

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Public Engagement Meeting
August 28, 2013

Keala Hughes: Ladies and gentlemen in the back, we do have a few more seats on either side, if you'd like to find a seat. Thank you for your cooperation.

Speaker 2: Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. The program is about to begin. Thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Good afternoon everyone and welcome. I am pleased to call to order the second meeting of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restore Council. It's great to be here in New Orleans. It really makes me happy to be here, so thank you for welcoming me as well. Let's start by having the council members briefly introduce themselves and then we will immediately hear from our distinguished Governor of Louisiana.

Rachel Jacobson: I'm Rachel Jacobson. I'm here on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Sally Jewell and the entire Interior family. So thank you all for being here today too.

Mimi Drew: Hi. I'm Mimi Drew. I'm representing the state of Florida, welcome to all my Florida friends who made it over for the meeting and looking forward to meeting today.

Jo-Ellen Darcy: Good afternoon. My name is Jo-Ellen Darcy. I'm the Assistant Secretary to the Army for Civil Works.

Robert Bonnie: Hi. Robert Bonnie under Secretary for Natural Resources in Environment at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Bobby Jindal: Bobby Jindal. I just want to welcome everybody to the great state of Louisiana.

Trudy Fisher: Good afternoon. Trudy Fisher representing Governor Phil Bryant in the state of Mississippi. Hello to all of you that I recognize out in the audience from our great state.

John Currier: Good afternoon. My name's John Currier. I'm Vice Commodore of the Coast Guard, representing Homeland Security, Secretary Napolitano.

Gunter Guy: Hello. I'm Gunter Guy, representing Governor Robert Bentley in the State of Alabama.

Toby Baker: Hello. I'm Toby Baker. I'm representing Governor Rick Perry in the state of Texas.

Ken Kopocis: Good afternoon. I'm Ken Kopocis representing Administrator Gina McCarthy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Bobby Jindal: Madame Secretary and Chairwoman and members of the panel, first of all, I want to thank you for coming to New Orleans. I welcome you to Louisiana. Tomorrow is the eighth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. During that storm, this hotel was torn apart. The Superdome right next door to us served as a temporary home for thousands of victims of that disaster. The

conditions were terrible. Many questioned whether New Orleans should be rebuilt or if we would ever recover. The horrific scenes from the Superdome and other areas of South Louisiana were burned into the memories of many of us here. Homes and businesses were destroyed. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters were lost. Families were torn apart, some lost absolutely everything. There had been recognition that our state was losing our coast and that land was subsiding, but that connection between that lost and that vulnerability that it posed to our state really wasn't fully appreciated by many until Hurricane Katrina.

We committed as a state to never allow that type of destruction to happen again. Following Katrina, we begun a fundamental restructuring of our state's coastal efforts. We streamlined components of numerous state agencies and our coastal board of directors. We established an implementation office to carry out all hurricane protection, flood control and ecosystem restoration efforts for our state named the Coastal Protection Restoration Authority. Now there's a realization in Louisiana that you cannot separate the health of our coast from that of our economy, our resilience and our livelihoods. And Louisiana's coast plays a national role. Our coastal resources play a key role in putting wild healthy domestic seafood on dinner tables across America, on powering our nation's economy and expanding global trade, including doing our part to meet America's exporting goals.

Louisiana is the number one producer of commercial seafood in the continental United States. We're one of the top ten recreational fishing destinations in the country. I've got a secret I want to share with you. You talk to a lot of people in South Louisiana, and I bet you many of us will brag and tell you what great fisherman we are. The secret is it's just easier to fish down here. A healthy coast supports abundant seafood and strong employment and economic activity. Our coastal area is the top source of off-shore energy in the United States and abundant reserves remain. In addition, we've seen strong growth in shell plays on shore, further increasing Louisiana's role in our national energy security. In recent years, Louisiana's been one of the nation's top three producers of oil and natural gas. While our country still relies heavily on foreign sources of energy, Louisiana's energy production puts a significant dent in our dependence on other countries. We don't need to be sending hundreds of billions of dollars overseas when we can do more right here at home. Studies show that a dollar spent at the pump on domestically-produced energy results in \$3.00 in economic activity. On the flipside, a \$1.00 spent at the pump on foreign energy only results in \$0.40 in economic activity in the United States.

Louisiana also serves as the gateway to America's commerce super highway, the Mississippi River system. Louisiana's home to five of the nation's top fifteen ports. Our intermodal system plays a key role in exporting numerous crops from mid...Mid-Western farms and other locations. We send soybeans, non-crude oils and corn all over the world. Thirty-one states have access to global markets as a result of our river import system. In recent years, up to 19% of all waterborne commerce in the country has gone through our river and port systems. And finally our unique cultural, food and livelihood in South Louisiana is second to none. Let's be honest, if the council had a vote about where we wanted to have this meeting between New Orleans or Houston and no offense to our guests from Texas, they're probably be only one vote to go to Houston. Now let's be honest, if there were secret ballots, there probably wouldn't even...wouldn't be even one vote for Houston.

The point...I'm sorry, I apologize. My apologies to...to Toby and Rick. The point is there is something special here. The food, the music, the people, the joie de vivre. While many were pontificating whether or not Louisiana would be rebuilt or whether we would recover from Hurricane Katrina, we were working on plans on how to make Louisiana one of the...and New

Orleans, one of the world's greatest cities, even better than it's ever been. And those plans are working. Forbes named New Orleans the number one brain magnet in the nation. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce designated Louisiana the number one export state in the nation for 2012. Bloomberg called New Orleans the number two boomtown in America. These achievements are not just by chance and they are not our peak. These achievements are the result of the commitment we made to return better and stronger. We are working every day to improve the business climate in Louisiana, to increase our role in global trade, to improve the efficiency of government, and to provide more employment opportunities for our people.

Now we've talked a lot about all the great progress we've made in Louisiana, the important role our state plays in the national economy and energy security and in global trade. I've shared with you the recognition our state has received from Forbes, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Bloomberg, just to name a few, but all of this progress, all of these recovery efforts are going to be wasted if our coast isn't sustainable. While the Corps of Engineers and CPRA have worked to provide the best protection system ever for the greater New Orleans area, the Gulf of Mexico continues to encroach on communities daily. We have lost over 1900 square miles since the 1930s. Numerous studies show the length between natural features such as barrier islands, dunes, ridges, cheniers, coastal wetlands and storm surge. These studies show that the more features we can put between our coastal communities in the Gulf, the more resilient our communities are. Though much work remains, we've committed billions of dollars to community resilience in Louisiana and the progress has been impressive. We've also committed billions of dollars to recovering our coastal wetlands. The coastal efforts underway in Louisiana today represent the largest effort in the country to protect and restore our coastal landscape.

Our 2012 Coastal Master Plan has received accolades from the most diverse groups in interest. The Louisiana State Legislature approved the plan without a single dissenting vote. This plan transcends politics. It's about our future and our survival. We are committed to continue our aggressive implementation of the master plan. In fact we have directed and non-directed state officials to commit 100% of RESTORE Act funding to ecosystem restoration and community resilience projects consistent with our master plan, but we need these dollars to be shared with the states in an expedited manner. The delay in regulations and trending bureaucracy is not going to save Louisiana and does nothing to help recovery efforts in other gulf states. Sequestration, additional administrative charges against the trust fund, duplicative scientific teams in science reviews in multiple applications and approvals are not what the public had in mind when they stepped out in strong support of the RESTORE Act and it doesn't correspond to the urgency we have on the gulf coast.

We need to get these dollars to the states, counties, parishes, where the oil came ashore and into the ground as quickly as possible. I'd also urge the council to not just focus on projects. Equally important is the project process and sustainable management of our natural resources. The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force began some important work on improving the efficiency of the regulatory planning and construction project processes. These are key objectives. We can't tolerate tens of millions of dollars and decades wasted studying critical projects to protect lives and livelihoods. Even the Natural Resource Damage Assessment's early restoration projects design and provide quick action are now projected to be evaluated for two more years due to bureaucratic processes. Many of these projects enjoy broad support. They've been thoroughly studied, they are designed to restore the environment. BP didn't conduct an environmental analysis before they spilled their oil. We don't want to further penalize our states by spending years repeating environmental analyses on projects designed to restore the natural resources. We also can't accept the double standard required property own...owners, local governments and

states to mitigate for wetlands lost while the federal government's own river management practices are the cause of the greatest historic and greatest ongoing wetlands lost in the nation.

We want our restore dollars in Louisiana to get us ahead, not mitigate for the unsustainable practices of others. An important principle applies here. First and foremost, do no harm. Let's pick up where the task force left off and complete this important work. The transfer of the coastal impact assistance program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was an example of progress and I do want to thank, and she's here, I want to thank Acting Assistant Secretary, Assistant Secretary Jacobson for her role in that. Now is the time for us to go forward and build on those successes. We need to find more opportunities for win-win solutions and stop saying no because it is simply the easy answer, solutions like beneficially using dredge material. Restoring our coast with dredge material from deeper navigational channels to accommodate post-Panamax ships, diversions that are designed to extract sediment, restore our coast, decrease annual dredging costs, and reduce the dead zone while minimizing fishery impacts. RESTORE provides opportunities and we must take advantage of them.

We're building a project today that includes funding from five different state and federal programs, many represented in this room today. This project's being built around Bayou Dupont and moves Mississippi River sediment down to the coast for coastal marsh creation. The efficiencies are impressive, they need to be repeated. It's important to note that RESTORE doesn't actually provide the resources. What it does provide is a framework. While Trans-Ocean has stepped up to the plate and paid much of their liability, BP is not. Today more than three years after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Louisiana shorelines continue to be plagued by BP's oil. Over 12,000,000 pounds of oiling materials have been removed from Louisiana since the response began collecting data. Today over 200 miles of our shoreline are still oiled. All of the heavily and moderately oiled shorelines are in our state. BP needs to stop spending hundreds of millions of dollars on their public relations campaign telling us how great they are and start proving it by addressing their clean water act and natural resources damaged liabilities today. Their responsibilities are not going away. We have got to hold BP accountable.

We are making great process in restoring our wetlands and protecting our coastal communities. The BP oil spill was an incredible setback. No one imagined that nearly three and a half years after the spill we'd still have 200 miles of oiled shoreline and BP would refuse to ever even survey half of our coast. Three and a half years later, BP has spent more money, I want you to hear this, they've spent more money on television commercials than they have on actually restoring the natural resources they impacted. Moving forward, we're going to continue working with our colleagues in Texas, Mississippi and Alabama. We may disagree about our football teams, but we do agree on the need to address disparity between offshore and onshore energy revenue sharing by asking Congress to take a fresh look at the disparity amongst the three-mile and three-marine league coastal boundaries of Gulf States.

Federal government has pocketed nearly \$200,000,000,000 from offshore energy production in the Gulf of Mexico. Last year, Louisiana received a check for \$80,000 of those dollars. If this energy activity occurred on federal land, we would share in billions of dollars annually. As many of you know, 100% of any proceeds from offshore energy revenue sharing would go directly into our coastal program. Billions of barrels of oil, trillions of cubic feet of natural gas have been produced safely in the Gulf and the Gulf will continue to play a key role in our nation's energy future.

Finally, we're also joining forces with our gulf partners to ensure flood insurance reforms don't make home ownership unaffordable, cripple economic development efforts and hold property owners accountable for Hurricane Katrina failures. We in Louisiana are all for a solvent and sustainable national flood insurance program, but actuarial rates mean just that. You charge those who are actually responsible for the liability. That is not the case with the current Biggert-Waters implementation plans. It is an issue Congress desperately needs to address. By working together, I know we can make a difference for the next time a storm comes our way. Again, to the council, I want to thank you for coming to New Orleans. I look forward to working with you all to improve the resilience of our Gulf Coast and again to our Chairman and to our Secretary, I want to thank you personally for your leadership and taking on this very important challenge. I'm confident that by working together, we can make great progress. Thank you Madame Chairman.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you Governor Jindal. I appreciate our time together and our teams working together. And thank you everyone on our council and, perhaps most importantly, I want to thank everyone in the audience today. The input that gulf residents have provided so far, particularly through the public engagement sessions in each state, have been extensive and invaluable in reaching this point. If we continue to work in a collaborative spirit, I am confident that we can implement the RESTORE Act in a way that reinvigorates economies, creates jobs, and rebuilds our environment for generations to come. In short, we must focus on the long-term health, prosperity and resilience of the entire gulf region. As I begin serving as Chair, I want you to know that I am committed to leading this council in a way that brings all the resources of the Department of Commerce to bear from economic development, to tourism promotion, to science-based restoration of the gulf's natural resources and much more.

President Obama and all of us at the administration know how vital the Gulf Coast region is to our nation. When we think of the beaches, the seafood, the unique communities and the rich cultural heritage, we realize the gulf region is a part of who we all are as Americans. In addition this region also includes key U.S. assets, such as energy resources and ten of America's 15 largest ports. This council has an unprecedented opportunity to preserve and strengthen the gulf in many ways. We want more people throughout the country and around the world to see the Gulf Coast as a wonderful place to visit, to work, to play, and to live. And I should know that restoring the natural ecosystem and restoring the economy are interconnected goals. This council still faces the challenge of not knowing the ultimate amount of the ultimate amount and the timing of available funds. But we're going to move forward regardless. Today we'll vote on a comprehensive plan that was developed with the help of residents and leaders throughout the gulf region, including many of you here today. This plan will guide our efforts to restore, to protect, and to revitalize the Gulf Coast. Justin Ehrenwerth, the Executive Director, will talk more about the plan in a moment. But let me provide a few broad strokes.

The plan's purpose is threefold. First, establish overarching restoration goals for the region. Second, describe how the council will solicit, evaluate, and fund projects and third, describe the process for the approval of state expenditures. Importantly, the plan incorporates the council's five overarching goals; restore and conserve habitat, restore water quality, replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources, enhance community resilience, and restore and revitalize the Gulf economy. The plan sets long-term priorities. It places science at the heart of decision-making and it commits to delivering tangible results for the people who live and work in the Gulf. We needed a smart plan that will help us tackle issues efficiently and effectively as soon as we get funds. I believe this is that plan. So thank you again to everyone who has contributed to it. We must continue to push forward and we're doing just that.

First today, we're going to hear from leaders of several Gulf Restoration Initiatives about how we can coordinate the many efforts underway in the res...to restore the Gulf. I want to thank them for being here. Second, I'm pleased to say that the Treasury Department has said that it will be issuing draft regulations regarding the project funding very soon. There will, of course, be a public comment period and we look forward to the input of Gulf residents, including those of you who are here today. Third, we're working in advance to remove regulatory barriers and address environmental compliance issues. We're doing this early in the process in the planning stages so everything is ready from our end and we don't get delayed in the future. And fourth, our hope is that we'll begin selecting and funding projects within the next twelve months, or as the Governor has said, before the next hurricane season. That's an ambitious goal, but I think it's achievable.

Clearly, we'll continue to need everyone's help in the months ahead. For example, we need to create a structure to solicit even more public input. After all, the President has been clear that he wants our efforts to be driven by the ideas that come from the Gulf, not from Washington. We need to hear from folks like all of you about your ideas in areas such as how to best restore the health of our fisheries, how to build hubs of innovation from technologies that will inevitably arise from Coastal restoration efforts and how to ensure long-term resiliency overall. On that note, let me close my opening remarks by saying thank you in advance to everyone who came here today, all of you. I deeply appreciate your partnership as we work together to help the Gulf Coast reach it's fullest potential in the 21st Century. So please give yourselves a round of applause as we continue the meeting. So the council understands how important it is to work with our partners, all the key players must collaborate closely and to advance common goals, to reduce duplication, and to maximize benefits to people in the Gulf as we go forward with our new plan and our efforts. So before I turn to those partners though, I want to turn to Justin Ehrenwerth, the council's Executive Director, for brief overview of the plan, which will be followed by our vote on it.

Justin Ehrenwerth: Thank you very much Madame Secretary, Governor Jindal, members of the of the council. It's wonderful to be with you all today. I've been serving as the...your Executive Director for about three months and it's been a...a tremendous if not awesome responsibility. It's a particular personal pleasure for me, that this important meeting is taking place in...in New Orleans. As...as some of you know, I've been commuting between Washington D.C. and New Orleans for the last three years or so for both personal as well as professional business. See I recently got engaged to a...a woman Opelousas, Louisiana and we live not too far away from here now and she reminded me this morning, as she has from time to time that she's accepted my proposal for marriage, but she hasn't yet said I do and because this meeting is taking place in Louisiana, she said, "Don't you go embarrassing me in front of my Governor and everybody that I live and work with or else things might not turn out the way that you want them to when we're at the wedding in a couple of months." So I'm going to, as I do, my best to try to try to honor that. As the Secretary said, my remarks will be will be brief and really going to do three things. The first is to provide an overview of what's in the plan. The second is to say a little bit about the public comments that we received, as well as some of the changes that were made to the plan as a result of those comments. And the third is to say a little bit about the next steps before the council.

Before jumping into the substance of the plan, it was suggested I give a very brief overview of the RESTORE Act framework and how the money will ultimately flow. The real achievement, one of the key achievements of the RESTORE Act is that it takes 80% of the civil penalties stemming from the...the deep water horizon spill and, rather than going to the oil spill liability trust fund, which is the typical way of things, 80% of that comes back here, to the Gulf for restoration. The RESTORE Act sets up what's called the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund and within that trust fund there are, what we refer to as the five buckets that are displayed on the on the slides in front of you.

Very briefly, those five buckets are as follows. The first is 35% that we call the direct component and that 35% is divided up into equal shares to go to all five states to carry out ecosystem restoration projects, economic development, tourism promotion and some other activities. The second 30% bucket is for what we refer to as council-selected restoration. Really one of the primary focuses of the council at the moment and there, that money is dedicated to moving forward with a comprehensive ecosystem plan. The third bucket is for state expenditure plans. Each state is to draft a plan that comes before the council for its approval and once approved, the money may flow from the trust fund to the state for the activities that they put forward in their plans. The final two buckets are small, but incredibly important. The first is a 2.5% for a science and monitoring program that's by NOAA and we'll hear from the acting director of that program shortly and the final 2.5% bucket goes to centers of excellence in all five of the states.

It is important to note has...has been observed many times that there's a lot of uncertainty right now in the process. The litigation with the BP and other parties is ongoing in the courthouse not too far away from here. Of course we're all watching that very closely. There has been a settlement with Trans-Ocean for \$1,000,000,000 so approximately \$800,000,000 of that, 80% will go into the into the trust fund. Despite that uncertainty, despite not knowing when we'll have the ultimate amount of money and how much it will be, we are all of course continuing to move forward.

The next thing that I wanted to just quickly display and I won't go into it because the Secretary did note the five goals is to...it's to really highlight them and note the integrated and interrelated nature of these five goals. The first four of them will be very familiar to those of you who followed our predecessor, the task force process. They're focused on ecosystem restoration. And the fifth goal is added due to the mandate of the RESTORE Act to restore and revitalize the Gulf economy and one of the things that's been quite important for the council and we have said and would want to continue to stress, is that the interrelated nature of ecosystem restoration and economic development that here in the Gulf ecosystem restoration and economic development are just inextricably linked and that's very important to our thinking as we move forward, that selecting those good ecosystem projects will indeed lead to positive economic development.

The draft plan that was it was put out in late May of of this year, was out for a 46-day comment period and during that time, the council received over 41,000 comments on a series of issues, an incredibly helpful body of advice. The council specifically asked the public for feedback on three issues. On the question of objectives, of priority criteria and advisory committees and I wanted to briefly summarize some of the feedback that we received. In the draft plan, the council set out seven objectives and these provide a bit more detail of the...the five goals that were mentioned earlier and we asked folks are these the right objectives? Did we get these right, should they be changed in some way, should they be added to? We noted that the RESTORE Act sets forth four priority criteria items and we asked folks should we...should we add to this list, should we supplement the criteria with additional criteria items, should we further define them.

Finally, the RESTORE Act says that the...the council may set up advisory committees. So we asked the public should we do that and, if so, what kind of advisory committees should we set up and how should we structure them. And what we heard was was quite helpful. On the question of objectives, we heard that that we got it...that folks that we got it about right. And so the objectives as are in the plan before you today remain largely unchanged. On the question of the priority criteria, what we heard was, from members of the public as well as key members of Congress, that the RESTORE Act represents a delicate and bipartisan compromise and we were

encouraged to move forward with implementation of the Act in a way that stays true to the RESTORE Act as passed. And for that reason as well as others, the plan before you does not supplement or...or change the criteria as were set out in the Act. And then finally on the question of advisory committees, we got a great deal of very helpful feedback there. There was strong support for a citizen's advisory body, as well as a scientific advisory body and what the plan before you today suggests is that we move forward with establishing those structures. That we do set up a public engagement structure, as well as a scientific advisory structure. We want to hear more from people and continue to engage on the precise nature of those structures because the two-way street that those bodies represent are so important that the people who participate, we need to make sure that it's a meaningful engagement for them and that the advice they provide is really helpful to the to the council.

Finally the plan before you today has a bit more detail on how the council will move forward in selecting projects for that bucket two, the council-selected restoration component of things. What the plan notes is that the council will release a schedule for the submission of proposals from council members and set out an evaluation process, which will importantly include what's called a coordination review. And again, we'll highlight our restoration partners with that element of the process. We want to ensure that we're doing everything we can to work in tandem with our partners, to ensure that we are leveraging and maximizing the opportunity that's before us right now.

Once we have a list of proposals, we'll put out what's called our draft-funded priorities list. That will go out for a public comment period. We will hope to get another set of really robust strong comments. The council would take those comments in, carefully review them, make any changes that are necessary at that time to the list and then finalize that list. And then once finalized, that list would serve as the basis for awarding money to particular projects. So, as has been the case to date, we really feel strongly that the public needs to continue to be involved in all these all these decision and the process that's set out does include a heavy dose of public transparency and engagement.

And before closing, I would just highlight a few additional next steps before the council. One is that in the coming months the council is going to take steps to improve our website so that we can better facilitate the exchange of ideas with the public. We're going to continue, and this is probably the third time I've mentioned it because it's so important, to enhance coordination with our restoration partners and just continue to make sure we're talking to one another and not duplicating. And then finally, as it's been mentioned, the council will move forward with the approval of...of these state expenditure plans so that money can flow from the from the trust fund to the states. In closing I just want to thank all of the council members, to thank everyone who's here and many who aren't with us today, but have been so helpful along the way. The collective commitment to this process is really the only way that we will get this right. And we have a tremendous amount of work in front of us and a real imperative to get this right. We just simply have to get it right and move forward quickly and efficiently and we have taken some very important first steps together. I would humbly request that the council members continue to support our collective efforts as you have been doing and believe that approval of the plan before you today is a very important next step on our collective journey together. So thank you very much.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you, Justin. Are there any questions or comments on the plan from the council members?

Trudy Fisher: I have a comment. Welcome to all of you today and, you know, it was a great thing I...for all of us when we were coming up here to sit. They were having to bring in more chairs and we were just elated to see all the crowd and how many of you are here with us today. So thank you. Secretary Pritzker, it's wonderful to have you on board and just want to thank you for the leadership that the Commerce Department has shown and we're so glad to have you here with us as Chair and look forward to working with you as we go forward carrying on the business of the council.

To the public, I just want to pick up on some of the comments that have been made about the public engagement process and to those of you who are here and those thousands of people that commented and the thousands who attended the public meetings from Florida to Texas, you know, we need all of you. We need you in this process. The comprehensive plan that is under consideration by the council today is an important milestone, no doubt and we're very proud to be here, but as you saw in the discussion on the next steps and you saw and you read when the plan, there's work left to be done. And we need you in that process. We need you, your voice matters. So please stay engaged. We have received so many helpful comments, a robust public involvement. We're just getting started so please stay engaged. Your voice matters. Thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Are there other comments?

Gunter Guy: Chairman?

Secretary Pritzker: Yes?

Gunter Guy: Thank you Madame Chairman and I want to join Trudy and all the others up here at the podium in thanking everybody for coming today. It's always tough sitting to the left of Trudy because all I can do really there is just echo her comments. There's no use that I repeat those. I do want to join in and thank Madame Chairman and the Department of Commerce for y'all's leadership in this matter. It's very important and it starts with the leadership. I also want to commend all the council members on the cooperative effort. And progress that we have made thus far and a member of this council, like many of you out there, I look forward to our next steps and our continued progress to restore, protect, and revitalize our Gulf Coast. Thank you Madame Chairman.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you. Thank you.

Toby Baker: Madame Secretary?

Secretary Pritzker: Yes?

Toby Baker: Thank you for being here today and thank you for your leadership and I'd like to thank Governor Jindal and I'd be remiss to not I was singled out by Governor Jindal, so I'd like to respond just briefly. And point out that Forbes ranks Houston the coolest city in America last year and I think in 2014, yeah, there we go, in 2014, we'll be able to settle it on the football field every Thanksgiving. I'm excited to hear about. Thank you, Justin, for your leadership as Executive Director and thanks to the public for being here. We wouldn't be here today with this document had it not been for the input that you have offered. If you listen to the media, you might think that the government isn't really good at much, one agency, but the idea of having multiple federal agencies and multiple states all coming together to put a document like this could be considered a miracle and I think that this comprehensive plan, while not a miracle, is a great step forward.

And to sort of stay in that spiritual theme, the bible talks about the cornerstone of the church and sort of where you go once that with that cornerstone, this, and I don't want to compare our work to the work of the Apostles, but this is the cornerstone for everything else that comes after this. So everything in the RESTORE Act, everything that we're going to do, hinges on this one document. And so to be here today, where we've been starting from zero, starting from nothing and I'll remind you operating with nothing, no operating funds outside of what we can scrounge together, to be able to put this together is I'm very proud to be sitting here and I'm looking forward to the next iterations, the next steps. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with all of you sitting out there to bring this plan to fruition. Thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you.

Ken Kopocis: Well thank you and I want to join in with all of my colleagues in thanking you, Secretary Pritzker, for your leadership and seeing this initial comprehensive plan, seeing it through amid trials and tribulations of the members of the team here in putting it together and making an excellent product through those efforts. I also of course thank of all my colleagues at the federal and state level for all their fine work. None of this would have been possible without all of them. Now I'll observe that the needs of the Gulf Coast region were well articulated by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Strategy and EPA very much appreciates that the council members have decided to carry forward the goals and the activities that were contained in that strategy. In addition to the strong commitment to the environment that's demonstrated in the plan, EPA also thanks the council for adopting the recommendations of our prior administrator that she expressed at the first meeting in Mobile, a commitment to citizen involvement, a recurring theme that I've heard here today and I've heard coming up before today as the council moves forward. And as the council moves forward in restoring the Gulf environment, the EPA very much looks forward to expanding opportunities, to engage with the gulf communities and stakeholders, including pursuing actions on environmental justice that will better protect the environment and help in the communities that have been overburdened by pollution for too long, that will empower communities to take action to improve their health and their environment and will establish partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal organizations to achieve healthy and sustainable community in a healthy and sustainable environment. So, again, thank you Senator...or Secretary Pritzker. I was showing my old Capitol Hill days I guess. And I also want to offer a special thank you, as well, to the staff who labored tirelessly to put this together, including the staff of EPA, who's represented here today by two of our regional administrators, our regional offices. We have two of them that affect activities in the Gulf and their strong interest is represented by their peers here today. And so EPA supports the plan as an excellent opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the Gulf environment and those communities that inhabit it. So, very much, thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you.

Mimi Drew: Thank you Madame Chair. Just don't let me...don't make me go after Garrett because Garrett has the ability to say a lot in a very articulate way, so I'm going to be brief. We're thrilled to see the plan moving forward. There are a lot of people in Florida who want to see action on the project, so I think, you know, getting this...getting through this hurdles going to be really important and you will also note that some of us act like family because we've been together for a while and you know, you'll see that dynamic because a lot of us have been working on this for a while. And the other, the last point I guess, we've heard a lot of football analogies since I've been here and I'm sort of a football fan, but only if the Florida Gators are playing, so my proposal would be that we come up with a different analogy and I think maybe talking about ecosystems

and how the different pieces of the ecosystems help each other in a team effort maybe it's a little more appropriate and maybe it would result in, you know, result in a little bit less of that dynamic among the football fans during football season. So, anyway, having said that, thank you very much for the opportunity to participate.

Jo-Ellen Darcy: I just want to thank the leadership of the council. I won't go with football analogies, because it's still baseball season for me because if New Orleans had a baseball team, I...I'd come up with something to say. But also it's great to be in New Orleans. We as part of this council look at this part of what our agency does a lot is respond to disasters and unfortunately in the deep water horizon we were there but what I look to in something like this is an opportunity. We've got an opportunity here to restore a precious ecosystem in this country that is invaluable and as part of this council, we've got an opportunity with, you've got six members of the federal family here, all united to be able to do this for this region of the country and I think we should we should use it as an opportunity with...with the resources that will be coming in from...from fines and from other places. I think we've got a great opportunity here to do something great for this region of the country and I'm just really pleased to be part of it. And for my friend from Houston, I just want to let you know that the Port of Houston has just become the largest exporting port in the country, just to give you a little more Houston acumen here. Thank you.

Rachel Jacobson: Sure. Thank you and not to sound like a broken record here, but I want to offer a series of thanks on behalf of Secretary Jewell and the entire Interior family, many of whom are here today. I really want to offer a thank you, first of all, to Governor Jindal and Garrett, as we'll express our thanks for hosting us today in New Orleans. Personally I would have voted for New Orleans over Houston, I'm sorry Toby. But I also want to thank you, Secretary Pritzker, for your Chairmanship. Here we are, you know, virtually day one on the job of first time public chairing this public meeting of the RESTORE council and we're very excited to work with you. We think we're going to have a terrific experience under your leadership, so thank you. I want to thank again, and everybody's said it, but it bears repeating, the staff of the agencies that make up this RESTORE council, who have worked tirelessly around the clock to bring this first, we call it the first, of version of the comprehensive plan over the finish line and we have to recognize that is the first and Congress also recognized this in the legislation that we will learn, we will adapt as we go forward. This is going to be a long process and we have to get it right. So there will be...there will be more to come. I definitely want to express again and always, our thanks to our federal and state partners, particularly our state partners that the collaboration they characterize is our work in the Gulf is absolutely terrific and we would not be able to do this without that...that collaboration. And we at Interior have so many agencies working in the Gulf every single day, fish and wildlife service, the park services, the U.S. geological service, our bureau of ocean energy management, our...our bureau of in safety and environment enforcement, our regulating our offshore entrance. We live here, we work here, we have assets here, so these partnerships for this administration are essential to us. And finally and especially I want to thank the public for your input into the plan, for your deep commitment and passion to the issues and your continued engagement, which is going to be vital, as we are about to embark on what will be the largest ecosystem restoration in the world. So thank you and we look forward to working together with you. Thanks.

John Currier: Secretary, if I could I'm here representing Department of Homeland Security. It's a privilege to be here with you. I'd like to thank you and Justin and the staff for their leadership clearly evident today. We feel we're a key component of the federal team, not only the Department of Homeland Security, but the Coast Guard. We're here supporting all five Gulf Coast

states. Our competencies, our core competencies normally are prevention of disasters or response to disasters, but it's really good for us to be able to advise consent on the reconstitution of the economies and ecologies, the ecology of the five Gulf Coast states. So it's really a privilege for us. We do remain committed, both the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard, to the safety and security and environmental stewardship not only of the Gulf, but all of U.S. waters around the world. As again I say thank you for allowing us to be here today and I will confirm our support to the initial comprehensive plan. Thank you.

Robert Bonnie: Secretary Pritzker, I, too, want to join in with other council members in thanking you for your leadership and to the other council members for all the work that you and the staff have done on the report or the plan that we're...that we at USDA enthusiastically support. Conservation of natural resources in the Gulf is not a new thing for the Department of Agriculture. Long before the deep water oil spill, USDA working primarily through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, but other USDA agencies as well, has had an active presence in the Gulf working with partners, with states, with conservation groups and particularly with farmers, ranchers, and forest land owners to restore natural resources in the Gulf. Let me mention briefly some of the things we've done over the last decade.

Seven years prior to the spill, NRCS invested about four, a little over four billion dollars in technical and financial assistance in the five Gulf states and this is to help farmers, again, and ranchers and private land owners, forest owners, improve soil health, improve water quality, protect wetlands, protect wildlife habitat. Immediately following the spill, NRCS redirected resources to the recovery and restoration through our migratory bird habitat initiative and to our Gulf of Mexico initiative, to protect habitat, to protect water quality. And so we look forward to working with others on the council. We look forward to working with the states. We look forward to working with all of you and with the public to put our shoulder behind the wheel and to see this plan move forward and to execute on this plan. So again I want to thank I want to thank you, Secretary, I want to thank the council members and pledge USDA's strong support to the adoption of the plan.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you.

Garret Graves: Thank you Madame Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to have the last word.

Secretary Pritzker: We knew you would.

Garret Graves: And, Toby, I want to congratulate you on getting in the fourth coolest city in Texas. And Mimi, in regards to the ecological...I'm sorry, in regards to the ecological productivity, I just site a National Geographic article that noted that the Florida Everglades ecological productivity was a petting zoo compared to the productivity of the Gulf...excuse me, of the coast of Louisiana. But here's comparing. But seriously...

Secretary Pritzker: This really does sound like a family. And no rivalries here at all.

Garret Graves: But seriously I want to thank everyone here. I know that a lot of folks here or a lot of people are here because you're stakeholders and you want to see dirt churning, you want to see progress on the ground, as many of us do. And over the past several months, this group many of the same people you see sitting here, have literally participated in hundreds of meetings, phone calls, through the day and through the night, working on oil spill-related issues through the natural resource damage assessment process, through the RESTORE council and other venues, and so we are a lot like family in many instances. We play hard and we fight hard and the fact

that we're able to be here today with a plan that represents the consensus view of this group is an impressive task. If I have to hear don't mess with Texas and, you know, I can tell Texas what to do one more time, I think I'm going to scream. But seriously everybody came together and has developed on consensus plan that represents the diverse views of the Gulf of Mexico. What's important moving forward is the actual implementation, ensuring that we do get these dollars on the ground as quickly as possible and ensuring that we...we are able to communicate a prioritization process that relies upon science, a prioritization process that reflects the feedback that we receive from the public and addresses, of course, the highest priorities along the Gulf Coast. So with that we'd like to motion, Madame Chair, that the plan be approved.

Gunter Guy: Madame Chair?

Secretary Pritzker: Yes?

Gunter Guy: I'd like to second that motion.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you. I'd like to call for a vote by affirmation.

Various people say aye.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you. So the council recognizes the importance, I'm going to move forward, the council recognizes the importance of coordination across all the Gulf restoration initiatives that currently exist. The Natural Disaster Damage Assessment Trustee Council, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, the NOAH RESTORE Act Science Program. These efforts have slightly different processes and focus areas, but all of them are going to be directed toward restoring the Gulf Coast region. So to that end, as I mentioned, we've asked our partners from our major restoration efforts to join us today. So first we're going to hear from Mimi Drew, who chairs the National Resources Damage Assessment Trustee Council. She is the former Secretary of Florida Department of Environmental Protection, having served in that role during the Deepwater Horizon explosion. So, Mimi, thank you for being here today and I'll turn the microphone over to you.

Mimi Drew: Thank you Madame Chairman. It's a pleasure to be here today with you all and see so many familiar faces, who have followed us faithfully for the last three years. So you'll see within this group, a lot of the faces that have been working also with the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Team since the oil spill and because some of us wear these multiple hats, some of us have actually worked in the field during the oil spill, some of us have been in various agencies during the oil spill, we've been on the NRDA, the acronym for Natural Resource Damages Assessment is NRDA, you'll hear that term, because we've all been engaged in that for a number of years, we were able to bring a lot of passion and commitment to this effort.

So what I want to do today is just confirm our commitment as the NRDA council, the Natural Resource Damage team, if you will, to ensuring that as the different streams of money start to flow in, and the different project lists begin to be developed, we are going to work across the board looking at those different pots, if you will, of money to make sure that we are coordinated, that we leverage the funds across different kinds of project types, that we work really closely with the RESTORE council as well as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the numerous scientific groups that are going to be working with us on this effort. So in NRDA world, we've been trying to spend a billion dollars of early restoration funds that we received from BP about two years ago. We've been working hard across the Gulf to get those projects out the door and you

won't...you've seen of them, you're going to see more of them pretty soon and what we try to do, and what we will try to do, is to ensure that those projects and well-coordinated with any other projects that come forward under RESTORE or under NFWF, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. And it's intent, as the NRDA trustee council to be very closely linked to the RESTORE council, to evaluate, project concepts and plans, and hopefully to assist all of those activities come together to result in a really vital plan for restoring the Gulf of Mexico.

We recognize that good projects are based on good science, no matter what the funding stream and we look forward to finding the groups that are doing the science and integrating those activities into the decisions about projects so that when we put a project forward, we understand the ecosystem implications of that project and we're able to say it's based on good sound science, it's going to be sustainable and it's going to make us all proud five to ten years from now. So having said all that, we very much look forward to this evolving relationship. I think it's going to be something that we'll learn over time because, as you heard today, we don't know exactly how much money we're getting in RESTORE. We don't know what the timings going to look like. We're going to have to be flexible and responsive and I look forward to working with all of you. I know my partners on the NRDA trustee council look forwarding to working the RESTORE council, in fact, many of us are the same people. So we think that that will be a really good way to make sure that we leverage the funds that we get a coordinated effort to get the absolute best restoration we can across the Gulf of Mexico. Thank you very much for your time and attention today.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you, Mimi. Next, we're going to hear from Tom Kelsch, who's the Vice President for the Gulf Environment Benefit Fund. Tom spent eight years at the EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds and for a time he was Chief of Wetlands Regulatory Policy Section. Thank you.

Tom Kelsch: Thank you Secretary Pritzker and the council members for inviting the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to this afternoon's meetings. We're pleased to be here today to share information with all of you about the newly established Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund and also to offer our commitment to work closely with our agency partners represented here on the RESTORE council and on the Natural Resource Damages Trustee council. To make sure that we, with not only this...this pot of funding, but the other pots of funding that we collaboratively are maximizing the conservation outcomes to benefit the Gulf of Mexico and it's communities.

For those we aren't familiar with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or NFWF, if you know us as NFWF, then you do actually know who we are. We are a private nonprofit organization that was established by Congress back in the mid-80s. Our board is appointed by the Secretary of Interior, includes the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the administrator of NOAA. We have nearly 30 years of experience in conservation grant making, and in particular, proven success in terms of managing legal settlement dollars and mitigation dollars. So our role here in managing the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, is one we've played for years, just obviously on a historic scale. We're also very familiar with the Gulf of Mexico having invested over two decades in trying to improve fish, wildlife and habitats throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Importantly, in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon spill, we've invested over \$23,000,000 to help safeguard and bolster populations of some of the most impacted species as a result of the event.

What I want to do through the remainder of the time here is just review some of the key provisions of the Criminal Plea Agreements that settled the criminal charges against both BP and Trans-Ocean. In contrast to RESTORE and in contrast to Natural Resource Damages that are both governed by statutes and regulations, the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund is governed solely by

the the provisions within the plea and so I thought it would be valuable today to just make sure everyone's aware of what those provisions are. Under the terms of the pleas, NFWF will receive a total of \$2.54 billion dollars over a five-year period. Half of that funding is very prescribed, it is very directed towards supporting barrier island river diversion projects included in the state of Louisiana's master plan and informed by the hydrodynamic study. So those, the dollars for that portion of the funding is very prescribed, very narrowly defined in terms of how those resources are to be spent. The remaining funds the plea set forth in allocation, with 28% of the funds going towards supporting projects in the states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida and 16% being available for projects in the state of Texas.

The purpose of the fund is very important and this is really one of the most important limiting factors, if you will, to the use of these funds. It is specifically intended to remedy harm to natural resources, where there's a connection with the type of resources that were affected by the Deepwater Horizon spill. There's a lot of overlap and similarity to the Natural Resource Damage and that's part of why we will be working very closely with the NRD trustee council as we move forward. A key element, then, to the...the work that we're going to be doing is the close consultation that has been going on and will continue to go on, working with the same state resource agencies that you see up here and many of the federal agencies, notably Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA.

The payment schedule, for those who have not...are not aware of it, is very important. This is one of the differences, I think, between the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, RESTORE and NRD. This is a very certain total amount of funding that's known and the payment schedule in terms of when the dollars are going to be coming in. To date, we've already received \$158,000,000 note towards the end there that more than half the funding comes in, in years four and years five. We believe that there's ample time, given the payment schedule, to do some good thoughtful planning and we're pleased that, with today's approval of the comprehensive plan, subsequent development and approval of the state expenditure plans, that will be able to guide the investment and obligation of these funds to the highest priority conservation projects within the Gulf.

Just as noted, we are required to consult with the state resource agencies. They're sitting up here around the table today as well as with Fish and Wildlife Service and with NOAA, those are the formal consultation requirements. We are informally consulting with all the other age...agencies who are sitting around the table here as well. So we really feel like we're...we're the distant cousin, but soon we're going to become a first cousin to this family, the Gulf family. And as Mimi just noted, when everyone...everyone early on was asking us how are we going to coordinate with...with NRD and with the RESTORE councils, the answer is simply by having...working with the same individuals who are representing the states and the agencies on these two other important councils.

So where are we today? The pleas were entered into and approved by the courts back in late January and February. Shortly thereafter our board met and approved a governance framework for overseeing how these funds are going to be administered. Importantly, the board set up a separate Gulf committee that's going to be overseeing all of our work, day to day work and included on that committee are four new board members to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Ken Melling from here in Louisiana, Rod Rodriguez both from Louisiana and Florida, Charles McCrary from Alabama and Tom Strickland, the former Assistant Secretary at Interior, a Texas native but also an LSU alum. So we've got some pretty good representation within our board. And then have added out capacity here within the region to make sure that we have ample expertise and relationships to be able to build on as we move forward.

As I mentioned, the initial payments have been received and we've been spending an awful lot of time working with our state and federal agency partners in identifying the priorities for these...these dollars as we move forward. Back in May, we publicly launched the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund and the states have taken lead in setting up websites, portals for receiving public comments and project ideas and they will be playing a key role in helping to coordinate potential obligations of funds through the Gulf fund with the other key pots of money. We also are talking to the agencies about potential pilot projects with the existing funds that we have in hand. We would like to identify potential projects that we could announce as soon as before the end of the year to really demonstrate the ability of these resources to get on the ground quickly and sort of relying on the fact that these are known resources, there's certainty around it and they can be a catalyst for ecosystem restoration moving forward.

And then in terms of next steps, as I mentioned, we are reviewing these pilot projects and we hope to announce an initial slate of projects sometime before the end of the year. Planning, we ourselves will be working with the agencies to identify the priorities for these funds, as large as they are, it's amazing, you know, how quickly you can see the dollars being obligated in a very short period of time. And this is where the adoption of the comprehensive plan is going to be so critical to all of our efforts to prioritize as we move forward and then just the continued coordination that we'll be undertaking working with many folks around the table today. Thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Terrific, thank you Tom. Last but not least, we'll hear from Dr. Russ Beard, the acting Director of NOAA, RESTORE Act Science Program, as prescribed in the RESTORE Act. Russ is the Director of NOAA's national coastal data development center in Mississippi. Russ, thank you for being here.

Dr. Russ Beard: Well I'd like to thank Madame Chair and the restoration council for the privilege to discuss the NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program. And I'm going to refer to our program as the NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program throughout. The other title to the RESTORE Act is much too long to recite in the time that I have. What I want to discuss today are the progress that we've made in partnerships and coordination with the diverse organizations and activities that make up the total restoration process, 1604 was established by the RESTORE Act by...and the legislative charge to NOAA was to, in consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife with the Gulf states Fisheries Commission and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, to conduct research, observations, monitoring's and assessments that ensure the sustainability of the Gulf ecosystem, fish habitat, fish stocks and to ensure sustainability of our fishing industries, be they commercial, recreational or industrial.

We began last year in August of 2012 working with U.S. Fish and Wildlife in our governance team with representatives from...from that agency, who have now transitioned to our science team. In addition, a senior representative from Fish and Wildlife sits on the NOAA Executive Oversight Board, who provides the guidance to the NOAA RESTORE Science Program. Additionally, we've had both informal and formal discussions with the commissions and the councils. We're now moving more into the formal discussions on how that consultation process will work for them. How do we align our research and science priorities then meet their scientific needs and their resource needs. Adding to the constellation, that's what we call this slide, it's section 1603. Prior to Deepwater Horizon, during Deepwater Horizon, and after Deepwater Horizon, NOAA's been acting involved with all members of the of the restoration council. Be it beforehand on understanding the economics, the ecosystem and the sustainability issues, the establishment of

the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System, and as plank owners, if you will, foundation members of the original Gulf Governor's Alliance, we have been federal partners in a ten year history with both an action plan one and two and members of priority issue teams and of course during deep water horizon, the work that USGS, EPA, the U.S. Coast Guard and other elements of the Department of Interior, to ensure response during the during the oil spill. Things like monitoring and the surface and subsurface trajectories of oil spills, where the oil is going and fully understanding the impact of the Deepwater Horizon event. And afterwards we followed with continuous surveys, monitoring seafood for its safety and getting...collecting the data and the scientific analysis we need to understand the long-term impact that is the ecosystem recovery.

So with RESTORE, section 1603, while your projects are not science...focused on science...specific science projects, we at section 1604 look forward to complementing your science activities, as well as providing scientific guidance for management decisions. But it's clearly by legislative intent, we are not an oversight to the science activities in 1603. I think that's an important message to take. Another star in the constellation of the centers of excellence, to the respective Gulf States. As treasury regulations will be released and formal announcements are made, we'll work to create those synergies and strategies, mitigate duplication, leverage the resource, identify those unique roles and responsibilities that each of us bring to the table. What are those capacities that are appropriate for those institutions, including our own.

Additionally with our not for profit, or non-governmental activities, we've had numerous meetings, both on the telephone, formal workshops and conferences in the National Academy of Sciences to once again align the science and research priorities, where are the common objectives, where are we tangential, let's not duplicate effort. Let's identify again where we can leverage the capabilities and capacities. Additionally over the time we have met with the Nature Conservancy, the Ocean Conservancy, all to garner input into our developing science plan framework, it's a work in progress. It is not going to be a directed without input from our Gulf wide community. Additionally, we have meetings scheduled with formal meetings scheduled with the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System that will be held in September. We have meetings scheduled as participants on the water institute's Gulfs monitoring workshop to be held in September and we'll be...on the scheduling docket is a meeting with National Fish and Wildlife Federation in Baton Rouge to come to Stennis Space Center and meet with elements of our science team. Again, all with the intent to mitigate duplication, leverage the resource and do what's appropriate within our respective organizations.

And then lastly, our...the academic to the research consortiums and we've worked with in the past and present, including sea grant, the Gulf State sea grants activities. We've worked from the inception with the BP funded Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative on aligning research and science priorities and to also provide access to that data, ready availability. We've also continued discussions with the NOAA Cooperative Institutes and the Gulf of Mexico University Research Consortium and the idea behind this again, I can't hammer home enough, is the prioritization of what we, as individuals, do that can leverage and act as force multipliers. And also to take the language to the RESTORE Act that sites, use the best available science, what does that mean and no one entity can tell us. We have to do that in a collaborative fashion.

So, in closing, I'd like to bring to the attention of the assembly and the restoration council, some common themes in unifying principles that have come out of our great number of engagement strategies, be they with partners or stakeholders, or the public in general. One, and we think these are relevant across all of our activities that are represented here today. One is clarification of our programs, what is it that we are specifically tasked to do? What can we not do? That's an

important message that the public needs to know, as well as our partners and stakeholders. With...with that is also communication that was another one that has percolated to the top. Regular communication with the stakeholders, partners and public in general they want to give us input, we need to be in a receive mode, not in a transmit mode and that's an important message, I think, that we need to take in and be ready to constantly change in terms of the science plan and the research priorities, it will be an iterate process to gather than input. The other I put together is one and the same, coordination and collaboration. With all these moving parts in that constellation that I showed earlier, if we are not coordinating, if we are not collaborating, we will not succeed. We have to again identify each respective role and what we bring to the table. The last two, one is transparency. Our intentions are known, they're articulated, they're documented and we build our relationships based on trust and if the trust isn't there, we need to do our best to build the trust with the various agencies and activities that restoration will encompass. And then lastly accountability. At the end of the day, through internal and external reviews, as projects wind down, as results are made, we should have these reviews that validates the success or assess where our failures were and also, more importantly, is did we meet the Gulf communities expectations in our projected outcomes and objectives. So, with that in closing, what I see, if you look at that constellation, there's ten, twelve, I liken it to an interstate and there's ten or twelve lanes. We've got to align where appropriate. We have to work together where appropriate to get down to that one lane and the goal at the end of that one lane leading in that road map, should be a robust Gulf economy and a vibrant and sustainable role of Gulf ecosystem. Thank you.

Secretary Pritzker: Thank you Russ. We've now come to the public comment portion of our meeting. And I'd like to welcome Drew Winter, council in the office of the Governor here to serve as our moderator for the public comment period. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Hello I'm Drew Winters and I'll be serving as the moderator for the Dedicated Public Comment portion of the meeting. The Council seeks to have a continuing dialog with the public as it moves forward with its next steps. We welcome your comments and feedback as we further define and develop our plans. Before we get started I'd like to mention that there may be some council members that have to depart during the public comment period. If that happens then their designees will simply walk up to the stage and take their spot. When you checked in there was an opportunity to sign up to provide public comment. You would've filled out a sheet like this. You will be called up to speak in the order which you signed up. When we call speakers up, we'll call people up in groups of 20. We have groups A, B and a partial list of group C today. When I call the first group, please line up at the second mic-stand above. Each speaker should come up to the microphone and state his or her name and organization, and if you're representing an organization, before you begin speaking. Because of the number of speakers, we will have a three-minute time limit. We want to give everyone an opportunity who signed up to speak a chance to do so today. Staff will hold up a warning sign, a red one-minute warning sign, it'll be Miss **Alees** sitting in the front row here, and please let me know that you see the sign and let her know that you see the sign as well. We ask that you that you respect the stated time limit, and once we have heard from all who wish to comment if there is still time remaining before the scheduled end of the meeting then we will provide the, you with additional opportunity to comment. We recognize that your time is valuable and we want everyone who wants to provide comments to have an opportunity to do so. If you have to leave before the comment portion of the meeting is over you may submit your comments at the comment station, right outside of the doors where you came in. Steph can assist you in submitting your comments. Please also know that you may submit comments via email at restorecouncil@doc.gov or if you

prefer you may submit your comments by mail. You may send your comments to The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, c/o The US Department of Commerce, 1401 Constitution Avenue Northwest, Room 4077, Washington D.C., 20230. Today we have Miss **Anne Wang** here who will serve as our Vietnamese interpreter for those of you who signed up and received headset when you came in. If you need a headset, and you have not received one, please raise your hand and we will get one to you. At this time we will proceed with comments. I'd like to call up group A. So, if you were signed up in group A, please come to the first mic-stand. We have 20 people in each group. Please keep your comments to 3 minutes or less. Please be respectful and courteous of the members. So, we'll have the first person to sign up to speak at the front then, followed by additional people. So, group A will start with Scott Brown from Defense Cell.

Scott Brown: Thank you. My name is Scott Brown. I'm with Defense Cell JSF Systems. Defense Cell is a cellular soil confinement system. We have been through extensive testing at ERDC, in Vicksburg, Mississippi. We incorporate an engineering and ecological system into a, into a solution. We're not here to simply sell a product. But we have worked with CEC, Civil Environmental Consultants, located in Nashville, Tennessee, to provide a solution to assist in property protection and by adding an organic plant nutrient, a soft armament system, for dunes and create rapid growth in the grasses and the marshes. Our unique ability to work as a secondary barrier and use of natural bacteria to oxidize hydrocarbons, allows us to cooperate with nature. JSF Defense Cell is a 70 year old country – company that is working with industry and governments across the globe. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Next up is Marsha Towns from the Student Conservation Association.

Marsha Towns: Good afternoon. I'm Marsha Towns. I am the director of partnership development for the Student Conservation Association and I'm located in Houston, Texas.

Speaker 1: Could you step up to the mic a little bit, please.

Marsha Towns: Is that better?

Speaker 1: That's better.

Marsha Towns: It has been SCA's pleasure to be a part of the natural and cultural resource community in the Gulf for more than 30 years. I engage in thousands of young people in meaningful conservation work and service. So, I'm here to ask you to please remember that youth and young adults are a positive and powerful force for getting vital restoration work done here in the Gulf. As the council and my partners here identify what needs to be done, SCA can continue to provide the how, and I thank you for an opportunity to have a voice and for all of you who have come here to listen.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Next up is Sara from the National Wildlife Federation. Again, please speak into the mic so everyone here can hear you.

Sara Gonzalez-Rothi: Good afternoon. I'm Sara Gonzalez-Rothi with the National Wildlife Federation. Congratulations to the members of the council on your unanimous vote today. During the Deep Water Horizon oil disaster and the two years of drafting, negotiations, and path to passage of the Restore Act that followed, I served as legislative counsel for Senator Bill Nelson. As senators and staff were working on the Act, we recognized both the enormity of the task ahead of the council and the very tight statutory deadlines. This was intentional. As everyone in this

room knows, the Gulf Coast region is in dire need of restoration and time is not on our side. I appreciate the council's efforts to move the process along quickly. The Act was also drafted in a way to urge the council not to start from whole cloth but to piggy back on work that's been done in this region. This includes existing large-scale ecosystem restoration plans, like the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan, the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, and the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program, and it also included oil spill related efforts, including those by Secretary Mabus, the Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill Commission, and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. So, thank you for your efforts thus far. Today's vote creates another valuable tool to put the Gulf Coast back together again. But to get from where things stand to turning dirt, to parrot off of Garret Graves, we'll have to connect some of the dots about project selection and prioritization. By restoring this ecosystem the council can ensure a diverse and healthy economy for this region for generations. We look forward to the transition from plans to action.

Drew Winters: Next up is Mr. David Muth from the National Wildlife Federation.

David Muth: Good afternoon. My name is David Muth. Like Sarah I work with the National Wildlife Association. I direct the Mississippi River Delta Restoration Program for the National Wildlife Federation here in Louisiana, working with, other national and local partners, who you'll be hearing from today. On behalf of our four million members and supporters, I very much thank you all for being here today. The presence of Governor Jindal and Secretary Pritzker, demonstrates the importance of this crucial step towards implementation of the restoration of the Gulf Coast and particularly of the Mississippi River Delta. The Louisiana coast is collapsing. If present trends are allowed to continue, the nationally important industries it supports, the ports that we mentioned, oil and gas production, refining, sea food, tourism, will continue to decline, and eventually become unbelievably costly. In addition, the wildlife that the coast of Louisiana and the delta support, including ten million ducks and geese that winter here and nest all over the interior of the continent, will suffer. And finally, and most importantly, the millions of people who live and work here, and the vibrant and cultural heritage of this region will be threatened and ultimately dislocated. As Governor Jindal, pointed out, during hurricane Katrina and another of other hurricanes, we learned just how vulnerable we are. We have responded as best we can, but we broke a natural system, in our management of the Mississippi River and of our coastal wetlands. And it's really only the power of nature, that can fix that system, and that would have to be done by tapping the power of the river, using its power to reintroduce water and sediment into our wetlands. Recognizing the existential threat that we faced, Louisiana has acted boldly. The 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, lays out a clear, achievable and realistic vision that might, if we are lucky and the money can be found, stave off the worst of our possible future outcomes. The time for action and leadership by this council is here, and it is time, as we move forward, for you - you to choose the best projects from that master plan and get them built and to do that in coordination with the state of Louisiana, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the NRDA trustees, and others. Delay is the enemy. Your next step is to fulfill the task clearly laid out for you and be prepared to build projects when the funds become available. Thank you very much.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Next up is Melanie Driscoll from the National Audubon Society.

Melanie Driscoll: Thank you. I'm Melanie Driscoll. I'm the director of bird conservation for National Audubon Society for the Gulf Coast and Mississippi Flyway. Audubon commends you all, the council, on finalizing the initial Comprehensive Plan, and commend you – and appreciate the intent stated in the final plan, to base all the work on best available science. We encourage the council to move with haste to implement projects that have already been vetted through rigorous

scientific processes such as those in the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan. We encourage the council to work, quickly to develop a science advisory committee though, for new projects that may be proposed, to ensure that the projects work synergistically to result in a Gulf Coast that is productive, sustainable, and balanced to support our communities, economies, and natural resources. To help the council meet these upcoming challenges, Audubon offers our 100 plus years of experience in coastal work and coastal bird work, our tremendous capacity through our large staff, our scientific expertise, and our grass roots network of citizen scientists and volunteers, to partner with all of the council family members on stewardship of birds. Our contribution to a strong partnership with the council will be to help ensure that the intent of habitat creation is realized; that the projects not only result in hurricane protection and other benefits to human communities, but also result in, restoration of the natural resources we all sought and saw damaged during the spill. We were all hurt in seeing the birds that were damaged in the spill and we'd like to encourage you to continue your good work to partner with us in order that we can help them come back from this and other disasters. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Next up is Caroline Graves from **Sale Fish**.

Caroline Graves: I'm Caroline Graves. I'm a business owner on Dauphin Island and I'm here to talk about Dauphin Island. I'm here to talk about the non-transparency of the BP projects and the injustice that I believe that's being done to Dauphin Island in south Mobile Alabama. Excuse me; I've got a sore throat. According to the Restore documentation, more than 90% of the crude oil and gas production what the federal government receives of the 4.5 billion dollars each year of off shore royalties. Alabama's trust fund is 2.48 billion dollars from oil and gas. Alabama in 1980, the oil was, discovered in south Alabama. All pipelines coming into Alabama go through Dauphin Island and bring in billions of dollars to the state of Alabama and the federal government. No pipelines go through Baldwin County. In the 1990's, the Baldwin County, they asked that no, oil rigs would be within 15 miles of their shore and then there was a resolution by, Secretary of Interior Babbitt to limit drilling within 15 miles of the ballpark zone of offshore Baldwin County. Dauphin Island was left with all of Alabama's large oil gas rigs and all of Alabama's pipelines that feed the rest of the country going through it. Personally, I don't mind the gas rigs and we understand the importance to the country for the energy. Excuse me. Even coastal Mississippi stated last year they didn't want look like Dauphin Island or Louisiana with all the oil-rigs showing. That means that this is a detrimental effect on the economy. The problems that come with the gas rigs is the Katrina cut which is caused by the pipelines being close - too close to the surface so the sand cannot take hold. The multiple gas leaks that've caused problems and even after Katrina one of the huge oil rigs from 60 miles away was washed on shore, it ended up 200 yards from the beach, and that was probably what knocked down all of the houses on the west end during the hurricane. Also, Dauphin Island is west of the Mobile shipping channel and with all of the gas and oil business and because of the dredging of the deep channels, the dredging is eroding the town's beaches to the west of the island. Over the last 30 years the federal government and the state of Alabama have done nothing to help Dauphin Island even though they are making billions from the oil and gas and the shipping industry that is eroding the shorelines and destroying the island. Last December, the Restore meeting in Mobile, it was stated that the committee that no Restore money would go to build convention centers or to build bridges that are not the purpose of the money and it was not from the impacted oil. To add insult to injury, the state of Alabama announced that they would use the first 100 million - excuse me - that was intended for the environmental use to rebuild the state convention center in gulf shores quoting loss of use for a hotel that was lost in 2004. The state and the federal government are getting billions of dollars from the pipelines and the state, and they do not feel their actions are inappropriate or unethical to spend 100 million on a hotel when Dauphin Island's beaches are washing away and many

property owners are under water. The state as recently informed Dauphin Island that none of the BP money would be spent, private property even though its behind the towns beaches that they've already washed way, even though Congressman Bonner sent us letter from the federal Fish and Wildlife stating that the BP money could be used. I am –

Drew Winters: Miss Graves, your 3 minutes are up. Can you wrap up, please?

Caroline Graves: Okay. All I'm gonna say is I'm begging you, I'm appealing to you that - to let Dauphin Island be the first Restoration project in Alabama and to put together a trust fund for insurance and for another trust fund for beach restoration for the sand bypass to save Dauphin Island. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Thank you. I remind you all, please be mindful of the three-minute limit. If we have time at the end we will allow folks to, to speak and say additional comments, if there is additional time at the end of the comments. Next up is Tom Tagliabue from the city of Corpus Christy, Texas.

Tom Tagliabue: Good afternoon. I'm Tom Tagliabue with the city of Corpus Christy, Texas and I'm here with my colleague, Sharon Lewis. Today, we are delivering a letter from Mayor Nelda Martinez and we want to thank the council, for this opportunity to provide additional feedback. To summarize the letter, Corpus Christy is already the most popular city in Texas on the Gulf of Mexico and we're primed for continued growth and opportunity in the next decade. To achieve success with council's five goals for Gulf Coast restoration within the initial 10 year funding strategy, we believe there is strategic value in investing in Texas ecosystem and economic restoration projects. The city's priority goals of restoring and improving water quality and quantity, economic restoration and revitalization are consistent with the council's initial Comprehensive Plan. The Restore Act and all Deep Water Horizon settlements offers a tremendous opportunity to make an investment in sustainability that will protect and replenish marine life, wildlife, and habitat for future generations. Our message for the council is to offer – is an offer by the city of Corpus Christy to help facilitate communication with coastal mayors from all five states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. We'd recommend a Coastal Mayors Advisory Council. We will continue to work within our own community to encourage a comprehensive regional approach to restoration activities. Thank you again for this opportunity. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Drew Winters: Janet Bowman from the Nature Conservancy.

Janet Bowman: Good afternoon. I'm Janet Bowman representing the Nature Conservancy, and we're a national and global conservation organization that has, chapters in all five Gulf States and in addition a robust science, staff that is involved in every aspect of Gulf restoration. As you saw, we were a star on the constellation of NOAA Research. I want to congratulate you all on the adoption of the framework. One of the things that's just very significant about the framework is it focuses on large landscape ecosystem restoration and while that's a fabulous goal one of the things that's difficult about accomplishing that is, we're trying to accomplish that in the context of individual projects and bringing individual projects together in a way that has – has a bigger ecosystem restoration result. And that's why it's really, critical to incorporate the best available science into the decision-making and to do that in a thoughtful way. So, we're, we're very happy that the framework talks about adopting a scientific advisory committee process, and we also suggest that it would be helpful to appoint a senior level chief scientist to kind of head up the effort. In addition, one of the aspects that's incredibly important to incorporate science is

development of evaluation criteria, and not just evaluation criteria of individual projects, but really big picture criteria to show that the restoration objectives that are necessary to ensure clean water in the Gulf, clean oyster restoration, wetlands restoration, that these big picture goals are achieved by the individual projects. And really the only way to do that is to identify the science upfront. Finally one of the things that I – we think it's important to focus on is, the state expenditure plans and in a timely fashion adopting, the impact allocation formula. The states are working on their plans and it's important information for them to know as they're developing the plans and then also we believe that consistency, with the council plan means more than that the projects won't harm the environment. We really want to look for sort of a constellation of projects that complement the council plan and, and sort of push the same objectives to restore, the ecosystem of the Gulf and the economy. Thank you very much.

Drew Winters: Next up Dr. Gloria Horning from Pensacola Florida.

Gloria Horning: Good afternoon. Familiar faces for sure, and I get to repeat myself one more time and I know Mimi and Trudy's heard it. We've got to talk about the health of the people. We keep leaving them out. We have to talk about the education of our young people. We keep leaving them out. We need to talk about the disenfranchised communities that are not engaged. They would like to be engaged but they don't know how. We need to go into their communities and ask them what they want, what they need, what they see. I know families that are eating fish every day to feed their family. These fish are not good to eat. There's going to be a health impact that Obama Care or any other national, health organization forms, we're not going to be able touch. We've got to educate our people, and we keep leaving them out. I appreciate the comment from I forgot Ken's last name, sorry for the familiar, Environmental Justice here. We've got to – we keep leaving it out and I hate to say this right now, there aren't any health educators here. There aren't any educators for environmental here, and there are no people of color here, representing these states that have some of the highest numbers in minorities and they're not represented. So, I appreciate the work you're doing, I just hope, I know Keith Wilkinson's going, "She's repeating herself again," I'm gonna keep repeating it until it's heard and it's tackled. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Doug Meffert from the Audubon, Louisiana.

Doug Meffert: Thank you and good afternoon. My name is Doug Meffert and I'm the vice president of the National Audubon Society and executive director of Audubon Louisiana. Melanie Driscoll has introduced to you to a little bit of Audubon. I also wanted to mention Audubon is a proud partner of the Mississippi River Delta Restoration Coalition which includes the National Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, and other collaborators where we seek to implement what is arguably one of the largest and boldest master plan implementation and coastal restoration plans in the nation to promote sustainability of Louisiana's coast, but also the communities that depend on them. Now, as you may have gathered our group is interested in multiple aspects of your work as the Restore Council but I just wanted to touch on a couple in the interest of brevity. First, on behalf of the referenced organizations over Mississippi River Delta partnership we'd like to commend the council on the release of the Comprehensive Plan and urge you to take full advantage of the opportunity you have before you to improve the Gulf ecosystem and restore its natural resilience. We encourage the council to focus on high priority restoration projects that will achieve significant wetlands benefits. These are ones that are large but also cost effective and those that provide the greatest possible deltaic land building. Now, the best science is telling us here in Louisiana that we can't wait anymore and the same science has also informed

the development of the most critical projects moving forward. Namely, the restoration components found in the Louisiana 2012 Coastal Master Plan. This represents this plan over 2 years of scientific assessments during its development that culminated in the unanimous passage that Governor Jindal mentioned earlier by the 2012 Louisiana Legislature. We look forward to our continued work with you on implementing this comprehensive plan moving forward. Second, and lastly I would be remiss if I didn't mention Audubon's interest in the western reaches of our state's coastal area. The area where we are recognized as land owners, where we work on the ground with our local partners and Vermilion Parish and other parts of the Chenier Plain to evaluate and protect critical bird habitats. Unlike southeast Louisiana this is a part of the Louisiana coast that doesn't have the Mississippi River as resource. It may take a different approach to restore these areas but they are absolutely worth your full attention. In conclusion, there is much for your group to consider and much restoration to conduct. Again, we thank you for your work and look forward to close and continued interaction until that work is complete. Thank you very much.

Drew Winters: Mr. George Ricks from the Save Louisiana Coalition.

George Ricks: Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the panel and I'd like to thank, Mr. Graves and CPRA for their hard work in developing the Master Plan for Coastal Restoration. But the Master Plan for Coastal Restoration is flawed, and that one flaw is the large-scale river diversions that will divert, tremendous amounts of fresh water into our brackish and saltwater estuaries. That will have a devastating effect on our fisheries. I appreciated the fact that Governor Jindal in his open - opening statement said the importance of our fisheries to the state, and our seafood industry, but what he failed to say is one out of every 70 jobs, that's 7-0 jobs in the state of Louisiana, are directly connected to the commercial fishing industry. Commercial and recreational fishing industry brings in 4.1 billion dollars a year to the state of Louisiana and provides 300 million dollars annually in state and local tax revenues. Now, these large-scale diversions will flood, the Sound and Barataria estuaries converting them totally to fresh water which will devastate our salt water fisheries, oysters, fin fish. Every juvenile stage of life, in the estuary has to get into the estuary, at the peak time of the year when the diversions will be run the most, and that's our concerns. These concerns were also echoed by NOAA, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sent letters to Mr. Graves and the CPRA stating these very facts. And we would just like the council and the CPRA to reconsider, the large-scale diversions and look more into, dredging and, and long distance sediment pipeline projects as opposed to the easy way out with these diversions. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Mr. Harvey Reed from the Louisiana Association of Cooperatives.

Harvey Reed: Good afternoon. Good afternoon. I'd like to thank everybody for coming to Louisiana. Most of all, over the years we have worked with small communities along the Gulf Coast, and also throughout Louisiana. Ever since hurricane Katrina, you know, we've had trouble along the Gulf Coast, because we talk about resiliency for those communities. These are the things we need to bring back. A lot of those communities has not really recovered from hurricane Katrina yet we have BP. Last year we had, you know, Isaac. We have many catastrophes that hit our Gulf Coast. One of the things that we need to be concerned about; funding for those individuals along the Gulf Coast that affect the rest of the state of Louisiana. Number 1: You know, if you look two resol – Louisiana – New Orleans we act - we actually get over three billion dollars into the resol – you know, quite naturally none of that money flows down to Gulf Coast communities. As stated earlier, people of color, travel groups have all been aggrieved by these disasters. These are one of the things we need to do. We need to bring back funding into those areas so they can more or less retool themselves to start having additional type of businesses and what have you, so they

can be competitive with other parts of the state of Louisiana as well as the Gulf Coast. This is not only applies to Louisiana but also it applies from Florida all the way to the Gulf Coast of Texas. Those small communities, every time we have a disaster they are affected by this, you know, financially, economically, and what have you. What do we do about that if we gonna lose – if we gonna lose the, you know, the Gulf Coast and the restoration, what have you, you gonna lose the people. The people is our primary, you know, concern right now. We have worked with cooperatives throughout the state of Louisiana. We have provided training, we have worked with under you know underserved individuals and socially disadvantaged producers. We have worked with, Asian communities that – you know that community as well as the tribal groups, and these are the things that we are looking at right now. We need to concentrate a little bit more on how we gonna take these funds if you want to take those five points that you have, take those last four and start putting that – plugging that into those small communities down there where they can be almost, you know, competitive with the larger communities. All the money is going right to the large communities, not to the smaller communities along our Gulf Coast. We are affected by that, you know it's true, Interior, Commerce, all of the departments, you know, we have to come to a conclusion. What are we gonna do with our smaller communities? And in closing I want to thank you all for passing this plan. You know I agree with it, now we have to implement everything. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Next up, Kara Langford from the Ocean Conservancy.

Kara Langford: Hi there. It's good to see you all again. My name's Kara Langford, I'm with Ocean Conservancy. First of all I just want to say how much we really appreciate all your hard work that you continue to do to develop a comprehensive plan that will ultimately guide project selection and eventually implementation. I know that you know our organization pretty well so you won't be surprised that we have a few suggestions for you in moving forward. First of all, we would like you to do these, as soon as possible too. Hire a senior level chief scientist who advises you and the executive director and who manages and works with independent peer reviewers and a scientific advisory committee. We feel like this is a really important next step for you guys to take. Establish a scientific advisory committee to provide advice on the best available science on restoration at a programmatic level. Develop a robust science-based project submission guidelines and evaluation criteria and publish them before accepting project submissions. We encourage you to reach out to your university and of course your nonprofit partners to develop these guidelines and to consult with NFWF to determine whether the same or similar guidelines can be used for project submission in that process. Lastly, we would encourage you to enter into a formal agreement with the BP/Deep Water Horizon NRDA trustee council and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation along with the National Academy of Science to link and coordinate oil spill and broader ecosystem restoration efforts. Thanks so much.

Drew Winters: Steve Cochran from the Environmental Defense Fund.

Steve Cochran: My name is Steve Cochran with the Environmental Defense Fund. I grew up down here in Louisiana. I'm currently stationed in Washington D.C., but this will always be my home so I will add my welcome to all of you for coming down here to listen to us and thank you for your patience as we, as the – I think the old joke goes, most everything's been said but not everyone has said it so you guys get to listen to this for awhile. I want to focus on three quick things. You've heard a lot from the Governor, you know, down about the values that we're trying to protect here. Many of them economic, certainly the ports, navigation, fisheries, energy coast, all of the things, tourism, that sustain us, as a community economically, contribute significantly to the nation but also make it possible for the people to live here to live the lives that they do and none

of that, literally, will be possible much longer based on the loss of land that is going on. The energy coast was built on land that is no longer there and is disappearing. Ports, navigation channels don't work if they're exposed to open water in great storms without protection. So, all of those economic values that you've heard about, essentially go away if we don't restore the coast along the lines that we've been talking about. Second, in terms of process, this is about as I've worked in state government in federal government, in the Congress, and now in the NGO community. I'm not sure I've ever seen a more complex undertaking with the levels of engagement that are required across agencies, across states, among states, between the federal and state roles, and so we obviously commend you for getting to this stage. But what that also tells me given the time limitations on our existence down here, that "business as usual" is our enemy here, and if we allow the standard operating procedures to occur, to follow the natural course, this state, the bottom half of it, will disappear. That's easy to say, hard to do, and very hard in each of your roles to remember to do when you have a thousand other things to worry about. So, I want to talk about the last part which is the opportunity. Here in the Delta we actually have a plan, it's not a perfect plan because no plan ever is, but it is absolutely the best approach to coastal restoration that's ever been done and we have it in place now. Because of a horrible accident we had the beginnings of the flow of money; it's not enough money but its essential money to get started. So, we have what we almost never have which is we have both a plan and money and we have the river. No other restoration effort has that same element. The natural forces which actually built this delta, if directed appropriately, which is what the plan does can begin to restore and sustain the restoration that's necessary here. If you can avoid "business as usual," if you can help us redirect the river to this task, I guarantee you, I promise you, you will look back on this as among the very best things that you have ever done. So, thank you very much for everything as you go forward.

Drew Winters: John Joplin from the Mississippi Center for Justice.

John Joplin: Good afternoon. I'm John Joplin and I'm the managing attorney of the Mississippi Center for Justice Gulf Coast office, located in Biloxi, Mississippi. The Mississippi Center for Justice is a nonprofit, public interest law firm with the mission of advancing racial and economic justice throughout the state of Mississippi. Since this oil drilling disaster occurred the Mississippi Center for Justice has worked with a broad coalition throughout the Gulf that calls itself Gulf Future that you've heard from at your previous gatherings and it is in the process of forwarding to you the comments of our working group. I want to go on record to let you know that the Mississippi Center for Justice endorses each and every of the particular comments that are being put forth by Gulf Future and we are going to lend the full weight of our state's organization to seeing that those comments are put into effect to the best extent possible. I also want to let you know that the Mississippi Center for Justice has worked with a more intimate collaborative in our town of Biloxi that's comprised of the Steps Coalition, ourselves, and the three Vietnamese advocacy organizations in Biloxi. Those three groups are the Mississippi Coalition of Vietnamese American Families and Fisher Folk, Asian Americans for Change, and Boat People SOS. Thao Vu is here this afternoon and she'll be speaking later on behalf of the Coalition of Families and Fisher Folk, and the Mississippi Center for Justice endorses each and every one of the recommendations that Ms. Vu will present to you this afternoon. We are a people organization. We are a social justice organization. We do not pretend to be an environmental organization and I certainly do not understand all of the science necessary to approach this daunting task that faces you, but I see the people of Biloxi regularly and we care and love our community and we have seen the pain that this disaster has brought to the Vietnamese community in particular. 65 percent of the commercial fishermen in Mississippi are Vietnamese American and their interests and their future must be protected as we go forward. Thank you so much for your hard work and thank you for

building into your work process the opportunity for the public to make contributions such as you have today. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Next up is Sean Turner from Vanishing Paradise. Sean, if you'd like to take that mic off the stand we can help you with that.

Sean Turner: Yes, I would. Hi, I'm Sean Turner from Turner House Productions and on behalf of Vanishing Paradise. Okay, we have this money and we're waiting. Why wait when we could do it now and save our coast? Cause, come on, I want to save this earth; I want to save Louisiana because I care. Not a whole lot of 10 year olds care but I do. Now, whoever's with me just please help me out with trying to get now, cause I want to save the Coast. I go fishing, I go hunting, that's why I care. I wanted to stay here 'cause it's a Louisiana sportsman's paradise. I just wanted to stay – and one more thing for the football team – Who dat? Go Tigers!

Drew Winters: Thank you, Sean. Always the highlight of our meetings. Next up is Mr. Howard Page from the Steps Coalition.

Speaker 1: Howard. That's gonna be hard to follow, Howard.

Howard Page: It's gonna be impossible to follow so I'm not gonna try. We'll reiterate the "Who dat" but – I'm Howard Page with the Steps Coalition from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Thank you for having this meeting. We, we have some really great work going on but we - we do have some comments were we see some things that are really good that came out of this and some things that, that need improvement. And one thing that, that has been good is the, the public participation but, I'm gonna kind of correct myself, it's also something that needs improvement, and one thing that needs improvement on the public participation is the time for public comments, between when, you know, the plans and drafts are received and, and when the comments are due. It, it would be nice if there's a, you know, a little more time period there for people to comment. Also when, one of the partners of the Steps Coalition is Ms. Thao Vu, and representing - other groups that represent Vietnamese fishermen on the coast, and in particular we would like to see translation happen in a timely fashion. [That when for example, when Vietnamese fishermen give their comments, that they receive the translated response to their comments in, in a timely fashion so that we can have more meaningful public participation. And on that subject, I'd like to reinforce something that we saw in there that, that we think is, is really beneficial and that's that you look at actually funding community based organizations to help do outreach, and finally, this is something that came out of – on that, so just something came out of the Exxon Valdez but, the term is traditional ecological knowledge that, that was used there and I believe they used, native populations of Inuit and other people, well on the coast we have, of course, a lot of fishermen and others, like the young man who was just here before probably, although he's 10 years old, he probably knows quite a bit about fishing and hunting and the wetlands and the waters, and we would – and of course a professional fisherman that's been out there all of his life really knows a lot so we would like that that you look at that as a valuable source of information just like scientists, just like other professionals that of course we do want to see, but that you look at traditional knowledge such as the fishermen out there. I'd like to reiterate something that I heard earlier which is that we hire a chief scientist to to guide the science work. I have to look at my notes here. I would like to ask that you look at developing hiring preferences that promote local hiring and training and that have a strategy of working toward a resource of locally trained people to work on these kinds of projects. And as I see my time's, going down I'd like to talk about a personal thing, and - I signed up for – I, I'm almost embarrassed to admit – but I signed up for a reception that I understood would further my work of giving me

possible, you know, a little time with some of the folks here, and I received, and I had to pay for it, and I, thought it was officially associated with you and maybe it is and maybe it isn't but I want to make you aware that someone is acting in your name and charging 50 to over 100 dollars implying that that you will have access to you. And you know, a lot of times when people are scammed the, one thing that happens is the victims won't come forward. Well, I'll admit I, I think I was a victim of this because we all got an email yesterday that the, the meeting was mysteriously – the reception, I'm sorry, was mysteriously cancelled and they didn't return our money. And so, if this was not a mistake that you're aware of, that you're somehow associated with, I'd like to ask that you have a way to get our money back and if it's not, if it is some kind of, you know, shyster work in here, I'd like to let you know that someone is acting in your name and it looks very official on the website doing things like this. Setting up receptions that, that claim that you can, meet with folks,]

Speaker 2: Mr. Page if I, if I can just note there is absolutely zero association with the council and that, entity. From what I've read, it's not the first time something like that's happened. I'm very sorry that that you guys experienced that. I will tell you that I, I will speak with our Attorney General, and see if there is something we can do to help ensure that, that you guys are paid back. That kind of activity is just ridiculous and unacceptable.

Howard Page: Thank you sir, and because it may not be appropriate, I've just been passed a note of who a possible name is but, I'd rather not say someone's name just out of speculation but, I am gonna pass it to this young lady and thank you. So, but – it's in there, thank you.

Drew Winters: Thank you, Mr. Page, we're gonna call up group B. We've got two names left on group A. So, if group A – group B could come forward now. We've got Mr. David White from the National Wildlife Federation.

David White: Hi. My name is David White. I'm the director of the Gulf of Mexico Restoration Campaign for the National Wildlife Federation, working out of St. Petersburg, Florida. I wanted to join the chorus to thank you for all your hard work on the first Comprehensive Plan. We know that this is just a starting point and this is a good framework, for a plan for restoring the Gulf. We look forward to working with you to develop more specific provisions for integrating science into the plan, coming up with a process for evaluating and choosing projects for funding, and providing opportunities for meaningful public participation and involvement. I have three specific recommendations, for the path forward to implement this plan. The first one is, think big; this is an opportunity to take an ecosystem scale approach to ecosystem scale projects. This may well be the largest environmental restoration trust fund in history, and we are accountable to the rest of the nation for using this opportunity to make meaningful progress for restoring the Gulf. Funding projects to restore iconic places like the Florida Everglades, Apalachicola Bay, Mobile Bay, the Mississippi Sound, the great marshes of the Mississippi River Delta, and the productive estuaries along the Texas coast will leave a lasting legacy for future generations. Second, focus on special places. Let's use this opportunity to restore our national estuaries, coastal and national parks and seashores, wildlife refuges, state parks, and recreation areas. We also need to address the uncertain – the certainty of future sea level rise and the possibility that it'll, it will accelerate. We have already made significant public investment in these areas because they are recognized as areas of regional and national significance. And we owe it to the people who come after us to leave them in better shape than we found them. Third, focus on getting the water right in terms of quality, quantity, timing, and distribution. It is critical that we address both water quality and restoring water flows into coastal areas in order to recreate conditions necessary to have successful restoration of oysters, sea grass, coral reefs, coastal wetlands, and other important

habitats for fish, wildlife and people. Doing these things will help recover Gulf fish stocks as well as the entire marine food chain which is so critically important to sustaining the Gulf coastal economy. Environmental restoration is the best way to create jobs, boost Gulf coast business, and strengthen local communities. Finally, we understand that you, as a council have direct authority over 60 percent of the Restore Act funds, but as individuals wearing different hats, you have enormous influence over how all of the various oil spill funds are used including NRDA and NFWF funds. We hope that all of you will commit to restore the Gulf by working to invest all of these funds in environmental projects that make economic sense because investing in responsible restoration will ensure that we all benefit from a healthy Gulf Coast for generations to come. Thank you again for your service.

Drew Winters: Last up in group A is Bonny Shumaker from On Wings of Care dot org.

Bonny Shumaker: Hi. I'm Dr. Bonny Shumaker. I'm a retired physicist with NASA and California Institute of Technology. I came out here in May of 2010, retired in May of 2011, and I've been here working for the Gulf ever since. There's two efforts I would really strongly like to encourage you. The first is a comprehensive and credible monitoring program. Monitoring wildlife waters and wetlands, and also pollutant incidents. There is no way to draw credible conclusions about the impacts of human activities in the Gulf of Mexico without that data, and as a scientist I care about being credible. So, as an example to you of what citizens can do toward this, three years ago the nonprofit that I founded, On Wings of Care, began systematically making aerial surveys of the Gulf area, and we do that to this day. We document, off shore oil and gas pollution incidents and accidents for the public and the Coast Guard. We support scientific activities looking at wildlife and, offshore oil and gas sources, birds for the Audubon. Our primary activity really has been supporting wildlife research and we've been able to landmark pioneering research on animals by, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries, by NMFS, by NOAA, and by universities. Just to give you an example, again, we've flown over 700 hours in the Gulf, but in the last three months alone, 90 days, and I gave this to the folks outside for you to see. Here's a Google Earth Map, here's the whole Gulf of Mexico. There's a 65 hundred square nautical mile area in the last three months that we have surveyed and here's a closer view of it. That's 11 different flights. That's just since the end of May. In those, we've documented - and discovered and documented over 50 distinct and significant oil slicks on the surface. These are pollution sites. We've also documented whales and dolphins and sea turtles and whale sharks and so that's all very interesting. I'll let scientific articles quantify in the future, but, I can say conclusively as a scientist that we noticed, a distinct absence of wildlife in a large area around MC252 and the general numbers are way down from what they were through the summer of 2010. The second effort I really want to encourage you, in my 30 seconds, is to, initiate a formal mechanism for gathering and relying on informed and empowered citizen input. Many of us here have advocated and in fact, prepared legislation to submit to Congress for a Gulf of Mexico Regional Citizens Advisory Committee. A council, excuse me, this is a council patterned after those in Alaska, after the Exxon Valdez, and it would definitely inform and invest citizens with playing a role in the future protection of the Gulf. You need a similar Citizens Advisory committee for the Gulf. I think we cannot overstate the importance and the potential benefits of an informed and empowered citizenry who are invested, fully invested, in both the restoration and the future protection of the Gulf. I thank you for your work.

Drew Winters: Park Smith from American Youth Works, Texas Conservation Corps.

Park Smith: Alright, thank you guys for listening to all this. We really appreciate you. My name's Park Smith. I'm the executive director for American Youth Works, and we run a program called the Texas Conservation Corps. We're a community base nonprofit, that offers jobs training,

education, and service opportunities to at-risk youth, and young adults who want to make a positive difference in their communities. These are AmeriCorps members that give national service and we have partnered for many years with Texas Parks and Wildlife, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, pretty much all the land management agencies across the nation we've been, partnering with for many years. We're part of a group that is called the Corps Network and there're other conservation corps like ours across the nation. There are 127 programs like ours that work across the nation to engage young people in conservation and in service to their country, and we stand ready to help bring some of those resources to these local communities to hire local youth to be engaged in these restoration activities. When you think of youth you might not think of, high quality work but, it – you will be amazed by the level of work, we're doing professional level work, have been for, over 20 years for all of these agencies that we spoke to you about a while ago. These folks hire our programs to do this work because, one we're extremely cost effective, we're very high quality, work in terms of the product delivery that we give and, we're building the future leaders of our country, and of the agencies that you represent. So, we ask that you give; you know, deep consideration to, engaging these conservations corps that is working with, young people from the communities that have been hit. We want to, help build the infrastructure for more young people to be engaged in this service across the nation. We're built sort of on the model of the Civilian Conservation Corps from the 1930's that built all of our national and many of our national and state parks across the nation. We, they helped restore the forests and during the 30s, this really gave people who were desperate, an opportunity to prove themselves, to build skills that would, take our country out of the depression. We have the highest youth unemployment we've had since the 30s now. We have people all across these coasts that could, be engaged, gross skills become employable, members of our community and contributors, and they're ready to be engaged. The young people have a tremendous amount to offer and they're waiting for an opportunity to prove themselves. It's a right of passage for them, to show that they have something great to offer their country. So, think deeply about to get them involved. We're ready to help you with that and we're a tremendous resource for you. So think about the conservation corps and we stand ready to help you with that.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Patrick Barnes from Limitless Vistas and BFA Environmental.

Patrick Barnes: Hello. I'm Patrick Barnes, President/Founder of BFA Environmental and Limitless Vistas. Limitless Vistas is a nonprofit, local job training nonprofit founded here New Orleans, to help – post Katrina – to help reconnect disadvantaged and disconnected youth to the community. I established Limitless Vistas after completing a contract for the Army Corps of Engineers to - in response to Katrina. And, it was during the execution of that work that I realized that there were a tremendous amount of kids that were unemployed and in need of, of reconnecting and in what better way than to use the contract vehicle that I had as a an engineering firm to do that. So I reached out to some community based organizations at that time 'cause LVI hadn't been rolled out yet, and we partnered with them, identified youth, trained them, and they participated in the contract. So once I ended that contract, you know, I said, "Wait a minute, I think I'm on to something here." And if only some of the bigger firms would see this. There's a tremendous amount of resource out there in our community that is not being tapped with these youth. And there's, a tremendous amount of work that they can perform, particularly related to environmental restoration and environmental work in general. Like Park Smith, that was just up here, LVI is a conservation corps. We are a member of the Corps Network, that 127 organization national nonprofit with over 27 thousand members, and we can grow and expand our job corps here to do more training and more outreach, and, better, facilitate the connection between the for-profit work that's out there and the nonprofit work that out there. And, I want to commend the council for an outstanding job on the Comp Plan, but it does fall short in one particular area.

We know that the bulk of the work will be executed on the, for-profit contract inside, and contractors, being one myself, we respond to what's being required in specifications and in RFPs and things like that. So, we need to include in the RFP stage a requirement that workforce and job training plans be required to be submitted with your response or the local community, how it is that you're going to engage these communities in your project. And, make that have a weight. It has to have a weight, something substantial, 20 percent at least. And then, that would become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Beyond that there would be not much else needed because the contractors would engage the community. The community would then hold their feet to the fire in terms of making sure they implement the plan and so on. I'm outta time. I did have one other – can I?

Drew Winters: We, we still – I'm sorry we still have about 30 people left to get to. Thank you very much.

Patrick Barnes: Thank you. Oh Darrell, with my program is gonna be up in a little bit.

Drew Winters: He's actually next. Darrell Lucher from Limitless Vistas.

Darrell Lucher: Good afternoon, Council. My name is Darrell Lucher and, I'm a graduate of the LVI program and, I would like to speak on the behalf of all the graduates as well I'll just tell you a little about myself. First off, I am a young black man, in my early 20s – I dare to say the only one here today, so, you know, I want to speak on behalf of LVI as well as my demographic. I grew up in New Orleans East, I'm a native. I went to St. Augustine High School. After, after high school I started, ucollege, and in college I made some, some serious financial mistakes and that put me in the workforce. And, with just a high school education and some college, I mean, there's really a minimal amount of things you can do. So, that put me in a position where I was like, okay maybe I can, pick up a trade. And then that's when I bumped into Mr. Patrick Barnes and the folks at LVI, and the folks at LVI gave me the, the training and the experience I needed to work within the environmental field. And, since my training at LVI I've worked with, Leaf Environmental, it an environmental agency in New Orleans, as well as, right now I'm currently employed with Ardaman and Associates. They're a geotechnical and environmental agency in Harahan, and it's a nationally recognized company. So, the program works. The program works. I'm just a success story of many, you know, in – within the program and, I just personally feel like not enough funds reach programs like this and as well as programs that impact people like me. So, I urge, I urge the council to take that into consideration as well as you know, invest in – invest in the youth. I mean, we are the future of America. You invest in us; hey we'll invest in you. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Casi Callaway from Mobile Baykeeper.

Casi Callaway: Thank you. I'm Casi Callaway. I'm the director of Mobile Baykeeper, and I certainly support giving money to the really awesome youth who stand up do this work. It's not an easy task and it's not an easy task for y'all to sit here and listen to three minutes times 75 people so I'm gonna try to be brief. We are so grateful for the work that you do and we know that I've seen most of you at a multitude of meetings. I think Garrett's point about thousands of meetings is very accurate for my life over the last three years. We have spoken, we have reached to y'all and in so many ways you've heard us, and we are so grateful for that. The vast majority of the plan meets our concerns and efforts and worries so, so greatly and I think it was reiterated by the science person, Dr. **Beard**, at the end when he said the most important thing is we're gonna focus on collaboration, eliminating duplication, and leveraging resources, and I cannot stress enough that that is so important and vital in what we look. Not just from the federal council's standpoint

but looking at the projects that come from each individual state. The other thing we are so proud to hear over, and over, over again, and the very first time I heard Justin Ehrenwerth say it out loud I almost burst into tears, but it is environmental restoration is the key to economic recovery and y'all have all said it and you've all heard it and it really seems to be resonating throughout the document. So thank you for that. The next thing, however, that I have to poke you on is in May of 2011 the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force announced the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee. Today, y'all announced that you're going to do research on creating, maybe, a citizen advisory committee. There are citizens – Mobile Baykeeper represents over four thousand members in the state of Alabama. We are a 15 – 16 year old organization. We're one. There are a multitude of people and you've heard 'em, and heard 'em, heard 'em who – so don't get me wrong, I know it's not easy to task to pick these people to represent, but you have a really phenomenal font of wisdom at your finger tips of folks who are willing to work for you, to do the research to make the efforts that need to be made. We need a citizens advisory and a scientific advisory committee and we need you to call it – that was my goal and hope, that I was gonna come here and y'all were gonna say, "We're doin' it. Put your name in the hat again." the last point I also have to make is that y'all have an obligation also to encourage the states to do the same. Alabama has not – Alabama has – Thank you. Alabama has decided not to create citizens advisory committee because we are different and we are represented by out 10 elected officials. Frankly, nine elected officials and one elected official that is still not citizens. That is still not citizens engaged in and involved in the level of detail and ability to participate that they need to be. I know the system, it's my job but, there are community, after community, after community who aren't represented and don't know how to get in this meeting or what to say to you when they get here. We need folks who can represent them. We need a more extensive process and we need that kind of leadership rolling over and over again. Again thank you so much for your efforts and your time.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Dave from Okaloosa County Florida.

Dave Parisot: Good afternoon, Council. I'm Dave Parisot, County Commissioner from Okaloosa County. I'm the Commissions liaison for, restore and RDA matters and I'm also a director on the Florida Gulf Consortium of the 23 Gulf coastal counties. First, I want to thank you for putting our initial Comprehensive Plan together. I call it our Plan because this plan is gonna form the basis for the state plans in Florida, the individual county plans, and this is something that we can use to grow upon on that. So, I thank you for that. I was glad to read on page eight of your revised plan over the draft that, you added, under the fifth goal to support ecosystem restoration that builds local workforce capacity. This is a further example that the council recognizes the impact of the oil spill on the economy and on jobs. In deference to the previous speaker, she'd be glad to know that in Okaloosa County Florida we have an 11 member Citizen Advisory Committee that is advising the Board of County Commissioners and helping to write our local restore plan. A key element of both the Restore and the NRDA process is going to be federal permitting and that is a process that we need to streamline. You know, eventually money's gonna become available, and we cannot allow this – these funds to languish while we're waiting on a long process for federal permits, whether it's from the EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, or other federal agencies you know, it's and I understand that I don't know if whether it's the, your group or the NRDA Trustee Council has established a working group to address this issue. Alright, I see some heads nodding out there. I thank you for that. However, that group – that working group will be judged on their efforts and what they – how they perform in, shortening the length of time that it takes to do this federal permitting process. In closing, I want to congratulate, Mimi Drew on her selection as a chair of the of the NRDA Trustee Council. Thank you, Mimi.

Drew Winters: Next up is Mike Smith from the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. Mr. Smith? (No Response). Alright, next up, then Mr. Mike Lane from the Save Louisiana Coalition.

Mike Lane: Thank you very much for letting me speak today. All respect to the Council and CPRA and everyone else here. When the Governor was speaking he said things that touched my heart like, we're number one in the United States in seafood production. We want to save our culture. We want to save all kinds of things that are great for Louisiana but there is a problem, and that is that 80 percent of the Master Plan is awesome and we fully support it. Where we diverge from there is when we talk about these massive fresh water diversions, called sediment diversions, which are gonna pump poison into our brackish marshes. It's gonna replace all the saltwater species with some sort of freshwater species some of which is Asian carp, which means you won't take your children fishing anymore because a 30 fish will jump up and put him under. Now, that's a little comedy but it's true. The other problem is this is supposed to save the coast. In reality, freshwater marsh is 7 times weaker than saltwater marsh. So, when the hurricanes come after this is put in place, if it does, then they're actually gonna, accelerate the destruction of the coast rather than preserve it. One of the objections we get is we're all for dredging because we can put it where we want it, we can put it to the height we want it and they tell us it's too expensive. Well, using the Governor's own words, three dollars at the pump equates to 12 dollars in the economy. Louisiana generates four billion dollars a year by our seafood production. If we lose that, using his formula, we're actually losing 12 billion dollars a year in benefits forever, because once we destroy, it's not coming back. They say dredging won't last. Well, people that are from around here know where Eden Isles is, they know where the New Orleans airport is, and there's most of the lake front of Louisiana was developed by dredging and it's still here. The airport sustained 22 hurricanes, it's still there. Eden Isles sustained 22 to 25 hurricanes, it's still there. If you look at the pictures of Caernarvon just with Katrina, they lost 40 percent of the land just in that one period. So, I say dredging will last. Dredging is the right way to go and if apply all the financial formulas to it, it's not so expensive, especially if we do it economically. And I do want to applaud the lady from the Ocean Conservancy because if you all would adopt what she suggested, it would be awesome, and the only thing you have to lose is your autonomy. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Thank you. Miss **Wyn** from the Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese American Fisher Folks and Families.

Wyn: My name is **Tut Wyn** [1:12:45-1:13:34 Speaker is speaking in Vietnamese.]

Thao Vu: Good afternoon Council members. It's good to see, a few familiar faces again, particularly in this ___ Mississippi. This is Miss **Tut Wyn** and she really condensed her comments, she wanted to express it Vietnamese. There is a translator comments that I will read back for her that gives her more context and I will express her concerns.

Good afternoon Council members. My name is **Tut Wyn** and I'm a long time commercial fishman, boat owner and captain for the vessel **Libyan III**. And I have been dredging oysters and shrimping for decade on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. As a result of the BP oil drilling disaster it has really devastated the fisheries with closed fisheries such as oystereries that have to remain mostly closed and significantly reduced landings has created great economic hardship for my family and many other families, not only in Mississippi but the entire Gulf Coast region whose livelihood is extremely dependent and critical upon a healthy Gulf. And, as a result I am very concerned about livelihood sustainability. I have some concerns about some of the processes. Earlier in the formal presentation, because of technical issue I'm not sure of, but there was very limited interpreting services. I only heard a few minutes of the interpreting. Par even though the formal presentation was at least a few hours before the public comment. And I would like to state that all language

access, you know, to the best of the ability be addressed on the front end in a timely manner and that includes having all translated documents, you know, posted or, in a way, or disseminated to the community that has access barriers and challenges and that we will have adequate time to review these materials. We do like to thank the Council for at least having the final Comprehensive Plan translated but there are some key documents that have not been translated including the Finding No Impact statement. There was a summary in Vietnamese but it is not a thorough, accurate translation of it and is missing Mr. Ehrenwerth's signature. Another document that has not been translated as very critical for us to be able to meaningfully participate in this process is the Problematic Environmental Assessment. That too has not been translated. And the final document that really needs to be translated is, and to give some context, is that many Vietnamese American fishermen have attended numerous coastal restoration meetings, not only under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment before Restore Act, and not only have we attended these meetings, we have commented on the website or through emails or through, you know, comments in person and we have not received our response back in a translated document, even though we know that the Restore Council has that documented in but it has not been translated. These are some of the concerns we would like the council to address. Additionally, you know we believe that the Council should focus on fishery restoration, and improving the habitats that these fisheries depend on and projects such as oyster restoration that includes dredging and a relay and not just merely placing cultured material on a weed that has been damaged or contaminated. We don't think based on our experience that will be successful in producing the healthy reef that we can harvest again in the future. Additionally we strongly believe that a long term fisheries monitoring program should be developed, you know, and based on the lessons learned and practices from the Exxon Valdez oil disaster in Alaska, that the council back then, the state of Alaska along, as well as with NOAA, actually implemented a process where they tapped into traditional ecological knowledge that the native fishermen up there possess and actually work with those communities on natural resource planning implementation. And at the end of the day, those fishermen work with those scientists to collect data that is really key and critical -

Thao Vu: [The lessons learned and practices from the excellent _____ in Alaska that the council back then, the state of Alaska, as well as with _____, actually implemented a process where they tapped into traditional ecological knowledge that the native fish men up there possess and actually work with those communities on natural resource planning implementation. And, at the end of the day, those fish men work with the scientists to collect data that is really key and critical to restoring their damaged environment. Lastly, as fish men we observe, you know, a number of, oil and dispersants that remain in the Gulf, particularly along the marshes, and we believe there should be a follow-up, or you know, a follow-up cleanup program similar to the Vessels of Opportunity Program that was implemented right after the disaster. Thank you.]

Speaker 1: Thanks, and could you identify yourself for the record, please?

Thao Vu: Yes, I'm Thao Vu, I'm with the Mississippi Coalition for Liberties American and Fishfolks and Families.

Speaker 1: Thank you, appreciate it.

Thao Vu: You're welcome.

Speaker 1: Next up is Sheri Floytlan, Bridge the Gulf.

Sheri Floytlan: Hey, and thank you for the opportunity but I am going to, let Miss Jackie have my time because she came in late and was unable to sign up, except to say, Garret Graves could you please tell your boss to not get on to the people who are trying to get some kind of recompense from the oil companies because according to a, probably unknown pole of kindergarteners, if you make a mess you have to clean up that mess. And honestly anything that's based on an economy that destroys the earth or destroys humanity, is probably not going to work anyway. So I wish you guys the best and everything, but just if you would share your money Sharif Waitlen, I have met him before, he should know. The rest of the time is for Miss Jackie.

Jackie Atalund: Thank you.

Jackie Atalund: Good afternoon. Jackie Atalund, Mobile, Alabama. Quickly, I am going to concur with, what Casey said. The words vital, critical, important, significant, empowering made a difference in where we are today. The ecosystem taskforce with EPA, thank you, thank you, thank you. If it was not for your work, all the work from the grass group communities would have been forgotten. Alabama, I told you! We are watching you! And we do not have a citizen's advisory committee and you say you will not give us citizens advisory. Well, Alabama does not consider our input important, vital, critical. Secondly, the community, we're not going to give up. We've already established a regional citizen's advisory council composed of the five Gulf States. We've already heard from one of the organizing members. We have members out here from all of the five states. You may think that we need the funding to protect ourselves. We've been protecting ourselves without funding for years, and we will not let our communities go unheard again. And, as for other areas that we have concern, is the public has been excluded. I've said it before and I'll say it again. Online internet access is not community involvement. Online internet that doesn't function is not community involvement. We really are appealing to this counsel to appeal to your state council members to ensure transparency, to ensure citizens engagement, to ensure citizens participation. I said it in the first meeting; we are here today, not because of what anybody on this stage did. It is because of the citizens knowing our need. The communities knowing what was happening on ground. We do appreciate what you're doing, but we need you to be accountable. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. I want to remind you all, just a few housekeeping notes, please be respectful of the 3 minute limit. Please come up in the order, which you signed up. We do not share time. We will have an opportunity for any additional folks who have not signed up to speak, to do so. If you have not done that yet, please see Layel in the pink. Layel, are you here? If not, I believe that you can see Jenny to sign up. Jenny, could you raise your hand? So, if you've not yet, signed up and you would like to do so, please see Jenny now and we can get you signed up to speak. Next up, is Reverend Tyron Edwards from Zion Travelers.

Reverend Tyron Edwards: I'm not going to hold that against you that you wait right before a preacher come up and give a lecture on time, but God forgive you for that. I just wanted to say that, we have been through this process for a while. If I can go to my friends from Texas, who talked about cornerstone. As an African American I have been doing this work, I'm 61, I've been doing this work since I'm 17. There was a certain event in history that inspired me. To have a colored person in the same mansion I was excited. To have another colored man in the White House, I was excited. But I found out that doesn't make a difference because if the cornerstone of this nation it shills out of economic greed, political prostitution. If the political resiliency means economic growth for the donors of congressional campaign, we in trouble. I hope that we talk about a 21st century that the members of this counsel will go beyond all of this mess and be serious about enhancing community resiliency. And I think to do that there are 2 key components I think are very important. We got to get the water right and we got to get the job right. We've heard

people over and over and talking about it. If we don't get the water right and the job right we gonna fail. We've seen and we talk about community enhancement. We've seen Katrina. We've seen Isaac. Business people come in, local people in the community who can have jobs, don't get the job, to help lift themselves up. So I hope you look at it. Also, I hope that you seriously look at – something Garret said that I thought was so important. And I'm not big on community reviser board, that'd be good, but I'm concerned about when we gonna get some dirt in place. We need land in place so that our future children can live on. And I'm saying is that I've talked to President Obama saying, and I see he came out with study after study. One thing I learned in community organizing one-on-one, if you want something to fail, you give it to a committee and then the committee give it to a subcommittee and then if goes to a focus committee and it die. So, I hope that this committee be about looking at projects that could bring about regional protection. Don't give it to one parrot because they have an animated parrot president or another parrot president because he have connection with somebody. Well, look at Jefferson, _____, _____, and _____ and make sure that the money spent, that some regional work taking place so that we can put buffers at the Gulf of Mexico and _____ and I hope you seriously consider that. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you Reverend Edwards. That time comment was not directed at you, but thank you for respecting the time. Next up, Julia Weaver, Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation.

Julia Weaver: Hi. My name is Julia Weaver and I'm representing the Partnership for Gulf Coast Land Conservation, which is a coalition of 31 land trusts local, national, and regional in the five Gulf Coast States. I understand that I am standing between you and 4 o'clock so I am going to speak quickly. We commend the counsel - our mission is to work together across the Gulf of Mexico region and within watersheds bordering the Gulf of Mexico to increase the pace, quality, and permanence of voluntary land and water conservation. We commend the counsel for adopting the goals, objectives, and project criteria that are set forth in the plan that you adopted today. As we move forward, we would urge members of the counsel to strengthen the plan in the following ways. First, adopt a policy that promotes permanent protection of natural habitats, ecosystems, and watersheds in the region. We believe that the research shows that permanent land protection can help accomplish the goals that you've set out. Secondly, we'd like to urge you to adopt a policy that allows for programs and projects to be implemented in inland and upland areas in critical watersheds. We would like for you to ensure that restore funds may used for match and cost share for other federal and state conservation programs and for endowments and dedicated management funds for ongoing long term restoration and management. We would like for to provide another iteration of the plan for public comment, which you've said that you would do and that you adopt a transparent process by which nontrustees are able to propose projects. I agree with several of the speakers who spoke before me, we advocate for a science and technical committee, a citizens advisory committee, and a land protection and restoration committee to be established. And thank you so much for your time and for all of your hard work and we look forward to working with you in future.

Speaker 1: Frank Hollowell, Edge Tech Inc.

Frank Hollowell: My name is Frank Hollowell. I'm out of the private sector and I'm here to basically thank you for your efforts. We are a jail-technical driven technology company. We are driven to promoting soft armament systems for coastal land management through wetlands remediation and revegetative efforts from dredge spoils. We can basically take dredge spoils and cultivated it into vegetative growth. The system is a soft armament system. It's dedicated to environmental friendly organic systems and it has no residual residue at all. It's critical to secure and protect the coastal infrastructure as seen most recently, even by the hurricane Sandy in the northeast. So,

your issue has now become global. I am here to help promote the public, private cooperative efforts mentioned by Governor Jindal. Again, I recognize that I'm only the second person from the private sector apparently up here to do this. I'm here to basically spread my technology and network to the engineering community and make it available. So, I'm here to help as a solution provider to the process, and it's a systems approach. I'm not here pushing a product as a total system. In closing, and in review of some of the comments and the projects that have been listed, it appears that there is a tremendous effort afoot to redirect the funds to noncoastal restoration efforts. I believe that's your effort and your charge to stop that. Other than that I appreciate your effort, I appreciate you passing your plan today and thank you for this opportunity. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Next up is Drew from Lafayette. Drew if you could state your first and last name for the record.

Drew Landry: How you all doing? Drew Landry. I originally I volunteered to clean oil in Venice and I went down there. I'm also a musician. I travel around and get to play, but I work with a lot of different nonprofits and a lot of my friends work off shore and fish and hunt and, it just doesn't look like we're gonna have the opportunity to pass that on to our kids if we don't do something. And, the one thing we're able to really do is try to help the people who had health issues from the spill, whether they were clean-up workers or lived in these areas. So, we brought three groups of sick people up to D.C. We talked to EPA, health and hospitals, every time, dropped the ball. "It's not my job." "Can't help ya." Don't know whose job it is still. We know they're doing a study that's gonna tell people why they died in maybe 10 or 20 years, but we need to treat and diagnose folks that've been exposed to the dispersant. So, what I did was I looked back on EPA's criteria for stopping the use of the Corex. There was two forms of Corex that I believe they were using; one at the well-head and another one were being sprayed on boats and, you know, I got a half dozen witness that say they been sprayed with it. They don't know what to do. Nobody wants to talk to them about it. They get treated like they're crazy. Instead of fixing their ailments or looking at the MSDS sheet or the science these people are just thrown under the bus, and I – they feel like the trade off, you know. And all they can do is tell me their problems so; I got this weight on my shoulders. Whatever, I volunteered for it, I guess. But my point is this; that EPA said that these dispersants would no longer be used if: Number 1: There was a significant reduction in dissolved oxygen, which you know, President Nungasser, you guys saw a lot of fish killed in that first year and it was always low oxygen, that was the reason. I think it's pretty clear that's an issue. The second part was right after testing, that I think the last Gulf – Clean Gulf Conference the oil and gas industries were like, "We don't want to go with those Rotifer tests," but those Rotifer tests showed that when you mix – you catching this? When you mix the oil and it corrects it, it's 52 times as toxic, and that's why people are sick. The other day they had some 60 minutes deal in Australia, they showed it on television. Three days later they quit using the dispersants. Three days later. They don't want that in their reefs. And then the third one – I'm sorry, I will, I will hurry up – is the evaluation of other factors. The governor said there was 200 miles of oil assured line. Human health effects, you know, according, during the fairness hearing there is still thousands of people that worked the spill that are sick. Nobody's addressing this. They're treating or diagnosing these people. There's nowhere for 'em to go, guys. Can y'all at least tell me in each state who can these people contact? 'Cause it's not fair to 'em. They're your citizens. They're our people, you know? No matter who you voted for or anything like that, it doesn't matter. You know, it doesn't matter, I mean we gotta, these are people that don't have a voice. Clearly, the last four or five people feel like nobody's listening. And I'm gonna hurry up, I'm sorry. Ecological impacts, we've seen the fisheries have yet to recover. I don't think their even gonna do a stock assessment until after the case is settle. So, if all this stuff in the NRDA process could help you decide what you want to do with the settlement or if it's even safe to take your kids to the beach,

and the public doesn't know this, and they're just continuing to get sick, we have some bigger issues. So, I guess in closing, where people go with their health issues. I know it's not here. I realize that. But, there's nowhere else to go, guys. Number two: How can these people have a voice in their future? There are a pretty good group of unbiased people that have just looked at the issues since the spill that would love to talk to you about what they think would help. They're not mad at you. They're part of this population and they really, really do care about the Gulf or they wouldn't be doing this for free. I mean this is boring. Sitting all day is really boring. It sucks. Y'all have had the same conversations for three years. We have too. And until BP's money comes down, nothing's going to help. Hell, we went all the way to London, called out Bob Dudley and said, "Dude, where's the money, partner?" The lawyers got it all. We know what happened to the money. So, last but not least, is, I just pray you guys have the courage and the candor and the guts to do something for the people that are legitimately ill. I mean, it all comes down to one study that's gonna say, "Well, this why you died later." And it's gonna – they're gonna try to find everything that's not the corrective that killed these people. I don't know what it was, but I know there's sick kids in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama that weren't sick before the spill. I know a little guy whose hair is falling out.

Speaker 1: Mr. Landry.

Drew Landry: Anyway, I'm babbling. Thank you. Can you guys just get back to me? I'll send a little video I put together. I mean, I honestly want to address these health concerns because they're still being ignored.

Speaker 2: Thank you Mr. Landry. Everyone, thank you very much. Jenny, if you can raise your hand. I want to be clear, Mr. Landry, that in the private settlement that BP is liable for addressing some health liabilities associated with the oil spill. Jenny can help get you in touch with –

Drew Landry: Ya, but that's not addressing the treatment or diagnosis.

Speaker 2: Give me a second if you don't mind.

Drew Landry: I'm sorry. Go ahead bud.

Speaker 2: And also, I would be happy to meet with you guys, again, if you could just in touch with Jenny, I'd be happy to meet with you guys after this. Either if we have time today, if not, setting up another meeting –

Drew Landry: Ya, man.

Speaker 2: To sit down and talk with you guys. But thank you.

Drew Landry: Thank y'all very much. I appreciate your time.

Speaker 2: And just know that a lot of the people sitting up here were actually out there on the front lines every single day of the oil spill being exposed to this stuff as well.

Drew Landry: Ya, I mean, and once you're exposed –

Speaker 2: There is sensitivity here as well. So thank you very much for highlighting the issue.

Speaker 1: Thank you Mr. Landry. Next up, Steve Merchie with Gulf Restoration Network.

Steve Merchie: Good afternoon. I'm Steve Merchie with the Gulf Restoration Network, founded in 1994. The GRN is a network of environmental social justice and citizen's groups and individuals committed to restoring the Gulf of Mexico to an ecologically and biologically sustainable condition. The Restore Act requires meaningful public participation and the counsel's recent actions and initial comprehensive plan are a mixed bag in that regard. On one hand, today's agenda showed a disregard for the public input by scheduling the vote on the plan before even taking public comment. On the other hand, we're pleased to see that the counsel is committing to having individual projects subject to review under the National Environmental Policy Act and NEPRA provides avenues for real public engagement and consideration of those project. And while the counsel missed an opportunity to embrace a citizen's advisory committee, the plan leave the door open for creating one, and we're pleased to see that. The plan's proposal to require a council member to sponsor a project or program in order to receive full consideration could open the process or it could close the public out depending on how it's implemented. A sponsorship system has the potential to institutionalize and uneven playing field for the bias towards interests who have significant influence with the five Gulf State governors and whoever occupies the White House and the agencies. It will also set up a system where advocates for projects and programs will have to shop for a sponsor council member. If the council proceeds with a sponsorship system for projects and programs, then at a minimum, each council member must have clear, transparent, and consistent procedures for all members of the public to bring a project or program to them for consideration. Furthermore, each council member must disclose to the public all project or programs they have been asked to sponsor, who has asked them to do so and all deliberations on whether to sponsor a project or program. Finally, the public must have one or more methods for bringing projects or programs to the full council for consideration without sponsorship from one of the council members. For the public to have confidence that our views are genuinely being considered and that restored dollars are not allocated through back room deals, everyone needs access to the process, everyone needs to play by the same rules, and we need transparency. We understand that there are limits to have fully the council can develop the plan without the treasury regulations still pending and clean water right penalties yet to be determined, but ultimately the council will be responsible for deciding how to spend billions of dollars in our states and in the Gulf and you can do a lot more to establish a fair inclusive and transparent system. We look forward to working with the council to do so. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Walter Earnest, Pelican Coast Conservancy.

Walter Earnest: I'm Walter Earnest. I'm the Director of Operations for the Pelican Coast Conservancy in Mobile, Alabama. We're a land conservation organization that operates in the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi and we also provide ecosystem services. I'm here today to ask you to consider the use of conservation easements for any property that is acquired with Restore funds or any property that is restored with Restore funds. Conservation easements provide a perpetual double layer of protection and they also can provide third-party oversight if you're working with a land trust to conduct the monitoring. In saying that, there needs to be sufficient funds set aside for the long-term monitoring and stewardship needs of any acquired properties. I also want to reiterate this could incorporate the holistic quarter shed approach that was mentioned at numerous of your, public meeting across the Gulf from various folks. You can incorporate into conservation easements into that. In closing I want to say; how this could be done? Perhaps you could set a Gulf-wide fund for the acquisition of easements into simple properties or you could do it on a state-by-state basis. I heard Miss Weaver speak for the partnership of Gulf Coast Land Conservation. We're a member of that organization and I have

been serving with steering committee and that would be a great organization for you all to work with to accomplish that. Thank you and I appreciate all the hard work that you put into this plan and hope that you will work with the land trust community and all of the natural resource environmental groups across the Gulf in the future. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Daryl Malick Wylie from the Sierra Club.

Daryl Malick Wylie: My name is Daryl Malick Wylie from the Sierra Club. I work for their environmental justice program, and looking at the plan we feel that you need to have a stronger environmental justice component involved in the plan. We knew a number of the federal agencies are operating under the President's executive order on environmental justice and we would like to see some of that language some way wrapped into here to make, environmental justice a more integral part of the plan. The communities most heavily impacted in coast of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama – there needs to be a way to bring these people more to the table and as one lady talked about it's not by the internet, it's not sending out an email. Some communities don't have broadband access. That's just a fact of life and we need to do something better to really involve communities. And going to that point, you talk about having a science-based evaluation process which is something that we support, but I think you need to also include the social scientists in that evaluation process and involve people who work on developing strong citizen participation plans and get more people involved in the community. And I would – we would ask the federal partners to talk with the department of labor about seeing if they can't find some funds to do work force development down here. In your plan, on page 8, it talks about in addition the council will support ecosystem restoration that builds local work force capacity. We want to make sure that there's more than just a sentence in the document; that it's in the RFPs, that there are points added to companies do business that include a strong local workforce development. We have the scientists, we have the people in the Gulf Coast that can develop these and work on these plans. And in closing, we want this counsel to move forward quickly as Steve Cochran talked about. In Louisiana we don't have time to think about it. We need to move forward and get some dirt and shovels. We went out there and I think we need to bring all the players to the table and move forward with the restoration of our coast. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Last up in group B is Bob Stokes. I'm also gonna call up groups C and D and after Mr. Stokes, we've got 12 people left so, this is your last opportunity to sign up to speak if you have not already done so. Mr. Stokes, you're up.

Bob Stokes: Thank you. I was walking slowly so hopefully, Commissioner Baker could get back from his restroom break. Bad luck! But my name is Bob Stokes. I'm the president of the Galveston Bay Foundation. We are a nonprofit conservation organization. We've been around since 1987. Our strength as an organization has been that we've always tried to work with all the users of Galveston Bay, that, which includes a recreational users, the, boaters, the fishermen, the kayakers, the birders, etc., who work with the commercial users, the shrimpers, the oystermen, and of course the industrial users in Galveston Bay ranging from the petrochemical complex to the refineries, to the, everything that's on Galveston Bay. And in our history of working with this diverse group of stakeholders, along with other NGOs and state agencies, and federal agencies, we have had the opportunity to protect, conserve or restore over 16,500 of habitat in Galveston Bay. Our collective efforts in Galveston Bay have truly been a success story. Galveston Bay is healthier today than it was 25 years ago. And we've shown that investing in coastal restoration truly has positive economic benefits. More fish, more birds, better water quality leads to stronger local economies on so many levels. I want to thank the council for keeping this notion central in its efforts moving forward. Good ecosystem restoration drives economic recovery and

strengthens local economies. There's no doubt about it. I also want to thank you for embracing public input and sound science in the plan, and I look forward to continuing to engage in this process, in front of this council and in Texas as we work to conserve and protect the next 16,500 acres. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Next up is Jim Muller from Bay County Florida.

Jim Muller: Thanks for the opportunity to talk today. I'm Jim Muller the Restore Act Coordinator for Bay County, Florida. Bay County is in the Panama City Beach area. Many people know it for its beautiful beaches and gulf water. We also have an amazing bay system that's on the other side of that. I appreciate the improvements to the plan including listening to the public stakeholders that you've done, it's obvious the changes made. We support the commitment to science, transparency, and public involvement that you are committed to, and are interested in to help set up the processes by which that'll happen in the future. Bay County is a member of Florida's 23 Gulf coastal counties consortium, that makes up almost half of – about half of the Gulf of Mexico coast. We look forward to working with the council to putting forward projects that include, projects and programs for all regions of Florida's gulf coast. That includes the, southwest Florida estuaries program that are influenced by the everglades, the Big Ben's such as the Swany River area, and also Florida's panhandle that has a very biologically diverse system of rivers and water sheds, they're also economically important. We are working now on water shed, plans for those areas and plan to bring forward programs to address the issues that are common across the panhandle to the council for consideration as projects and programs. Side note, I'm also on the Florida State University Coastal and Marine Lab board of trustees, and the Lab looks forward to continuing their partnerships with the many other science organizations and doing research on the Gulf, and also just within the last six months FSU Office of Research had delivered a new research vessel that's about 65 feet catamaran that's good for inshore as well as off shore research that will be available, for all research organizations to be able to reserve time on. So, thanks very much.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Next up is Mushir Robinson from Berger Navalez.

Mushir Robinson: Actually it's Louis Berger and Novasys. My name Mushir Robinson. I'm an environmental epidemiologist. Originally trained at Oxford. First American environmental epidemiologist since I started in '72. I was head of public health in New Jersey and then I sort of deserted academia and became a managing director at Smith-Barney, head of public finance and a global head of jumbo risk and consulting at Marsh McLennan, the world's largest insurance entity. And, so my remarks are sort of private sector oriented in the main. We have a tremendous opportunity to fund stuff today. We have a traditional structure that investment banks have used which is to pre-fund those monies that will be spent in grants or other sources of funding. So, if we create a P3 counsel, a public, private partnership council, which can involve these various technical, financial organizations, as well as from inputs from our various different not for profit groups and of course the plans, we can very, very fast fund projects. We could approve projects for funding. We've had meetings with JP Morgan, Abramson James, and a variety of different entities to suss out the ability to bring forward and fund projects now in advance of receipt of funds. The technical or engineering studies are gonna become irrelevant if we wait two years for projects to be funded. So, we would very, very much like to see you establish a P3 counsel where members of our industry from the finance, engineering, risk industries can be involved in some formal process to advise you and help you to catapult projects forward. I'm also chairman in Louisiana of Economic Development for the NAACP. We've just signed a national agreement with FEMA about diversity. We do have the mechanisms to bring diversity. HUD is not represented

here. In the event of more disasters, which we will have, community development block grant disaster recovery funds will be spent. So, I would recommend that we co-op HUD into this, have and interagency agreement, use section 3, as well as use in the context of 8A and other diverse goals to ensure that we adopt formal mechanisms to have the total community as HUD – as homeland security talks about in FEMA, of total community recovery. So, we do have the tools, we just simply have to integrate those tools. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Miss Rebecca Triche, Louisiana Wildlife Federation.

Rebecca Triche: Thank you. I am Rebecca Triche, I am the Executive Director for Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and I'm representing more than 8,500 members, 27 affiliate organizations in the state. Many of our member work and live in coastal Louisiana and others boat, hunt, fish, paddle, bird watch in the coast so, it's been a very heartfelt issue, for us to participate in. We're glad to be here and thank you for moving this forward. I guess you can gather that our membership are recreational users, and they suffered in the oil spill and in the aftermath. They, you know, had loss of access to coastal waters. You couldn't get near marinas because of the cleanup. They lost opportunities for recreation in the midst of it, and since then some areas are still closed to commercial fishing, at least, but I'm sure, you know, the areas are affected. And that leads to the anxiety that they suffered about what was happening in the short term and long term to marine wildlife and the fish habitat that they love enjoy. So, you know, as you move forward, we still see impact in Louisiana, 3 years later. I wanted to let you know that we, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, supports Louisiana's coastal master plan. We think it's based in sound science. We certainly support reconnecting the river with the wetlands where feasible and possible nearby. That's returning a natural wade for function and it's a way to build habitat and maintain it in the long term. Can't have a fish habitat without long-term wetland maintenance. I just want to cut to – and Garret Graves has heard me say this before – we, the public, does not know what NERDA research is finding yet. We don't know the impacts under the water near shore. , some of it we can only see when we're out there, particularly in Louisiana and here at the _____ locally and elsewhere. So, all we can do is look to the council and the other entities that are, you know, privy to what information that you are using to plan this, and so, you know, we put our trust in that, but for recreational users, we have a sense of urgency. We want to see projects go. We think the master plan for the state of Louisiana is a great start and can fast track this and at the state levels and local levels there's projects to, pursue with that as a partner. So, please keep in consideration the losses that recreational users have experienced and that we value habitat restoration for a long term mitigation and repair. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you Miss Triche. Spencer Murphy from the Gulf Intercoastal Canal Association.

Spencer Murphy: Good afternoon. My name is Spencer Murphy. I live here New Orleans. I work for a canal barge company which is a family-owned marine transportation company headquartered here. We operate throughout the entire inland waterway system of the United States. I'm also here primarily in my capacity as the current president of the Gulf Intercoastal Canal Association. , the GIWW, the Gulf Intercoastal Water Way, is the nation's 3rd busiest waterway behind the Mississippi and Ohio River, and it is the common thread that connects all five of the states in the Gulf. It runs from Brownsville, Texas to past Pensacola, Florida. I would like to, voice our support for the, Restored Acts, plan and for the efforts that are ongoing here. I would also like to recommend to the council to look at the Louisiana State master plan process as a good model to use for engaging industry and in particularly engaging the navigation industry. Most of the project that we are talking about here involve our water ways. And, there multiple users and multiple stake holders along all of these waters way. Our industry provides a lot of jobs

and a lot of value to the country and we also live down here so, we want to make sure that the coast is protected because, as was said earlier, the GIWW will cease to exist in 50 years if we don't properly maintain our coast. So, in the master plan, myself and many others from our industry were part of a framework development team and a navigation group that provided input and I think we provided a lot of value and made a better product in the end because of that early involvement. There was not a situation which has happened in the past where some very well-meaning and very smart people come up with a list of projects that are the equivalent of building a wall across I-10 and then everybody has to come and say, "Well, wait a minute, that's not the greatest idea from a commerce standpoint." So, I would just encourage you, if we're gonna create a citizen's advisory committee or a scientific advisory committee, both of which sound like very smart ideas, that you somewhere in there also create a navigation advisory committee to make sure that the projects that are, selected are ones that are either benign to navigation or either, or are in many cases complimentary to navigation, and our company and our industry, we are committed to those goals and we are actively talking to folks that we haven't really talked to very much in the past like the, EDF and others to try and find those solutions for the long term maintenance of the system because the river is changing, the Gulf coast is changing but our industry – the importance of our industry is not changing and so, we want to be here for the long term. And we live here as well so, it's important just from all those angles. So, I would again, just commend you. Please consider the navigation industry upfront, in all these decisions because we will have a say one-way or the other. We just want to make sure we have our say, in a more constructive way than at the back end. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Next up is Michelle Aaronburg. We have a number of people who are on group D. I would ask you to come up. Christine McGlarin, Vebs Bagwell, and William Sharongote, Matt Rhoda, Jeffery Buchanan, Brian Gorman, David Gote.

Michelle Aaronburg: Hi, I'm Michelle Aaronburg and I'm the coordinator of the Gulf Future Coalition. A lot of our members have been up, to address, you all this evening, and, but there just were a couple of points that I didn't check off my handy list here, that I wanted to make sure were stated. We do really appreciate the opportunity to speak today. The Gulf Future Coalition is, a Gulf wide diverse network of conservation community and social justice organizations, and we've been working together for the last nearly four years, to make sure that our communities and our environment fully recover from the BP disaster. Overall we think that this newest version of the plan is, pretty good and we really appreciate all the time and effort, that some of you spent with us to try to make sure that, community input did make into the plan and it's very clear and we would really like to acknowledge the places where our comments, were clearly incorporated into the plan overall. So the one thing that I'd really like to touch on, that I'm pleased to see is in the plan, and didn't get enough mention today so, I want to bring it up is, that we are really encouraged that the plan includes community resilience in one of its five goals. However, many of the communities on the coast understand all resilient strategies that are defined in this plan are really adequate to address the myriad of threats. This community resilience means different things in different communities, so, we want to make sure that the council, Really works closely with communities to develop the kinds of community resiliency strategies that are needed in those particular communities and don't really take this kind of one size fits all approach. And then along that lines, and part of community resiliency is making sure that we're really addressing the threats of sea level rise and working on adaptation strategies, but investing in climate change strategies without really addressing the causes of climate change is really just tackling one part of the problem. And so really to create a truly sustainable Gulf Coast, we need to really be willing to put resources towards comprehensive long-term approach to addressing the numerous man-made and natural threats to the Gulf. I know that we live in a very oil dependent region however,

we really would encourage the council to make some investments in green infrastructure and energy efficiency upgrades and safe renewable energy sources because those kinds of investments will create local jobs and will help diversify our economy. And we know that communities, not just on the Gulf Coast, but across the country, would really benefit from funding efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emission and the country's dependence on fossil fuels. So thank you so much.

Drew Winter: Next up Kristin McLaren with the Louisiana Seafood Board.

Kristin McLaren: Good afternoon and thank you for having me today. My name is Kristin McLaren with the Louisiana Promotion Marketing Board and I want to thank the council for including promotion of the consumption of Gulf seafood in the state expenditure plans eligible activities. There are still a lot of concern out there, in fact the board has conducted four different studies since deep water horizon oil spill and the most recent study we conducted showed that 67% of consumers are still hugely concerned about the safety of our seafood, 26% of those consumers have changed their seafood consumption behavior by eating less and another 10% are avoiding consumption of Gulf seafood altogether. So there is still a real need out there to...to address those concerns. All this despite the fact that in the state of Louisiana, no samples have exceeded PA...PAH levels for safe seafood consumption, as determined by the FDA. So thank you very much for including that.

Drew Winter: Thank you. Next up Babs Bagwell, Isle de Jean Charles um...

Speaker 1: Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians.

Drew Winter: Thank you. It's just an abbreviation here.

Babs Bagwell: Hi y'all. I'm Babs Bagwell Senior PR, Isle de Jean Charles. I'm also with First People's Conservation Council.

Drew Winter: Will you lower the mic?

Babs Bagwell: We're one of those communities that are on the edge. We're outside the state master plan, we're outside of Morganza to the Gulf, and with the language in the plan now, which bases off of the executive orders of the President, we're still left out because we're not a federally recognized tribe. We're...we're recognized, yes, by the state of Louisiana, but not federally. So we're still...we're going to be an expendable people. We've been fishing the waters, we've been caring for the land, but we've...we're going to have to start all over again. Our elderly are going to have to start all over again. People are selling their boats, they're quitting shrimping the waters, they're quitting eating the waters, kind of like Sherry Foilands said. You know, we teach our children to clean up our mess and this is something we've got to address and we've got to clean up, if not, what are we leaving for the next generation. I thank you for what you're trying to do. I just ask you to make it bigger.

Drew Winter: Ann Williams, Alliance for Affordable Energy.

Ann Williams: Good afternoon. I want to say thank you for the opportunity for saying comments. My name is Ann Williams and I represent the Alliance for Affordable Energy. The Alliance is a local nonprofit public interest membership organization that advocates for fair affordable environmentally responsible energy in the state of Louisiana. I'm here today because I want to

talk about climate change. Climate change is a high priority for the Alliance. Our organization was one of the first to raise this issue in Louisiana and spearheaded a legislative study committee, a report that was released in 1999. We are concerned the issue of climate change received less attention in the initial comprehensive plan than in the previous version and much less than in the Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Strategy released last year. The committee must increase the level of attention given to this critical issue. Climate change is central to the implementation and ultimate success of the RESTORE Act. The initial plan notes the critical role in mitigation and adaptation efforts and highlights risks, particularly sea level rise that could impact the plan's proposed actions. The reality is that sea level rise and stronger storms will directly affect the resilience of the Gulf Coast region that the plan is working to strengthen. In other words, the rapidity and magnitude of climate change will affect the ultimate success of the plan. Climatic changes are being driven by greenhouse gas emissions. The sooner we begin to decrease emissions, the more resilient we will be. While global warming pollution from particular projects under the plan are likely to be temporary and not of long-lasting significance, the larger issue of emissions must be addressed by the Gulf Coast states. The plan claims that analyzing emissions and sequestrations from its project would be speculative. This is not accurate. Entergy recently published a study along with Sarah Mag, a local wetlands scientist, to determine the carbon sequestration credits for wetland restoration. This formula should be included in this effort and used to screen projects for mitigation and adaptation. This should be included in the scoring of projects. Those with the most to contribute should be chosen. Addressing climate change is not specifically spat out in the RESTORE Act, but it should be pretty obvious to anyone that ignoring climate change will undermine the plan's goals and fail to restore the Gulf Coast states. Too many political officials in the most vulnerable region actively obstruct climate policy and deny observable phenomenon. This must stop. We call on the council to take strong steps and comprehensively committing to resiliency by including adaptation and mitigation potential from its project because if you don't, then who will. If not now, then when? You're making critical decisions that will make or break an entire region of the United States. Please make it count. Thank you.

Drew Winters: Next up Sharon Gauthé, BISCO.

Sharon Gauthé: I thank you for having us. Hi. I'm Sharon Gauthé with Interfaith Sponsoring Committee, BISCO Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing in the the school body interfaced shared community organizing in Lafourche, Terrebonne parish, we also work in Brandeaux, which is lower Jefferson parish. As our Governor said today, the oil is still coming on our shores in Louisiana. I know y'all really have an opportunity to say where the funds go, but I just think it's so unfair that Louisiana has such ongoing issues and yet the way the funds have been allocated concern me. My goal here today is to talk about the fact that we as nonprofits are working in these areas and with the oil coming on the shore, there are people that are still being affected and that we, as the nonprofits, are the only ones they can go to. We're the ones who've been trying to help them. You said in your earlier statement you were unfunded. I understand that. Welcome to our world. We are unfunded so many times and we continue to do this work. I recognize that in the revised plan, when you talked about resilience, you talked about nonprofit funding. I just would like to urge you that when these contracts go out, that's it's not just understood that nonprofits are on the ground to work, that we are there to collaborate. What happens is these larger private organizations and larger organizations receive funding and then they come to us, the nonprofits and say we know you want to do this, it's in your community's best interest. They come, but they have no funds. Our organization is at the brink of disaster at this point because we have no funds. All of our staff is on half pay. Most of the organizations I know are in that same bind. So knowing that you had to do this whole plan with no funding, at

least you had organizations behind you that had deep pockets that could help in some way to make sure that this very important document is released. So I thank you for...for that. The second thing is that we, as an organization, are part of the Gulf future collaboration and we're also a part of the Gulf Coast...I'm sorry, the Oxfam Gulf communities collaboration. We support all of the comments and the work that's been submitted on their behalf. Sometimes of course when you're with a big group, there may be some issues that you don't agree with, but when you have to collaborate together sometimes, you...you go with the flow. So as a nonprofit organization, I thank you for all the work you've done and we appreciate that you're knowing about us and that you continue to remember that we are working hard on the ground. Thank you.

Drew Winter: Matt Rota, Gulf Restoration Network.

Matt Rota: Good afternoon. It looks like we're getting pretty close to happy hour for y'all. So I wasn't going to talk but I had a couple of things that kind of came up during all the other public comments. So there are two things that I'd like to talk about. One of them is Mississippi River pollution and the other one is environmental review. First of all with Missi...there are, you've heard some people saying we need diversions, we need big diversions, we need them now. You've heard some people say diversions are the worst thing that we could ever do to our coast, right. And so if you were...there's obviously some, you know, discrepancy there. So what I...what I'm saying is that we need to be setting ourselves up for success and one of the concerns that folks have about having sediment diversions going into wetlands is the elevated level of nitrate and phosphorous that is flowing down the Mississippi River that causes the dead zones, that causes harm for algae blooms and things like that and I understand that water quality is one of the goals in the plan. But I think that it needs to be more explicit and also talk more about how the how that's intertwined and that we need to set up our restoration for success by making sure that we're reducing the pollution and monitoring the pollution that's in the sources that we're trying to get sediment water and things like that. So one thing I would like to suggest to y'all is that it's made much more explicit that one of the goals should be reducing the pollution that's in the Mississippi River and other rivers that are going to be used for restoration. And I recognize that the projects, a lot of the projects, can't be more than a few miles outside the coastal zone, but there is NRDA, there's NFWF, there are other mechanisms that need to be used to ensure that the reductions of the pollution that are coming from upstream outside, have a huge impact on us. And so that the projects that we're doing are need to be tied and require that we actually reduce the pollution before we can actually have this chance of success and be...be able to move forward. The other thing I wanted to talk about is environmental review. There are some people that said we need to streamline the environmental review process and the environmental review process is what's going to slow this whole thing down. Well we don't have the money, we don't have any projects on the ground right now, so now is the time to be doing that environmental review. It's not the environmental review that's slowing things down. Its people that want to do bad things that are slowing things down. If you have a project that's truly environmentally...has environmental benefit, it's not going to go...have to go through the entire NEPA process, it can get an environmental assessment and it goes. You go to the entire process when there's potential for having impacts on the environments and other impacts. With the Corps of Engineers, for example, section 404 permits, a lot of times I work with them a lot, and a lot of times why permits take such a long time is because there's going to be a lot of environmental damage. If these projects are making the environment better, it should be a lot easier to get these permits and I don't think we need to be revising the NEPA process or any other environmental review process, it's just how about putting forward only projects that are going to do benefit for the environment. Thank you.

Drew Winter: Thank you. Jeffrey Buchanan, Oxfam America.

Jeffrey Buchanan: I'll try to brief. First I just want to say thank you and congratulations. We applaud the council and Oxfam applauds the whole council for the comprehensive plan and passing that. I just want to say three brief things about a couple of positive things in the plan and some ideas on resources either within your agencies or resources outside of the agencies when you're thinking about moving forward. We are very excited in the community resiliency objective about the emphasis that was put on the power of community-based organizations and their ability to play a role in resiliency building. As an agency that funds community-based organizations, work on resiliency issues, we've seen that there are tremendous assets in the Gulf and I think the more that you can find ways to leverage these...these organizations and their particular qualities in partnerships, I think you'll really benefit in that. I'm appreciative of Mr. Kopocis' comments about EPA's programming in the HA communities and its work around community-based approaches to the environment. I think that Mr. Kopocis' in his agency could be a tremendous resource moving forward for the council to think about how to implement this. Secondly in the goals, we were really excited to see Oxfam and our partners, the addition of the language about trying to build the capacity of the local workforce and all the projects that the...the council is involved with. We think that the council and in the legislation has a powerful tool in the duty to develop common contracting terms around promoting local hiring and training. To that effect, Oxfam America is working with LSU's business school in the International Economic Development council on trying to compile best practices, both from within the five Gulf Coast states and outside of the Gulf Coast states and some of the reflections from key stakeholders such as industry, contractors, state of contracting officials and others as to how the council could in fact pursue this and look forward to following up with you on it. Thirdly, you know, we're excited to see the emphasis and decision-making around science-based decision making. But, you know, I think that we would really appreciate looking at how social science is incorporated into that into that effect. Oxfam and the Nature Conservancy recently hosted with partners from NOAA a workshop of 60 officials spanning Mississippi and Louisiana and natural resource managers, social scientists and others to look at what are the gaps in social science and decision-making. Perhaps what, for all the different buckets of restoration going on in the Gulf, what are some best practices that could be adopted going forward in the integration of social science and we're preparing a white paper, which we look forward to sharing with you shortly. So congratulations to the council and thank you for the opportunities here.

Drew Winter: Brian Gorman, Catholic Charities of New Orleans.

Brian Gorman: Thank you. I'm the workforce development coordinator for the Spirit of Hope Programs. The Spirit of Hope program started after the oil spill to service those affected by the oil spill. We were working...currently working with communities in Lafitte, St. Bernard and lower Plaquemines. We just want to thank the council for the hard work to restore the Gulf Coast, specifically Louisiana's marsh and wetlands. So I echo similar comments made by others regarding the need to factor in the health and well-being and prosperity of our...our cultural communities. Given the large amounts of money that will flow down to the Gulf States, I implore the council to implement policies that will utilize local labor, knowledge and expertise when performing all coastal restoration projects. Louisiana first hiring acts was a good first step in incorporating local labor, but it does not go far enough. As Governor Jindal described earlier regarding accessing local oil and gas resources and the economic return that it has on our economy, compared to bringing in foreign...foreign oil and gas, this can be analogous to using local labor. Local residents working on these projects will keep their income within local economies. Such a focus is in line with many of the principles and goals of the council...of this council supporting healthy,

sustainable and resilient communities. I advise the council to look in contract bids through such...through such a lens. More companies who will employ local...local labor, that your contract comes down to company A, who will hire local labor, excuse me, and company B who does not include in their bid the...the fact that they will hire local labor, then it makes sense to choose company A. Again, similar to many of the comments you've heard earlier today. In summary, selecting companies who will hire local labor who are knowledgeable about our bayous and wetlands, will result in better...in the completion of better projects and ultimately healthy sustainable and resilient communities. Thank you.

Drew Winter: And last speaker for the day is Mr. David Gauthé from BISCO.

David Gauthé: Thanks again. First I'd like to say how great of a speech Sharon Gauthé with BISCO just did. She's my boss at work, so that's a win. I just want to say ditto to the comments that we...with the...what the citizens advisory committee dittoes to the environmental justice comments that were made and dittoes to the workforce development comments that were made as well. But that's what I want to kind of close in on and I'll be real brief. We...we see a lot of work being done today in all areas from...from local projects that's going on and we see a lot of people working out there. I would like the council, and I know it's kind of late because you've already voted or going to, but perhaps in your future connection we're in association with contractors and local hires. Contractors and local, you know, training. In other words, what I'm trying to say is that if we can see contractors come to this area, number one, open to all local contracts first and number two, I hope that they will hire local people first. And I guess number three, I hope they train local people first. So I'd just like to echo those comments. I just wish there was a point system that contractors who have been on contractors before should do the say, number one if they are local, that's a couple of points. What kind of a...what percentage of workforce is going to be local and that'd be a couple of points. Are they going to be offering training, that's going to be a couple of points. And the benefits...so you can compose a system that would make them kind of bid for the job but at the same time, help out workforce development. And thank you very much. Y'all have done a great job.

Drew Winter: Thank you. That's our last comment for the afternoon. Thank you all for attending and providing your valuable input. If you did not make any comments and would like to do so, please remember that you may always submit feedback to the council at RESTORE council at DOC.gov. Thank you for your participation and I'll turn it back over to Teresa and Garrett to close the meeting out.

Teresa: Thank you Drew. I just want to, on behalf of Secretary Pritzker, thank everybody for coming. Those of you who have staying through the whole meeting, we greatly appreciate your input. We do want to clarify that we did have the comment on the plan, we had comment open for 46 days, but will continue to have comment as we adapt the plan and move forward to look at project selection. I also want to thank Justin Ehrenwerth, our Executive Director for his on the ground leadership and thank the state of Louisiana for hosting us today. And thanks to fellow council members for your participation and we look forward to working with everyone as we move forward to start project selection. Thank you.