

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Fiscal Year 2028
Annual Performance Plan
January 2026

This report is available on the internet at [RESTORE Council Website](#).

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Preface

Established by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012, or the [RESTORE Act](#), codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1321 (t), the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council or Council) is composed of the governors of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas (States), the Secretaries from the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Army, Commerce, Agriculture, and Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA Administrator currently serves as the Council's Chairperson. The mission of the Council is the implementation of a long-term comprehensive plan for the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region.

The RESTORE Act dedicated 80% of all Clean Water Act administrative and civil penalties arising from the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) oil spill to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund) and established the Council as an independent entity within the federal government. The Council administers the expenditure of 60% of the funds deposited in the Trust Fund.

Funding for RESTORE projects is limited to amounts available in the Trust Fund. Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the Act, 30 percent of available funding is administered for Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration and protection. Council-Selected Restoration Component funding decisions are guided by criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act and the [2022 Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy](#) (Comprehensive Plan). The Comprehensive Plan sets forth the Council's goals, objectives and other policy commitments. The remaining 30 percent is allocated to the Gulf states under the Spill Impact Component, according to a formula set forth in the Act. Spill Impact Component funds are spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) that are developed by each state entity identified in the RESTORE Act. The SEPs must adhere to criteria set forth in the Act and are subject to approval by the Council chair in accordance with those criteria.

In cooperation with our restoration partners, the Council is striving to establish and maintain a benchmark for collaborative work while facilitating efficient implementation of large-scale restoration projects across the Gulf. The Council recognizes its unique and unprecedented opportunity to implement a restoration effort in a way that restores and protects the Gulf Coast environment, reinvigorates local economies and creates jobs in the region. The Council is committed to working with Gulf communities and partners to invest in actions, projects, and programs that will ensure the long-term environmental health and economic prosperity of the Gulf Coast region.

Introduction

This document provides the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council’s Annual Performance Plan for FY2028, which is used to communicate the agency’s strategic objectives and performance goals. The plan describes how the goals will be achieved, identifies priorities among the goals and explains how the agency will monitor progress.

The Gulf Coast region is vital to our Nation and our economy, providing valuable energy resources, abundant seafood, extraordinary beaches and recreational activities, and a rich cultural heritage. Its waters and coasts are home to one of the most diverse environments in the world—including over 15,000 species of sea life. More than 22 million Americans live in Gulf coastal counties and parishes, working in crucial U.S. industries like commercial seafood, recreational fishing, tourism, and oil and gas production. The region also boasts of a significant shipping industry with 10 of America’s 15 largest ports accounting for nearly a trillion dollars in trade each year.

Despite the tremendous economic, social and ecological importance of the Gulf Coast, the health of the region’s ecosystem has been significantly impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, as well as by chronic and acute harm caused by other past and ongoing human actions. Restoring an area as large and complex as the Gulf Coast region is a costly, multi-generational undertaking. Over the past several decades, the Gulf Coast region has experienced loss of critical wetlands, erosion of barrier islands, imperiled fisheries, water quality degradation leading to, among many other impacts, one of the world’s largest hypoxic zones every year, alteration of hydrology, and other cumulative environmental impacts.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council is playing a key role in helping to ensure that the Gulf’s natural resources are sustainable and available for future generations. Use of the Gulf restoration funds represent a great responsibility. The ongoing involvement of the people who live, work and play in the Gulf region is critical to ensuring that these monies are used wisely and effectively.

Scope of Responsibilities

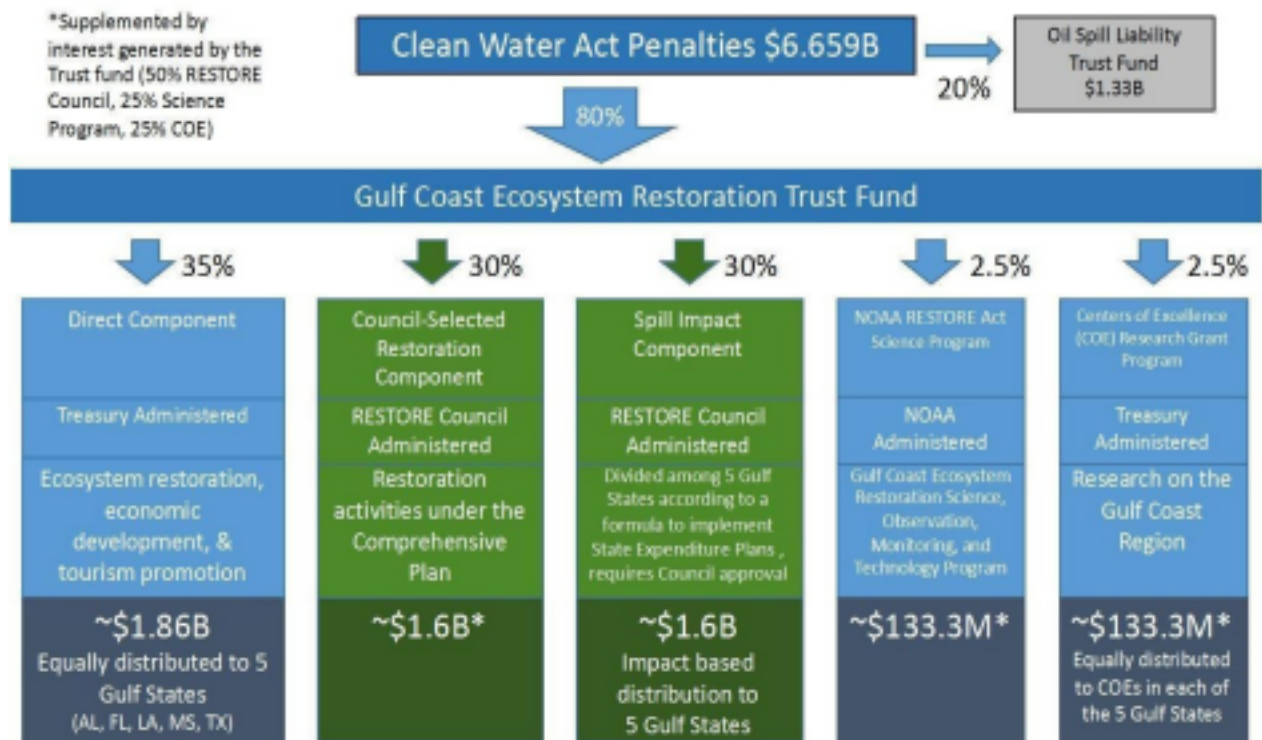
The Council was formally established in 2015 as a new, independent federal agency with a mission to implement a long-term, comprehensive plan for the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region. Unlike most federal agencies, the Council does not receive funds through the annual federal appropriations process (all funds are received through the Trust Fund).

The RESTORE Act and Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund

The Council administers the expenditure of 60% of the funds deposited in the Trust Fund (Figure

1). Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the Act, 30% of available funding is administered for Gulfwide ecosystem restoration and protection through Funded Priority Lists (FPL) developed in collaboration among the members of the Council. The Council-Selected Restoration Component funding decisions are guided by criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act, the Council's [Comprehensive Plan](#) and other policies. The remaining 30% is allocated to the states under the Spill Impact Component of the Act, according to a formula established in the Act. Spill Impact Component funds are spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) that are developed by each state entity identified in the RESTORE Act. The SEPs must adhere to criteria set forth in the Act and are subject to approval by the Council chair in accordance with those criteria.

Figure 1. Allocation of the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund based on settlements with BP, Transocean and Anadarko; RESTORE Council oversight components are highlighted in green.



Council-Selected Restoration Component

Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the Act, only Council members are eligible to submit proposals for funding. Council approval of funding requires the affirmative vote of at least three state members and the Chair. The other five federal members do not vote on Council funding. Projects and programs approved for Council-Selected Restoration Component funds are contained in FPLs, which are periodically developed by the Council through collaboration among its members and with feedback from stakeholders across the Gulf.

Funds for approved FPL projects and programs are disbursed to Council members via grants to

state members and interagency agreements (IAAs) with federal members. As part of the grant and IAA process, all activities for which funding is sought are reviewed to ensure consistency with the approved FPL and compliance with the RESTORE Act and all other applicable requirements. The Council's [Annual Reports to Congress](#) provide more information on the approval and award processes.

In selecting projects and programs under the Council-Selected Restoration Component, the RESTORE Act requires that the Council give the highest priority to activities that address one or more of the following criteria:

- **Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting** the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.
- **Large-scale projects and programs** that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.
- **Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast state comprehensive plans** for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
- **Projects that restore long-term resiliency** of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the DWH oil spill.

As noted above, the Comprehensive Plan sets forth the goal, objectives and other policy commitments that guide Council funding approvals under the Council-Selected Restoration Component. In addition, the Council's [Planning Framework](#) provides further guidance to ensure funding approvals are consistent with the Act and the Comprehensive Plan. More detail on these goals, objectives and policies is provided below.

Spill Impact Component

Under the Spill Impact Component of the Act ("Bucket 3"), the remaining 30% of amounts in the Trust Fund administered by the Council is allocated to the state Council members (except for Florida, where funds are allocated to a consortium of 23 affected Florida counties ("Consortium")). On December 9, 2015, the RESTORE Council voted to approve a final rule for allocation of the Spill Impact Component funds and disbursed to each state. The rule became effective on April 4, 2015 when the federal court in Louisiana approved and entered the Consent Decree. Using the information set forth in the rule, the allocation of funds among the five states is:

- Alabama – 20.40%;
- Florida – 18.36%;
- Louisiana – 34.59%;

- Mississippi – 19.07%; and
- Texas – 7.58%.

Spill Impact component funds are spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) developed by each state member (in Florida, by the Consortium) that set forth projects and programs contributing to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf.

Funds for projects in approved SEPs are disbursed to the state Council members (in Florida, to the Consortium) via grants when the requisite funds become available in the Trust Fund. As with Council-Selected Restoration, all activities for which Spill Impact Component funding is sought are carefully reviewed to ensure consistency with the applicable SEP and compliance with the RESTORE Act and all other applicable requirements.

Strategic Goals

The Council's Comprehensive Plan sets forth five strategic goals to help guide the approval of funding for projects and programs under both the Council-Selected Restoration Component and the Spill Impact Component:

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats;
- **Strategic Goal 2:** Restore Water Quality and Quantity – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine waters;
- **Strategic Goal 3:** Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources;
- **Strategic Goal 4:** Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes; and
- **Strategic Goal 5:** Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy. The fifth goal focuses on reviving and supporting a sustainable Gulf economy to ensure that those expenditures by the Gulf Coast States authorized in the RESTORE Act under the Direct Component (administered by the Department of the Treasury) and the Spill Impact Component can be considered in the context of comprehensive restoration.

To advance these goals, the Council supports ecosystem restoration that can enhance local communities by giving people desirable places to live, work and play, while creating opportunities for new and existing businesses of all sizes, especially those dependent on natural resources. In addition, the Council supports ecosystem restoration that builds local workforce capacity.

Strategic Objectives

The Council's Comprehensive Plan also sets forth strategic objectives to help guide the approval of funding for projects and programs under both the Council-Selected Restoration Component and the Spill Impact Component.

- **Strategic Objective 1:** Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats – Restore, enhance, and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats. These include barrier islands, beaches, dunes, coastal wetlands, coastal forests, pine savannahs, coastal prairies, submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster reefs, and shallow and deep-water corals.
- **Strategic Objective 2:** Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources – Restore, improve, and protect the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by reducing or treating nutrient and pollutant loading; and improving the management of freshwater flows, discharges to and withdrawals from critical systems.
- **Strategic Objective 3:** Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources including finfish, shellfish, birds, mammals, reptiles, coral, and deep benthic communities.
- **Strategic Objective 4:** Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines – Restore and enhance ecosystem resilience, sustainability, and natural defenses through the restoration of natural coastal, estuarine, and riverine processes, and/or the restoration of natural shorelines.
- **Strategic Objective 5:** Promote Community Resilience – Build and sustain Gulf Coast communities’ capacity to adapt to short- and long-term natural and man-made hazards, particularly increased flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors. Promote ecosystem restoration that enhances community resilience through there- establishment of non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding.
- **Strategic Objective 6:** Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities, professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.
- **Strategic Objective 7:** Objective Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes – Improve science-based decision-making processes used by the Council.
- **Management Focused Strategic Objective:** Organizational Excellence – Council staff will provide exceptional service to Council members, partner state and federal agencies, and public, private, and other stakeholders to support the Council’s efforts to achieve integrated and coordinated efforts for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration.

Performance Metrics

Over its lifetime, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council will invest over \$3 billion dollars in Gulf Coast ecosystem and economic restoration activities. These investments will not only advance the Council’s goal of comprehensive Gulf restoration, but also result in diverse scientific and economic data observations which can be used to demonstrate the benefits of Council investments. The RESTORE Council recognizes the importance of comprehensive planning for the collection and compilation of data that can be compared across projects. Comparable data enables reporting at multiple scales, including project- and program-specific scales, as well as

potential future larger-scale assessments across the Gulf. To facilitate consistent data collection and management, RESTORE Council projects/programs are required, where applicable, to develop an Observational Data Plan (ODP) as part of the Council's financial award process.

Members monitor the performance of all projects funded by the Council toward ecosystem restoration, primarily through the selection and tracking of metrics. The Council's ODP Guidelines provide guidance to the Council's grant and IAA recipients on the selection of metrics, parameters and monitoring methodologies for Council funded activities. The Council has identified 61 metrics that are organized by the Planning Framework restoration approaches and techniques being implemented by a project or program. Funding recipients select from these metrics to identify targets, track annual award performance, and ultimately evaluate the efficacy of projects and programs in meeting the mission goals and objectives of the Council. The ODP Guidelines indicate that these metrics should be:

- Objective;
- Quantifiable;
- Accompanied by targets (success criteria);
- Consistent across program activities;
- Identified in proposals with details provided in application ODPs; and
- Able to support the goals and objectives of the program or project.

Another element of the Council's commitment to measuring and ensuring success is the application of adaptive management strategies. The purpose is to support meeting the Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, both for individual activities as well as programmatically across watersheds or other geographically defined regions. By considering new information gained from monitoring and scientific advancements, the Council intends to fulfill its commitment to utilize adaptive management processes to enhance the benefits of its work.

Performance Goals and Indicators for Fiscal Year 2028

Mission Performance Goals

Performance Goal 1: Promote a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Approach to Restoration

Effective and efficient advancement of the Council's vision for "A healthy and productive Gulf ecosystem achieved through collaboration on strategic restoration projects and programs."

Performance Indicator 1.1

A Gulf-wide comprehensive restoration approach is applied to meet the Council's Goals and Objectives through the collaborative consideration of changing policy, public input, and other planning considerations by Council members and interested stakeholders to maximize the Council's "return on investment."

Performance Indicator 1.2

Application of best available science (BAS) used in the selection and execution of RESTORE projects under both the Council-Selected Restoration and State Expenditure Plan components of the RESTORE Act, and clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties.

Performance Goal 2: Council-Selected Restoration Component Performance Excellence

Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Council-Selected Restoration Program to achieve the goals of the Act.

Performance Indicator 2.1

The Comprehensive Plan Update and Planning Framework are used as a foundation in the development of ecosystem restoration strategies in support of all Funded Priority Lists developed by the Council.

Performance Indicator 2.2

Best Available Science, and adaptive and data management principles are utilized in the development of Funded Priorities Lists and evaluation of FPL amendments.

Performance Indicator 2.3

Environmental compliance for Council projects and programs is efficient and effective.

Performance Indicator 2.4

Applications under the Council-Selected Restoration Component include relevant and adequate justification for the selection of metrics and an adequate proposal for scientific monitoring. Reported progress towards metrics provides a useful gauge of the success of the project or program. Reports include a description of the methodology for quantifying results for each metric and monitoring the achievement of the metrics.

Performance Indicator 2.5

Relationships significantly contribute to synergy and cooperation between the Council, other RESTORE partners, stakeholders and other external environmental entities to achieve gulf-wide goals and objectives in the development of FPLs.

Performance Goal 3: Spill Impact Component Performance Excellence

Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Spill Impact Program achieve the goals of the Act.

Performance Indicator 3.1

Applications for funding under the Spill Impact Program include relevant and adequate

justification for the selection of metrics and an adequate proposal for scientific monitoring. Reported progress towards metrics provides a useful gauge of the success of the project or program. Reports include a description of the methodology for quantifying results for each metric and monitoring the achievement of the metrics.

Performance Indicator 3.2

Activities approved for funding under the Spill Impact Component comply with the RESTORE Act and the Council's State Expenditure Plan Guidelines.

Stewardship Goals

Performance Goal 4: Operational Excellence

An administrative infrastructure that supports teamwork, collaboration, synergy between functional areas and overall operational excellence to provide excellent services, programs and outcomes to the Gulf Coast region is maintained.

Performance Indicator 4.1

A Council operational budget is developed using strategic direction that conserves resources, supports operational stability and efficiency, and addresses emergent requirements within approved levels.

Performance Indicator 4.2

Effective internal controls and financial management systems that meet the objectives of the Federal Manager's Financial Integrity Act are established and maintained.

Performance Indicator 4.3

All Council operations required by the RESTORE Act are monitored and audited by the Department of Treasury OIG, and audit recommendations are promptly implemented. OIG audit findings and recommendations are addressed in a timely manner.

Performance Indicator 4.4

Human Capital Management: The Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA) requires agencies to indicate how human capital management will support agency strategic goals.

- The Council's human capital strategies and actions comply with all applicable laws, Executive Orders and related Administration guidance, and support achievement of agency strategic goals.*
- Decisions regarding human resources and HR requirements support a steady-state operational mode recognizing that the last RESTORE funds will be received in April 2032, with continuing operations through 2042 before the agency sunsets.*

Performance Indicator 4.5

Requisite reports, including the Annual Finance Report and Annual Report to Congress are submitted in a timely manner.

Performance Goal 5: Management Excellence

Council staff will provide exceptional service to the Council members and their accompanying state and federal agencies, as well to the stakeholders associated with restoration of the Gulf of America ecosystem by meeting programmatic, administrative and customer service objectives.

Performance Indicator 5.1

Programmatic, Management and Compliance Elements of Grant and Interagency Agreements under the Council-Selected and Spill Impact Components are achieved by:

- *The programmatic and grants review of grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under Council-Selected and Spill Impact Components meet timelines established by the RESTORE Act, 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability.*
- *Post-award management and oversight is carried out for all grants and Interagency Agreements. Pre- and post-award reviews ensure compliance with administrative and regulatory requirements under the RESTORE Act, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, support mitigation of applicable critical risks in the Council Risk Profile and IPERA and meet other federal regulatory requirements.*

Performance Indicator 5.2

Organizational Risk Assessed and Risk Mitigation Factors are Employed.

- *Organizational risk assessment recommendations meet OMB Circular A-123 requirements; documentation of tactical level risk mitigation activities is complete, including Improper Payments and Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA), the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200 - Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards), and the President's Management Agenda.*
- *Completion of project and program site visits serve as useful tools to provide technical assistance to our recipients while simultaneously mitigating critical risks on the Council's external risk profile.*
- *Comply with requirements under FISMA including the submission of timely reports. Organizational Risk is Assessed and Risk Mitigation Factors Employed.*

Service Goals

Performance Goal 6: Engagement Through Information Sharing

The Council staff will provide engagement opportunities for Gulf Coast communities to ensure ongoing public participation in the Council's restoration efforts.

Performance Indicator 6.1

Activities of the Council are effectively communicated to stakeholders to ensure the goals and objectives of the Council are broadly understood and the concerns of stakeholders are addressed. As appropriate, the Council provides the public with the opportunity to review and comment on proposed funding approvals prior to a final Council decision.

Performance Indicator 6.2

Development and maintenance of content for RESTORE Council's website, print and electronic publications, and the organization's visual identity are consistent with the policies of the RESTORE Council to serve to broaden public understanding of Council programs.