

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Summary of Funding Approval for Mobile Bay National Estuary Program
University of South Alabama Water Quality Project
April 22, 2026

On April 22, 2026, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) voted to approve funding for a water quality project on the University of South Alabama (USA) campus in Mobile, Alabama. Specifically, the Council approved \$349,133 to install stormwater management systems, referred to as bioswales, at the USA campus.

Background on this funding approval is provided below. Before voting on whether to approve funding, the Council published this proposed action for a 15-day public comment period beginning on February 26, 2026 on March 12, 2026. The Council received one public comment, fully supporting the proposed project.

Background:

Pursuant to the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012* (33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)) (RESTORE Act), the Council is responsible for administering portions of *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill settlement funds for the purpose of restoring the environment and economy of the Gulf coast. The RESTORE Council includes the governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas and the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, the Army, Commerce, Homeland Security, the Interior and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Council administers two different sources of RESTORE Act funding. The first is called the Council-Selected Restoration Component. These funds are used for ecosystem restoration across the Gulf. It is referred to as the Council-Selected Restoration Component because funding is approved by a vote among the Council members.

The Council periodically approves Council-Selected Restoration Component funding for groups of projects and programs in what is called a Funded Priorities List (FPL). Activities in FPLs are then carried out by the sponsoring Council member. The Council occasionally amends FPLs to add additional funding or otherwise modify previously approved activities. These amendments are approved by a Council vote, after the Council seeks public input.

In 2015, the Council approved its Initial FPL, which included the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP), sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Initial FPL MBNEP project involved restoring an eroded segment of Twelve Mile Creek in Alabama. This creek restoration work has been successfully completed, and EPA has now secured Council approval to use \$349,133 in remaining, unspent MBNEP funds to implement water quality improvement work on the USA campus.

Specifically, the USA campus water quality project involves the installation of bioswales to reduce stormwater runoff rates and reduce erosion and loss of native vegetation near the Life Science/Visual Art building and the Gamma building. Bioswales are vegetated channels designed to manage stormwater by slowing, filtering, and treating runoff. Additionally, the MBNEP work will include interpretive signage about the importance of incorporating native plants, managing invasives, and stormwater runoff near the bioswale installation.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for this funding approval, the Council is using an EPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) that covers actions relating to existing infrastructure systems, including stormwater systems. It is the Council's practice to use federal member CEs wherever applicable to expedite project implementation and save money by reducing potentially duplicative analysis. The Council finds that the CE documentation developed by EPA also effectively addresses other applicable laws including the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The project's NEPA documentation can be found here.

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