

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

*created October 5, 2010
By Executive Order of the
President of the United States*

Ecosystem restoration is needed

- To effectively address the damage caused by the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
- To address the longstanding ecological decline of the region
- Begin moving toward a more resilient Gulf Coast Ecosystem

Administration

- The President designated EPA Administrator, **Lisa Jackson**, to Chair the Task Force.
- The Chair selected John H. Hankinson, Jr. as Executive Director.
- The Executive Director shall supervise, direct, and be accountable for the administration and operation of the Task Force.
- Administrative services, funds, facilities, staff, and other support services are to be provided by the executive departments, agencies, and offices represented on the Task Force.

Duties of the Chair include:

- Facilitate a smooth transition from the response phase of addressing the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill to the restoration phase
- Communicate and engage with the States, tribes, local governments and other stakeholders in the Gulf Coastal region
- Coordinate the efforts of executive departments, agencies and offices related to the functions of the Task Force

Administration

- State Representatives to select from among themselves a Vice Chair of the Task Force
- Task Force may establish technical working groups, to provide for greater collaboration with additional representatives from State and tribal governments.
- The Departments of Commerce (through NOAA), the Interior (through the FWS), and Justice shall identify linkages and opportunities for the Task Force to complement the restoration progress of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council.

Advisory Departments & Agencies

- At the request of the Chair, executive departments and agencies, including
 - Department of Labor,
 - Department of Health and Human Services,
 - Department of Energy,
 - Homeland Security,
 - Small Business Administration,
 - National Science Foundation,shall serve in an advisory role to the Task Force on issues within their expertise.

Task Force

- **prepare a Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy (Strategy)**
- engage stakeholders throughout the region in the development of the Strategy
- communicate with affected tribes
- coordinate intergovernmental efforts
- coordinate research needs and the consideration of relevant scientific and technical knowledge
- support the NRDA process by referring potential ecosystem restoration actions
- focus on health and economic benefits associated with proposed ecosystem restoration actions
- prepare biennial updates on progress of efforts to implement the Strategy

Strategy – Due Oct. 4, 2011

- Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Agenda
 - Define goals for ecosystem restoration
 - Identify performance indicators to track progress
 - Develop a means of coordinating intergovernmental restoration efforts
- The executive departments, agencies, and offices with representatives on the Task Force are to consider ways to align their relevant programs and authorities with the Strategy

How are we to develop the Strategy?

- Consider existing research and ecosystem restoration planning efforts in the region, including
 - National Ocean Council
 - Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force (Gulf Hypoxia Task Force)
- to identify planning and restoration needs
- to identify ways to address those needs

- Identify major policy areas where coordinated intergovernmental action is needed.
- Propose new programs to implement elements of the Strategy where existing authorities are not sufficient.
- Evaluate existing monitoring programs and identify gaps in current data collection.
- Identify monitoring, research, and scientific assessments that are needed.
- Describe the circumstances under which termination of the Task Force would be appropriate

Activities in the Short Term

- Assemble a staff and resources to accomplish Task Force objectives
- Install a functional infrastructure for meaningful involvement by stakeholders, tribes, and local representatives
- Establish clear lines of communication with Task Force members
- Develop Task Force organizational procedures such as meeting frequency, agenda development, and deliberative process

Activities in the Short Term

- Begin preparation of the Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy
- Review existing federal, state, local and academic research and restoration planning and inventory ongoing restoration activities in the Gulf
- Initiate interaction with the NRDA process to identify opportunities to support that effort.

The Challenge

- **In just 11 months, this Task Force will submit to the President a Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy.**
- We will have received and responded to input from stakeholders in the region, considered all the work currently underway by other entities, identified gaps in scientific and technical data, coordinated with NRDA and recommended restoration actions, established milestones for assessing progress, and put into place a mechanism for long-term interagency and intergovernmental coordination.

- Continue to engage local stakeholders, communities, the public, and other officials throughout the Gulf Coast region;
- Provide leadership and coordination of research needs in support of ecosystem restoration in the Gulf Coast region;
- Monitor progress toward the goals of Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration, as outlined in the Strategy and report biennially;
- Disband the Task Force when appropriate.