Nation has concerns about how government-to-government consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will proceed on projects funded through the RESTORE Act Trust Fund.

The National Historic Preservation Act directs federal agencies to consult with federally recognized Tribes on a government-to-government level about projects, conducted by federal agencies or with federal dollars, that have the potential to impact Tribal sacred and historic sites. Many of the projects made possible through the RESTORE Act Trust Fund will have the potential to do exactly this.

The money in the Trust Fund is federal, yet most of it will be given to states and to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to distribute for specific projects. Many of the ground-disturbing projects to be funded with this Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

money will be carried out on non-federal land by non-federal entities. However, government-to-government consultation responsibility cannot be delegated to a non-federal entity.

The Choctaw Nation asks that before funds are distributed, the federal members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystems Restoration Council define how and at what points government-to-government consultation under Section 106 will occur with Tribes over the specific projects funded by the Council. Furthermore, the Choctaw Nation asks that before funds are distributed to the states (allocation buckets 1 and 3) a lead federal agency or agencies be defined to conduct government-to-government consultation with Tribes concerning the projects that will be funded at the discretion of the states, by these federal dollars.

It is our fear that if a structure for doing this is not worked out well in advance, cultural resources on the Gulf Coast that are extremely important to the Tribes Indigenous to the area will be negatively impacted.

We are happy and eager to continue consultation.

Sincerely,

Ian Thompson PhD, RPA
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 137

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/05/2013 Date Received: 07/05/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

PLEASE, PLEASE include Dauphin Island in the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Plan. Dauphin Island is the first line of defense not only for the city of Mobile but also for Mobile port, a critical component for successful Southeastern commerce.

Dauphin Island is a vital revenue resource for the state of Alabama and continues to be neglected in every funding initiative available to other Alabama and Gulf Coast communities.

The Local and Federal government's neglect, in addition to continued dredging practices, have reached a critical point in the continued livelihood of the island, jeopardizing natural habitats, scientific research, commerce, and the tourism industry.

Again, PLEASE consider the historical and monetary value of Dauphin Island and include our beaches and community in your restoration plans.

Sincerely,
Jane Callaway

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 138

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/06/2013 Date Received: 07/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dauphin Island is a small community with a big role to fill as a barrier island. Receiving our fair share of the settlement is vital as the island has suffered much erosion due to both natural and man-made causes. If we are to continue to provide protection to inland areas, we must have funds to do so. Your consideration is greatly appreciated.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 139

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/06/2013 Date Received: 07/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

July 6, 2013

Restore The Gulf.com

via Comments post

To whom it may concern:

My wife and I are planners. Some would consider us worriers. We are aggressive savers and conservative investors. After one visit to Dauphin Island, Alabama in 2010, we made the easy decision to become property owners. The culture of our Island is special. Hard working residents welcome visitors with open arms, making each individual and family feel a part of the community. As owners of rental home, our goal is simple. We want our guests to relax and experience the casual lifestyle and natural beauty that has become an important part of our lives.

Our home is located near the West End of the Island on the Gulf. Beach replenishment is key to the preservation of our Island. As a barrier island, we are highly vulnerable to storms and man-made threats. The health of the ecosystem is vital to literally all the Island's attractions: fishing, birding, biking, walking, swimming, sunning and our personal favorites, dolphin watching in the early morning and watching the West End sun set in the evening.

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My wife and I are also hard workers. We look forward to becoming permanent residents of this vibrant, diverse community when we retire. There is no doubt that the culture and spirit of our Island will remain intact. We are asking for the support of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to assure that the topography, infrastructure and economy will be intact as well.

Respectfully yours,

Mark and Dolores Harwell
Canton, Georgia / Dauphin Island, Alabama

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 140

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/06/2013 Date Received: 07/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

As a full-time resident of Dauphin Island, AI , I have watched our wonderful town shrink in population, in number of businesses, in income level, and in t'he number of visitors to our beaches and landmarks. I've also watched a seperate small barrier island drift so far it is now connected to our shoreline, thereby eliminating needed protection for beaches, flora and fauna. In another section, several miles of land were completely cut off from the island "mainland". The value of our homes has plummeted. Snowbirds are enjoying their winters elsewhere. The question is: How did our island paradise get in such sad shape? T'he answer is: Mother Nature and BP Oil. The solution is: Beach restoration. And while other àreas of t'he Gulf Coast have received funding for Beach Restoration, Dauphin Island has been excluded. It is important to note that Dauphin Island is t'he barrier island that is essential to helping our neighboring city a few miles north of us, Mobile, survive storms and hurricanes and potential future oil spills. Will you please consider t'he importance of Dauphin Island, Alabama when you allocate funds for shoreline restoration? It is vitally important to its citizens and landowners, not to mention to the Gulf Coast, the city Of Mobile, and t'he state of Alabama. Respectfully, Delois C. Maggard

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 141

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/06/2013 Date Received: 07/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

To Whom It May Concern,

Of course special attention should be given to Federally acknowledged tribes in the region, but the many state recognized tribes in the area should also be brought to the table. The evaluation criteria doesn't adequately address economic development and subsequently community resilience. In addition to science based decision making, which I agree is very important, local knowledge, and specifically local ecological knowledge should also be incorporated into this process. Of course large-scale project are essential, however, there needs to be a way for small community based projects to be considered for funding so people can directly address these issues within their communities. In addition Citizen Advisory committees comprised of small business owners, fisherman, tribes and community members need to be created not only to give feedback on proposed project, but also to some kind of oversight on the projects that are funded. In addition community members that take the time to participate in advisory committees, or focus groups should be compensated for at mileage and meals at minimum. It is crucial to engage with the community at every level of this process and to educate and communicate with people living in the areas most affected by the BP oil spill and coastal erosion.

Thank you,
Liza Kachko

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 142

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/06/2013 Date Received: 07/06/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
Notes:

Correspondence Text

Saturday, July 6, 2013

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

Subject: Stay Focused on Environmental Restoration

Dear members of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I appreciate that the Ecosystem Restoration Council's draft plan provides more details on the Council's 30% funding dedicated solely to projects that benefit the environment. I urge the Council to continue to reaffirm this ecosystem-oriented focus. The final plan should also require that each Gulf States' plan complements the Council's efforts by also restoring the environment.

"As we peer into society's future, we--you and I, and our government--must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering for our own ease and convenience the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow."
-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

In the spirit of the promises made by the President and leaders in Congress, the Council must reject any projects that
Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

do not support this goal. I urge you to include language in the Final Initial Comprehensive Plan that provides clear direction to the Gulf States that restoring Gulf habitats for dolphins and other marine wildlife is the best use of BP's oil spill fine money.

"Every man who appreciates the majesty and beauty of the wilderness and of wild life, should strike hands with the farsighted men who wish to preserve our material resources, in the effort to keep our forests and our game beasts, game-birds, and game-fish--indeed, all the living creatures of prairie and woodland and seashore--from wanton destruction. Above all, we should realize that the effort toward this end is essentially a democratic movement."
-- Theodore Roosevelt

I'm also pleased that you have indicated you will seek further public comment on a project list as it becomes available. It's important for stakeholders to provide input on projects in the Gulf that will inevitably have a national impact.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."
-- Aldo Leopold

Thank you for your consideration of my comments. Please do NOT add my name to your mailing list. I will learn about future developments on this issue from other sources.

Sincerely,
Christopher Lish
Olema, CA

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 143

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Correspondence Information

Status: New
Date Sent: 07/07/2013
Number of Signatures: 1
Contains Request(s): No
Notes:
Park Correspondence Log:
Date Received: 07/07/2013
Form Letter: No
Type: Web Form

Correspondence Text

To Restore Act Council,

I have been a commercial fisherman (crabber) for many years on the MS Gulf Coast.

My livelihood has been devastated by the BP Oil Disaster. Significantly reduced or no catches has caused a tremendous hardship for my families and countless other families. Particularly, it has been alarming for me to see a significant decrease in the crab's fisheries (particularly female crabs) within the past few seasons.

As a critically important objective, please prioritize restoration of fisheries and its habitats, and to hire local, experienced fishermen to work on coastal restoration projects. Critically important criteria should be prioritizing and implementing frequent monitoring and data collection of the fisheries; and with additional training, local fishermen can be hired to work with scientists on such projects.

It's crucial, please incorporate my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to make comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 144

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

My family has been commercial fishermen (shrimping, oyster dredging & crabbing) for decades in Mississippi.

As a result of the BP Oil Disaster, in the past three years, fishing communities whose livelihoods and way of living depend on healthy, natural resources have suffered great economic and social impacts. As an objective, the Council should prioritize the restoration of natural habitats for key fisheries that my community critically depends upon for our livelihoods. The Council should also promote local hiring in contracting, such as hiring experienced fishermen (we already have the necessary skillsets) to help restore the damaged Gulf of Mexico and its marine habitats.

In terms of projects, I think implementing citizen-based monitoring projects of all fisheries (shrimp, oysters, crabs) where trained fishermen and scientific researchers collectively gather and document data is critical to proper fisheries restoration.

Specifically, for oyster reefs, and based on our experience, dredging and or a relay element must be implemented for successful restoration. Placing new cultch material on a damaged, contaminated reef will not produce a healthy environment where spat sets can grow and eventually become adult oysters that are harvestable.

Many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the meshes (a key area where fisheries spawn). I recommend that the Council implement a clean-up project (similar to the Vessels of Opportunity Program) and local fishermen could be trained and hired to work on such a project.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 145

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a commercial fisherman, owner and captain of a freezer boat, and have been shrimping for decades in Mississippi.

The BP Oil Disaster has greatly damaged the Gulf of Mexico and its ecosystems. As a result of fisheries closures and significantly reduced landings, many other fishermen and myself have been very concerned about livelihood sustainability.

Regarding objectives and criteria, the Council should prioritize properly restoring ecosystems, marine life, and habitats for communities that depend on healthy natural resources for their livelihood and culture.

It's vital that the Council implement a community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect data critical to restoration of the fisheries. I also think that preventive measures must be taken to prepare for future disasters. I strongly support a fishing contingency program where trained fishermen are prepared to respond to future oil disasters (clean-up equipment on their vessels) and also hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring alongside scientists.

Please consider incorporating my recommendations and thank you for accepting my comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 146

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Information

Status: New
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Type: Web Form

Correspondence Text

Dear Council Members,

I am a commercial fisherman and captain of a shrimping vessel for many years on the MS Gulf Coast.

First, please address language access needs; meeting notices, translated documents should be translated into Vietnamese language. There should timely, targeted outreach (significant number of Vietnamese-American fisher folks do not have computers/email accounts) and please provide interpreters at all public meetings. I recommend the Council work with organizations such as MSCVAFF to address those needs.

The Council should prioritize fisheries restoration (shrimp, oysters, crabs), and habitats that critically support those fisheries as a key objective.

Proper restoration of the fisheries must include an ongoing, community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect important, fisheries relevant data. I strongly support that the Council prioritize such a project.

I also support additional clean-up, remediation work (many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the Gulf, its ecosystems, marshes, etc.) This is greatly affecting water quality and causing losses in the fisheries. The Council should prioritize projects that hire vessels to do the clean-up work.

I think that proper restoration of the fisheries must include a community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect important data on an ongoing basis.

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Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

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Correspondence: 147

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am commercial fisherman, boat owner & captain for the vessel, Red Eagle. I have been shrimping for decades on the MS Gulf Coast.

It is important that Language barriers are addressed on the front end, with translated documents, and qualified interpreters. There should be timely, targeted outreach and we need to be informed of meetings in advance. The Council could work with local non-profit organizations such as MSCVAFF to address these issues. The peak of shrimping season is the summer months, please be mindful of this when planning public meetings.

I strongly support the implementation of a community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect data critical to fisheries restoration. I also strongly support a fishing contingency program whereby trained fishermen have clean-up equipment (booms, etc.) on their vessels and are prepared to respond to future oil spills and simultaneously hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring alongside scientists/researchers.

Many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the sediments. I strongly support additional clean-up remediation work. The Council can implement projects that hire vessels to do the necessary clean-up work.

Regarding objectives, the Council should prioritize fisheries restoration (shrimp, oysters, crabs), and habitats that critically support those fisheries.

It's vital to prioritize restoring the natural resources that our livelihoods depend on; please incorporate my Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

recommendations, and thank you for accepting my comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 148

Author Information

Keep Private: No
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Correspondence Text

Please include Dauphin Island in the disbursement of restoration funds. Our beaches were drastically impacted by the spill and property values have been severely affected.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 149

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

- 1) I urge the Council to create local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project;
- 2) I urge the Council to establish a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council;
- 3) No projects should be selected that benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 150

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/07/2013 Date Received: 07/07/2013
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Correspondence Text

To Whom It May Concern,

I am Paul E. Roberts, a graduate student in the Marine Resource Management graduate program at Texas A&M Galveston. The following paragraphs will address my concern with Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy.

My first concern is that project funds are for areas within 25 miles of coastal zone, however saltwater tidal influence can easily go well beyond that. So why 25 miles when it might be better to say areas that are under saltwater influence?

The next concern is that there is no plan in place to prevent one coastal area within a state from getting the majority of the money from the money allocated. And this can happen because there might be more active scientists, environmentalist and etc that are involved with a given coastal area than another area.

My final concern is there is no preventive measure that money used by a state will be used to offset their budget shortfall on current and future projects that the state may do without this new influx of new money.

Thanks for reviewing my concerns.
Paul E. Roberts.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 151

Author Information

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am an oyster harvester (dredging) and shrimper for many years on the MS Gulf Coast.

Since 2010, my family has experienced great hardship as a result of the BP Oil Disaster. Due to fisheries closures (mostly closed oyster reefs and significantly reduced catches); I am very concerned about my ability to continue fishing and to provide/support my family.

First, please address access issues for the Vietnamese fishing community. We need translated materials and interpreters at all public meetings. Importantly, we need to be informed in advance through better outreach methods (many of us lack computers and do not have e-mail accounts). Work with community -based organizations to help disseminate important information. Many of us did not have an opportunity to obtain a higher education. We settled in the Gulf Region to continue our livelihoods (many of us come from multi-generational fishermen).

I think that for objectives and criteria, the Council should focus on properly restoring fisheries (oysters, shrimp, and crabs) and its habitats. As for the workforce, hiring/ contracting local, experienced fishermen should be key criteria.

Please establish a committee that consists of Vietnamese-American commercial fishermen who can work alongside with scientists on restoration projects. The scientists should include fisheries experts and social scientists who understand the economic value and cultural importance of commercial fishing.

I highly recommend that the Council implement an oyster reef restoration project with relay and/or dredging components.

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I also think another clean-up program should be considered (similar to Vessels of Opportunity). There is still significant oil, dispersants, tar balls that greatly impact water quality and as a result impact the health of fisheries.

It is vital that the Council implement a monitoring project where fishermen are trained and work with scientists to help gather data important for fisheries restoration. Many of us have spent decades fishing in the Gulf and could provide valuable expertise for various projects.

It is critically important, please strongly consider my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 152

Author Information

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Status: New
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Date Received: 07/08/2013
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Correspondence Text

Dear Council,

I am an oyster harvester (dredging) and shrimper for many years on the MS Gulf Coast.

The BP Oil Disaster has devastated the Gulf of Mexico and its fisheries. As a result of fisheries closures and significantly reduced landings, many other fishermen and myself have been very concerned about our livelihoods. In the past three years, I have faced great hardship because of the devastating impact to the fisheries.

Regarding objectives and criteria, the Council should prioritize properly restoring ecosystems, habitats, and marine life for communities that depend on healthy natural resources for their livelihoods and way of life. And local hiring/contracting of experienced, fishermen should be a criteria.

I highly recommend the Council form a steering committee that consists of commercial fishermen. We could work closely with scientists/researchers, who are experts in fisheries, to help develop, and implement restoration projects.

It's vital that the Council implement a community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect data critical to restoration of various fisheries (oyster, shrimp, and crabs). I also think that preventive measures must be taken to prepare for future disasters. I strongly support a fishing contingency program where trained fishermen are prepared to respond to future oil disasters (their vessels have booms, other clean-up equipment) while they help scientists gather monitoring data.

Thank you for accepting my comments.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 153

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I have been a commercial oyster harvester & crabber for over 15 years on the MS Gulf Coast.

Before the BP Oil Disaster, I earned approximately \$50K during the eight month oyster season (this did not include other fishing income). This was not a great amount but sufficient to provide and support my family. Since the disaster, the reefs have been mostly closed and caused great economic hardship and livelihood sustainability concerns for my family and hundreds of other oyster harvesters. This great loss is not only experienced by fishermen but the State and local economy has also lost a great deal of revenue because of closed fisheries. It's critically important that the Council prioritize fisheries restoration projects, and to hire, local, experienced fishermen to work on the projects because we have the necessary skillsets and practical experience to help properly restore the Gulf & its ecosystem.

Further, proper oyster reef restoration should involve dredging or a relay component. In order to ensure that oysters will be cultivated and harvested in future years; old, contaminated shells must be dredged before placing new cultch material.

And I highly recommend that the Council implement a community-based monitoring project where trained fishermen work with scientists. We have the experience and can help collect and document data that is critical to fisheries restoration. The Council should also consider preparing for future oil disasters; I strongly support the creation of a fishing contingency program where trained fishermen have clean-up equipment (booms, etc.) on their vessels and also hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring alongside scientists.

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It is vital to our livelihoods; please strongly consider incorporating my comments. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/08/2013 Date Received: 07/08/2013
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Correspondence Text

To Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a commercial fisherman and have been shrimping for numerous years in Mississippi.

The following are my comments regarding process, objectives, criteria and recommended projects.

It's very important that language barriers are addressed, all important documents should be translated into the Vietnamese language in timely manner and there should be targeted outreach. Interpreters should be available at all public meetings.

Regarding objectives and criteria, the Council should restore the fisheries (shrimp, crabs, oysters), and habitats that critically support those fisheries. It's vitally important to prioritize restoring the natural resources that our livelihoods are critically dependent on. Important criteria should be local hiring /contracting with experienced fishermen.

And I support the development of a steering committee with Vietnamese-American commercial fishermen who can work with scientists that are experts in fisheries and understand the value of fishing.

I strongly support the development of a citizen-based monitoring project in which trained fishermen work with scientists to gather and document fisheries data on a routine basis.

I also highly recommend the creation of a fishing contingency program (respond to future oil disasters) whereby trained fishermen have clean-up equipment (booms, etc.) on their vessels and simultaneously hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring with scientific researchers.

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In the past several seasons, many fishermen have observed that significant amounts of oil and dispersants remain in the sediments. The Council can support projects that hire, local vessels to do the clean-up work. For example, too much oil and dispersants remain in marshes and this is adversely impacting the ability of shrimp to spawn.

I support the Small Craft Gulfport Harbor expanded into a larger commercial fishing dock.

Thank you.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 155

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Date Sent: 07/08/2013 Date Received: 07/08/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

Dear Council,

I am submitting these comments on my own behalf. I live in Houston, Texas and oppose the project known as "Ike Dyke." As such, I was extremely concerned that the Council's draft environmental assessment (EA) -- the document required to ensure that any plans or projects do not overwhelming harm our ecological resources -- specifically envisioned that RESTORE dollars from the largest off-shore oil spill in the nation could be spent on enhancing port infrastructure. Under Section 3.4.4 entitled Infrastructure, the draft EA correctly identifies that coastal transportation infrastructure is "increasingly vulnerable to local sea level rise and extreme weather events, like hurricanes." But then indicates that "[i]mplementation of eligible projects and programs could impact existing infrastructure or require the creation of new facilities." [Emphasis added]

RESTORE dollars should not be allocated to any proposed project that would add port or transportation facilities already at risk and create new ones to be further threatened. RESTORE dollars should be used to restore, preserve, and protect the natural ecosystems along the Texas coast that have been shown -- in study after study -- to be the best natural defenses for coastal communities. It is this Council's role to ensure that these dollars are spent to remedy the huge environmental and economic harm caused by careless players in the Gulf. And without a doubt, spending these dollars on actual on-the-ground projects, like major land acquisition, purchasing environmental in-flows, oyster bed restoration, or creating marine sanctuaries, will have a significant return on an investment that otherwise would not happen. Creating new port or transportation facilities is best left to the business community.

Further, as the Texas population continues to grow, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve and protect the Texas coastline. These dollars should prioritize substantive projects that protect or restore our beautiful coast, not add dollars to existing agencies to study issues. The entities, many of which have representatives on this

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Council, should prioritize substantive projects to restore an already deeply degraded environment and seek additional budget dollars to study old problems.

Thank you for considering these comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 156

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 07/08/2013 | Date Received: 07/08/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Dear Council,

I am submitting these comments on my own behalf. I live in Houston, Texas and oppose the project known as "Ike Dyke." As such, I was extremely concerned that the Council's draft environmental assessment (EA) -- the document required to ensure that any plans or projects do not overwhelming harm our ecological resources -- specifically envisioned that RESTORE dollars from the largest off-shore oil spill in the nation could be spent on enhancing port infrastructure. Under Section 3.4.4 entitled Infrastructure, the draft EA correctly identifies that coastal transportation infrastructure is "increasingly vulnerable to local sea level rise and extreme weather events, like hurricanes." But then indicates that implementation of eligible projects and programs could impact existing infrastructure or require the creation of new facilities." [Emphasis added]

RESTORE dollars should NOT be allocated to any proposed project that would add port or transportation facilities already at risk and create new ones to be further threatened. RESTORE dollars should be used to restore, preserve, and protect the natural ecosystems along the Texas coast that have been shown -- in study after study -- to be the best natural defenses for coastal communities. It is this Council's role to ensure that these dollars are spent to remedy the huge environmental and economic harm caused by careless players in the Gulf. And without a doubt, spending these dollars on actual on-the-ground projects, like major land acquisition, purchasing environmental in-flows, oyster bed restoration, or creating marine sanctuaries, will have a significant return on an investment that otherwise would not happen. Creating new port or transportation facilities is best left to the business community.

Further, as the Texas population continues to grow, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve and protect the Texas coastline. These dollars should prioritize substantive projects that protect or restore our beautiful coast, Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

not add dollars to existing agencies to study issues. The entities, many of which have representatives on this Council, should prioritize substantive projects to restore an already deeply degraded environment and seek additional budget dollars to study old problems.

Thank you for considering these comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 157

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
| Date Sent: 07/08/2013 | Date Received: 07/08/2013 |
| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
| Contains Request(s): No | Type: Web Form |
| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

Dauphin Island is desperately in need of beach restoration funds. The ship channel built for Mobile has routed needed sand away from the natural replenishment of sand on the island. We need for the dredged sand from the ship channel to be placed on the island rather than being dumped offshore.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 158

Author Information

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Date Sent: 07/08/2013 Date Received: 07/08/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Correspondence Text

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July 8, 2013

Comments of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy and the Accompanying Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment - Submitted by Ken Kramer, Lone Star Chapter Water Resources Chair and Evelyn Merz, Lone Star Chapter Conservation Chair on behalf of the 20,000+ members of the Sierra Club in Texas

Background & Overview

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is the Texas state-level arm of our national organization. Our Chapter has been an organized entity since 1965, and over the almost five decades of our existence, our leaders and members have been active monitors of coastal activities and impacts on our Texas coast as well as strong advocates for protection of our coastal and marine resources.

The impacts of both natural and man-made disasters as well the effects of development and industrial activities along the Texas coast have strained and stressed those coastal and marine resources to an extent that requires a major comprehensive effort to restore coastal and marine ecosystems, which in turn will promote economic recovery and enhance the sustainability of the Texas Gulf Coast. In an ironic way the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

spill provides a unique opportunity for ecosystem restoration and consequent economic recovery and sustainability for the Gulf Coast region, including Texas and the other Gulf states.

But in order for the full potential of this opportunity to be achieved, the restoration and recovery effort must be implemented efficiently and effectively. Perhaps most important in that regard, the RESTORE and related activities undertaken as an outgrowth of the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill must emphasize, promote, and support ecosystem restoration, which will have the most benefit for the economy in the long run, and those activities must avoid projects undertaken in the name of economic recovery that would have the perverse result of undermining our natural ecosystems in the Gulf region.

General Comments on the Draft Plan

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club understands that there are a number of uncertainties at this time (for example, uncertainty as to the total amount of funds that will be available for implementation of the RESTORE activities) that make it difficult for the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) to provide a truly specific Comprehensive Plan for public review and comment. We appreciate the general goals and objectives in the draft Plan, which by and large emphasize ecosystem restoration.

However, we respectfully urge the Council to revise the Plan with more specifics as some of the "uncertainties" are removed, and we further urge the Council to provide such a revised plan for additional public review and comment for a period of not less than 60 days. The Council will receive much more meaningful and helpful public input when there are more specific Plan elements available for review and comment.

Regarding the current Draft Plan, we make the following general observations and suggestions:

- We applaud the Council's commitment that decisions made pursuant to the Plan will be "based on the best available science" and that the Plan itself "will evolve over time to incorporate new science, information, and changing conditions." Such a commitment, if implemented effectively, will help to assure the wisest use of RESTORE funds.
- We appreciate the recognition by the Council that "upland, estuarine, and marine habitats are intrinsically connected" and the commitment by the Council to "promote ecosystem-based and landscape-scale restoration without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region."
- We commend the commitments by the Council to coordinate RESTORE activities with the other programs that are responses to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, to pursue and engage in strategic public and private partnerships, and to leverage other funds to optimize and extend the benefits of RESTORE funds. We do urge the Council to make sure that RESTORE funding and activities are additive to that of other entities and programs and not used to substitute for existing or planned funding that would be spent and activities that would be undertaken anyway. Having said that, we point out that while both state and federal governments make appropriations from time to time for land acquisition for state and national parks, wildlife refuges and management areas, and other public recreation or conservation areas, state and federal budgets for those purposes have been severely strained in recent years in many parts of the Gulf region, especially Texas. Therefore, the use of RESTORE funds for acquisition of wetlands and other ecosystems may be essential for full ecosystem restoration and protection even if theoretically other funds might be made available for land acquisition.
- We applaud the recognition by the Council of the need to measure outcomes and impacts of RESTORE projects. Ecosystem restoration projects must be held accountable just as any other project would be, and these projects

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should demonstrate and achieve measurable results. When the Council issues a list of proposed priority projects, the Council should also outline the monitoring and measurement process that will accompany those projects.

- The Council should commit that any project proposed to "enhance community resilience" or "restore and revitalize the Gulf economy" will also aim to achieve at least one of the other Council goals ("restore and conserve habitat," "restore water quality," and "replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources") and that no project will be approved that would in any way undermine one or more of the latter three goals.
- While we understand the rationale and necessity of using some of the funding available directly or indirectly through the Council for technical assistance and/or additional studies to be able to direct and implement RESTORE activities effectively, we encourage the Council to limit appropriately the percentage of funding used for those purposes. The most important use of RESTORE funding is for projects and activities that directly result in ecosystem restoration – in other words, projects and activities such as land acquisition, on-the-ground restoration work, protection or acquisition of freshwater inflows to bays and estuaries, and establishment and protection of marine reserves, to name some examples. The RESTORE Act itself has already allocated funds to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for "Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science, Observation, Monitoring, and Technology" programs as well as additional dollars to fund Centers of Excellence within the states. That is where the focus of funding for studies should be.
- We urge the Council to place the emphasis of RESTORE funding for enhancing community resilience and restoring and revitalizing the Gulf economy on projects such as those that involve green infrastructure, promote responsible flood plain and stormwater management, protect wetlands, and enhance fisheries, among other examples. These types of projects would better serve the intent of the RESTORE Act than projects related to roads, bridges, ports, or other hard infrastructure developments along the coast, which often have negative environmental impacts and for which other funding sources are available anyway. As one example of a project that would not be appropriate for RESTORE funding, the proposed "Ike Dike" in the Galveston area would not protect ecosystems but rather would endanger ecosystems (such as beaches, barrier islands, and wetlands) that act as natural storm buffers. That type of use for RESTORE funds would undermine the spirit and intent of the law and work at cross purposes with many other projects that might receive RESTORE funding.
- We note that there are no specific objectives in the draft Plan that are linked to the goal of "restoring and revitalizing the Gulf economy" – unlike the situation with other goals – and we encourage the Council to develop such objectives and include them in a revised Plan for further public review and comment. Without such specific objectives it is hard for the public to have a clear sense of what direction the Council will take in considering projects that might be approved to further this goal.

General Comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment

The draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment is a valuable document, especially with regard to its overview of the Gulf Coast region, its description of the coastal and marine resources as well as human activity and resources of the region, the discussion of threats to those resources, its explanation of RESTORE and other responses to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and its attention to the concept of cumulative impacts of possible RESTORE activities and projects. Obviously, for a variety of reasons, the current draft EA is only a start toward a full environmental assessment of what RESTORE may ultimately propose and pursue.

Moreover, as is noted in the draft EA, individual projects that may be proposed under RESTORE must undergo further environmental reviews and meet other legal requirements before being approved and implemented. In some instances that may require a complete Environmental Impact Statement process, although that is obviously not likely

for the vast majority of potential projects.

One such type of project that would require an EIS would be one related to enhancement of port facilities. The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club is concerned that the draft Programmatic EIS does not address impacts on the environment that would come from new port facilities or transportation or other infrastructure. Note that under Section 3.4.4 Infrastructure, the draft EA correctly identifies that coastal transportation infrastructure is "increasingly vulnerable to local sea level rise and extreme weather events, like hurricanes." Therefore, we are concerned to see that when considering the cumulative effects from the draft Plan, the Council in the draft EA indicates that "Implementation of eligible projects and programs could impact existing infrastructure or require the creation of new facilities." [Emphasis added]

RESTORE dollars should not be allocated to any proposed project that would add port or transportation facilities already at risk and further threatened. RESTORE dollars should be used to restore, preserve, and protect the natural ecosystems along the Texas coast that have been shown – in study after study – to be the best natural defenses for coastal communities.

We urge the Council to further refine and add specificity to the draft Programmatic EA and to make subsequent revisions available for full public review and comment opportunities.

General Comments on Appendix A – Preliminary List of Authorized But Not Commenced Projects and Programs

While it may be premature to make extensive comments on the numerous projects in Appendix A – the Council makes it clear that these projects will not necessarily be prioritized or funded – the Council has invited public comment on the document, and we think a few comments are in order at this time. The Lone Star Chapter is concerned about some of the Texas projects on the list because they will not achieve ecosystem restoration – and in some instances they might have the opposite effect – or they would be more appropriately funded through other means.

Here are just some examples of projects of concern:

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project for the construction of flood conveyance and detention features on Clear Creek and three of its tributaries (page 52 of the list). This is a controversial project that has been fought vigorously by environmental advocates because it would destroy rare bottomland hardwood forest and wetlands, which is at odds with ecosystem restoration.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project to deepen the upstream portion of the Houston Ship Channel (also on page 52 of the list), which has no ecosystem restoration benefit.
- TCEQ's proposed development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) in coastal wetlands (page 33 of the list). This activity should be funded out of existing federal Clean Water Act funds and/or state appropriations. The emphasis instead should be on possible projects to implement action plans to clean up impaired water bodies (which are also considered as potential projects on the list).
- Education campaigns (numerous proposed projects) – no, we are not against environmental education. The issue here is prioritization of the use of RESTORE funds. The priority should be direct ecosystem restoration. A public education component should be considered as part of restoration projects ultimately funded by RESTORE money, but RESTORE dollars for separate environmental education campaigns should be a low priority.

Specific Comments on Selected Questions Posed by the Council

Should the Council develop additional criteria for selection of projects and programs?

Yes, we think it advisable for the Council to do so. We believe that the Council would find it instructive to consider the approach taken by an informal coalition of Texas conservation groups working on RESTORE efforts in the document entitled "A Framework for Developing a Texas Restoration Plan Based on the RESTORE Act." That document is attached to our comments for reference. Although developed as input to the officials who will be preparing the State Expenditure Plan for Texas, the suggested Threshold and Supplemental criteria for evaluating projects have general application, with perhaps one exception. We believe these criteria are consistent with and supplement the goals, objectives, and proposed criteria in the draft Council Plan.

Should the Council consider other objectives at this juncture?

As noted above, we recommend that the Council develop objectives that link directly to the goal of "restoring and revitalizing the Gulf economy" and that emphasize the priority of natural ecosystem restoration rather than infrastructure development to further that goal.

Should the Council establish advisory committees? If so, what type, and what role should they play?

Yes, we believe that the Council should establish both a citizens' advisory committee and a science advisory committee. One of the important roles that each committee could play would be to assist the Council in developing a ranking system of projects for the funded priorities list – a system that reflects both public and scientific perspectives. Many of the entities represented on the Council do not have natural resource conservation and protection as their primary function. The additional expertise from a citizens' advisory committee composed of members with such background as well as the expertise from a science advisory committee of natural resource and other scientists would be a valuable source of assistance to the Council.

Concluding Comments

The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club appreciates the opportunity to make these comments, and we appreciate the efforts by the Council to take public input and especially to extend the comment period for the draft Plan and draft Programmatic EA – in response to public requests. We hope that the Council will continue to enhance the transparency of the RESTORE process and will provide additional drafts to the public for review and comment. We also urge the Council to provide adequate opportunity and time later for the public to provide input to the Council on the State Expenditure Plans as they are developed by the individual Gulf states and presented to the Council.

Although our organization and the other Texas conservation groups following the RESTORE process will be active in the development of our state's Expenditure Plan and provide input at the state level, we believe it is important for the Council – because of its oversight and approval authority over state plans – to have the benefit of direct public input when the State Expenditure Plans are presented to the Council. That may require more than a 60-day public comment opportunity. While we certainly wish to see RESTORE funds spent in a timely manner, it is also important that they be spent in the correct manner. Adequate public review of proposed projects will help to assure that will happen.

As partners in the process, the Council and the public will be able to assure that this historic opportunity for ecosystem restoration of the Gulf region will achieve its potential and have lasting positive impacts for the people and the environment for decades to come.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

A Framework for Developing a Texas Restoration Plan Based on the RESTORE Act

Introduction

The parties responsible for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill face civil penalties for violations under the Clean Water Act and other statutes. The RESTORE Act diverts 80 percent of civil penalties to Gulf coast ecosystem and economic restoration. The Act requires the five Gulf states to develop plans for the use of RESTORE funds that will be made available to them. It also requires the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council created under the Act to develop a "Comprehensive Plan to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region."

Texas has an unprecedented opportunity to develop a science and needs-based environmental restoration plan that invests in the long-term health and resiliency of the state's coastal and marine resources. All Texans directly or indirectly benefit from these vital resources. Investing RESTORE dollars in environmental restoration projects will boost the economies of Texas coastal communities and help ensure that these resources will continue to provide goods and services for the state, region and nation.

The Council's Path Forward to Restoring the Gulf Coast, released in late January 2013, recognizes five overarching goals for the Comprehensive Restoration Plan; four focus on environmental restoration and one on economic recovery. Given that state plans must take the Comprehensive Plan into account when developing their own, we encourage Texas decision-makers to use the Council's overarching categories-Restore and Conserve Habitat, Restore Water Quality, Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resource, and Enhance Community Resiliency--both as a guide for nominating preferred projects for Council consideration and for developing the state's own plan. We recommend further that the state adopt the science-based criteria outlined in this document for screening and prioritizing the best projects.

An Opportunity and Legacy for Texas Natural Resources

The ultimate success of a Texas 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. Under the leadership of the Governor's office and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas has a rare and significant 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.

Environmental Restoration Supports the Economy

We encourage Texas to fund projects that restore, protect or otherwise conserve coastal and marine resources while also achieving the related goal of supporting coastal economies affected by environmental stressors, such as hurricanes, dead zones, and anemic freshwater in-flows into estuaries. Ecosystem restoration projects benefit the economy and communities by generating demand for goods and services provided by local contractors, by employing local workers, and by enhancing resources of commercial value. Projects for which economic development is the primary purpose may be compatible with environmental restoration goals, but projects may result in unintended and undesirable environmental impacts.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

To aid the selection of projects under a Texas restoration plan, with the intent of maximizing environmental benefits and avoiding or minimizing project impacts on natural resources consistent, we offer below a series of science-based project selection criteria.

Science-based Project Selection Criteria

The criteria listed below are intended to be a screen, giving priority to the strongest projects on the basis of environmental benefits and costs. 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

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Implementation Impacts

- A project's potential harmful effects on natural resources and ecological services are evaluated and deemed acceptable only if:
- the project would result in a net benefit or improvement for the environment; and
- any adverse impacts resulting from the project can be fully 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 of the Gulf Coast

- Priority will be given to projects or programs that:
- give a preference to individuals, organizations and companies that reside in, are headquartered in, or engage in business in Texas;
- protect or restore livelihoods in any of the following economic sectors: 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;

Changes in the Coastal and Marine Environment

- The project should yield long-term ecological benefits commensurate with investment and with due consideration of sea-level rise;
- The project would enhance resilience and adaptation of coastal and marine environments and species with respect to climate change impacts;

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Proposal Quality and Scope

- Competitive, innovative, collaborative and cost effective proposals for restoration projects or programs will be encouraged;
- Projects or programs that are scalable may be funded in part, provided that the funded component stands alone in terms of its benefits or is integral to and is able to leverage funds for completion of a broader, multi-year initiative (e.g., keystone projects).

Public Support

- The project represents a restoration approach for which the public has expressed support; 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.

04.04.13

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 159

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RESTORE Act projects to be considered for funding must be conducted on the Gulf Coast in order to comply with eligibility for approval.

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Correspondence: 160

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July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf's Ecosystem and Economy. Greater New Orleans, Inc. (GNO, Inc.) serves as the regional economic development organization for Southeast Louisiana, and our organization led a multi-state coalition of over one hundred business and trade organizations to ensure passage of the RESTORE Act. GNO, Inc. is pleased that the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan maintains and affirms the RESTORE Act's statutory requirement that the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council-selected Restoration Component be dedicated solely to ecosystem restoration projects. We strongly urge that it be strictly maintained, as required by the Act, in the Final Initial Comprehensive Plan.

The RESTORE Act mandates that the Comprehensive Plan focus on ecosystem restoration and requires that all decisions must be prioritized based on the best available science. GNO, Inc. strongly supports this approach, as it maximizes the unprecedented opportunity the RESTORE Act presents us – the opportunity to save our coast and grow our economy.

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Furthermore, the implementation of the Final Initial Comprehensive Plan will provide significant job opportunities for businesses and people across the Gulf Coast. In June 2012, GNO, Inc., in partnership with The Walton Family Foundation and Mather Economics LLC, released a study forecasting significant job growth in the region as a result of passage of the RESTORE Act. The study, "Job Creation from Gulf Coast Wetlands Restoration," found that such projects would create, on average, 29.54 jobs per million dollars, adding as many as 57,697 new jobs across the region within the first 10 years and, in turn, contributing significantly to the economic growth and stability of the Gulf Coast region.

GNO, Inc. also urges the Council to prioritize funding for projects in Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan. Supported by GNO, Inc., and passed unanimously by the state legislature in 2012, the Plan was developed to effectively and efficiently save our coast. Prioritizing funding for the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan is a logical way to ensure RESTORE Act funding is used for its intended purpose.

Greater New Orleans, Inc. is in the process of establishing the Coalition for Coastal Resilience and Economy (CCRE), a business-led organization focused on coastal restoration that we hope the Council will use as a resource. CCRE will exist to ensure that funding for ecosystem restoration projects is maximized, that local businesses and workers are prepared to capitalize on the economic opportunity of coastal restoration, and that coastal restoration remains a priority for Louisiana's leaders in years to come. We hope that this new entity can serve as a resource to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council.

Greater New Orleans, Inc. urges the Council to take full advantage of the unprecedented opportunity the RESTORE Act presents to repair the Gulf ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Greater New Orleans, Inc.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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It is important to use appropriate criteria to select projects that will be considered for and awarded Restore Funds.

The most important criteria to use are to make sure that:

- The projects are managed by local entities and that the money is going to local entities, especially local non-profits.
- The projects are evaluated to ensure they do not damage wildlife or other natural resources.
- The projects include clear and measurable objectives and are based on science, and / or, evidence based practices.
- The projects include funds for on going monitoring, research, and evaluation.

Since the environment, especially the Gulf waters and shore lines, were the most directly affected by the MC-252 Event, it is also important that the projects that restore and protect the natural environment receive preference.

It is important that the restore funds are directed through local entries, especially local non-profit organizations. Our local non-profit organizations have been committed to our Gulf Coast Wildlife and environment long before the MC-252 Event, and the local non-profit entries will continue to be here caring for our local resources long after the Restore Money has been spent and long after the Media Attention has faded away. Their detailed, historic, and current knowledge of the Gulf Coast wildlife, habitats, fisheries, beaches, wetlands, and uplands, is a wealth of knowledge that needs to be acknowledged, appreciated, and funded.

Organizations coming from unaffected areas, who may be trying to profit, from what they may be perceiving as a "windfall of BP money", will not have our area's long term interests as their top priority. mind. The local organizations and the local people were negatively affected by the MC-252 Event, therefore it is local organizations and local people who should benefit from the Restore Funds. Local non-profits and local people will most definitely have the area's long term interests as their top priority.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

When we preserve the beauty and health of our living and sustainable natural resources, then we remain a magnetic place to live, work, or visit. Being an attractive place to live feeds economic growth in a natural manner.

I have been a resident in this area since 1992; and a Florida resident since 1982. The reason I chose to stay in the Pensacola area, instead of moving back to South Florida, was because of the amount of trees and the natural beauty of this area. Every dollar I have spent locally since November of 1992, when I decided to stay here, is the result of our area having healthy wildlife habitats, trees, butterflies, birds, and open spaces.

To restore and preserve our area, the focus needs to be on eco system restoration and long term preservation, including funding for local entities to do on going monitoring, research, and evaluations.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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I like the nickel for the marshes plan. These native habitats could not be more crucial for the preservation of our coastline. So much has already been lost, the remaining sites must be protected to ensure the resiliency of these natural community's ability to protect our coasts from all manner of natural and unnatural disasters.

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Sierra Club Delta Chapter
P.O. Box 52503
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July 8, 2013

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
C/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Comments on "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy"

The Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club welcomes the opportunity to comment on the "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan" put forward by the Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Council under the RESTORE Act.

The present structure of the Draft Plan seems to be a shorter version of the Draft Strategy released in 2011, along with a list of preliminary projects submitted by federal and state agencies. We are in agreement with the Goals and Objectives articulated in the Draft Plan:

Goals – Restore & Conserve Habitat; Restore Water Quality; Replenish and Protect Living Coastal & Marine Resources; Enhance Community Resilience; Restore & Revitalize the Gulf Economy.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Objectives – Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats; Protect and Restore Living Coastal & Marine Resources; Restore & Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines; Promote Community Resilience; Promote Natural Resource Stewardship & Environmental Education; Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes.

Clearly, the devil is in the details for some goals and objectives. The goal of restoring and revitalizing the Gulf economy should include measures to make that economy and its energy use more sustainable environmentally and economically, and less dependent on fossil fuels in general. This can be done while recognizing that fossil fuels, in particular offshore oil, will remain an important part of the economy of some Gulf states. But other decisions, such as the pending permits for massive new coal export facilities along the Mississippi River, are already directly impacting local communities and their resiliency by making those areas less healthy and safe to live in.

If this goal – to restore and revitalize the Gulf economy – merely rebuilds or in some cases expands projects or infrastructure that is not sustainable, then the critical one-time resource provided by the BP funds from judgment or settlement will have been wasted. The resilience of the habitats and communities whose protection and restoration the Draft Plan rightly prioritizes will be directly affected by policies and investments in economic and energy options.

All of the Draft Plan's Goals and Objectives will also be impacted by the effects of global warming, a factor that the Draft Plan refuses to mention. This decision damages the Draft Plan's credibility, since sea-level rise, flooding, and hurricanes are clearly increasing the vulnerability of the Gulf Coast Region, as the 2011 Draft Strategy acknowledged. How can climate not be a component of a "region-wide restoration effort that restores, protects, and revitalizes the Gulf Coast"?

The absence of the problem of climate change from the Draft Plan demonstrates the need for broader participation and transparency in the RESTORE Act and Gulf Council process. Clearly, the "Commitment to Science-Based Decision-Making" by the Council requires broader oversight, and we support the formation of a Science Advisory Committee to aid this purpose along with the general scientific integrity of restoration efforts. The creation of a Gulf Coast Citizens Committee will help ensure transparency and an open process for decision-making.

Regarding particular projects listed in the "Preliminary Authorized But Not Yet Commenced" list submitted by federal and state agencies, the habitat protection and restoration value of a number of projects appears to be very high. In our area, the conservation/expansion proposal for the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge (p. 19) would help expand a critical habitat area. On a coastwide level, RESTORE Act funds would provide a critical opportunity for restoration of Louisiana's degraded barrier islands.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 164

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Since the intention of RESTORE was to help those 5 Gulf States effected by the BP Oil Spill it would be a travesty to use those funds on other states.

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July 8, 2013

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

The Alabama Rivers Alliance (ARA) is pleased to have the opportunity to submit comments on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's (Council) Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy (Draft). This is truly a monumental opportunity; to not only mitigate the damages to this important region from the Deepwater Horizon disaster and oil spill but to restore and protect our Gulf Coast going forward. It is encouraging that this process is established on the principles of State and Federal cooperation and is attempting to coordinate agency actions toward common goals. ARA is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the waters of the State of Alabama. We represent over 800 individual members and 60 watershed groups throughout the state including many in the coastal zone of Alabama. Our work is described in the Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Alabama Water Agenda which is available at www.alabamarivers.org. Development of a sustainable restoration plan for the Gulf Coast region is an important component of ARA's efforts to develop comprehensive and sustainable water management policy for Alabama.

We appreciate the Council's commitment to "select and fund projects and programs that restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region" and to ensure that the Plan is based on the "best available science and can be adapted over time to incorporate new science, information, and changing conditions." Likewise, we commend the Council's assertion that "a regional approach to restoration more effectively leverages the resources of the Gulf Coast and promotes holistic Gulf Coast recovery" . The recognition of the many interrelated benefits of comprehensive regional restoration is important to the overall mission to "foster a stronger, healthier, and more resilient Gulf Coast region." . Similarly, the impact to the Gulf Coast region from activities upriver in the watersheds cannot be overstated. We encourage the Council to keep these principles at the forefront as pressure mounts to quickly evaluate the myriad programs and projects that will be competing for what is, after all, a limited source of funding.

In developing a comprehensive plan the Council is to "give highest priority" to projects that will "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", and large-scale projects that will "substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem." Considering the impacts to the Gulf region from hydrologic alteration, developing state and interstate water management programs are just the type of landscape scale activities that are among a limited number of activities that will meet the "greatest contribution" standard. Successful water management programs will also meet the second criteria by providing the freshwater flows critical to every facet of restoration and protection of the Gulf Coast's natural resources. The Council should prioritize funding for such programs and stipulate management for freshwater flows be included in local, state, or regional restoration plans.

Recommendations

In order to ensure that the Council's Comprehensive Plan truly fosters a stronger, healthier, and more resilient Gulf Coast region for future generations, we recommend that the Plan:

1. Clarify that freshwater flow studies can be undertaken in order to establish baseline conditions and freshwater flow requirements from the watersheds in the Gulf Coast region.
2. Specifically acknowledge that state and interstate landscape scale water management programs that will demonstrably contribute to the long term sustainability of freshwater flows to the Gulf region are eligible for funding under the Plan. Interstate watershed management and cooperation should be encouraged through prioritization of programs that address interstate flow issues over programs that address flows solely within state boundaries
3. Whenever possible, link habitat restoration projects, with other projects or programs aimed at addressing freshwater flow issues.
4. Included a strategy to coordinate federal activities that will impact freshwater flows into the Gulf Coast region or the successful implementation of approved projects, including ongoing efforts by the Corps of Engineers to update the water control manuals for the ACT and ACF watersheds and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's licensing or relicensing of hydropower facilities on the Black Warrior, Alabama, Coosa, Tallapoosa, and Chattahoochee Rivers.
6. Implement the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force's recommendation that social, environmental and economic outcomes be fully considered in all river management decisions, and placed on equal footing with other river management priorities such as navigation and flood damage risk reduction. Review federal actions with potential

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

impacts on freshwater flows or that will serve as barriers to fish migration with an eye towards improving freshwater inflows and fish passage.

Alabama's Water Resources

With over 77,000 miles of rivers and streams and roughly 14% of the freshwater flow in the continental United States, Alabama's rivers provide an essential portion of the freshwater flows to the Gulf Coast region. These flows are critical to the functioning of the Gulf Coast ecosystems and economy.

According to noted biologist E.O. Wilson, "Alabama as a whole is home to arguably the largest numbers of freshwater fish species in America, some 350 species, many of which live in and immediately around the [Mobile] Delta waters." Many of these are critically endangered putting Alabama 3rd for the most listings by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Restoration and the sustainable management of Alabama's freshwater resources is an essential component of each of the Council's restoration goals. Getting the flows right in Alabama is particularly important the Council's goals of restoring and conserving Gulf Coast habitats and restoring water quality. To accomplish these goals, the Council should specifically recognize landscape scale flow studies as fundable projects and prioritize those projects and programs that contribute to the restoration and sustainability of natural fresh water flow regimes including statewide water management programs.

The Council may approve programs or projects anywhere in the State of Alabama. For those projects that will "make the greatest contribution" to restoration and protection, such as the development of comprehensive statewide water management programs, the Council may allocate funds "without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region" For all other projects, including flow assessments, restoring water quality, and removing barriers to freshwater flow and fish passage, the Council may allocate funds in Alabama's Coastal Zone, including federal lands, and "any adjacent land, water, and watersheds, that are within 25 miles of the coastal zones" Because they are "watersheds... that are within 25 miles of the coastal zones", the council may approve projects or programs within the Mobile Delta/Bay Watershed, the ACF watershed, the Escatawpa River watershed, or one of the various watersheds shared by Alabama and Florida.

Importance of Freshwater flow in Gulf Region Recovery

As noted in the Path Forward, "[the] Gulf Coast States have experienced loss of critical wetland habitats, erosion of barrier islands, imperiled fisheries, water quality degradation, and significant coastal land loss due to the alteration of hydrology and other human activities." We appreciate the Council's recognition that ecosystem restoration encompasses "all activities... appropriate to the health and resilience of the Gulf Coast ecosystem...." Successful projects or programs should address the underlying causes of degradation to the "physical, biological, or chemical properties" of these ecosystem, or the services they provides.

Freshwater inflow is essential to the physical, chemical, and biological health of Gulf Coast ecosystems. In addition to providing passage for the many species that migrate from marine to fresh water habitats or vice versa, fresh water rivers are critical to sustaining the estuaries and marine habitats along the Gulf Coast. Of the many important functions of freshwater flows in Gulf Coast ecosystems; the creation of the brackish waters needed for healthy estuaries and bays; and transporting crucial sediments, nutrients, and organic materials necessary for the physical and biological makeup of the estuaries, bays, and gulf stand out. Many of the Gulf Coast regions' recreationally and commercially important species rely on these mixing zones at various stages of their life cycle. In turn, these ecosystems depend on a very fine balance of saltwater and freshwater conditions; and alterations to flows upstream can lead to ecosystem collapse as seen in Apalachicola Bay in 2012.

While discussions on freshwater flows often focus on the overall amount of water that the rivers provide, it is also important to get the natural seasonal variability right as well. A 1994 study of freshwater requirements for Texas' bays found that the seasonal timing of freshwater inflows were the most important factor for healthy estuarine environments. When these flows were outside of certain seasonal ranges the bays experienced the loss of nursery areas for economically valuable seafood resources and were less able to assimilate manmade wastes.

Unfortunately, there are significant gaps in the science for understanding the role of freshwater flows in Alabama generally and on the Mobile Bay in particular. In a 2004 assessment of the Mobile Bay Delta, The Nature Conservancy found that the biological richness and ecological complexity of the Mobile Delta/Bay Conservation Area depends on a wide range of freshwater inflow conditions." However, there were "many critical gaps" in the scientific information, about the hydrology, sediment, and geomorphic dynamics of the system and the habitat, and about species and ecology that rely on these factors. Likewise, there is a lack of data or models that explain how the system should act in the absence of human alterations and a lack of science needed to assess the effects on the Gulf Coast region due to the ongoing alterations of freshwater flows.

In its December 2011 report: Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy,(Strategy) the Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (Task Force) recommended prioritizing ecosystem restoration in the Gulf of Mexico by fully considering "social, environmental and economic outcomes...in all river management decisions", improving the "quality and quantity of freshwater flows into priority estuaries" and restoring and preserving "more natural river processes of sediment and freshwater distribution" These were identified as "specific actions that require the most immediate attention." The Task Force also identified other actions, such as restoring and protecting oyster and coral reefs, and other coastal ecosystems, and enhancing community resiliency, which have a direct nexus to the management of freshwater flows into the region. Unfortunately, addressing these issues in Alabama is extremely difficult because Alabama does not currently have a water management program, the State does not establish and protect environmental flows, nor are federal agencies with ongoing actions in Alabama, such as the Corps of Engineers' development of a Water Control Manual for the ACT or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) relicensing of hydropower projects on the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers, coordinating their activities in such a way as to provide sustainable flows for the Gulf systems.

The examples of projects and programs listed in the draft plan are limited to on-the-ground activities within the immediate coastal region. While these are extremely important activities that, if successful, will greatly benefit the region; it is unclear how successful many of the examples can be without addressing the underlying problems associated with hydrologic alteration. With regard to flows from Alabama and the impact that alteration of these flows has had on the region, there is currently a great deal of study that must first be undertaken in order to effectively evaluate the long term sustainability of proposed project. We encourage the Council to include in the discussion of projects and programs those activities that focus on managing freshwater flows into the region. Comprehensive water management programs at the state and interstate level and meaningful freshwater flow protections in federal activities are fundamental to "improving the management of freshwater flows, discharges to and withdrawals from critical systems" Without such programs, hydrologic alteration of freshwater flows will continue to degrade Gulf Coast ecosystems despite the money spent on restoration projects.

Ongoing restoration projects such as the 100-1000 Restore Coastal Alabama project are quickly moving forward to restore critical coastal habitats to support sustainable resource management of commercially important oyster populations. Concurrent work must be done to ensure that the freshwater needs of these systems are available in order to ensure the long term sustainability of the project. As these types of "living shoreline" projects are brought to the council for funding, the council should evaluate the freshwater flow needs for project success and prioritize those projects that address flow needs or that coordinate with other ongoing or proposed projects or programs which aim to restore or protect freshwater flows. Additionally, river restoration and dam removal projects upland within

the watershed should be favorably evaluated for their benefit to providing more natural freshwater flows to the Gulf Coast region.

Given the critical need for freshwater flow for the Gulf Region, the Council should explicitly encourage projects or programs which will assess the freshwater flow needs of the Gulf Coast region as well as the current use and hydrologic alteration of the watersheds that provide these flows. The Council should favor those programs and projects which have a strong component dedicated to the study of freshwater flow and the impacts that alteration of such flow is having on the habitats that the project or program is intending to restore, enhance, or protect. The council should also specify that State or interstate comprehensive water management programs, or projects under such programs that establish and provide for ecologically sustainable flow are potentially successful proposal that will be given due consideration

Conclusion

The Gulf Restoration Council's Draft Plan, along with the recommendations of the Gulf Restoration Task Force, is a significant step towards the development of a comprehensive plan for restoring and sustaining our Gulf Coast region. As proposals for projects and programs begin to come in, we encourage the Council to keep science at the forefront of this process and to prioritize projects or programs which will undertake a rigorous assessment of the fresh and salt water needs and balances in the coastal ecosystems and to favor those encourage projects or programs which will serve to restore and sustain critical seasonal freshwater flows into the Gulf Coast region.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss the Council's thoughts on our comments as well as the ongoing development of this comprehensive restoration plan. ARA will remain an active participant in the process and we offer any support that we can provide to ensure that the Council successfully meets its goal of ensuring the long-term health, prosperity, and resilience of the Gulf Coast. . If there are any comments or questions regarding this letter please do not hesitate to contact us at the information provided below.

With sincerest appreciation for your collective work,

Mitch Reid, J.D.
Program Director
Alabama Rivers Alliance
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 166

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Correspondence Text

I also submitted our comments via email as they contain an attachment (map). Thanks.

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.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

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
The Conservation Fund

Enclosure: The Conservation Fund's "Gulf Coast Partner Acquisition Priorities" map

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 167

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During the economic recession engineering consulting firms throughout the Gulf states and in Florida in particular have struggled. Many formerly Florida-based firms have been acquired by national and international firms. The restoration activities throughout the Gulf associated with the RESTORE Act present a unique opportunity to support the economic viability of regional firms headquartered in the Gulf states as the region continues its economic recovery. We encourage supporting this effort by providing incentive for firms headquartered in the Gulf states during the consultant selection process for projects that are funded by RESTORE Act resources. We recommend that firms headquartered in the Gulf states be given a local preference allowance on submittals for the RESTORE Act funded projects.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 168

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Correspondence Text

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, July 8, 2013
c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy

The Mississippi Forestry Association appreciates the opportunity to submit our comments and concerns regarding the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan for implementation of Gulf Coast restoration projects. We view The RESTORE Act, and the funds provided by the trust fund as one of the most comprehensive, coordinated, as crucial investments in the Gulf Coast restoration efforts.

We believe the Council's draft has put forth the appropriate blueprint of goals and objectives for ecosystem and economic revitalization of the Gulf Coast. However, there are statements which could be interpreted as allowing for funds to be allocated far upstream of the Gulf Coast. As you are aware, the RESTORE Act trust fund was created by Clean Water Act penalties that resulted from violations that directly impacted the Gulf Coast States, and the coastal zone. While we agree that there are numerous challenges and issues involved from upstream areas, we disagree that RESTORE Act funds were intended to be used in this manner. The Council's Initial Comprehensive Plan should clearly reflect the intent of the Restore Act, that these funds are to be used within the coastal zone and the adjacent areas within 25 miles of the coastal zone.

The Mississippi Forestry Association believes the plan should remove all ambiguity regarding the roles of State and federal partnerships. We believe that these funds should be allocated to the States, and that the States have primacy

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

to propose, initiate, and implant Gulf Coast restoration projects. We believe that the States and their leadership, working with local government officials, stakeholders, and citizens, are the appropriate channels for ecosystem restoration and economic revitalization efforts.

While not specifically mentioned in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, the Mississippi Forestry Association believes the Council should provide a clear statement that RESTORE Act funds are not to be used for setting new water quality standards or criteria. The Plan should clearly define that the funds are to be used for on-the-ground projects that provide ecosystem restoration, habitat restoration, invasive species control and economic revitalization. This would reflect the intent of the Act, provide real and immediate results of restoration efforts, and provide numerous jobs in the areas that have been directly affected.

Thank you for your efforts, and for considering our comments and concerns.

Sincerely,

J Tedrick Ratcliff Jr
Executive Vice President
Mississippi Forestry Association

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 169

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I simply want to ensure that the funds from the Restore Act to to the Gulf States only as originally designated, and that there be a citizen advisory committee set up in those Gulf States to help direct those funds to the highest priority projects including consideration of local job creation and support of coastal communities.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 170

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Smart Coast is supportive of the request of Weeks Bay Foundation to set aside a percentage of money to preserve land which will add to the ability of our coastal area to become more resilient to both man made and natural disasters.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 171

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Correspondence Text

RESTORE Act projects to be considered for funding must be conducted on the Gulf Coast in order to comply with eligibility for approval, which was the intent of the law.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 172

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If the RESTORE ACT funding is designated for the Gulf Coast region, then funding should be only in the Gulf Coast region. Why would other states that are not involved in Gulf Coast restoration be allowed to receive funding for their projects. RESTORE Act projects to be considered for funding must be conducted on the Gulf Coast in order to comply with eligibility for approval.

Again, the United States government creates funding opportunities for our area so that we can restore our environment, increase economic opportunities and attract new businesses to our region, and then they decide that it is appropriate for other states as far away as New Hampshire to apply for funding? That makes no sense.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 173

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Correspondence Text

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), 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.

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

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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. 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.

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

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ID: 47484

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
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Richard Raynie, Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 174

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Correspondence Text

"RESTORE Act projects to be considered for funding must be conducted on the Gulf Coast in order to comply with eligibility for approval."

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am restricting my comments to marine mammals, because I know that taxonomic group best, and because I am troubled that no marine mammal projects appear to have been funded in the "early restoration" phase. This taxonomic group is ecologically important, and they enjoy heightened protection under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act, and in some cases the US Endangered Species Act, but they appear underrepresented in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy.

1. Many of the existing marine mammal stock assessments for the Gulf of Mexico have low statistical power to detect declines, but as I read the report, NMFS will not be able to use any new funding to cover the real & high costs of improved stock assessments, because they are already mandated to do such surveys. I would urge the Trustees to acknowledge the need for improved monitoring of marine mammals, because the DWHI requires us to have more and better data than we needed a few years ago. Monitoring recovery is absolutely critical in order to allow us to evaluate whether any of the restoration activities are achieving the desired effect. Without giving NMFS additional funding to do that improved monitoring, we cannot know whether the restoration funds were well spent. I would argue that the new surveys that are needed are fundamentally different than the monitoring that is part of NMFS's usual job description -- we need higher-powered surveys specifically designed to detect trends and monitor recovery, rather than the traditional stock assessment surveys designed to generate abundance estimates periodically, and those higher-powered surveys need to be funded.

2. I am very concerned about what appears to be a disconnect between the affected ecosystem and the geographic/jurisdictional allocation of funds. It was a pelagic spill, but the funding appears to be disproportionately allocated to coastal activities. As I read the report, only 2.5% will go to agencies responsible for offshore waters, and even that cannot be spent on stock assessments. Pelagic work is FAR more expensive and logistically challenging

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than coastal work, and yet the agency responsible for pelagic work appears to be receiving the least funding.

3. Assessing the damage to marine mammal stocks appears to be given superficial treatment. We cannot assess which stocks were the most affected by the spill simply by counting bodies that strand on the beach. The superficial view is that coastal bottlenose dolphins were most heavily hit, but that perspective is confounded by the fact that (in California, at least), we are 50X as likely to recover the carcass of a coastal ecotype of Tursiops than an offshore form of Tursiops (Perrin et al. 2010). Across species, in the Gulf of Mexico, we recover historically only 0.5-2% of marine mammal carcasses (Williams et al. 2011). We have not even begun to estimate the true death toll of pelagic marine mammal stocks, nor am I aware of any effort to partition Tursiops mortality rates by stock/ecotype. I understand that an \$8 million study was funded to estimate carcass recovery rates of seabirds. I urge a similarly big investment in assessing total marine mammal injuries. My co-authors and I have started to do that work (Williams et al. 2011), and I am keen to help NOAA's efforts to improve our multipliers. Otherwise, we are unlikely to be setting our recovery targets appropriately.

Perrin, W.F., Thieleking, J.L., Walker, W.A., Archer, F.I.,
Robertson, K.M. (2010) Common bottlenose dolphins
(*Tursiops truncatus*) in California waters: Cranial
differentiation of coastal and offshore ecotypes.
Mar Mamm
Sci

Rob Williams, Shane S. Gero, Lars Bejder, John Calambokidis, Scott D. Kraus, David Lusseau, Andy J. Read & Jooke Robbins. 2011. Underestimating the Damage: Interpreting Cetacean Carcass Recoveries in the Context of the Deepwater Horizon/BP Incident. *Conservation Letters* 4:228-233.

4. Noise as an ecosystem restoration activity. Many of us are working to quantify the effects of noise on marine mammal populations. I would be happy to work with Trustees on a project to invert those equations to predict how ecosystems may benefit from noise quieting (i.e., time-area closures on seismic surveys, ship quieting technologies, ship speed restrictions in important whale habitats). NOAA has already made substantial investments in soundfield mapping and marine spatial planning (See NOAA CETSOUND page, which your comment form will not allow me to hyperlink) and these tools could be brought to bear with a modelling exercise to predict ecosystem benefits of noise reduction.

5. I focus on marine mammal deaths, because I am worried that if we don't pay attention to the true death toll now, the responsible parties will not be fully compensating for public use in future. If there are lagged effects of oil on marine mammal populations, and we fail to acknowledge those now, my understanding of US policy is that those stocks may become listed as strategic stocks at some point in future. If a take-reduction team is formed, my understanding is that the fishing sector may be affected (by being asked to reduce take through fishery bycatch), and human activities (i.e., fishing) in the Gulf in future will be affected but not compensated for. There are socio-economic tools that can be built into ecosystem modelling tools (e.g., Ecopath with Ecosim) to gauge what those opportunity costs might be, but we can only do that by acknowledging now that our damages assessment system is imperfect.

6. I am pleased to see that the report acknowledges that the lagged effects of oiling may take years or decades to detect, but that detection will only occur if we fund studies to (a) monitor lagged effects, and (b) make predictions from model species. I would encourage the Trustees to look to natural experiments in the literature where extremely well-studied cetacean populations (e.g., resident killer whales, resident bottlenose dolphins etc) have been exposed

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to oil and followed through time. I have data from dozens of well-known individual killer whales that were observed swimming through a diesel slick in 2007 (Williams et al. 2009). Six years post-spill, we could evaluate whether those individuals had lower survival or reproductive rates than their unexposed counterparts. If we canvassed the marine mammal research community, there may be other natural experiments that could be used to gauge roughly how big the lagged effects of oiling could be.

Rob Williams, David Lusseau & Phil Hammond. 2009. The role of social aggregations and protected areas in killer whale conservation: the mixed blessing of critical habitat. *Biological Conservation* 142:709-719.

If any of my datasets, modelling methods or ideas are of any help to this exercise, please let me know. I am happy to help in any way I can. I thank you very much for the opportunity to submit my comments on this draft plan.

Sincerely,
Rob Williams, PhD
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 176

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Correspondence Text

Thank you for your work on behalf of the Gulf Coast. My comments are as follows:

There needs to be a priority on ensuring that restoration jobs go to members of the communities affected by the oil spill, including those who were working in the seafood and hospitality industries at the time of the spill. Evaluation of restoration projects should include this as a factor.

There needs to be a Citizens Advisory Committee composed of representatives of local, grass-roots, non-profit, public interest, social justice, environmental and other organizations. This Committee must have real power to weigh in on proposed restoration projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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It is vital that the local coastal governments and its citizens have a voice in "Any decisions" that will affect the coastal regions of Mississippi. We are the ones that live, work and call this area home. The Council must commit to job creations, safe and long-term job and economic growth for all regions of the gulf coast, whereby workforce development will be part all any and "all new restoration projects".

We strongly want it where a 'Citizen's Advisory Committee is established with local citizens are involved in all decision making processes and that our voices are heard and our ideals are encourage along with a Science Advisory Committee with a real power based of influence with projects that are to be selected by the council. And that no projects will be a benefit to the local economy but it has a negative impact and/or cost to the ecological restoration projects etc. to the coastal regions of Mississippi.

Again, we the citizens should have a major voice to any and all issues that council advisory committee bring or plan within a open dialect and open communication with its citizens, not just for politicians of the state, local government or national, but the common citizen that these project will be impacting on a daily basis.

Thanks.

Tanya Talley Chorba

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Correspondence Text

The Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project; There must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council; No projects that will benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

Galveston Bay Foundation
17330 Highway 3
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July 08, 2013

Dear Gulf Coast Restoration Council:

I am writing on behalf of Galveston Bay Foundation ("GBF"), a non-profit conservation group committed to the preservation, protection and enhancement of Galveston Bay estuarine system and its tributaries. As a member of the Gulf Coast community, our organization would like to submit the following comments regarding the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:

1. Texas projects for the Funded Priorities List should include those kinds suggested by the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force and Texas Conservation groups. Specifically, priority should be given to projects that:

- a. Restore marshes and wetlands;
- b. Restore oyster reefs;
- c. Secure fresh water inflows to bays and estuaries; and
- d. Conserving habitat through land acquisition.

2. While the Direct and Spill Impact components (bucket 1 & 3) allow for RESTORE money to go to economic recovery projects, ecosystem restoration needs to remain the Council's primary focus. On page 11 of the draft comprehensive plan, the Council says that pot 2 money will only go to fund "projects and programs that restore and

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protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region." GBF is glad to see the Council's commitment to ecosystem restoration as the primary factor in selecting projects for the Funded Priorities List. It is important that ecosystem restoration remain the council's top priority during the project selection process.

3. The Spill Impact portion allows economic recovery projects to be included in the State Expenditure Plans. Unfortunately, some economic projects can be harmful to the environment. The RESTORE Act requires the States to closely consider Council's Comprehensive Plan and to create SEPs consistent with the Plan's goals and objectives. Therefore, we urge the Council to require economic projects in State Expenditure Plans to yield net environmental gains. We believe this is consistent with the competing economic and environmental interests at stake -- because a healthy economy depends on a healthy ecosystem.

4. Public input is necessary because decisions made by the Council will affect people throughout the Gulf. This is especially true for the development of the State Expenditure Plans, as there are very few requirements on how the States will solicit and incorporate public input. The Final Draft should describe how the Council plans to involve the public in selecting projects for the Funded Priorities List (e.g. set up a process for submitting proposals and comments through the Council's website). It should also incorporate a strong commitment to public input in its objectives and evaluation criteria. This will help to ensure that the States incorporate public input in their SEPs because the RESTORE Act requires that the States develop their SEPs consistent with the Plan's goals and objectives.

5. The Council has asked the public to consider whether or not the Council should establish advisory committees. The RESTORE Act says the Council should establish such committees as needed and even suggests that it create a science advisory committee. The RESTORE Act also urges the Council to consider the best available science in creating the Plan and selecting projects. We are encouraged by the Council's commitment to science-based decision-making. To further this objective, we urge the Council to create a Science Advisory Committee. This committee should be comprised of scientists and should advise the Council during the project selection process.

6. The Plan needs to describe how the Council plans to track the progress of the Council-selected and Spill Impact projects.

7. We understand that RESTORE provides a great opportunity to accomplish large-scale, collaborative projects. However, small projects that target local conservation should not be completely discounted. The Galveston Bay Foundation, working with many local partners has been very successful over the years in carrying out smaller-scale projects that have benefitted local wetlands, oyster reefs, and countless other habitats and have certainly been of cumulative benefit to the health of Galveston Bay. We would ask that even though the Council may prioritize large-scale projects, that it still consider small-scale, localized projects in addition to these larger projects.

Galveston Bay Foundation would like to thank everyone on the Council for all of your hard work on the draft plan and your consideration of our comments. We look forward to working with you in restoring and revitalizing the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,
Bob Stokes
President of Galveston Bay Foundation

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 180

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Regarding the draft Initial Comprehensive Plan:

The RESTORE Council is to be commended for focusing on ecological restoration when developing the objectives described in the draft initial plan. As the plan reiterates, "Restoring our environment restores our economy." It is encouraging to see a high priority placed on environmental restoration.

It would be very helpful and reassuring if the plan provided additional details on how projects will be evaluated during the selection process. Past experience here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast indicates a high probability that many projects will be proposed that will be far more beneficial to the economy than the environment. The evaluation process should give a lower priority to projects that have a high economic benefit but contain only a small environmental or ecological benefit.

The inclusion of environmental education as an objective is also commendable. Environmental education and natural resource stewardship will result in long-term benefits to our Gulf Coast. Numerous past and existing programs provide evidence that the schools and teachers on the Gulf Coast are willing and able to successfully utilize environmental education materials and funding when it is made available to them. The Environmental Stewardship Program of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is just one good example of what teachers can accomplish if resources are available.

However, education must continue beyond the traditional classroom. Including a professional development component in this objective is also extremely important and commendable, providing additional opportunities to foster natural resource stewardship while improving skills and even creating jobs.

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A final suggestion indirectly related to the draft report:

The RESTORE Council and member agencies might consider the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) as a "mini-model" for implementation, as the programs share many of the same goals. For example, to ensure adequate project oversight, federal agencies might consider the local liaison concept that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is using for CIAP implementation in each state. The liaison provides an on-the-ground contact for oversight, monitoring, and guidance to the local grantees. As a result, the agency has a much more realistic picture of what is truly being accomplished under any project. Attending the traditional tour is much different than being on the ground and knowing what is going on day by day with a project. Unfortunately, without a local presence, federal agency representatives run the risk of getting the "dog and pony show" rather than a true understanding of the status and benefits of a project.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to comment.

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I am currently working as a legal intern working with community members and community organizations in Biloxi, MS. While working with theses members of the community, I have learned that the three biggest concerns surrounding the Restore Draft Plan are the following:

- 1)The Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project;
- 2)There must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council;
- 3) No projects that will benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration.

Thank you for taking the time to reading our comments and we hope that you are able to address these concerns.

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It is my hope that the money goes to restore the gulf and not be spent on big business projects or companies who swoop into the gulf region, make promises, obtain the money and leave.

In order to truly restore the gulf, the projects chosen should employ the people in this community, the people who were actually harmed and suffered because of the oil spill. Any jobs created should be offered to locals first. Also, it is imperative that ecological restoration be at the forefront of any plan, even in front of economic development. Finally, there must be Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee. There should be people on these committees from the community and they should have authority to influence projects selected by the Council.

I do hope that you will implement these ideas into the Plan and truly commit to restore the gulf in all aspects.

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I am a native Alabamian living currently in Dallas, TX. My husband and I have owned a house on Dauphin Island for the past fifteen years and have seen the terrible erosion that is happening to the Island due to hurricanes and water levels. We have re-built, re-sanded, donated to restorations...everything we as individuals can do to assist in the continuation of the west end of the Island. We need additional help.

The Island is a treasure to the state and the country...unspoiled, beautiful and a necessary barrier to mainland Alabama. Please help us keep it that way!

Thanks for any and all help.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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To the RESTORE Council,

Hello, my name is Andrew Schill and I'm very concerned about the initial draft plan that was released in May. To specifically address the questions posed by the council with the plan, I have organized my thoughts below.

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

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 as an objective; this will create employment by the local workforce in the communities where restoration projects will occur.

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Both of the suggested 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.

I strongly encourage the creation of 'shovel ready' jobs as an important component of any project selected by the Council, and I look forward to the reviewing the finalized plan.

Thank you,

Andrew Schill

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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In May 2013, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council released a Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan entitled "Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy." SkyTruth, a nonprofit organization that uses satellite imagery and other remote-sensing technologies to investigate and illustrate environmental issues and incidents, offers the following comments and suggestions regarding this Plan:

1) Restoration Funding Should Target Ecosystem Recovery

The 2010 BP / Deepwater Horizon oil and gas disaster subjected coastal and marine ecosystems throughout the northeastern and north-central Gulf of Mexico to the world's worst accidental oil spill. Acute damage to these ecosystems, as well as beach and fisheries closures ordered during and in the immediate aftermath of the spill, caused significant short-term economic losses felt by communities throughout the Gulf region and beyond. Long-term alteration of these ecosystems has the potential to create continuing economic hardship, thwarting the financial and social recovery of affected communities.

The key to minimizing this hardship is to restore healthy long-term function to those damaged ecosystems, so that the fishing, seafood and tourism industries may once again provide a stable economic and social foundation for the region. For this reason, monies made available to the Plan via the RESTORE Act should be primarily allocated to projects that target ecosystem restoration and recovery. This could reasonably be expected to include the design, review, selection, and evaluation of these projects, in addition to their implementation. Scientific research directly related to these functions could also be supported.

However, general scientific, economic and social research on the causes and effects of the spill should not be funded

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by this program, as that research is being conducted under other programs, including the Natural Resources Damage Assessment process. Similarly, projects that focus primarily on economic recovery rather than ecosystem recovery should not be funded by this program, as economic damages to individuals, businesses and communities are directly addressed by the well-publicized BP claims and settlement process.

2) Review and Evaluation Panel

A Review and Evaluation panel should be established with the purpose of monitoring, periodically evaluating, and publicly reporting on the progress of Gulf ecosystem restoration projects. Ideally this panel would be comprised of scientists with expertise directly relevant to understanding the function and restoration of Gulf coastal and marine ecosystems, as well as representatives from communities affected by the spill and in proximity to the restoration projects, environmental organizations, and relevant local, state and Federal government agencies. The panel would meet regularly to review and evaluate the progress of funded restoration projects, and publicly issue finding on progress and recommendations for correcting or terminating projects that are failing to achieve expected milestones and outcomes.

To facilitate this process, the workplan for a funded project should describe the expected outcomes, include a timeline for accomplishing milestones and provide a suggested schedule for reviewing and evaluating progress.

3) Satellite and Aerial Monitoring Program

As an integral part of the review and evaluation process, we recommend establishing and funding a remote-sensing monitoring program that will routinely collect and analyze imagery and other remote-sensing data to assist in tracking, evaluating and publicizing the progress of funded restoration projects. A subgroup of scientists and other experts serving on the Review and Evaluation Panel could be tasked with establishing this program, which could then be executed by an internal working group or outsourced to an independent public entity (academic institution or other NGO).

Many ecosystem recovery projects will likely include workplan elements and milestones that are directly observable and measurable using satellite and/or aerial remote sensing. Marsh revegetation, beach and barrier-bar reconstruction or reconfiguration, fluvial sediment redistribution, oyster bed construction and other alterations of the physical environment can typically be detected, monitored and measured using remotely collected imagery. For some projects, occasional remote monitoring may prove more cost-effective for auditing progress than routine fieldwork. Some imagery – for example, high-resolution color aerial survey photography acquired by the federal National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) – may be coincidentally collected by existing government programs. Other aerial imagery could be collected as needed, in partnership with non-governmental organizations such as SouthWings and LightHawk or by purchasing aerial surveys from commercial vendors. Multiple sources and types of satellite imagery exist that could serve specific monitoring and evaluation needs, ranging from free (for example, Landsat-8) to commercial. Analytical skills and expertise in remote sensing can be found throughout Gulf-area academic institutions, in government agencies such as NOAA and USGS, at nonprofit organizations, and in the private sector. Making the raw data freely available to the public (contingent on licensing restrictions for commercial datasets) would enhance transparency, and facilitate contributions by outside experts.

Aside from its evaluation role, imagery can serve the functions of illustrating progress and communicating effectively with a highly interested public. Throughout the BP / Deepwater Horizon oil and gas disaster, imagery was an important tool for independently assessing the size of the spill, and identifying waters and shorelines directly impacted by slicks. This information was critical for informing a concerned public during what was, for many, a chaotic and deeply emotional crisis. The multiyear, multibillion-dollar restoration program is sure to attract a high

level of public scrutiny. Regular publication of imagery and credible scientific analyses documenting progress, and verifying that restoration dollars are being spent wisely and well to promote Gulf ecosystem restoration and recovery, will help build public support, recruit public engagement, and attract public participation to ensure successful execution of the Plan.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 190

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1. With any new restoration project, the Council must prioritize the creation of jobs and workforce development at the local level. Jobs that are created should be targeted to low- and moderate-income individuals, with incomes between 50% to 80% of area median income. Restoration projects should coordinate with other local development initiatives, including the Sustainable Communities Initiative, funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as local economic development agencies. Job creation must focus geographically on pockets of high unemployment areas south of Interstate 10 along counties touching the Coast.
2. There must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council. This means that these two committees would hold power to veto projects selected by committee if found to be at odds with broad community interests or contrary to environmental safety.
3. No projects centered on economic development should be approved if such activity interferes with or directly inhibits ecological restoration. Economic development is essential to recovery, but maintaining ecological recovery above all other goals will ensure that the base upon which economic development occurs is sustainable, with capacity to absorb the effects of future disasters.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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- 1) As a resident of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, I would like to see my fellow residents employed in the restoration projects. MS Coast residents have been affected the most by the BP oil disaster, and should be given the opportunity to bring income into their households while using existing and newly acquired skills.
- 2) I believe that residents of the Gulf Coast should be given the opportunity to contribute to the planning of restoration projects, as we will be affected the most by them.
- 3) Restoration projects should not benefit the Gulf Coast economy at the expense of our natural, ecological environment. One of the greatest benefits of living here is having abundant natural resources and beautiful landscapes. We don't want to threaten the existence of these natural gifts.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 192

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The Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project because this was the original primary purpose of the RESTORE Act.

To provide the necessary transparency, and involve a more inclusive and diverse voice to the project, there must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council.

Restore means to bring back. Therefore, no projects should be allowed that will benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological RESTORation.

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Correspondence: 193

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Correspondence Text

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 Stewardship and Environmental Education Comments

July 3, 2013

Dear Council,

The purpose of this letter is to provide comment on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan issued on May 23, 2013 by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team applauds the Council for the inclusion of Objective 6, "Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education." To improve upon the existing Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, our comments recommend:

1. Maintain Objective 6, "Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education" and integrate it through the five main goals;
2. Ensure program and project evaluation criteria include Stewardship and Environmental Education;
3. Establish Stewardship and Environmental Education as priority funding;
4. Recognize the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team as an established network for regional citizen engagement;

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5. Recognize the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team Partners as talented professionals with a long track record of success. These five recommendations will serve as inclusive public participation while eliminating duplication of effort. Further explanation is included in the enclosed attachment. The Dauphin Island Sea Lab, in partnership with the State of Alabama, is the Environmental Education lead for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. On the behalf of the Environmental Education Priority Issue Team, I respectfully submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Lee Yokel, MS
Environmental Education Coordinator, Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education
Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Gulf of Mexico Alliance
Environmental Education Priority Issue Team
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

COMMENTS

These expanded comments are provided to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. They reflect a consensus within the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team.

1. Maintain Objective 6, "Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education" and integrate it through the five main goals.

To ensure proper citizen involvement in future restoration efforts, Objective 6 needs to be integrated through all five goals of the Plan. Stewardship and Environmental Education can be inclusive of outreach, communication, training, and broader societal impacts, thereby providing multiple opportunities to reach a variety of stakeholders and target audiences. Programs and projects become holistic with the potential to reach many impacted audiences.

This is the first draft plan to address broad societal needs beyond the restoration of the coast. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team applauds the Council for recognizing this value. This objective need not be sacrificed or minimized for additional plan recommendations and inclusions.

2. Ensure program and project evaluation criteria include Stewardship and Environmental Education.

Good intentions often cite the need for Stewardship and Environmental Education but fall short when these are not a required component of a program or project. An incentive is often needed for inclusion. In this case, as an evaluation criteria, successful programs and projects will entail Stewardship and Environmental Education.

Multiple exemplary education and outreach projects have been funded by the Federal Government through NSF, NASA, NOAA, DOD, and DoE. They provide significant guidance and systematic models for success in the region. Programs and projects have been studied and positive outcomes analyzed, interpreted, and documented. These proven models could provide the springboard for "scaling up" across the entire coastal region in a unified manner, reducing duplication, and dedicating sole support for human impact research, education, and outreach.

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3. Establish Stewardship and Environmental Education as priority funding.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team is concerned about priority funding and allocation of resources through the trust fund. Budget cuts and sequestration often target Stewardship and Environmental Education first. Since the trust fund will be impacted by future sequestration, it is requested that all Plan objectives be treated equally in cuts and redistribution. Addressing citizen involvement must be treated with an equal level of priority.

Stewardship and Environmental Education are like monitoring, they must be continually maintained to assess conditions and make positive improvements. The capacity-building, networks and multi-faceted leveraging successes have taken an inordinate amount of time to build and foster. Utilizing this existing structure would be value added and cost effective.

4. Recognize the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team as an established network for regional citizen engagement.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team is a broad network of organizations and professionals established in the Gulf region. Universities, non-profits, formal education representatives, and community partnerships are currently aligned and connected through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. This Environmental Education Network (EEN) is currently working in local communities to accomplish stewardship, education, outreach, and communication. The EEN reaches numerous audiences to include those in environmental justice. Many directly support workforce development and environmental literacy in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

5. Recognize the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Priority Issue Team Partners as talented professionals with a documented and long-lived track record of success.

Members of this network provide an experienced track record of success. Partners have educated literally hundreds and thousands of audience members across the region. They are place-based organizations with Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center designation, Gulf Guardian Award winners, successful grant applicants, other regional organizations as well as those with long-established relationships in their communities.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following comments on behalf of Monroe County, Florida, one of the 15 non-disproportionately impacted Gulf Coast counties.

1. Comments Regarding the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

In order to assist the Council in finalizing the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, Monroe County is providing more specific comments on various issues related to this draft Plan, Programmatic Environmental Assessment ("PEA") and further Plan/process development.

While Monroe County understands that the RESTORE Act is unique, other major federal efforts to restore aquatic ecosystems that have been altered or impaired by development, habitat loss, and federal water resource projects are instructive to build upon and to create a process for implementation. Some of these restoration initiatives include those in the Everglades, Coastal Louisiana, California Bay-Delta, Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Klamath Basin, and elsewhere. Plans and projects for RESTORE are still subject to the typical environmental permitting context, including but not limited to:

- the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"),
- the Clean Water Act ("CWA"),
- the Endangered Species Act ("ESA"),
- the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act ("FWCA"),
- Flood Control Acts, and
- the Rivers and Harbors Acts.

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This process needs to build upon the successes of other restoration efforts to address issues such as: project formulation, alternatives analysis, project documentation requirements, defining key terms and developing implementation policy guidance.

a. Defining "authorized but not yet commenced" projects

Monroe County understands there are two different requirements set forth in the Act regarding the creation of "project lists" and that Appendix A is not "the list" of initial projects. The import is that Appendix A is only meant to fulfill a narrow requirement producing a list of "any project or program authorized prior to the date of enactment of this subsection but not yet commenced the completion of which would further the purposes and goals of this subsection" Problematic is that the Plan states: "In general, Council Members put forward projects and programs that have either been federally authorized by Congress or approved under a State program, plan, or action." With this language, the Draft Plan seems to qualify "projects and programs" as federally authorized or approved under a State initiative which seems more limited than the RESTORE Act language "any project or program".

None of the projects that Monroe County has submitted thus far to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") appear on Appendix A. That said, they may not have met the "authorized but not yet commenced" threshold, but without a clear definition of how a project must be "authorized" or at what level, it is impossible to know if any of Monroe County's projects meet that criteria and could likely be included in the Plan or first 3-Year Prioritized Project List. When compared against the Restoration Priorities, some projects on Appendix A remotely, or do not even at all, provide a benefit to the Gulf Coast region or ecosystem or rectify harm caused by the spill. This is a basic premise of all of the Restoration Priorities listed in Section 1603(t)(2)(D)(iii).

Recommendation: Resolve inconsistencies in language regarding project thresholds that are simply "authorized but not yet commenced" versus those "that have either been federally authorized by Congress or approved under a State program, plan, or action" to assure clear understanding of those projects that are eligible for inclusion on the Appendix A List.

Recommendation: Define level of authorization for projects. Specific issues to address are whether or not the project already had to receive regulatory approvals (at the state or Federal level) such as NEPA or CWA or other environmental resource permitting requirements at the State level to be included in the Council's Plan.

Recommendation: Refine Appendix A for consistency with Restoration Priorities. Monroe County would urge the Council to further refine this list to assure that all projects meet the requirements of the Act, fundamentally, projects must "further the purposes and goals" which are the Restoration Priorities outlined in the Act.

b. Defining the process for future project evaluation

The Plan states, "the Council will use an open and transparent process to evaluate and select ecosystem restoration projects under the Council-selected Restoration Component" and the "Council will further review the projects and programs on this list to determine whether each project or program meets all applicable requirements of the RESTORE Act." The Plan needs more detail on how this process might work, and at the local level, it is important that this process be clearly outlined so that projects can be developed and targeted for the appropriate planning process or source of funds.

The Plan states that the Council will fund and implement projects through its members, but more clarity is needed as to what this means. For instance, the Council will request proposals from its members and they then choose to

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sponsor or submit for consideration projects and programs. Monroe County recommends the Plan should clarify the following issues:

Recommendation: Outline project submittal and assignment procedures. Clarify how a member can submit, as opposed to implement, a project. For instance, if another Council member (agency) is better qualified to actually implement the project, but hasn't proposed it, the Plan should clarify how that project will be implemented by the most appropriate Member. While the RESTORE Act itself states that primary authority for each project and program included in the Comprehensive Plan shall be assigned to a Gulf Coast State or a Federal agency, that process of "assignment" should be provided in further detail since being accountable for a project is a large commitment on behalf of any state or agency.

Recommendation: Create one set of streamlined project documentation requirements. The Council needs to set the stage for a streamlined documentation process so that state environmental resource and federal regulatory requirements are addressed with one set of documents. This process should then be employed throughout all of the planning processes for consistency as needed for that level of activity.

Recommendation: Establish a multi-disciplined Project Review Team. An entity will have to determine several key factors about a project. For instance, will the Council provide this function themselves or delegate this to staff? The Council could create a "Review Team" or similar body to review the technical merits of the projects, summarize the key issues and make recommendations to the Council. This Team needs to be coordinated with the Science Advisory Committee suggested later in this document. This Team would need to complete policy review, receive input from a Science Advisory Committee, provide engineering input and have a truly a cross-disciplinary skill set to be effective. Issues for this Team to vet are:

- o Where is the proposed project in the feasibility process? Has it been permitted and is it likely to be permitted?
- o What is the timeframe for the project? Despite the fact that the project has been identified in another plan or process and has "been on the books" for several years, that may not mean there is widespread support for it and that implementation will be feasible or expeditious.
- o What is the stakeholder support for the project?
- o What restoration, protection and resiliency benefits are expected to accrue from the project's implementation?
- o What are the key performance measures that should be used to determine success?

Recommendation: Clarify and establish rolling timeframes for project submittals. The Proposal Evaluation and Selection process needs to be further defined. Additionally, a timeline should be established so that proposals are accepted on a quarterly or semi-annual basis assuring that pre-submittal planning can occur in a meaningful way. These submittal timeframes should be keyed to appropriations schedules and fiscal cycles, as much as they can be, given the multiple jurisdictions involved.

Recommendation: Define how responsible parties will be accountable for project implementation. The Council should begin developing a standard "Project Agreement" or similar instrument to memorialize the accountability process for project implementation.

c. Plan Update, 3-Year Prioritized Project List and 10 Year Spending Allocation

The Plan requirements also include a 3-Year Prioritized Project List "subject to available funding ..." Given that Appendix A is not meant to meet this particular requirement, and the development of the 3-Year Prioritized Project List is "subject to available funding", there are numerous opinions of when and how this important requirement should be met. While the Plan Update provisions in the RESTORE Act require the Comprehensive Plan to be

updated every five (5) years , Monroe County does not believe the Council should wait that long to produce the next version of the Plan. Producing the first 3-Year Prioritized Project List as soon as possible is important because all of the planning efforts must be consistent with one another. The Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan has the largest scope and provides the biggest picture approach for restoration with the State Expenditure Plans and Multi-Year Implementation Plans of the Coastal Political Subdivisions providing more localized projects. Without the big picture, it's difficult to fill in the gaps. That said, Monroe County also understands that the Council's planning process must be scientifically-driven, and given the staff and time constraints to meet the RESTORE Act deadline to produce the Comprehensive Plan, producing this List now could be premature. Clearly Monroe County understands that if the first 3-year Prioritized Project List cannot be produced yet, then it is equally difficult to meet the requirement that the Plan identify which amounts from the Trust Fund are projected to be made available to the Council for the succeeding ten (10) years and how they will be allocated. Obviously, this is equally impossible to determine given there is no real understanding of the amount or flow of money over that duration let alone the short term.

Recommendation: Develop timeline for Plan Update and 3-Year Prioritized Project List. It is important that the Plan explain how and when development of the Plan Update and the 3-Year Prioritized Project List will occur (and when) so that the State and Local governments can begin their planning process focusing on the more finite level given that the Council's Plan is focusing on larger scale regional projects.

Recommendation: Certainty of some funding amounts. The first 3-Year Prioritized Project List should address the Council's portion of the first \$800 million from the Transocean settlement that will be available for RESTORE implementation.

Recommendation: Build upon previous project submittals. The first 3-Year Year Prioritized Project List should build upon projects submitted pursuant to the NRDA process that have not yet received funding. The point would be to not require duplication of the project submittal process and build upon applications already deemed critical and completed, whether or not they have been funded.

Recommendation: Sort projects by type. The first 3-Year Prioritized project List should begin sorting and identifying projects that can be categorized in the various project and program phases (Planning, Technical Assistance and Implementation) building upon work already completed by the Task Force.

d. Clarify NEPA evaluation requirements

It is important to note that this process not only seeks comments on the Draft Plan but also seeks comments in accordance with NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4335, and the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations implementing NEPA, 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1507, for the PEA on the Draft Plan.

As the states and local governments are currently launching their planning efforts, they need to know if a particular planning process or document will require an accompanying NEPA analysis or if these requirements will be met on a project by project basis. Additionally, as required by regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 C.F.R. 1505.1 and 1507.3), agencies must identify classes of actions generally requiring an Environmental Impact Statement ("EIS"), generally not subject to NEPA, and actions requiring an Environmental Assessment ("EA"). For ease of review, our comments or questions track the various sections of the PEA document.

Recommendation: Clarify approach to NEPA analysis. The most important point regarding NEPA evaluation is that the Council needs to quickly define programmatic and project-level NEPA analysis requirements for Council actions, State actions and those for coastal political subdivisions. Given that state and local governments are already

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launching their planning processes, it would be prudent to provide guidance on whether or not these planning efforts will require full NEPA EIS analysis, EA analysis or be categorically exempt. For instance would these efforts fall under a "programmatic" NEPA analysis or require a full range of alternatives analysis?

1.2.1 The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economic of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012

While not necessarily within the purview of the PEA, this Section outlines the tasks of the Council and refers to approving State Expenditure Plans and overseeing grants. As quickly as possible, the Council needs to define this process, and in particular, the flow of funds through a combination of reimbursement and advance payments.

Recommendation: Develop reimbursement and advance payment procedures. The Council should establish a threshold to ensure that large projects can be funded as certain milestones are achieved rather than completely relying on establishing a reimbursement program. Long review times for reimbursement procedures could result in tremendous budgetary and fiscal challenges for implementation at the State or local level.

1.2.2 The National Environmental Policy Act

On page 5, the document states, "The Council has determined that a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) is the appropriate level of analysis to perform at this time" and that the Plan "does not authorize any specific projects or programs or reach decisions on funding allocations ... and therefore no direct environmental effects flow from the Plan." "The Council developed this PEA to assist it in determining whether the Plan ... results in potentially significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, in which case the Council would prepare an EIS."

Recommendation: Define when more detailed NEPA analysis is likely required. The PEA is the appropriate vehicle for this planning level analysis. Since no specific projects are authorized, there is no way to determine what the direct impacts may be. That said, Monroe County believes that the next version of the Plan, presumably including the first 3-Year Prioritized Project List would include more specificity to determine direct impacts and likely would require an EIS.

The document states on page 6, "The draft PEA does not analyze the specific effects of projects that the Council may later fund. The appropriate level of NEPA analysis will be performed on proposed projects prior to their selection by the Council for funding."

Recommendation: Clarify when project-level NEPA analysis is required (after project selection by Council as opposed to before). This is a crucial issue to clarify and address. The Council must define how the NEPA evaluation will evolve both at the plan development level as well as the project level. If this statement holds true, does this mean that projects will have to be completely documented for NEPA compliance prior to Council inclusion in the Draft Plan (or logistically the 3-Year Prioritized Project List)? If so, this could add significant time to the development of that 3-Year Prioritized Project List thus making it much more difficult to coordinate Plan development for the State Expenditure Plans or Multi-Year Implementation Plans at the local level. It would stand to reason that the Council would be selecting the projects, developing the first Plan update, developing the first 3-Year Prioritized Project List and then completing its next NEPA review on the Plan. Then as projects start to undergo implementation individually, they would be subject to NEPA based on the size and threshold. Requiring the appropriate NEPA analysis prior to Council selection will likely add years to the process before a project can even be included in the first 3-Year Prioritized Project List.

1.5 Compliance with Other Authorities

The section states that projects must comply with applicable Federal statutes, regulations and Executive Orders. The list of these authorities is described as non-exclusive.

Recommendation: Include wage and procurement requirements in table of authorities. This section and Appendix C should list all applicable wage and procurement requirements so that entities proposing or implementing projects understand the full array of what is entailed in project implementation. For example, implementation of the Davis Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. § 3141 et seq.) will have a large impact on project implementation and it would be important to list its applicability at this stage.

2.1 Alternative A: No Action

The section states, "The Act also requires another 30 percent of the amounts in the Trust Fund to be allocated ..., once the States have submitted, and the Council has approved a State Expenditure Plan, that is consistent with the Council's Plan" and "The State's expenditure of funds for projects under the Direct Component ... is not dependent on the Council's issuance of the Plan, and may be utilized by the States on projects and programs regardless of adoption of the Plan."

Recommendation: Explain the timeline and process for planning consistency determinations. While this may be technically accurate because these are two different funding sources, the Multi-Year Implementation Plan, State Expenditure Plans and the Council's Comprehensive Plan are required to be consistent with one another so it will be difficult for the States to begin expending funds until the first 3-Year Prioritized Project List is developed so that the State and local planning efforts are synergistic and not duplicative.

4.6 SUMMARY

The PEA states, "The Council may not select projects until the Plan is published and the States cannot expend funds under the Spill Impact Component until the Plan is released, since the projects and activities in their State Expenditure Plan must take into consideration and be consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the Plan."

Recommendation: It will be difficult for the other planning process to be consistent with the Initial Comprehensive Plan because there is no base of projects to build upon. Without the 3-Year Prioritized Project List, it will be hard to determine consistency amongst the planning efforts. Determining that consistency will include little more than reviewing projects against the 5 very broad goals and 7 objectives in the Plan. Until the first Plan Update occurs, truly harmonizing the planning efforts and projects at the Council, State and local levels will be challenging.

1. Establish clear and consistent policies and procedures across RESTORE Act implementation

The Draft Plan also described the State Expenditure Plan process for the Spill Impact Component in that these plans must be approved by the Council and a "grant" will be awarded to the State. The Draft Plan then provides a permissive list of what could be included in the State Expenditure Plans. Given that states are starting to launch these planning efforts now, it would be important to provide more specificity to what a State Expenditure Plan must have to receive approval.

Recommendation: Provide more guidance on the State Expenditure Plan development and approval process. The Draft Plan should clarify what will be required in a State Expenditure Plan and provide guidance so that states can begin development of their Plans. Several key concepts that the Draft Plan should address to provide this guidance include:

- o In the Draft Plan, as well as the PEA, there are statements regarding oversight of "grants" to the Gulf Coast States for the Spill Impact Component of the Trust Fund. Monroe County would urge the Council to start developing this grant process as quickly as possible because as the Expenditure Plans are being developed, the flow of funds in particular is important to understand.

- o Criteria to meet the various project purposes (including economic recovery). This will avoid proffering projects that will not be approved wasting both time and expense for the Council, local governments and Treasury.

- o Better define activities considered as "administrative costs" and "planning assistance". Administrative costs must capture all costs including auditing, monitoring and reporting.

- o Explain how "certification" will occur (criteria to achieve certification and who will provide it or approve it) for determining that the project or program:

- (I) is designed to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, or economy of the Gulf Coast;

- (II) carries out 1 or more of the activities described in clauses (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (B);

- (III) was selected based on meaningful input from the public, including broad-based participation from individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations; and

- (IV) in the case of a natural resource protection or restoration project, is based on the best available science".

Given that the Council has the authority to develop memoranda of understanding establishing integrated funding and implementation plans, and that other rules and processes are currently being developed, we urge you to adopt an overarching and coordinated regime of policies that expedites the approval and reporting processes for project approval and disbursement of funds. It is Monroe County's belief that all of the project approval processes across the 3 planning efforts must have some level of consistency. Finally, these procedures must not impede the restoration progress.

Recommendation: Defining specific terms and processes now will save time and effort to comply with the Act and expedite distribution of funds. Monroe County's chief concerns include clarifying the process and procedures to comply with the Act, whether that be for specific determinations required by the Act itself or what documentation the regulations will require for project funding. Such processes, concepts and terms include:

- o The process or processes for distribution of project funds and making "grants" both generally and pursuant to Section 1603(t)(2)(E)(ii)(III) "Limitation on transfers" (presumably different from other types of funds distributions).

- o The requirements (including documentation) for "previously approved projects and programs" (as opposed to new project starts). For instance, will the development of a Multi-Year Implementation Plan be considered a "previously approved project or program" if it is started before a local government actually receives RESTORE Act funds thus reimbursable with RESTORE Act funds, or is a previously approved project and program something authorized under a separate initiative?

- o Identify the content of Multi-Year Implementation Plans to assure compliance with RESTORE Act and specify procedures for project modifications, project phasing as well as modifications to projects individually or Multi-Year Implementation Plans. Perhaps an outline of contents should be developed to assist in this endeavor. This will aid local governments in quickly developing clear plans also resulting in a more streamlined review process for Treasury.

- o Define "significant actions and associated deliberations" subject to public transparency requirements (and what

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those requirements will be).

- o Land acquisition requirements should be described whether the project lands are initiated at the federal, state, local or private entity level.
- o Identify back end project monitoring, performance measures or milestones and reporting of pre and post project benefits (including evaluating progress during project implementation). Review timeframes and deadlines should be established for various steps of the approval, auditing and monitoring processes.
- o Specify the role and procedures of the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of the Treasury to conduct, supervise, and coordinate audits and investigations of projects, programs, and activities funded.
- o Clarify any enforcement provisions and what that process may entail, including timeframes associated with those provisions.

2. Council Requested Input on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan

a. Priority Criteria

Should the Council further define the Priority Criteria? If so, how? The "Priority Criteria" refer to Restoration Priorities in Section 1603 (t)(2)(D)(iii) already defined by the Act. Generally these include restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, as well as restoring the long-term resiliency of these resources. The Council should further define the Priority Criteria with some key guiding principles including:

"...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..."

- Consider the various types of ecosystems and address them comprehensively including greater watersheds, shoreline and coastal habitat and open water or bluewater systems.
- Factor in how the previous work of the Task Force Strategy "Recommended Actions" already identifies the greatest contributions that can be made.
- Develop regional key performance indicators for expected benefits such as the use of indicator species or acres of specific habitat restored and protected.

"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..."

- Better define "Large-scale projects" such as identifying thresholds of benefits achieved such as acres restored or habitat units protected.

"Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection..."

- Build upon previous work and update relevant and existing watershed-based planning efforts to develop priority projects and assess their level of readiness for implementation. Define what comprehensive plans will be considered under this priority.
- Consider how portions of projects may be implemented holistically across funding sources and planning efforts.

"Projects that restore long-term resiliency...."

- Develop science-based planning assumptions that could compromise the benefits achieved at a later date, for instance relevant climate and storm risk data.

The Council created an additional goal for this Plan "Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy". We agree with the concept of enhancing the sustainability, and in particular, the resiliency of the Gulf economy to withstand catastrophic events, as explained in the Plan.

- To avoid any confusion that the planning priorities have shifted since the passage of the Act, the Plan should better explain why this goal was added and that this addition in no way weakens the Council's focus to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region. Further, the Plan should clarify the distinction between economically-related eligible activities in the State Expenditure and local Multi-Year Implementation Plans versus the focus of this goal at the Council level. Clearly, projects fulfilling the goal of restoring and revitalizing the Gulf economy (enhancing the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy) must demonstrate a nexus to Gulf of Mexico restoration.

Finally, examples of projects should be added to further define the types of projects that will satisfy these criteria and goals. For example, would a long-term watershed monitoring program be an acceptable project?

Should the Council develop additional criteria for consideration now or in the future? If so, what should they be? The Priority Criteria appear to be broad enough to encompass the projects that will achieve the stated goal of comprehensive ecosystem restoration.

b. Objectives

Should the Council consider other Objectives at this juncture? If not, at what point, if any, should the Council consider additional Objectives? If so, what should they be? The 7 objectives that outline the broad types of activities that are expected to achieve the stated goals appear to be adequate to encompass the types of projects that will achieve the five goals outlined in the Plan.

Similarly, should the Council eliminate any of the Objectives? We do not believe the Council should eliminate any of the objectives.

How should the Council prioritize its restoration Objectives? While all of the Objectives are important and contribute to comprehensive ecosystem restoration, proposed projects that meet objectives 1-4 should be ranked higher in priority than objectives 5-7. We believe the first 4 objectives best meet the Restoration Priorities for the Council's Plan outlined in in Section (t)(2)(D)(iii) already defined by the Act.

c. Advisory Committees

Should the Council establish any advisory committees? Science Advisory Sub-Committees for each Gulf Coast watershed should be established under a primary Committee. It is important to assure strong peer review and checks and balances between national and local scientists who have been working in their respective watersheds or knowledgeable about them for their entire careers. These individuals should have the best knowledge of the projects that are needed to comprehensively restore the local ecosystem and watershed. This could be modeled after structures currently in existence through the National Estuary Programs.

If so, what type of advisory committees should the Council establish? How should the Council structure such advisory committees? What role should such advisory committees play? Each Watershed Science Advisory

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Committee should fall under a larger Science Advisory Committee and should prioritize submitted projects based on applicability, scientific merit, expected results, chance of success, and cost versus ecosystem benefit. The work of these committees should feed into a "Project Review Committee" described in these comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 195

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
Date Sent: 07/08/2013 Date Received: 07/08/2013
Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
Contains Request(s): No Type: Web Form
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Correspondence Text

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of providing funding for restoration of the beaches of Dauphin Island. In particular, the west end of the island remains badly eroded and if the purpose of the funding being offered is for restoration of the Gulf, then I cannot think of a much better use of the funds than providing an engineered beach for the west end of the island. As you know, Dauphin Island was very negatively impacted by the BP spill and life still hasn't quite returned to "normal" there. I am a property owner on the island and I still see tar balls in the sand and they are still washing up on the shore with some regularity.

I understand that the positive effects of funding such a project would be seen immediately; as the project has already gone through a significant "planning" stage and is truly "shovel ready," so to speak. I also believe that beach restoration on Dauphin Island's west end would bolster significantly the island's role as a barrier to the mainland in the event of a strong tropical system that threatens the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

Scott Kiker

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 196

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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

It is extremely important that the Council devote at least some of its funding/programs toward revitalizing the local economy, which has long been dependent on the bounty of the Gulf. Without that bounty, the area is really hurting. Of course, such focus should not come at the expense of the local ecosystem, but it is my belief that ecology and economy can be improved simultaneously and in harmony.

In addition, scientists and citizens should have meaningful input on the process!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 197

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Correspondence Text

The Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project;

There must be a Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committee with real power to influence projects selected by the Council;

No projects that will benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 198

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Correspondence Text

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, Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

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. Clean-up 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."

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 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

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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
National Parks Conservation Association
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Notes:
Park Correspondence Log:
Date Received: 07/08/2013
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Correspondence Text

Dear Council,

I am a commercial fisherman, boat owner and captain of a crabbing boat. Prior to the BP Oil Disaster, I was harvesting sufficient crabs to provide and support my family. However, since the disaster, and in the past few seasons, I have seen alarming decline/losses of the crabs in areas that previously had abundant crabs (for example, I used to harvest sponge, female crabs in the summer months; however, this season/ summer, I have not harvested those crabs). This loss has caused great economic hardship for my family and we are very concerned about our livelihood.

First, of all, please address language access needs for Vietnamese-American fishermen. We need targeted outreach (many of us do not have computers), advance notice of meetings, translated documents received in a timely manner, and interpreters at the public meetings. I recommend the Council work with local organizations, such as MSCVAFF to address these issues.

Please keep restoration of the Gulf, its ecosystems, marine life/fisheries as a primary objective. Numerous fishing families all along the Gulf Region are highly dependent on healthy fisheries for our livelihoods and way of life. Primary criteria should be local hiring/contracting of experienced, commercial fishermen for various restoration projects.

I highly recommend the Council consider and implement a monitoring project where fishermen are hired to help scientist collect fisheries data.

I also suggest the Council implement a clean-up program (similar to Vessels of Opportunity). There is still
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ID: 47484

significant oil, dispersants, and tar balls in the sediments. These contaminants greatly impact water quality and as a result adversely impact the health of fisheries. We need additional remediation, clean-up work to remove those contaminants in order to effectively restore the fisheries.

And I am interested in exploring crab aquaculture projects.

Thank you for accepting my comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

To whom it may concern,

I am a resident of Ocean Springs, MS and I have lived on the Gulf Coast for more than two decades. My comments on the initial draft plan are structured around four specific areas of focus. First, the Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project. The fishing community was disproportionality impacted by the BP Oil Spill, and these same workers must be employed by any new restoration project. Second, some percentage of the restoration projects must employ minority and disabled workers from our Gulf Coast community. Third, the Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committees are vital to the success of any restoration work, but these committees cannot be figureheads; they must have real power to influence which projects are selected by the council. Finally, there simply cannot be any project that would benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration. The premise that the community could be uplifted economically while selling out our ecological future is short sighted and utterly ridiculous.

Thank you,

Jeremy Eisler

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

To whom it may concern,

First, the Council must commit to creating local jobs and workforce development with any new restoration project. The fishing community was disproportionality impacted by the BP Oil Spill, and these same workers must be employed by any new restoration project. Second, the Citizen's Advisory Committee and Science Advisory Committees are vital to the success of any restoration work, but these committees cannot be figureheads; they must have real power to influence which projects are selected by the council. Finally, there simply cannot be any project that would benefit the local economy at the cost of ecological restoration.

Thank you,

Reilly Morse

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

My family members are long-time commercial fishermen, owner and captain of a shrimp boat. As a result of the BP Oil Disaster, my family and countless others are very concerned about livelihood sustainability. Since then, fisheries closure and greatly reduced landings has caused great hardship for us.

Below are my recommendations:

The Council should develop a more inclusive process; please address language access needs for us. Please provide translated documents/materials and interpreters at all the public meetings. There should be timely outreach and we should be informed of meetings in advance. I suggest working with organizations, like MSCVAFF to help address these needs.

The Council should strongly prioritize fisheries restoration (shrimp, oysters, crabs) and habitats that support those fisheries as important objectives. Please do not squander limited resources on projects that do not properly restore the damaged Gulf, its ecosystems, and marine life. Further, important criteria should include contracting/hiring experienced fishers to help implement restoration projects. Many of us have spent decades fishing in the Gulf and have great practical experience that is invaluable to fisheries restoration.

In the past several seasons, many fishermen have observed significant amounts of oil, dispersants, tar balls, are still in the Gulf, particularly within the sediments. The Council should implement projects that hire vessels to do the necessary clean-up work.

And I strongly recommend developing a long-term, citizen-based monitoring program where trained fishermen work alongside with scientists to collect and document data.

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Finally, I also support a fishing contingency program, to be prepared for and respond to future oil disasters. The program would have trained fishermen with clean-up equipment (such as booms) on their vessels, and also conduct fisheries monitoring with scientific researchers.

It's vital for our livelihoods; please incorporate my recommendations, and thank you for accepting my comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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| Status: New | Park Correspondence Log: |
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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

I fully support the restoration and stabilization of Dauphin Island, AL. Dauphin Island took a direct hit from the BP oil spill and was more affected than Gulf Shores/Orange Beach, AL and the coast of Florida, and deserves to be "made whole" again. Dauphin Island is known as the "Birdiest Coastal Town." Many plants and animals, both on land and in the Gulf, depend on our island for their habitat and continued existence.

Many people are were affected by the oil spill, and their livelihood was severely impacted. A restoration project would bring much needed jobs to the area, and would increase tourism, creating even more job opportunities.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Number of Signatures: 1 Form Letter: No
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Notes:

Correspondence Text

Dear Council Members,

I am a commercial fisherman, owner and captain of the Lady Jo Ann, a shrimp boat.

As a result of the BP Oil Disaster, I am greatly worried about my livelihood. Since then, closed fishing areas and greatly reduced landings have caused tremendous hardship.

Coastal Restoration, well planned and implemented is the one opportunity to properly restore the damaged Gulf, its habitats, and fisheries. Regarding objectives, the Council should prioritize properly restoring ecosystems/ habitats, and fisheries for communities (such as Vietnamese-American fishing population) that depend on healthy natural resources for their livelihood. Additionally, please create a steering committee of commercial fishermen who can work with scientists. These scientists must understand the economic and cultural value of fishing. As for criteria, please prioritize hiring local, experienced fishermen. We already possess the necessary skillsets and have great practical experience.

It's very important that the Council consider a citizen-based monitoring project of various fisheries (trained, employed fishermen working with scientists to gather and document data critically important for proper restoration).

I also recommend that the Council establish a clean- program, similar to the Vessels of Opportunity Program. Many fishermen and I have observed that a significant amount of oil, dispersants, tar balls remain in the Gulf and must be cleaned-up because it's greatly affecting water quality and therefore the health and restoration of the fisheries.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 205

Author Information

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Correspondence Information

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Correspondence Text

As a member of a community impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill event, I am concerned that the RESTORE funds will be disproportionately distributed, and communities such as Dauphin Island, AL will suffer with long-term and devastating consequences. Every community deserves to be fairly evaluated, and funds made available to assist us in returning our communities to a more stable and growing environment, rather than a continuing spiral of decline. Our Dauphin Island tourism has been impacted, businesses were impacted, and the unique bird and animal habitats are at risk.

This is not a case of merely asking for funds because they are available. It is a real and sincere recognition that every community along the gulf was impacted. If funds are distributed to other locations to assist them in recovering, then it is inconceivable to expect that communities, like Dauphin Island, can overcome the massive obstacles of the past several years without the same and equal funding assistance.

We are a small organization, and unfortunately, small groups have small voices. While my letter is short, the message should be loud and clear that all communities desperately need whatever assistance is available. To leave Dauphin Island out of the process of funding under the RESTORE program requires the leadership of Alabama and the RESTORE program to acknowledge the consequences of those actions. We respectfully request that Dauphin Island be given equal opportunity and funding to allow our community regain tourism and business.

Thank you for reading my comments and I ask that the RESTORE committee to seriously consider providing necessary funds to Dauphin Island.

Sincerely,
D'Etta Rassier

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

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Correspondence: 206

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a boat owner and captain of a crabbing boat.

The BP Oil Drilling Disaster greatly devastated my livelihood and caused severe economic hardship. In the past several seasons, I have seen severe losses/ decline in the crab fisheries, particularly female crabs. In the past, I would harvest female, sponge crabs, particularly, in the summer; however, I haven't harvested those crabs near the volume/amount harvested prior to the disaster.

I implore the Council to prioritize restoration of fisheries and its habitats as a primary objective. Critically important criteria should be prioritizing and implementing ongoing monitoring and data collection of the fisheries (crabs, oysters, and shrimp). Additional criteria should include hiring local fishers to be trained and work with scientists on such projects.

Further, the Council should develop a steering committee of commercial fishermen. We can work with scientists/fisheries experts who understand the economic value of the seafood industry.

I also recommend the Council consider implementing a clean-up program. Many fishers have stated that oil, dispersants, and tar balls remain in the sediments. These contaminants greatly impact the health of fisheries. The Council can support projects that include additional remediation, clean-up work to remove those contaminants before the fisheries can be restored.

And I am interested in working with scientists to learn about crab aquaculture projects.

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It's critical to many livelihoods, please strongly consider and incorporate my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to make comments.

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Correspondence: 207

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Correspondence Text

To Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

My family consists of commercial fishermen; we are the owners and the captain of a shrimp boat that also harvest oysters (dredging). We also have a crabbing boat.

As a result of the BP Oil Disaster, fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on healthy, natural resources have suffered great economic hardship. Oyster reefs have remained mostly closed in the past three years; there are significant crab losses, and declining shrimp catches/landings.

The Council should prioritize the restoration of natural habitats for various fisheries as one of its primary objective. As criteria, the Council should also promote local hiring in contracting. For example, hire fishermen who already possess the skills and have great practical experience.

Please establish a steering committee of commercial fishermen and /or their designees. And this committee can work closely with scientific researchers to help plan/develop and implement fisheries restoration projects. Scientists should comprise of fisheries experts and those that understand the economic and cultural value importance of fishing.

Importantly, for oyster reef restoration, dredging/and or a relay element should be implemented. Based on our experience, setting new cultch material on a damaged, contaminated reef will not produce a healthy environment for future harvesting.

The Council should develop a citizen-based monitoring project of fisheries where trained fishermen and scientific Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

researchers collectively gather fisheries data (oysters, shrimp, and crabs).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 208

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Status: New Park Correspondence Log:
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Correspondence Text

As a long time active resident of Alabama's shoreline, I beg of you to place the physical restoration of vital submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster beds, and fill sand to rebuild the crucial habitat here along our delicate coast AT THE TOP of your list of projects. The acreage lost over the past years has been phenomenal and without immediate help, rebuilding our nation's seafood habitat may never happen. This area has been hit by three disasters since 2004 with hurricanes Ivan, Katrina and the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. The local communities cannot afford to not regain their livelihoods without which, they are slowing dying. Building tourism IS NOT a way to bring us back. Invest in what by nature is here. Thank you.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 209

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

My family members are commercial fishermen who have resided in Mississippi for over fifteen years. We are the owners and captain of a shrimp boat.

The following are my comments:

The BP Oil Disaster has greatly damaged the Gulf of Mexico, and its fisheries. Throughout the Gulf Coast Region, fishing families are greatly worried about livelihood sustainability and are experiencing economic hardship. Many of us are delinquent on household's bills and boat docking fees.

Regarding objectives and criteria, the Council should focus on additional remediation, clean-up work and properly restoring the fisheries and the habitats that support those fisheries.

I support additional clean-up, remediation work because many fishermen have stated that oil, dispersants, and tar balls remain in the Gulf and marshes. This is critically affecting water quality and therefore adversely impacting the fisheries.

The Council should prioritize projects that hire vessels to do the clean-up work.

Further, I think that it's crucial for fisheries restoration to include a community-based, fisheries monitoring project.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 210

Author Information

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council:

The Alliance for Affordable Energy wishes to submit the following comments on the "Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan" for implementation of the RESTORE Act to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council. Our responses answer the questions posed by the Gulf Council in your request for comments – "Should the Council develop further criteria for consideration now or in the future?" and "Should the Council consider other Objectives at this juncture?" The Alliance is a non-profit organization that has worked since 1985 to promote fair, affordable, and environmentally responsible energy policy for Louisiana and the nation.

Energy production, its benefits and drawbacks, touches every Louisiana citizen's life. The industry directly provides a great number of jobs, point source pollution, tax revenues, and dangerous working conditions. Indirectly, the industry has exacerbated coastal erosion, climate change, and political interference. The trend towards riskier deepwater drilling is indicative of a larger problem often described, as "the easy oil is gone." Deepwater drilling of the kind that failed at the Macondo Well is more expensive and riskier both financially and in terms of human lives. Though many improvements have been made in the leasing and oversight of off-shore drilling, more needs to be done to protect this vulnerable region while maintaining our communities and economies. The creation of a Science Advisory Committee and a Gulf Coast Citizen's Committee would help insure that the Council reaches these goals in an open and substantive way.

We are pleased that the Draft Initial Plan includes protecting and conserving ecosystems so they can continue "to reduce impacts from tropical storms and other disasters, support robust economies, and assist in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change (per Executive Order 13554)". The resilience of our coastal is integral to the health of our communities, economies, and habitats but time is running out. Our biggest challenge is coming

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from the impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise, more intense storms, and alterations in hydrological cycles. These effects have major implications for the Draft Plan's Objectives (pp.11-13), including restoration of habitats and natural processes, restoration of natural processes and shorelines, protection and restoration of living coastal and marine resources, and community resilience.

We strongly recommend including more information on what will qualify a project for 'assisting in mitigation and adaptation' to local authorities. Without this guidance, we suspect that too much time and resources will be wasted on project proposals that simply will not qualify under the President's executive order.

Locally, our efforts should be informed by the degree of adaptation necessary, which will be determined by the degree of change expected for the region. The drivers of climate impacts – sea level rise, storms, extreme weather, etc. – are in turn driven by greenhouse gas emissions at the global level. Including more information about how to include climate change factors in the Initial Draft Plan will dramatically enhance the Plan's seventh Objective – to Improve Science- Based Decision-Making Processes, and provide a level playing field for each project proposal. Every project must be based on the same sound fact, i.e. the different scenarios for projected carbon emissions, sea-level rise, hurricane activity, hydrological changes, etc.

We would stress the importance of "mitigation" in the plan and allow for ecosystem sustainability to include energy efficiency across all sectors and to diversify the region's energy systems with distributed generation and renewable energy. The American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) ranked the Gulf Coast states on their State Energy Efficiency Scorecard, and found a wide range, from 51st (Mississippi) to 29th (Florida), with Louisiana (43), Alabama (40), and Texas (33) falling between. Increasing efficiency and renewable energy capacity are easily integrated with programs to improve storm and weather resiliency in coastal communities. Other quantifiable benefits include reduction in energy bills for consumers, energy rate suppression, and decreases in pollution.

In the Gulf Coast city of New Orleans, programs such as Energy Smart and NOLA Wise are enabling residential and commercial consumers to reduce their energy use and their monthly bills through greater efficiency. Reduced emissions are a collateral benefit of these programs, along with a stronger economy. The ACEEE released a report in May 2013 which estimated that new or expanded energy efficiency policies and programs could save Louisiana customers \$4.2 billion in lower energy costs and support 27,100 jobs within the state by 2030.

Given these opportunities and the region's striking vulnerability, it is reasonable and fair to demand that Gulf Coast states commit to reducing climate change pollution as part of the regional resiliency effort under the RESTORE Act. This is consistent with all of the Draft Initial Plan's Objectives (pp. 11-14).

In conclusion, climate change must be integrated into the criteria and Objectives of the RESTORE Plan. Define resilience more clearly and require each state to provide a vision for the Gulf Coast in 50 – 100 years and answer the question: what do you need to do to get there? Every project needs to define its role in climate mitigation and/or adaptation. It must be made clear that projects with greenhouse gas emission reduction targets will be prioritized over projects that have no mitigation benefit. The Council needs to provide adequate guidance for how to comply with this requirement by providing projected carbon emissions, sea level rise, etc. Non-traditional ecosystem protection projects, like energy efficiency and renewable energy, should be authorized for RESTORE plan dollars.

The danger of not explicitly and comprehensively including climate change in the Plan's actions, as well as complementary policies and programs, is that critical one-time resources will be wasted on trying to save a region that simply cannot survive 3-10 feet of sea level rise and repeated disasters. Let's not squander billions of dollars.

Sincerely,

Casey DeMoss Roberts
Executive Director
Alliance for Affordable Energy

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 211

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Correspondence Information

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a long-time commercial fisherman, boat owner and captain of a shrimp freezer boat. I have been shrimping for decades, in federal waters off the coast of Louisiana.

Since 2010, the BP Oil Disaster has greatly damaged/contaminated the Gulf of Mexico and its fisheries. As a result of fisheries closures and significantly reduced landings, numerous fishing communities all throughout the Gulf Region have been very concerned about livelihood sustainability.

The Council should prioritize restoration of the Gulf, its ecosystems, and fisheries (shrimp, oysters, crabs). Please work with experienced fishermen to help plan and implement such projects. For effective restoration, academic knowledge and practical experience should be shared. I recommend the Council develop a steering committee that consists of Vietnamese-American fishers and/or their designees. This committee would work with scientists who are experts in various fisheries and understand the economic value of fishing.

Also, I highly recommend the implementation of a long-term, community-based monitoring project where commercial fishermen receive training and work with scientists to collect data.

Recently, I learned about a fishing contingency program in Alaska that was established after the Exxon Valdez Oil Disaster. Because of the massive BP Oil Disaster, we should be prepared for future oil disasters. Trained fishermen could have booms and other clean-up equipment on their vessels like the Vessels of Opportunity program and they can also be trained in fisheries monitoring.

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It's critically important for livelihood sustainability; please implement my recommendations and thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 212

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Correspondence Text

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am both an oyster harvester (dredging) and shrimper and have resided in South Mississippi for many years.

Since 2010, when the BP Oil Disaster occurred, my family and fishing community has experienced great hardship. Because of fisheries closures (for example, oyster reefs that were once harvestable have remained mostly closed), many of us are very concerned about livelihood sustainability

First, please address language access needs for the Vietnamese-American population (many of us did not receive a higher education. We settled in the Gulf Region to to continue our livelihoods (in Vietnam, many of us came from coastal fishing villages and fishing is a way of life for us). We greatly need experienced interpreters at all public meetings. Importantly, we need to be informed in advance through better outreach methods and to receive translated documents in a timely manner. Work with organizations like MSCVAFF to help address language needs.

As for objectives and criteria, the Council should focus on properly restoring the Gulf and its fisheries (oysters, shrimp, and crabs) and its habitats. Hiring/ contracting local workforce such as experienced fishermen should be a key criterion.

Please form a committee that consists of Vietnamese-American commercial fishermen who can work with scientists on restoration projects. The scientists should include researchers who understand the economic value and cultural importance of commercial fishing.

I highly recommend that the Council implement an oyster reef restoration project with relay and/or dredging

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components. Post Hurricane Katrina, some of us was hired for such projects and the outcome was successful. Based on our experience, we do not think placing cultch material on a damaged, contaminated reef will be successful in producing the necessary spat sets needed for future harvesting.

Further, I strongly support a monitoring project where fishermen are trained and work with scientists to help gather data needed for fisheries restoration.

I also think another clean-up program should be considered (similar to Vessels of Opportunity). There is still significant oil, dispersants, and tar balls that adversely impact water quality and consequently the fisheries stock are not healthy and abundant.

Our livelihoods are at stake, please strongly consider my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621 Correspondence: 213

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| Number of Signatures: 1 | Form Letter: No |
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| Notes: | |

Correspondence Text

this submission form would not allow me to send our comments due tue "scripts and links", I sent them in an independent email from michael@leanweb.org as a pdf. Please confirm that they have been received.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 214

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Correspondence Text

TO: Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, c/o U.S. Department of Commerce
FROM: Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
DATE: July 8, 2013
RE: Public Comments for Restore Council

The Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy (GCCLP) is a non-profit, public interest justice center with a mission to build, serve and advocate for structural shifts that promote equity in law and society. We envision social and political systems that promote equity and justice for all people. Therefore, the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy works to create structural balance in the laws and policies that produce disparate impact on marginalized groups.

In an effort to offer expert local leadership, GCCLP Advocacy Initiatives are rooted in data and work done in partnership with marginalized communities. Our Land Sovereignty & Climate Justice campaign is part of our work in Gulf Coast communities of Color. We offer the following recommendations for the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council as part of the public commenting process:

1. Prioritize Environmental Justice Communities in Restoration Projects
2. Strict Adherence to Federal Statutes that Prevent Unsafe and Unfair Labor Practices
3. Apply Innovative Approaches to Ensure "Local Hire" Goals are Met
4. Establish a Citizens Advisory Committee and Extend Council Vote to Community
5. Use Community Participatory Research Principles to Ensure Long-term Ecosystem Success

Prioritize Environmental Justice Communities in Restoration Projects

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It is a known fact that the most vulnerable communities to climate change are the same communities most often marginalized by overt and structural discrimination. Many of the low income and communities of Color throughout the Gulf Coast have had to bear the burden of ecosystem degradation caused by industry, developers and stronger storms facing the region. Acknowledging the role these communities play in the protection of states like Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alabama requires that Restore Act be prioritized to right past wrongs and make the most vulnerable places of the Coast stronger.

Strict Adherence to Federal Statutes that Prevent Unsafe and Unfair Labor Practices

In the aftermath of several recent disasters, Federal Labor and Contracting laws were suspended or nullified to allow for "business" to move swiftly. With no regard to the struggles that brought forth fair hiring, labor or contracting practices, bottom-lines became the most important indicator of economic recovery and growth. But this growth was done at the expenses of thousands of Gulf Coast workers, some of who have lost their lives or their livelihoods because federal standards were not met, monitored or adhered to. The RESTORE Act dollars present yet another opportunity for big business to benefit off unfair/ unpaid wages, discriminatory hiring/labor practices, dangerous work conditions and false/faulty reporting on community safety requirements. We need the RESTORE Council to act independent of the "favors" that occur at the executive levels of governments. Monitoring of federal labor and contracting should be a key part of any on-going reports and decisions of the Council.

Apply Innovative Approaches to Ensure Local Hire goals are met.

Despite major strides toward equality and fairness, the South continues to see disproportionate percentages of its communities of Color locked out of job and contracting opportunities based on institutional barriers maintained at various state levels. One tactic of institutionalizing oppression is for those in power to create a certain circumstances and then punish those victimized for being in that position. In other words, we cannot continue to create systems that produce mass poverty and then punish those who live a in the various level of life of that reality. Innovative approaches are needed to ensure that "local hire" goals are met.

Often, members of impoverished communities are turned away from jobs because they 1) lack a certain level of education; 2) have a criminal record; or 3) fail a drug test. Rarely are employers required to acknowledge the role that persistent poverty plays in educational attainment or access to educational opportunity. Few employers question a criminal conviction despite Louisiana's ultra-strict drug violations (E.G. Felony convictions that in most other states would be considered a misdemeanor offense) or the various Department of Justice Investigations into racial profiling, police corruption or court sentencing discrimination. And almost never will an employer grant a second chance to those living among social conditions that proliferates generational depression, yet bar access to mainstream mental health treatment and cope using methods considered treatment in some states and crimes in others.

Yet the data consistently shows that when a person with all of these challenges secures a well-paying job, s/he seeks higher educational attainment, stays out of legal trouble and stays sober as part of a new found self-esteem and pride. Many of these workers go on to be loyal employees of companies that choose to see them as better than their circumstances.

An innovative approach to ensure that people have the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty would consider an individual's ability to learn, stay out of criminal entanglements and stay clean from use of drugs. The zero tolerance approach to "job readiness" should be substituted for a process that allows for 1) tailored pre-educational courses specific to job training and position 2) review of non-violent criminal offenses against the backdrop of Louisiana's sentencing and racial profiling practices; and 3) Drug testing that allows for multiple screening over a six week period to show an applicant's commitment to stopping use of illegal drug treatment.

Establish a Citizens Advisory Committee and Extend Council Vote to Community

Too often, value is placed in those well-meaning allies to come from afar, with new ideas and fresh perspectives on how to save the Gulf Coast and its communities. To be sure, we will need the best that science and technology have to offer to combat such a massive challenge. But we can no longer afford to ignore the generational expertise found in our long-standing communities namely, sovereign native tribes, that possess information about processes that held true for so long. In addition to a Citizen Advisory Council that reports directly to the Restore Council, additional votes of the Restore Council should be offered to long-standing community representatives and sovereign tribal nations recognized by impacted states. These additional representatives should be members of both the Citizen and Government Councils and their votes as well as their opinions should be weighed equally.

Use Community Participatory Research Principles to Ensure Long-term Ecosystem Success

The one thing we know for sure is that one day, the RESTORE Act money will run out. The only remaining question will be whether the Gulf Coast is better for all that these dollars have been able to build. After Hurricane Katrina, "rebuilding success" was counted in the number on new building that arose from that devastation. Today's success looks like empty neighborhoods, high crime rates, high suicide rates, poor health statistics and a growing wealth divide.

We cannot afford to gauge success in such a rudimentary way. Long-term success of this region does not simply rest in wildlife habitats. Instead, it rests in how the residents of this region see themselves as part of a broader ecosystem. To build in this perception and positive learning, research cannot just be done on the people and the habitats of the Gulf Coast. It must be done by the people. Residents should not just be for extracting data, but should also be key actors in a process for imparting knowledge that will stay in the communities long after the RESTORE resources fade. Principles of community participatory research must be at the core of research and monitoring projects funded by RESTORE dollars. The community must learn the new methods of these great research allies and the details of their community-based culture.

We offer the above recommendations for your consideration and request that you contact directly to hear more about our work or our opinions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colette Pichon Battle, Director
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 215

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Correspondence Information

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Correspondence Text

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a 501(c)(3) land conservation organization, appreciates the opportunity to offer its views of the draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. For 40 years, The Trust for Public Land has advanced its mission to conserve "land for people." The organization has completed more than 5,200 conservation projects and protected more than three million acres nationwide.

Over its history, The Trust for Public Land has completed scores of land conservation projects along the Gulf Coast - from Corpus Christi to the Florida Keys. Most recently, the organization has been active in the Deepwater Horizon disaster recovery effort by assisting in the preservation of critical tracts in the Florida panhandle through the use of civil settlement funds. These early mitigation projects were among the first cases of recovery funds being quickly and successfully delivered to Gulf Coast communities.

The Trust for Public Land is committed to remaining an engaged partner throughout the Gulf Coast to aid in the recovery of local communities affected by the disaster. The Comprehensive Plan will provide a framework for this recovery effort so that investments from the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund and other sources are made in a coordinated and strategic fashion that will have the greatest restoration outcomes.

The Council's solicitation of public comments is an opportunity to ensure that the final product benefits from views of an array of stakeholders. To that end, The Trust for Public Land respectfully offers its views of the draft Initial Comprehensive Plan.

(1) The Council should follow the RESTORE Act's evaluation criteria for the Council-selected Restoration Component of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. The Trust for Public Land commends the Council for relying Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

on the statutory language in proposing the evaluation criteria for the Council-selected Restoration Component in the draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. The RESTORE Act clearly intended for the Restoration Component, which represents 30 percent of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, to be used for projects aimed at ecosystem restoration. Section 1603 states that the "Council shall give highest priority to projects that address one 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 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."

No changes are necessary to the four evaluation criteria for the Restoration Component. They reflect Congressional intent, and they are broad enough to capture the range of ecosystem restoration needs across the Gulf. The Council should maintain this position in preparing the final Comprehensive Plan.

(2) No additional criteria are needed for the Council-selected Restoration Component. To the extent that important recovery projects fall outside of the four evaluation criteria for the Restoration Component, they may be funded from the Direct Funds Component or, perhaps, the Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act.

The Direct Funds Component represents 35 percent of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, and through the RESTORE Act Congress provided states with broad authority in the use of these funds. Section 1603 of the law lists nine categories of eligible activities which states may conduct using Direct Component Funds "for ecological and economic restoration of the Gulf." This wider latitude will allow states to initiate projects they may view as priorities, but that are beyond the scope of the Restoration Component's evaluation criteria. Similarly, the RESTORE Act permits states to use their Spill Impact Component funds - 30 percent of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund - for these eligible activities provided that Council approval is given to a State Expenditure Plan.

Due to the range of uses available to states in their use of the Direct Funds and Spill Impact Funds, no further criteria are needed for the Restoration Component beyond those provided in the statute. Indeed, additional criteria could diminish the aim of the Restoration Component of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, which is recovering the ecosystem. The final Comprehensive Plan should continue to respect this division so that the range of recovery projects can proceed from their appropriate funding sources.

(3) The Council should give special consideration to projects that have been federally authorized. Three years after the disaster, it is crucial to advance eligible quality projects that can restore the Gulf. The RESTORE Act requires that the initial Comprehensive Plan include a list of authorized projects "not yet commenced, the completion of which would further the purposes" of Gulf Coast restoration. Advancing such projects - provided that they meet the

evaluation criteria - would help ensure that restoration can proceed without unnecessary delay.

The draft Initial Comprehensive Plan's Appendix A includes an expansive list of potential restoration projects. The draft makes clear that the "list does not represent a list of projects and program that the Council will prioritize or necessarily fund." With that in mind, our understanding is that the legislation specifically sought to have a list of projects with federal authority for conservation and restoration, such as through the Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Conservation Act, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and various other special legislation that provide agencies with robust authority to protect ecological resources. We further believe that such a list limited to federally authorized projects, as we understand Congress intended, will provide significantly greater value to the Council than the current list in Appendix A.

The Trust for Public Land is grateful for the opportunity to offer its views of the draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, and the organization stands ready to work with the Council to ensure that recovery effort is the success it must be for the people of the Gulf.

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While the draft plan states that it "recognizes the value of tribal input in the region's restoration activities", it seems to limit this value only to federally-recognized tribes, as stated earlier in the paragraph on page 1. Coastal Louisiana is filled with as diverse a population as it has natural environment, and part of this diversity consists of both the state-recognized and non-federally or state recognized tribes who call coastal Louisiana home. Their lives, life-ways, and livelihoods are embedded in the lands and waters along the coast and they deserve just as much a voice as any in their input being included.

Related to the above point, while outside scientific monitoring is needed, just if not more important is the inclusion of local, citizen science and knowledge. There needs to be a plan included for incorporating local knowledge, observations and monitoring, in which outside scientists are guided by local understandings of the water and ecosystem.

Page 4 discusses the natural catastrophes the region has experienced, as well as the loss of wetland habitats, erosion, land loss, imperiled fisheries, and water quality degradation. The draft attributes these losses to natural forces, the alteration of hydrology, and other human activities. This is all true, but what is being distinctly left out of the draft is the significant role played by the oil and gas companies dredging thousands of miles of pipelines, whose impacts have severely exacerbated the issues listed above. Furthermore, there is a direct connection to the issues such as erosion and land loss and the impacts of these so-called natural disasters, in which these issues greatly increase the adverse impacts of these disasters, putting communities and ecosystems at ever greater harm's way.

Page 4 also discusses the "compromised water quality and quantity" (and again on page 8); the compromised soil and air quality also needs to be included, as this impacts people's health and ability to grow their own food for subsistence, as well as sell locally. Furthermore, there is no mention of restoring and protecting people's subsistence-
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based livelihoods in the entire draft, which is a necessary element to be included.

What about funds to support community-led relocation if a community themselves decide they can no longer stay in place? Communities should be able to receive funding and support to lead their own relocation efforts if they deem it is no longer feasible to continue living where they are due to the intense erosion, land loss, saltwater intrusion, sea-level rise, contamination, pollution, and destruction of their livelihoods.

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RESTORE Act projects to be considered for funding must be conducted on the Gulf Coast in order to comply with eligibility for approval.

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Correspondence Text

To Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

I am a commercial fisherman, the captain of a shrimp and oyster (dredging) boat. I have been fishing for numerous years in the Gulf and because the BP Oil Disaster, I am very concerned about my livelihood. For the past three years, it's been a tremendous toll on fishermen, as we earned very little or no fishing income due to various fisheries closures and/or greatly reduced catches.

The Vietnamese-American fishing community has great language access needs. Many of us did not obtain a higher education nor do we have computers/email accounts. Please provide translated documents, and there should be targeted outreach when disseminating information. Interpreters should be available at all public meetings.

As for objectives and criteria, the Council should restore the fisheries (shrimp, crabs, oysters), and its habitat. Important criteria should be local hiring /contracting with experienced fishermen for various fisheries restoration projects.

And I support a steering committee with commercial fishermen who can work with scientists that are experts in fisheries and understand the economic value and cultural importance of fishing.

It's very important that the Council consider a citizen-based monitoring project. I think that having trained fishermen working with scientists to gather and document fisheries data are critically important for effective restoration.

I also highly recommend establishing a fishing contingency program whereby trained fishermen are first responders and have clean-up equipment on their vessels and also hired to conduct ongoing fisheries monitoring with

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researchers.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

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As an applied cultural anthropologist, I was honored with the opportunity to work with members of numerous Alabama and Florida fishing communities following the 2010 BP Gulf oil spill. This allowed me reengagement with communities I had worked with in the past as well as introduction to communities with which I had no prior involvement. My field experiences reemphasized a key observation from my previous work: As members of historically-rooted, natural resource-dependent communities, Gulf Coast commercial fishers maintain detailed knowledge stores related to the local environment and the effective means to overcome the disasters that regularly impact the coast. Other ethnographers affiliated with the project found that Gulf Coast Native American communities and non-Native ethnic communities maintain similar knowledge systems based on their surrounding environment. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council should be aware of local knowledge for two major reasons: 1) If applied carefully, local knowledge could be invaluable to the restoration of the entire Gulf Coast following from the oil spill disaster; 2) Local knowledge should be kept closely in mind in the design and implementation of efforts intended to help these communities move beyond the major setbacks deriving from the spill. If local knowledge is ignored or undermined, development projects often fail or can even inflict more damage to the community.

At the Spanish Fort listening session on 5 June 2013, I heard many people mention that the Council should consider projects that incorporate "sound science." My fear as an anthropologist is that such a focus on "sound science" might result in application of "expert" knowledge to the near exclusion of local knowledge. Indeed, across the Gulf Coast, community resilience projects frequently rely on the implementation of plans designed by people outside the community. Often, these plans are presented to communities at their completion rather than developed alongside them. This practice results in projects that do not take into account how the community functions most effectively.

Economic sustainability efforts should also be inclusive of local knowledge and goals. Moreover, such efforts

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should closely consider social networks, which help sustain individual economic success and, thus, support the economic viability of the entire community. Typically, economic sustainability is seen as the domain of economists, wherein various statistics are used to assess the viability of a community's economy. Proposed implementations might be rezoning properties for commercial development or allowing different types of industries to enter an area. But, these proposals ignore cultural associations people maintain through locally developed economic structures and social networks. They also do not consider traditional economic adaptations that support individuals and families through times of resource scarcity. At the Spanish Fort session, many people offered that resolving environmental problems would necessarily lead to economic sustainability. From my perspective, if cultural viability is not addressed alongside environmental problems, economic development efforts will not be successful. My recent work in fishing communities exemplified that the oil spill negatively affected social relations and networks on which fishers rely for economic success. Without first addressing these delicate cultural problems, economic sustainability proposals may fail in these communities.

In finalizing the Comprehensive Plan, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council should be very careful in its employment of terms and work diligently to be inclusive of projects that would take a "bottom up" approach, wherein local knowledge and culture is accounted for in resiliency and sustainability efforts in Gulf Coast communities. These types of projects would include ethnographic studies to understand cultural aspects of the community and then attempt to employ these data in restoration efforts. Such projects would help communities resolve cultural viability problems while helping achieve the overall goals of environmental and economic recovery.

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Dear Council,

I am a commercial fisherman, owner, and captain of a shrimp vessel that also dredge oysters.

When the BP Oil Disaster occurred, numerous fishing families experienced great hardship. Because of extended fisheries closures, for example, oyster reefs have remained mostly closed and many of us are very concerned about our livelihoods and culture.

As for objectives, the Council should focus on restoring the Gulf and its fisheries such as oysters, shrimp, crabs, and its habitats. Further, contracting/hiring a local workforce of commercial fishermen should be a criterion because we already have the skills and experience.

I also recommend the Council form a committee that consists of Vietnamese-American fishermen who can work with scientists to help develop and implement projects. The scientists should include researchers who understand the economic and cultural value of commercial fishing.

And I highly recommend that the Council implement an oyster reef restoration project with relay and/or dredging components. Based on experience, we do not think placing cultch material on a damaged, contaminated reef will be successful in producing the necessary spat sets.

Further, the Council should develop an ongoing, monitoring project where fishermen are trained and work with scientists to help gather data needed for restoration.

I also think another clean-up program should be considered (similar to Vessels of Opportunity). There is still

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significant oil, dispersants, and tar balls that adversely impact water quality and consequently the fisheries are not healthy.

Please strongly consider my recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

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Correspondence Text

Dear Council,

I am submitting these comments on my own behalf. I live in Houston, Texas and oppose the project known as "Ike Dyke." As such, I was extremely concerned that the Council's draft environmental assessment (EA) -- the document required to ensure that any plans or projects do not overwhelming harm our ecological resources -- specifically envisioned that RESTORE dollars from the largest off-shore oil spill in the nation could be spent on enhancing port infrastructure. Under Section 3.4.4 entitled Infrastructure, the draft EA correctly identifies that coastal transportation infrastructure is "increasingly vulnerable to local sea level rise and extreme weather events, like hurricanes." But then indicates that "[i]mplementation of eligible projects and programs could impact existing infrastructure or require the creation of new facilities." [Emphasis added]

RESTORE dollars should not be allocated to any proposed project that would add port or transportation facilities already at risk and create new ones to be further threatened. RESTORE dollars should be used to restore, preserve, and protect the natural ecosystems along the Texas coast that have been shown -- in study after study -- to be the best natural defenses for coastal communities. It is this Council's role to ensure that these dollars are spent to remedy the huge environmental and economic harm caused by careless players in the Gulf. And without a doubt, spending these dollars on actual on-the-ground projects, like major land acquisition, purchasing environmental in-flows, oyster bed restoration, or creating marine sanctuaries, will have a significant return on an investment that otherwise would not happen. Creating new port or transportation facilities is best left to the business community.

Further, as the Texas population continues to grow, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve and protect the Texas coastline. These dollars should prioritize substantive projects that protect or restore our beautiful coast, not add dollars to existing agencies to study issues. The entities, many of which have representatives on this

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Council, should prioritize substantive projects to restore an already deeply degraded environment and seek additional budget dollars to study old problems.

Thank you for considering these comments.

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Clearly there will need to be prioritization of how the Gulf of Mexico Restoration Funds will be spent. There will be a huge amount of potential expenditures represented by the proposed projects and there is little doubt that quite simply, the money will run out.

While I respect the broad range of projects that are being proposed under the RESTORE Act, I urge the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to focus on two areas: Restoration of aquatic and marine ecosystems directly affected by the Deepwater Horizon accident and restoration of the Gulf-Front as the bulwark against the effects of future accidents and as the first line of defense against rising sea levels and increasing storm surges.

Firstly, the aquatic and marine ecosystems impacted directly and indirectly by the Deepwater Horizon oil, the use of chemical dispersants, and the construction of temporary barriers need to be restored to health. This will need to be done in coordination with the National Academy and other researchers to apply the latest scientific knowledge, develop new restoration techniques based on the latest and emerging knowledge and evaluate the success.

Secondly, the barrier islands that are the first line of protection for the Gulf Coast must be restored, a long range plan for protection of the Gulf-Front barrier island resources must be developed and implementation of this plan must begin. Although it is a complex task, I do believe that the dune systems of the barrier islands can be restored and enhanced, the effects of channel dredging can be ameliorated by restoring sand supplies, and crucial breaches in the barrier island system can be closed. It is absolutely essential that the barrier island system be reinforced as the first line of defense for Gulf Coast cities, ports, estuaries, bays, and bayous.

What is even more complex is how to plan for the next century of protection and management of the Gulf Front defenses we call barrier islands. There will be some very difficult choices. For instance, do we want to remove Gulf Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Front structures that are most subject to both damage from incoming oil and incoming storm surge? Do we want to make barrier island maintenance and restoration an integral part of channel dredging plans for Gulf ports? Do we want to have local, state, and federal policies that discourage further development of the barrier islands? What do we expect the barrier island resource to be in 25, 50, 100 years and how can we achieve that?

These are truly challenging times for the Gulf Coast and I realize that the Council will face an onslaught of competing requests. I urge the council to focus on these two areas as the keys to both ameliorating the existing damage from Deepwater Horizon and making it possible for the Gulf Coast to move along in the 21st Century with the best chance of making it to the 22nd.

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Correspondence Text

Dear Council Members,

I am a commercial fisherman, working for a shrimp and oyster(dredging) boat.

Because of the BP Oil Disaster, I have faced tremendous hardship. Since then, I have earned very little fishing income and have great difficulty paying household bills. Formerly, I was independent, but because of dramatic loss in fishing income I had to seek help from social service providers/organizations.

Please address language barriers, by providing translated documents and interpreters. The Council could work with organizations such as MSCVAFF to conduct targeted outreach.

The Council should prioritize fisheries restoration (shrimp, oysters, crabs) as it first objective. And criteria should include hiring local fishermen who already possess the skills and experience.

Also, I highly recommend that the Council develop a long-term fisheries monitoring project. Trained fishermen could work with scientists to collect and document data on fisheries.

It's important to our livelihoods. Please incorporate my recommendations and thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.

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I would like to see the national news channels report that outcomes and impacts of restoration activities of the Gulf and its beaches will be available on this web site. Americans need to know that our government is pursuing the Gulf restoration as promised.

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Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
C/o U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW, Room 4077
Washington, DC 20230

July 8, 2013

Dear Council,

I am legally blind and had to give up driving 19 years ago. I have not been able to attend the various meetings and hearings held in Louisiana and other coastal states on projects which might be considered in the recovery of the coast from the massive BP – Macando oil spill disaster on the Alabama – Florida border out in the Gulf of Mexico

In 1974 Louisiana voters adopted a new constitution which included some new wording covering natural resources. Article 9 of the Constitution deals with natural resources like air, water, wetlands, forest, oil and natural gas, the mining of salt, sulfur, gypsum, sand, gravel, logging of forest and related things. Section 1 of Article 9 tells how the harvesting or alteration of these important natural resources must be dealt with.

" The natural resources of the state, including air and water, and the healthful, scenic, historic, and esthetic quality of the environment shall be protected, conserved, and replenished insofar as possible and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the people. The legislature shall enact laws to implement this policy."

Then in 1984 the Louisiana Supreme Court gave us a 9 –0 decision in a case involving a proposed commercial hazardous waste disposal facility in which Article 9, Section 1 of the 1974 Constitution was a key element. This decision was *Save Ourselves* versus the Louisiana Environmental Control Commission, 452 So.2d 1152

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Several other court cases have further described or clarified processes which regulatory agency officials should consider when making decisions which may adversely impact human health and the environment. These decisions include *Blackett v. La. Dep't of Env'tl. Quality*, 506 So. 2d 749 (La. Ct. App. 1st 1987) and *Rubicon*, 670 So. 2d 475 (La. Ct. App. 1st 1996) (recommending formal I.T. findings).

In coastal Louisiana there are hundreds, and possibly thousands of dams, weirs, sills, locks, levees and other structures which limit water flow and block the movement or passage of aquatic species between the Gulf of Mexico and the millions of acres of coastal waters and wetlands which are, or should be, a critical part of their habitat.

1 - Today there is a weir which is maintained by local landowners and hunters which prevents aquatic species from being able to move from Lake Pontchartrain into the more than 20,000 acres of coastal wetland habitat known as the LaBranche wetlands. More than 30 years ago the weir was put in to keep highly saline waters which were entering Lake Pontchartrain from the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers never considered, or mitigated, what adverse impacts the MRGO navigation canal would do to the wetlands of St. Charles Parish.

While the weir on Bayou LaBranche has kept out salt water it has also kept out shrimp, crabs, menhaden and other aquatic species because the weir was not built to give these critters access to their habitat. The sportsmen may have kept out salt water but they were thinking about hunting rather than fishing and aquatic species. A rebuilding of this weir to allow the migration of aquatic species would reconnect more than 20,000 acres of coastal wetlands with the Gulf of Mexico which are desperately needed by aquatic coastal resources and people.

All of the water control structures which have been built in coastal Louisiana should be evaluated to determine if these structures are limiting the movement of aquatic species. The coastal restoration program should determine if any structures should be rebuilt to reestablish or improve the movement of aquatic species in their habitat.

Toxic And Hazardous Waste

There are hundreds, and possibly thousands of areas where contamination can be found in coastal waters, sediments and wetlands from the release of waste from industrial activities. In Louisiana some of this contamination has been well documented by industry, and government agencies at the local, state and national levels but very little has been done to clean up this serious pollution.

2 - There is the mercury contamination in the Pearl River on the Louisiana – Mississippi border from the paper mill at Bogalusa which contaminates all aquatic species in the river. This contamination has been well documented and is clearly a threat to aquatic species in the Pearl River Basin and to wildlife and humans who live on or try to enjoy these aquatic resources.

Back in the 1970's the paper mill was ordered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to stop using mercury compounds in their paper making process but nothing was done to clean up the mercury waste which had been discharged into the Pearl River Basin.

3 - In Bayou Bonfouca the Environmental Protection Agency did a cleanup of massive amounts of toxic and hazardous waste from the former American Creosote site in the middle of Slidell. While this cleanup was apparently a good one there are still tons of serious contamination in the bed of Bayou Bonfouca which has not been cleaned up. This contaminated sediment includes the part of the bayou which flows through the wildlife refuge which is maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service where the contaminated bayou flows into Lake Pontchartrain.

4 - While the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality apparently did a good job of cleaning up some of the waste left by the Madisonville Creosote Site the water way between this wood treating facility and Lake Pontchartrain has not been cleaned up

5 - On Selser's Creek just south of Hammond there is extensive contamination from several battery recovery facilities like Delatte – Fuschia and Pontchatoula Battery. This little water way has been contaminated for decades with heavy metals and acids. Aquatic species, wildlife and humans have again been deprived of the natural resources which were in this coastal ecosystem before these battery reclamation facilities contaminated these resources.

6 - On the south side of Lake Pontchartrain we find extensive contamination in the LaBranche wetlands. For more than 70 years Shell Oil discharged more than 5 million gallons of waste water every day into Bayou Trepagnier which flows into Lake Pontchartrain. Today the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is proposing that Shell should clean up one mile of this seriously contaminated coastal water way but will allow Shell to leave extensive contamination on more than two and a half miles on the bed of the bayou.

7 - Good Hope Oil Refinery, next to Shell Oil at Norco was never required to clean up the contamination which was discharged into the canal next to Airline Highway which is U.S. Highway 61 in St. Charles Parish. This waste flowed into Bayou Labranche .

8 - Bayou LaBranche was also contaminated by waste discharged by the Pan American Oil Refinery which discharged waste into Cross Canal which also empties into Bayou LaBranche. There was some cleanup of the contamination of the Pan American Oil Refinery Site after workers became contaminated with waste which had not been cleaned up when the refinery was closed. The contamination in Cross Canal still pollutes the waters, fish and wildlife resources and humans in this part of St. Charles Parish in coastal Louisiana.

9 - There are at least two salt domes in the LaBranche wetlands where EXXON and Shell have caused extensive contamination of waters and wet lands for decades and this contamination has never been dealt with.

10 – For almost a year now the residents of the Bayou Corne settlement near the Napoleonville salt dome have been forced to stay away from their homes. There are apparently some 34 salt domes in Louisiana where oil, natural gas, chemicals, radioactive waste and other materials have been stored in etched out caverns. The Office of Conservation has been permitting these facilities but the agency never adopted any regulations to control these storage facilities.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council could recommend that all Gulf Coast states make sure that they have adequate laws, regulations and staff to control activities like salt dome storage facilities so that activities which may endanger human health and the environment are properly permitted and regulated.

The Council should also request all federal, state and local government officials with any responsibilities and duties in environmental, human health, waters, wetlands, wildlife, aquatic species, shipping and other forms of transportation, oil and natural gas production, transporting and processing, agriculture, recreation and tourism and other activities which may create or encounter any adverse impacts to human health or the environment to work with the Council to identify and deal with these real or potential problems.

I have identified a few of the places in coastal Louisiana where there are known problems but clearly there many more problems in the five Gulf of Mexico states which have not yet been identified or dealt with. If the Council could at least begin compiling things which need to be identified and dealt with that would be a great step in the right direction.

The few locations I have identified are but a small list of challenges to the restoration of our coastal environment

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ID: 47484

which if corrected would provide many tens of thousands of acres of waters and wetlands which need to be restored for our fish and wildlife resources and human activities like fishing, and swimming.

Sincerely yours,

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Please prioritize projects that improve water quality, such as stormwater retention systems and projects to stabilize sediment on dirt roads and farms. It is far more effective to improve water quality by capturing pollutants within a watershed before they reach surface waters.

I also ask that you hold State expenditure plans to the goals outlined in The Path Forward. Doing so will ensure that infrastructure projects like roads and bridges are not funded with these monies. Using RESTORE monies to build roads will negate the many environmental benefits that will come from the environmental projects likely to be funded. In fact, it would be a tragic irony to take monies resulting from a terrible oil spill, and use them to encourage communities to use even more oil by expanding automobile networks.

There are many examples of infrastructure projects that help conserve energy and reduce environmental damage-- like sidewalks and bike paths, or stormwater retention areas. There is also the ability to add to communication infrastructure through enhanced broadband networks to make communities more connected. New infrastructure that does not significantly damage natural resources should be the only kind funded through the Council's RESTORE dollars. Thank you!

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Dear Sirs: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Initial Plan. Like millions around the world, I watched with sadness and anger the devastation of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Restore Act, and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, are important elements in the recovery process for the people, and ecosystems of the Gulf.

The Council is to be commended for a good start in what will continue to be a long and difficult effort. I especially and strongly support its effort to place best available science at the center of the decision process.

I believe further that ecosystem recovery must take precedence over economic recovery, because without a healthy ecosystem the economy will not fully recover, and not remain healthy long term.

I urge the Council to form science and citizen advisory committees to assist the Council in developing criteria to prioritize the selection of projects and programs for RESTORE funding. I am convinced this disaster would have never occurred if citizen advisory committees had been in operation in the Gulf, as were recommended and set up in Alaska waters after the Exxon Valdez disaster. Citizen input and monitoring is a valued part of our democracy.

I urge the Council to continue to deepen the specifics and details of its Plan and provide regular update releases and comment periods (I suggest 60 days at least).

This disaster should never have happened. We depend our government to make sure that justice is obtained, that lives and livelihoods are reconstituted, and that ecosystems are restored. And that such corporate incompetence will not be excused in the future.

Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC ID: 47484

Thank you

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

Correspondence: 228

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I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these proposed plans:

A few short comments,

Keep the focus on projects that restore the natural environment, avoid the political drift that will try to shift the focus to economics. Environmental restoration must be at the core of all economic activity.

Do no harm. Be consistent.

Do not approve one project that protects a natural resource and approve another that damages that same resource.

Upgrade and update all Programatic Biological Opinions that pertain to natural Gulf systems. Make sure the information contained is current and relevant. Be sure to take into consideration the impacts of the BP oil disaster on the system(s) considered before using the B. O. to justify evasive, injurious activity.

The statement on page 59 under "Threatened and Endangered Species Under the Endangered Species Act, must be rewritten to make the paragraph relevant to the task of restoring the damaged, degraded natural resources of the Gulf. Be specific, setting standards that protect and restore. Managed abundance not continued measured degradation of resources.

New thinking is needed. New Processes.

.....

Minimize interference with selected projects, encourage collaboration, don't control.

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The meeting of the Council that I attended, the final one in Florida, had a number of public commenters from the scientific community. I think a scientific component should be a part of almost all approved projects so we in the future can reflect on the data collected to move forward with our effort to survive on this earth.

Sincerely,

Robert (Bob) Krasowski
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council,

Below are comments from the MS Coalition for Vietnamese-American Fisher Folks and Families (MSCVAFF), which were stated at the public meeting on June 11, 2013, at the MS Coast Coliseum in Biloxi, MS. Additional language is also included.

First, I am speaking on behalf of the hundreds of Vietnamese-American shrimpers who were unable to attend this meeting due to the opening of the shrimp season in the Mississippi Sound this morning. They would like to convey that they do not consider this a meaningful, public participation process when they have to choose between supporting their families or attending a public meeting critically important to their livelihoods.

Additionally, there is no meaningful public participation, when language access needs are not addressed at the front end. Key documents as the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan, Preliminary List of Proposed Projects & Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment must be translated into the Vietnamese language and disseminated to the community in a timely manner and all public meetings should have qualified interpreters. It is unacceptable that this population, acknowledged as an environmental justice community, whose livelihoods are critically dependent on healthy natural resources, and comprise at least one-third of commercial fishermen in the Region, cannot have their language access needs properly addressed. The Council should develop more effective ways to announce meetings and disseminate documents aside from the restorethegulf.gov website, because of language access needs and lack of computers owned by minority households.

We propose creating a mailing list, sending translated documents to community-based organizations and to a smaller number of residents.

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We highly recommend that the Council incorporate the following objectives:

1. It's important that the communities who most depend on the health of the Gulf of Mexico have input into the planning and implementation of this Comprehensive Restoration Plan, and see their needs reflected in the plan and its decision-making process.
2. Update preliminary list of proposed projects (conditions may have changed) and host additional public meetings (for some proposed projects, it has been years since the public vetting process took place).
3. There is a great need for Regional priorities, coordination, and implementation of projects in a large scale, comprehensive manner (for example, oysters spawn from East to West and regional oyster reef restoration projects should factor this). However, the limitation that only Council members may sponsor projects may hinder this important Regional coordination.
4. The Council should develop a Public Steering Committee with voting authority that consist of Vietnamese-American commercial fishermen and/or their designees.

Finally, we strongly implore the Council to release another copy (second draft) of the Draft Initial comprehensive Plan with further defined objectives, criteria, and incorporated public comments from the fishing community, and to host another round of public meetings (second public comment period) before the Final Comprehensive Plan is released. If the Council does not release a second Draft Comprehensive Plan, then we ask that the Council list the incremental steps/elements in drafting the Comprehensive Plan, explaining and listing reasons why the Council incorporated or did not incorporate comments/recommendations from the listening sessions/public meetings.

It's critically important for livelihood sustainability, please incorporate the above recommendations, and thank you for the opportunity to submit our recommendations.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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

The following comments are being submitted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership's Center for Marine Fisheries. These comments have been reviewed and approved as representative of the opinions of the TRCP's Gulf restoration workshop's steering committee members: Jeff Angers, President, Center for Coastal Conservation, David Cresson, CEO CCA-Louisiana, Ken Haddad, American Sportfishing Association Government Affairs Committee, George Cooper, Senior Vice-President Forbes-Tate, American Sportfishing Association Government Affairs Committee and TRCP board member and Chris Macaluso, Center for Marine Fisheries Director, The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership.

Sportfishing is an inextricable component of the culture and economy of the Gulf of Mexico region. A recent report examining the economic and social role of sportfishing released by the American Sportfishing Association illustrates that more than 3.5 million people in the Gulf participated in recreational saltwater fishing in 2011 with more than \$10 billion in economic activity associated with the region's recreational fishing. Many Gulf communities would be decimated without the economic benefit of recreational fishing as would the quality of life of Gulf residents.

Recreational fishing and fishermen suffered greatly during the 2010 oil spill and continue to contend with the impacts more than three years later. Fishermen, especially in the northern and central Gulf, lost an entire spring, summer and early fall of access to the fishery. Some popular fishing areas along Louisiana's coast still see periodic closures due to oiling from the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

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In the short term, the spill damaged and destroyed marshes, beaches, reefs, grass beds and other essential fish habitats and caused shifts in fisheries distribution. Many of the long-term impacts will not be experienced for years, even decades, to come.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and its sportfishing partners, Coastal Conservation Association, American Sportfishing Association and Center for Coastal Conservation worked with recreational anglers, state and federal agencies, business owners, retailers and researchers to convene workshops in each of the five Gulf States. The purpose: to discuss the various oil spill recovery efforts and gather input regarding projects, strategies and initiatives that can sustain and enhance marine recreational fishing.

The five workshops were conducted in the following locations:

St. Petersburg, Fla. May 1, 2013

Orange Beach, Ala. May 15, 2013

Gulfport, Miss. May 16, 2013

Houston, Tex. May 20, 2013

New Orleans, La. May 21, 2013

Representatives from several conservation organizations including The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, Snook and Gamefish Foundation and many others participated. Several fisheries scientists and managers from state and federal agencies as well as prominent universities across the region attended as well along with charter captains and guides, community and business leaders and retailers who are heavily-engaged in sportfishing.

The ideas and recommendations gathered are serving as the basis for a report to be released by TRCP in early fall of 2013 outlining the sportfishing community's priorities for Gulf recovery and long-term sustainability. The specific project and priority recommendations in this report are built upon a foundation laid in 2011 by Gulf sportfishermen in a report produced by TRCP entitled: Gulf Spill Recreational Fishing Response Group: Recommendations for Resource Recovery.

That report outlined three broad priorities for Gulf restoration including:

- Habitat restoration and improvement
- Improved fishery monitoring, data collection, research and management
- Recreational fishing business impacts and restoration of angler interest and confidence

The report released in early fall of this year will outline specific policy and project recommendations within each of those broad goals that can help repair access to anglers that was lost during the spill and improve recreational fishing in the long term.

In general, the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy, broadly reflects many of the priorities recommended during the five Gulf workshops, though there are some areas of concern.

The plan is understandably vague considering the uncertainty in the funds that will ultimately be available and the lack of guidance from the Department of the Treasury regarding how trust fund dollars are to be spent.

Despite these unknowns, it is important for the Restore Council to move forward with quickly identifying specific projects. Some projects, especially large-scale habitat restoration efforts, will take years to implement and will have to undergo extensive review. However, there are many habitat enhancement projects, education and outreach efforts

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and fisheries infrastructure projects that can be expanded or created in a very short time frame.

Identified as sample priorities for recreational fishermen: 1) expansion of artificial reef development programs already in operation that are lacking adequate funding; 2) education programs designed to get children more engaged in fishing; 3) repairs to aging boat ramps and public piers, and 4) efforts to engage recreational anglers in assisting in fisheries data gathering .

These can all receive immediate financial support without having to undergo extensive environmental reviews.

The recreational fishing community is very concerned with the lack of robust data concerning sportfish stocks, forage fish and habitat in the Gulf. Though the Restore Act dedicates 2.5 percent of fines or settlements to a Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program, that investment may not be adequate to expand fisheries stock analysis and examine impacts to fisheries from the spill. Investing additional funds in fisheries data collection and analysis -- and developing more complete fisheries science in the Gulf -- should be considered.

While most of the plan reflects the interests of the sportfishing community, it is disconcerting that recreational fishing is not specifically recognized more in the plan. Despite the enormous role recreational fishing plays in the region, the phrase "recreational fishing" is used only once in the plan and not until Section V, State Expenditure Plans. It may be implicit that the efforts to restore and enhance habitat for fisheries will benefit recreational fishing but it still is necessary for this plan to reflect the pivotal role that recreational fishing plays in the Gulf's culture and economy by including it specifically in the industries listed as "crucial" to the Gulf in the plan's introduction.

That stated, it is laudable that the promotion of recreational fishing is listed as an approved use of state Restore Act dollars.

The first three goals listed in the plan, Restore and Conserve Habitat, Restore Water Quality and Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources, were all extensively discussed as priorities for recreational fishermen at the workshops.

Anglers and fisheries scientists across the Gulf recognize fishery production is directly tied to habitat health. The fact that the plan focuses on habitat development and the recognition that healthy habitats will translate into a healthier and sustainable Gulf economy is appreciated by recreational anglers.

TRCP workshop participants agreed fisheries stock enhancement centers could provide great benefit in helping certain fish stocks recover from the 2010 spill and in conducting vital research. In addition to rehabilitating some fish stocks in areas where habitat and food sources allow, enhancement centers can also help biologists observe changes in habitat, water temperatures, salinity levels, exposure to hydrocarbons and other factors in a laboratory setting. Long-term investment of oil spill recovery dollars is essential to ensuring the success of these facilities.

Anglers and researchers also recommended long-term investments in habitat monitoring and maintenance to ensure investments of recovery dollars are producing intended results. The plan reflects that as well in the following statement,

"The Council recognizes the importance of measuring outcomes and impacts in order to achieve tangible results and ensure that funds are invested in a meaningful way."

Fisheries infrastructure such as piers, boat launches and docks, access roads and public fishing areas throughout the Gulf needs long-term maintenance funds as well. Making that investment would certainly help achieve the fourth and fifth goal of the Restore Council to enhance community resilience and restore and revitalize the Gulf economy.

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TRCP and its sportfishing partners are in full support of the recommendation in the plan to examine assembling a "citizens' advisory committee" to the Restore Council. It is important that the sportfishing community and other stakeholders remain engaged in the process and be a part of helping educate citizens of the Gulf about the Restore Council while providing guidance on how recovery dollars are directed.

TRCP and its sportfishing partners are encouraged by the broad policies in the draft plan.

We are also pleased with the level of engagement between the state and federal agencies working on the Restore Council and the recreational fishing community. The Departments of Commerce and Interior and representatives from the State of Louisiana have been especially helpful to TRCP in providing guidance and staff for the five Gulf workshops and in meeting with the recreational fishing community both before and after the workshops.

Restoring the Gulf and making it a better place to live, work and recreate is going to be a lengthy process requiring the cooperation of many different stakeholders in all five states. TRCP and its sportfishing and conservation partners look forward to the opportunity for continued engagement with the Restore Council to ensure the habitats and communities of the Gulf recover from the oil spill and are sustained for generations to come.

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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July 8, 2013

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

Dear Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Members,

I am sending this letter on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of the Alabama Coastal Foundation. We thank the Council for the opportunity to provide our feedback on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan. As promised during the first public hearing you held last fall, we have encouraged others to share their thoughts and recommendations as well. This letter is in addition to the comments I shared with Council members on June 5th in Alabama at the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center.

The Alabama Coastal Foundation (ACF) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization with a mission to improve and protect Alabama's coastal environment through cooperation, education, and participation. The ACF has worked to create a healthy balance between the conservation needs of Alabama's priceless coastal resources and the inevitable pressures of economic growth. Over the past two decades, the ACF has sought common ground among business, government and private citizens. We accomplish our work by bringing together stakeholders with differing interests to facilitate mutually beneficial solutions to our environmental challenges.

While we do not have a large budget, we do cooperate with other non-profit organizations in our field that do

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including The Nature Conservancy and Ocean Conservancy. I have read each of the detailed comments they have submitted and concur wholeheartedly with their observations and recommendations. In particular, the diagram that Bethany Kraft, Ocean Conservancy's Gulf Restoration Program Director, created for defining Restoration Science would be a very positive concept to bring into reality.

Given ACF's emphasis on environmental education, we also request that all projects have a public education component in order to use this tragedy to build a stronger understanding of how our ecosystems support our economy and quality of life. We see the "Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education" objective as a foundational one which should support all restoration projects. Finally, we ask that the Council considers embedding in the Plan a 5% allocation of funds to purchase and protect coastal marshes and wetlands.

The Alabama Coastal Foundation is willing and able to help the Council take the best path forward from this disaster. We look forward to working with you and others as we protect and celebrate all that Alabama's Coast and the Gulf Coast as a whole has to offer for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Mark Berte
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PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Council Members,

Comment on Draft Plan.

1. There should be citizen advisory committees for public trust and transparency through the entire planning, development and prioritizing projects in each state affected.

2. There should be more public outreach education, interaction and comment time to all citizens, their dependents especially those whom are low income, disabled and seniors through their local non-commercial educational community radio stations throughout the affected states (with some consideration for these facilities most of them are local member supported) Low income folks generally don't have access to computers, smartphones or the internet. Most all have a FM broadcast radio. (public access)

Most citizens are really NOT well informed about what is the "RESTORE" act and "IF" WE THE PEOPLE have any say or participation in the process of Project prioritizing and have some oversight throughout the entire long process for years to come. would think: the more ways citizens that were affected by the oil spill could directly participate routinely giving more input for council decision making.

In pursuit of Happiness,

Brice L Phillips
KB5MPW

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President Hancock County Amateur Radio Assoc, Inc
ESF 2 Communications Director - Hancock County EOC
WQRZ 103.5 FM Katrina Radio Station - Official Voice of Hancock County Emergency Operation Center -
Volunteers and WQRZ Served without consideration of compensation since April 2010 OIL Spill Emergency Ops -
Public Outreach
Serving through the "ART" of Radio through Rain, Shine or Another Katrina
a 501c3 publicly supported charitable Organization
KatrinaRadio.com WQRZ.org

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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:

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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
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Correspondences - Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy - PEPC
ID: 47484

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Sperm whales are an endangered large whale species found in the upper Gulf of Mexico that has been studied enough to have a baseline prior to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. A 4-year study on Gulf of Mexico sperm whales, funded by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) entitled Sperm Whale Seismic Study (SWSS) determined the year-round presence of sperm whales in the Gulf, then measured their home range and core areas. Males' home ranges were 10X larger than those of females that moved E-W along the upper Continental Slope.

Shortly after the beginning of the Deepwater Horizon (DWH) spill, Oregon State University scientists tagged 12 whales (mostly within sight of burning DWH oil) before the well was capped. Half the tagged whales headed west, while half actually seemed to "work" the edges of the thickest satellite-visible surface oil. we suspect they were taking slow squid (their primary prey) stunned by oil or dispersant that could have increased their exposure to dispersant and oil toxicants. The movements thereafter were similar to SWSS whale data, except with smaller home ranges.

In 2011, additional tagging in the Gulf found the continued trend of smaller home range for both male and female sperm whales and the collective home ranges were more fragmented (not as contiguous) as during the SWSS years. There was an oblong area not used by sperm whales that included the DWH site and 4,000 sq. km. From what we understand, this area had the same general axis (NE-SW) as the main flow of surface oil (NE) and subsurface dispersant/oil micro-droplets (SW). The 2012 field season was designed to tag whales on either side of this "void" to determine whether whales were actually avoiding the area or it was merely a sampling issue. One alternate possibility is that whales tagged in 2011 included animals from two different subpopulations, one tending to be on the upper slope edge and the other concentrating in deep waters. However, the home ranges of these two "groups" merge or abut each other to the west.

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We applied advanced Dive Behavior tags to 11 whales in 2011. These state-of-the-art prototype tags were developed under Joint (Oil & Gas) Industry Program (JIP) and Office of Naval Research (ONR) funding to demonstrate how whales behave underwater for extended periods of time. The tags use a 3-axis accelerometer to detect lunges during deep dives that are a proxy for foraging attempts on squid, their main prey. One tag produced a continuous 6-week record during 2700 km of travel, with an average of 14 lunges during the bottom phase of each 40+ minute dive. During the last 2.5 weeks, foraging effort (as depicted by lunges) was much higher (up to 150 lunges in a single dive), suggesting the main reason for whales to travel such long distances is to find patchy aggregations of squid that could make a huge difference in their annual energy budget.

Because squid only live 1-2 years, the impact on squid and hence sperm whales might be delayed years after the spill. Instead, we found home ranges continued to get smaller in 2011, and much more so for males, whose ranges had become less than females (a reversal from the SWSS years). The home range data suggest whales did not need to roam as far to find food as a result of some increase in area-wide productivity. Microbial experts suggest these circumstances may have arisen from the DWH oil having been consumed by microbes and causing a carbon spike for the whale's food web (Hazen et al. 2010. *Science* 330:204). This certainly is not the expectation of most scientists or the public, and it may not be a universal response through all of the food web. However, our observations of whales during tagging efforts since the spill continue to show whales in good shape and calves present in some of the pods.

Due to failure of passive acoustic monitoring tools (which are our main means of locating submerged whales during a tagging cruise) and Hurricane Isaac, we tagged only four whales in 2012. These whales had a somewhat increased home range over the first two post-spill years (2010 and 2011), but did not return to the size of the pre-spill SWSS years.

As part of the SWSS study, the International Association of Geophysical Contractors provided us with all of the track lines for their active seismic survey vessels. We have analyzed these data with the movements of tagged whales and are drafting a paper showing no discernible effects in the distribution of tagged whales within 5 km to 100 km of seismic vessels. While our sample size was too small to address the issue inside 5 km, this will be the first paper of its sort to scope these issues at this scale. There is general concern about anthropogenic ocean noise among the public, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the scientific community, most recently demonstrated by the NMFS announcement this month of a petition to list Gulf of Mexico sperm whales as a Distinct Population Segment (DSP) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It listed three reasons (genetics isolation, Deepwater Horizon spill and seismic surveys) why the sperm whale in the Gulf were at risk and suggested this whale population was declining. The work we propose will contribute information to all of these issues.

Summary of Future Research Goals:

We seek a way to understand how sperm whales interact in their environment over the long-term environmental variables experienced over many years. We also want more specifically to investigate how a hypothesized carbon spike from DWH oil may have affected the continued presence of sperm whales and their squid prey base in the NE Gulf of Mexico. To do so, we would conduct fieldwork on Gulf of Mexico sperm whales in July 2013 to:

- determine by tagging whales in proximity to the "void" (observed in 2011 between upper continental slope and deeper offshore groups of sperm whales) if it appears to persist;
- determine if reduced home ranges of tagged sperm whales observed after the spill (suggesting increased foraging opportunities) continue to get smaller, remain small, or trend toward larger sizes seen during 4 SWSS years of pre-spill baseline/control research;
- determine with acoustic back-scatter if there are detectable differences in prey abundance in the "void" and in adjacent areas outside the void where sperm whales are present; and

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- determine with Dive Behavior (GPS/TDR/accelerometer) tags, how foraging attempts by sperm whales identify the patchy distribution of squid and if whales in the same group have similar changes in lunge rates and dive patterns indicative of co-operative feeding.

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.... and Longer-term Objectives:

Ultimately, we want to incorporate an acoustic dosimeter into these highly sophisticated dive behavior tags (developed initially with Joint Oil & Gas Industry Program [JIP] funding and additional Office of Naval Research [ONR] support) so they can register how loud various sounds (seismic surveys, naval sonar, ship noise...) are at the whale during its dives. These tags would be extremely valuable in solving the debate about the effects of noise on whales. When used in a behavioral response study (BRS) or controlled exposure experiment (CEE) in future work, a ship emitting anthropogenic sounds would approach instrumented animals to determine if (and at what levels of received sound) whales change their diving behavior or move away from areas of previously high foraging effort. Because these tags can stay attached for much longer periods than suction-cup applied tags, sound exposure experiments can be repeated for individual whales over weeks to acquire statistically significance sample sizes and also address habituation and recovery issues. During the 2013 study, we will demonstrate: the improved GPS (3rd generation Fast-loc with 90% less energy use than earlier versions); 3-axis accelerometer systems with magnetometers to provide more accurate underwater movement data; and tag release-recovery processes to warrant the development of the acoustic dosimeter for future studies to definitively determine the levels of sound that may cause problems for sperm whales.

This research has huge potential to better understand present and future oil & gas issues. Ideally, development of an acoustic dosimeter and a commitment to sperm whales as a 5-year restoration project after the DWH settlement would not only develop more metrics about Gulf sperm whales, but also develop broader understanding of acoustic issues around the world and provide new tools that would be useful beyond sperm whales. We believe this research deserves a long-term monitoring strategy for sperm whales in the Gulf of Mexico.

Dr. Bruce Mate

PEPC Project ID: 47484, DocumentID: 53621

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Correspondence Text

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council.

My name is Ya-Sin Shabazz and I serve as the Director of Programs and Development for Hijra House, a community and faith-based organization located in Biloxi, Mississippi and serving the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Southeast region.

I would first like to commend the Council for its ongoing efforts towards, an attention to, community engagement and community feedback. Per the Council's invitation, I would also like to offer comments on the three aspects of the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan: 1. the plan's 'priority Criteria,' 2. the plan's 'objectives,' and 3. the council's consideration of 'advisory committees.'

PRIORITY CRITERIA

The priority criteria established in the RESTORE Act and included in the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan should and must be further defined if the RESTORE Act is to fully achieve it's stated goal in the State of Mississippi. More specifically if the RESTORE Act is to equitably Enhance Community Resilience by building upon and sustaining communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes, and Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy by Enhancing the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy, the priority criteria must be further defined to include a Minority Economic Development fund that would be geared to the specific resiliency and revitalization needs in ethnic minority communities. Further, this fund could and should be administered by a minority advisory subcommittee of the citizens' advisory committees being considered.

OBJECTIVES

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