

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Request for Public Comment on Proposed Funding Approvals

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) is seeking public comment on two proposed funding approvals for implementation of ecosystem restoration and protection activities in Texas and Louisiana. Specifically, the Council is planning to vote on whether to approve the following:

- \$19,322,600 in planning and implementation funding for land acquisition as part of the Managing Wetlands Migration Corridors and Natural Floodways Program in Texas.
- \$90,772,250 in implementation funding for the Chandeleur Islands Restoration Project in Louisiana.

Summary information on these proposed funding approvals is provided below. These two activities are listed in Council's [2026 Funded Priorities List](#), which contains more detailed information on each.

Before voting on whether to approve the above funding amounts, the Council is requesting public comment during a 15-day period beginning on September 24, 2026 and concluding at 11:59 pm (CST) on October 9, 2026. You may submit comments using one of the two methods below:

By Email: To restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov
Email submission of comments ensures timely receipt.

By U.S. Mail: Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
Attn: 2026 FPL Wetlands Migration Program Amendment Comments
500 Poydras Street, Suite 1117
New Orleans, LA 70130
Mail must be posted no later than October 9, 2026 to be included in this public comment period.

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) and *note*) (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 Council administers two funding programs, one of which is the Council-Selected Restoration Component. Under this funding program, the Council votes to approve Gulf ecosystem restoration projects and programs proposed by the Council members. Council-Selected Restoration Component projects and programs approved for funding by the Council are included in what is referred to as a Funded Priorities List.

FPLs include activities in two categories. Category 1 activities are approved for funding. Such approval requires a Council vote on transfers of funds as set forth in the RESTORE Act. To be approved in Category 1, a project or program must have documentation demonstrating that all applicable environmental laws have been addressed. For example, a construction project would need documentation demonstrating compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable laws.

Category 2 activities are Council priorities for potential future funding but are not currently approved for funding. As appropriate, the Council reviews the activities in Category 2 in order to determine whether to move the given activity to Category 1 and approve it for funding via a Council vote. Such funding approvals are done via amendments to the FPL containing the given project(s) or program(s).

Land Acquisition under the Managing Wetlands Migration Corridors and Natural Floodways Program (Wetlands Migration Program)

The Council is proposing to approve \$19,322,600 in planning and implementation funding for land acquisition of large, high quality coastal properties under the Managing Wetlands Migration Corridors and Natural Floodways Program sponsored by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). This funding was originally budgeted in Category 2 of the Council's 2026 FPL. Since publication of the FPL, all environmental compliance necessary for a Council vote to approve implementation funding for the land acquisition has been completed.

The Managing Wetlands Migration Corridors and Natural Floodways Program aims to address estuarine wetland loss by preserving corridors for wetland migration during relative sea level variations. Preserving coastal wetland migration corridors through acquisition is vital for supporting wildlife, recreational activities, commercial fisheries, flood control, and water quality. Using the results of a landscape change analysis performed for the Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan (TCRMP) utilizing the SLAMM wetland model to project the future of wetlands in coastal Texas, TCEQ partners will acquire and conserve priority lands located inland of coastal marshes along the Texas coast to support future estuarine wetland habitat migration under changing environmental conditions.

To comply with NEPA, the Council is proposing to adopt a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Categorical Exclusion (CE) described in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(6); "Acquisition of land or interest in land". The Council's adoption of member CEs is consistent with Section 4(d)(4) of the Council's NEPA Procedures. The USDA supports the Council's proposed USDA CE adoption and has determined land acquisition under the Wetlands Migration Program is fully consistent and applicable to the category described in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(6); "Acquisition of land or interest in land". The Council has also coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives, who have advised the Council that no additional Endangered Species Act (ESA) coordination is necessary. Associated environmental compliance documentation can be found [here](#).

Chandeleur Islands Restoration Project

The Council is proposing to approve \$90,772,250 in implementation funding for the Chandeleur Islands Restoration Project, sponsored by the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. This funding was originally budgeted in Category 2 of the Council's 2026 FPL. Since publication of the FPL, all environmental compliance necessary for a Council vote to approve implementation funding has been completed.

This project includes restoration activities within a remote barrier island complex on both North Chandeleur and New Harbor Islands in St. Bernard Parish, located in southeast Louisiana, more than 20 miles offshore. The islands are managed as part of Breton National Wildlife Refuge. The restoration strategy is designed to reverse decades of erosional barrier island wetland loss and provide direct benefits to a wide range of wildlife and fish species that were impacted by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This includes sea turtles such as Loggerhead, Green and the endangered Kemp's Ridley. Several bird species will benefit, including colonial nesting waterbirds and foraging birds. A wide variety of fish species including reef fish, sharks and game fish will benefit. Additionally, eighty species designated as "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" will benefit from this project.

The overall size of the estimated project benefit area is approximately 12,000 acres which includes 1,800 acres of beach and dune restoration; 600 acres of salt marsh restoration; 140 acres of bird colony restoration on the adjacent New Harbor Island; 5,200 acres of marine seagrass meadow preservation and enhancement; and the balance would be the back barrier island watershed acreage that will be conserved by the restoration footprint. These estimated benefits vary slightly from the amounts listed in the 2026 FPL, and are subject to change based on cost, engineering and/or other considerations.

To comply with NEPA, the Council is proposing to adopt an October 2025 Environmental Assessment prepared by the U.S. Department of Interior. The EA, entitled "*Final Joint Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #1: Restoring Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats, Federally Managed Lands, Fish and Water Column Invertebrates, Sea Turtles, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, and Birds of the Chandeleur Islands*" can be found [here](#). The Council has determined that in addition to NEPA, other applicable laws have been addressed, including ESA, Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. The above linked EA includes discussion of these and other environmental compliance matters.

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