

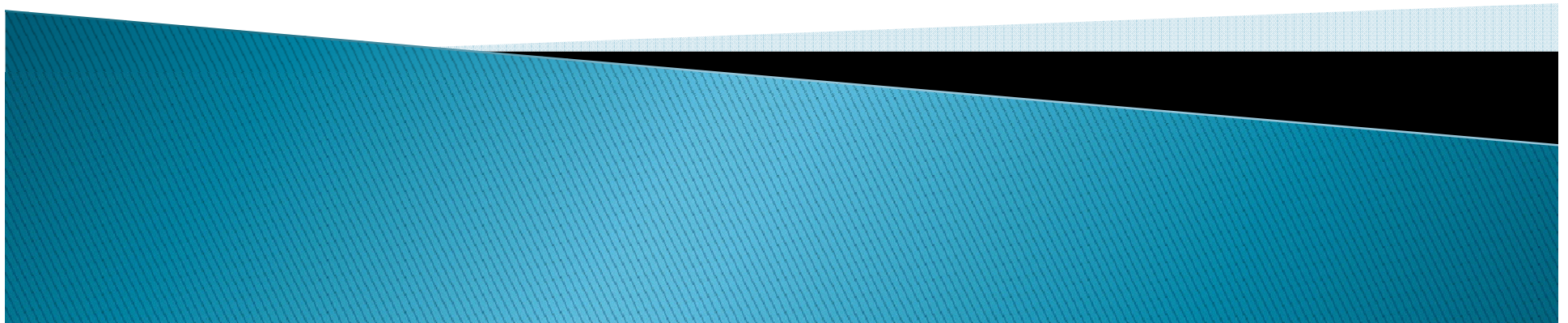
US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



# **Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Strategy: Communications & Stakeholder Engagement**

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Staff

**June 27, 2011**



# Components



## 1. Informing & Educating Interested Stakeholders

- ▶ State call-in lines
- ▶ User-friendly web site
- ▶ Email announcements to listserv
- ▶ Press releases

 A screenshot of the EPA website for the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The page features a header with the EPA logo and navigation links. The main content area includes a large image of a sunset over a marsh, a "Task Force" sidebar with links to members, meetings, and resources, and a "How to Get Involved" section with details about an upcoming meeting and a strategy background document. There are also sections for "Government Response" and "Share your individual thoughts on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Strategy".
 

**Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force**

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by President Obama through an Executive Order (PDF) (5pp, 69K, About PDF) on October 5, 2010, and is the result of a recommendation made in Secretary Mabus' report (PDF) (122pp, 9MB, About PDF) on long term recovery following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. By October 5, 2011, the Task Force is charged with development of a restoration strategy that proposes a Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration agenda.

**How to Get Involved**

**Task Force Mobile Meeting Strategy Background Document**

The Task Force will continue engaging with local governments, tribes and the public to seek input into the development of the restoration strategy. The Task Force invites response to five key questions:

- Are these the right goals?
- What are the critical actions or major outcomes that need to be accomplished as part of this strategy in order to achieve the overarching goals?
- What new programs and actions (state, federal and private) are needed?
- What key policy changes will improve the processes necessary to support restoration?
- What would "success" look like, and how should it be measured and reported?

**Upcoming Task Force Meeting and Listening Session**

Galveston, TX on June 27, 2011  
Galveston Island Convention Center  
5600 Seawall Boulevard  
Galveston, TX 77550

Pre-registration | Agenda coming soon

Pre-registration closes at midnight on Saturday, June 25th. On-site registration will be available on Monday, June 27th at the Galveston Island Convention Center starting at 7am.

**Government Response**

- RestoreTheGulf.gov: official federal government site for spill response and recovery
  - File a claim
  - Report a concern
  - Volunteer
  - Hotlines and phone numbers
- Natural Resource Damages Assessment (NRDA): official federal government site for more information on the NRDA process, and how to submit comments and/or project ideas.

**Share your individual thoughts on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Strategy**

Task Force is holding a series of public meetings and online discussions in conjunction with those meetings. We welcome your views on any of the subjects raised in this process, we particularly encourage you to express your views.

Learn more on how to comment.

# Components



## 2. Providing Opportunities for Involvement

- ▶ Public meetings
- ▶ Listening sessions
- ▶ Comments page on Task Force web site
- ▶ Task Force email in-box
- ▶ Federal Advisory Committees



# Gathering Input from Stakeholders



We've been posing 3 questions:

1. How can we best keep you informed and involved in the process of developing the Strategy?
2. What, in your opinion, is the priority issue facing the Gulf regarding ecosystem restoration?
3. What do you believe are the impediments to addressing the priority issues.

## Time Frame

- ▶ Starting Nov 8, 2010 listening sessions in Pensacola
- ▶ Continuing until May 6, 2011 release of the *Strategy Background Document*

# Input Received



Over that period, we've received over 1,300 individual suggestions from over 1,000 individuals:

- ▶ Used in process of selecting our priority areas of concern



- ▶ Additional thoughts and suggestions noted
- ▶ Common themes emerged across stakeholder groups, and across states



# Common Themes

Question 1: How can we best keep you informed and involved in the process of developing the Strategy?

**ANS 1: Keep us informed/coordinated - 18% of all comments**

**Develop partnerships to ensure coordination between as many organizations and individuals as appropriate.**

Ensure transparency/timeliness: Public needs to know about Task Force (structure, process, timeline, goals, activities).

Provide education and proactive outreach - make it personal!

Raise public awareness about the Gulf - should be as valued as the Grand Canyon.

Gain and keep credibility and the trust of the public.

**ANS 2: Hear our voices - 8% of all comments**

Get the widest participation to share data/information, create a vision, set goals, and implement Strategy.

**There needs to be a citizen's advisory board to the Task Force.**

Each set of answers represents 75% of the responses to this question received in round 1.

# Common Themes



Question 2: What is the priority issue facing the Gulf regarding ecosystem restoration?

<b>ANS 1: Our specific environmental issues - 25% of all comments</b>
Clean up, proper disposal, and prevention of residual oil, dispersants and other toxic chemicals.
<b>Think Big: we need a comprehensive approach at the watershed level.</b>
Restore, enhance, and maintain the wetlands (or mitigate in kind) to protect the land.
We need preparation and prevention to make sure this catastrophe won't happen again.
Consider and encourage beneficial uses of dredged material.
Address subsidence/shoreline restoration: acquire land, preserve land, and work with land owners.
Very concerned about the hypoxic zone/nutrients and resulting loss of fish habitat.
Coastal communities must be adaptive and resilient.
Restore the gulf to pre-storm conditions: drinkable water, safe for recreation
Restore, protect, and promote living shorelines.
Address water quality issues - don't just focus on land issues.
Engage and monitor the effectiveness of adaptive management.
Recommend international coordination, e.g. Mexico, the Caribbean.

This set of answers represents 75% of the responses about specific environmental issues.



# Common Themes

Question 2 continued



**ANS 2: Understand/prioritize the impacts/science/solutions - 21% of all comments**

What are the actual impacts and the sources/root issues? We can't restore what we don't understand.

**How can we choose projects that will have the biggest positive impact (short and long term)?**

Monitoring and data collection is critical to understand whether we are successful.

Understand how restoration interrelates with climate change, sea level rise, and other chronic stressors.

Use models: successful restoration needs predictive capabilities.

Want a science clearinghouse (database) describing methods & studies underway.

Need a dedicated agency with appropriate authority to oversee the big picture efforts.

**ANS 3: Our economic concerns - 12% of all comments**

**Need to make sure allocated funding actually reaches the most impacted counties or parishes.**

Work ecosystem restoration in tandem with local jobs: link monitoring and cleanup with economic development.

Evaluate and value ecosystem services: the multitude of benefits that are supplied by natural ecosystems.

Restore fisheries, support seafood. Seafood is unifying.

Support tourism by focusing on renewable industries.

Develop clean energy resources in the Gulf Coast like wind turbine farms, tidal pool generators, biofuels/bio-diesel.

Each set of answers represents 75% of the responses about the need for more information, and about economic concerns.

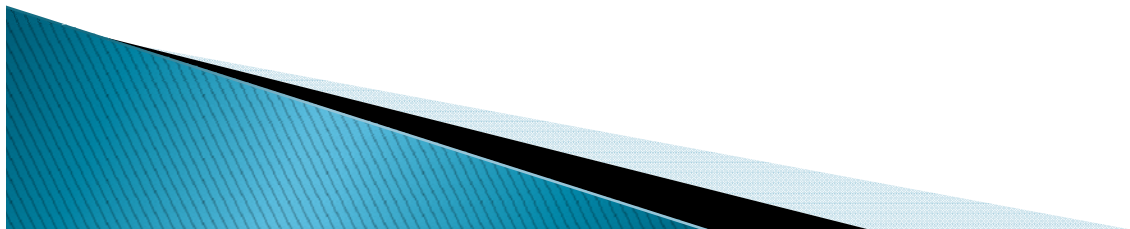
# Common Themes



Question 3: What do you believe are the impediments to addressing the priority issues?

ANS: Obstacles we see going forward - 14% of all comments
<b>Lack of (long-term) funding for research, monitoring, land acquisition, improved safety, habitat restoration.</b>
Existing statutes, regulations, Agency policies and processes inhibiting progress.
Is this just another plan? or another Task Force? Too many plans, too many task forces, too little action.
Lacking accountability/liability from the polluter.
Once lost, always lost: the system had already had been damaged from decades of abuse.
Political conflict: getting reelected means more likely to fund economic projects than environmental ones.
Development and restoration not compatible.

This set of answers represents 75% of the responses to this question.



# Comments under 4 Priority Areas



Of all the comments received up to May 6, half focused on one of the 4 priority areas

- Enhance Community Resilience
- Restore and Conserve Habitat
- Restore Water Quality
- Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources





# Comments on 4 Priority Areas

- **Enhance Community Resilience**

“When you look to future, consider the effects of climate change and sea level rise.”  
– Non-Governmental Organization

“Need a watershed level plan.”  
– Local Government

“The current planning process has problems - there is a disconnect between organizations.”  
– Business/Industry



# Comments on 4 Priority Areas

- **Restore and Conserve Habitat**

“Oyster reefs provide huge ecosystem services value. You need to restore and protect these reefs.”

– Non-Governmental Organization

“Create partnerships between industries to provide better habitats.”

– Business/Industry

“Critical habitat needs to be monitored and modeled, including oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation, salt marshes, and mangroves.”

– Academia



# Comments on 4 Priority Areas

- **Restore Water Quality**

“You need to examine both storm water buffering capacity of wetlands and storm surge capacity.”

– Academia

“Fresh water in-flow is critical.”

– Non-Governmental Organization

“We have to get the farmer in Iowa to see the Gulf of Mexico from his kitchen window.”

– General Public

# Comments on 4 Priority Areas



- **Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources**

“Consider land-based impediments, such as the dams being torn down in the west, to help fish populations recover.”

– General Public

“Our primary concern is the health of the fisheries.”

– Business/Industry

“Ensure that we have adequate research and information on the impacts to fish.”

– Local Government

# Input Received through Advisory Committees



LGAC's recommendations were transmitted to EPA Administrator on April 21, 2011

Three primary suggestions:

- 1) Use a **bottom-up approach**
- 2) **Identify and resolve policy barriers** to restoration
- 3) Identify a stable **source of restoration funding**







# Looking Ahead

- ▶ Awaiting the recommendations from the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC)
- ▶ Compiling comments received at listening sessions responding to the four priority areas described in the *Strategy Background Document*:
  - Mobile, Alabama May 6, 2011
  - Pensacola, Florida June 1, 2011
  - Galveston, Texas June 27, 2011
- ▶ Continuing to engage our stakeholders using the approaches mentioned today.





# Questions?

