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Habitat Restoration Listening Session

Commenter's Affiliation	Comment
Business and Industry	Any habitat restoration efforts should keep in mind the need to have a direct impact on commercial fisheries. There is a need for a healthy, productive environment, but there is also a need for the ability to use those resources. Habitat restoration needs to have direct impact on harvestable seafood, and not focus on environmental concerns alone.
Business and Industry	Several good ideas came out of the "Roadmap to Resilience" report.
Non-governmental Organization	Appreciates the creation of a citizens FACA.
Non-governmental Organization	Suggests the need for prioritization tools to select projects; recommends that projects which perform ecosystem services rise to the top of the projects. For example, barrier oyster reef restoration projects are important projects that rank high in ecosystem services. A project scores points if it: has precedent; has more functions; puts people to work in jobs other than the oil & gas industry; and has metrics for success/failures. The Gulf Restoration Network's Project Guidelines can be a model used for scoring and choosing priority projects.
Non-governmental Organization	<u>Potential Prioritization Guidelines by Ecosystem Criteria:</u> 1) Connectivity: How will the project protect or reconnect processes important to shaping habitat structure and function? Is the project linked to or does it build off of other protection or restoration projects planned or currently underway? 2) Areas of Historic Loss: Describe the project goals in terms of restoring habitat conditions. What factors contribute to the decline of conditions? Are those factors still present to an extent that they could impact the success of a project? 3) Improve Ecosystem Function: What habitat functions will be improved from the restoration effort (e.g. food web support, sediment retention, nutrient reduction), and 4) Size and Scope: Acres or linear feet of habitat restored or enhanced.

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Non-governmental Organization	<u>Potential Prioritization Guidelines by Economic Criteria:</u> 1) Does the project put people to work in jobs other than the oil and gas industry ? 2) Does the project result in long-term restoration of livelihoods in one or more of the following areas (tourism, fisheries, recreation, maritime)? and 3) Does the project proposal include plans to hire a local, diverse work force ?
Non-governmental Organization	<u>Potential Prioritization Guidelines by Implementation:</u> 1) What is the likelihood the project will be self-maintaining over time ? 2) What level of engineering or manipulation will be required to re-establish natural process and habitats? 3) Are there any overarching issues that could constrain the success of the project?
Non-governmental Organization	<u>Potential Prioritization Guidelines by Community Support and Participation:</u> 1) Discuss the outreach and education components of the project. 2) Describe how you will involve local property owners or community organizations in the restoration effort. 3) Identify similar projects in your county or state, and how your project will enhance ongoing activities in the watershed . 4) Is the project currently contained in an existing restoration or watershed management plan ?
Non-governmental Organization	<u>Potential Prioritization Guidelines by Monitoring:</u> 1) Are there existing, successful, peer-reviewed examples of this type of project? How long have then been monitored? 2) Has a monitoring plan been established for this project? 3) Have specific restoration goals and monitoring standards been identified to gauge performance and implement changes if needed?
Non-governmental Organization	Encourages GCERTF to come up with specific actions that have deadlines/timelines and some that are short-term, and to make assignments for who is tasked with what given current authorities.
Non-governmental Organization	There will be different actions for each state, and therefore encourages putting out different action plans per state to reflect how different states will accomplish restoration goals.

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Business and Industry	There are a lot of lessons learned from Everglades. Challenge the way government is working together or not working together. There were some creative ideas concerning ACOE and NEPA, that took a lot of collaboration at the federal, state and local levels.
Business and Industry	Would like to see an entire listening session on the collaboration needed.
Business and Industry	When Everglades first got started there was talk of creating another Agency to do it; why don't we do it in Gulf Restoration. Why couldn't people from ACOE, NOAA, EPA, States, Private Industry all join a consortium? In such a scenario the paycheck comes from the consortium so that employees can take off their separate Agencies hats.
Local Government	Warming up to the idea presented by the panelist of getting the water and the land right. Worked on the Kissimmee restoration project and saw another side. The project area is suffering from the death of a thousand cuts and each individual watershed contributing to the detriment of the Gulf of Mexico.
Local Government	Recommends focusing on the sources of the problems that have led to the need for restoration. We need go back to the source of why we are losing habitat: is it poor design and engineering, nutrients, pathogens? We keep looking at ways to restore, but the source of the problem still exists.
Business and Industry	For anyone who spends time working in the bays of the area, it is obvious that we've made them into bathtubs; we have built walls. Federal and state policy changes are needed that support a living shoreline, and regulators need to stop supporting, and subsidizing, the building of these walls. We need living shorelines with grasses and trees that preserve and protect the water quality, and we need to educate people on the importance of the living shoreline not just waterfront.
General Public	When planning a project for beneficial use, if it can be made easier to get a project through the feasibility stage that would be very good.

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General Public	Big now in the Netherlands is to build with nature: nature-driven design. Mimic the delta load with your dredged material; if you can build something that looks natural, you can feed the sediment to the shoreline rather than pumping it. Allow nature to move the sand, not the dredging. Urges thinking about doing more passive things rather than structural changes. Has experience building sand berm off of the barrier islands; place the sand there, but then let nature move the sand to build the berms naturally, not artificially with man made berms.
Non-governmental Organization	Better collaboration that can facilitate quicker decisions. Consider what policy barriers are out there. For example, consider waiving match requirements for states for the federal grant programs.
Non-governmental Organization	Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) provides an opportunity to get projects on the ground now. The Task Force (GCERTF) should recognize the work being done within the Alliance team, such as beneficial use and project development in habitat and sea level rise. GOMA has made policy recommendations that GCERTF should recognize.
Non-governmental Organization	It is promising to see GCERTF working with GOMA and other organizations and reviewing existing plans. But, it is not enough to review a planning document; it is far more imperative to have GCERTF work hand-in-hand with GOMA and other entities that are at work on the same priorities areas. These organizations are working on the same issues, but they may not all be captured in planning and guidance documents.
Academia	Agencies have statutes that guide their thinking and their actions. We need to find a way to streamline. To get something we want, we are going to have to give up something else and, that is okay. For example, take essential fish habitat (the whole of GOM is identified as essential fish habitat), the idea that you do something for essential fish habitat means that you do not do something else. This is not a bad thing.

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Academia	We have an urgency need and must move things forward quickly. We need expedited projects that do not need to go through long drawn out evaluations. Following Katrina, ACOE quickly got almost \$1M and alternate arrangements for meeting NEPA requirements. Something needs to change to allow projects that we know are going to have net positive impacts to happen.
Academia	In the future, principles and guidelines are important; the new PNR (if this document hits the street) talks about ecosystem uncertainty and sea level rise and the net benefits of a project; there may be some promise in this document.
Business and Industry	A caution on the request to change the NEPA implementation, you don't want it to be repealed all together. You don't want to get rid of NEPA, but you would have an expedited process, and be able to trust each other when you think the net benefit to society with be positive.
Business and Industry	Project justification process is broken. We need to define the project justification process. Who understands what a habitat unit is? Ecosystem services? Where is the detailed way to do it and what is going to be acceptable.
Business and Industry	The trust issue is relevant in our ability for risk-taking. Denise's comment, that we don't need an extensive science program, while startling is true. In the Everglades, science was used to delay action. We need to trust risk-taking.
Non-governmental Organization	We need to strengthen our accountability for our response to the oil. We must do more research on the use of dispersants. We cannot let the oil industry dictate to EPA how to handle the oil.

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Business and Industry	Policy Change. There is a 2010 study saying that ACOE disposal facilities are getting nowhere in their capacity; ACOE does not have storage space for disposal of dredge material. So the problem is that ACOE is mandated to go through the least coast way; it may be necessary to change this particular policy so that ACOE can use the sediment for beneficial use.
Business and Industry	The states need to agree on an overall water quality standard. Forget political boundaries and develop an overall standard statement for the disposal and use of beneficial materials with the objective to restore the Gulf of Mexico Watershed. For example, all the states in the Chesapeake Bay agreed to the water quality standard, but if you have different standards, requirements and jurisdictions these difference become an obstacle. If you take a regional approach, this will drive a lot of the necessary changes for handling of dredged material. This was done in the Missouri River with a number of states and tribes; they finally came together and realized that the entire system needed to be restored. Once this objective came to be, everything else fell into place. Start with the basics.
Non-governmental Organization	Take a look at legacy dredging projects before NEPA. For example there is a dredging project from 1954 for a cannery, but the cannery no longer exists and the dredging continues. Recommends reevaluating the dredging projects that go on to even see if they are necessary any longer. And, address and incorporate lessons learned.

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