Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Strategy Development
Tribal Webinar
June 1, 2011, 2pm – 4pm EDT

Summary of Questions and Answers

Attendees

- Cherise Maples, Assistant Director, Environment Department, Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Elizabeth Letts, Environmental Protection Specialist, Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Buck Sutter, Deputy Director, NOAA/Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (GCERTF)
- Angela Bandemehr, EPA/GCERTF
- Joe Redican, ACOE/GCERTF
- Carolyn Scully, EPA/GCERTF
- Katharine Dowell, EPA/OW/GCERTF

Summary of Questions and Answers

Q: **Will Tribes have an opportunity to review strategy?**

A: **(Angela Bandemehr)** Yes. They will. A draft will hopefully be out this summer some time. There is a strategy background document available already -- see www.epa.gov/tribal.

(Buck Sutter) Yes. And we are very interested in hearing from you how your tribe has been impacted by the problems and issues in the Gulf of Mexico. But if we don't cover everything in the strategy, that doesn't mean the game is over. The strategy will be revisited every 2 years, and updated/amended. A big part of that is ensuring stakeholders have a way to direct the restoration efforts.

Q: **Will the strategy be science based? How, since the task force is separate from NRDA (Natural Resources Damage Assessment)? Wouldn't they be dependent on one another?**

A: **(Angela Bandemehr)** Yes, it is science-based, there is an effort to cull all the existing science knowledge to inform the strategy.

(Buck Sutter) The Executive Order (EO) is very clear that this must be a science-based process. The strategy development process has included a strong science-based foundation. We talked with and continue to interact with scientists throughout the region to find out what steps need to be taken to restore the Gulf. For example, if a goal is to restore wetlands, then you may need to build a barrier

island first, since it protects the wetlands behind it. Planting sea grass first to restore the wetlands may not be as useful if the barrier island is not intact to protect the wetland.

There will be decisions that need to be made on the best available information. As we move forward, monitoring will be a big part of the strategy recommendations. An adaptive management framework allows for a feedback mechanism; science will be used to inform decisions, we monitor, and we adjust, again using science, as we go forward.

NRDA is also science-based. The NRDA process is very litigious in nature, some of that science information is sequestered information right now for this process. $90M has been spent to get science research up and going to determine what is the impact of the oil spill.

Two different tracks, there is no doubt about that. This is due to the OPA and CWA, but both are science-based.

Q: What about the health impacts of dispersants?

A: **(Buck Sutter)** This is more of a NRDA issue. The impacts of dispersants are being studied from an effectiveness standpoint using the NRDA penalties monies. As far as the health impacts of dispersants such as Corexit, they are being studied in the two NIH studies. GCERTF will be referring to these other studies.

We have certainly heard loud and clear the importance of the impact of dispersants on humans and seafood safety, and realize the importance of linking this to our strategy.

Q: Is there a link between the GCERTF work and the work begin done in the Everglades (such as by the Everglades Task Force)?

A: **(Buck Sutter)** Yes, we will look at the work being done in the Everglades. Part of GCERTF's charge is to look at existing efforts and partner/support them. A relationship with the work being done in the Everglades may be similar to how the GCERTF works with entities like the Hypoxia Task Force. With the Hypoxia Task Force GCERTF is looking for ways to add value to the efforts that are already on-going. How can GCERTF make them more effective? We are building on several plans that are already in existence.