

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Summary of Council Funding Approval
Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program Boundary Expansion
September 25, 2024

On September 25, 2024, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) voted to approve a boundary expansion for the FPL 3b Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program Expansion. Background on this approval is provided below. Before voting on whether to approve this program boundary expansion, the Council requested stakeholder input during a 30-day public comment period which began on July 18, 2024. A summary of comments received and the Council's responses can be found [here](#).

Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program Expansion Summary

The Council originally approved \$927,000 for planning and implementation activities for the Tribal Youth Coastal Restoration Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Interior (Interior), on behalf of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), as part of the Council's FPL 3b. The overarching goal of this program is to educate and train tribal youth through Gulf restoration projects. This work builds on the success of the FPL 1 Tribal Youth Conservation Corps activities and anticipates having restored about 2,000 acres by the conclusion of FPL3b. As originally approved in FPL 3b, restoration work under this program may take place within coastal Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana working with (1) the Chitimacha Tribe; (2) the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; (3) the Poarch Band of Creek Indians; (4) the Seminole Tribe of Florida; (5) the Miccosukee Indian Tribe, and (6) the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana. Interior is expanding the geographic boundary for the location of this program to also include the possibility of working with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (Tribe) on land owned by the National Park Service (NPS) within the Big Thicket National Preserve (BITH). With the approval of this boundary expansion, the youth efforts will be a collaboration between the Tribe and the already existing youth programs at BITH, including a number of restoration activities such as collection of environmental data, water inventory for flood conveyance planning, water and soil sampling, trail restoration, coastal habitat improvements, preservation of cultural resources, invasive species removal, and hazardous fuels reduction.

To comply with NEPA, the Council is using an NPS Categorical Exclusion which covers activities that will be performed by the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas youth program. The Council is also adopting the Interior's Environmental Assessment for the Big Thicket National Preserve Fire Management Plan, to ensure NEPA is addressed in the event that Tribal youth engage in fire mitigation activities. The NEPA documentation also addresses ESA and NHPA for these activities. This environmental compliance documentation can be found in [EC package 1](#) and [EC package 2](#).

To learn more about the RESTORE Council visit us at www.restorethegulf.gov or send questions to restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov.