

DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL

FLORIDA TRUSTEE IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

**FINAL RESTORATION PLAN 1 AND ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT: HABITAT PROJECTS ON FEDERALLY MANAGED
LANDS; NUTRIENT REDUCTION; WATER QUALITY; AND
PROVIDE AND ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**



FINAL MARCH 2019



Executive Summary

In the spring of 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) mobile drilling unit exploded resulting in loss of life and a massive release of oil and natural gas from the BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP) Macondo well. Initial efforts to cap the well were unsuccessful resulting in 87 days of continuous discharge into the northern Gulf of Mexico, totaling approximately 3.19 million barrels (134 million gallons) of oil (U.S. v. BP et al., 2015). Oil spread from the deep ocean to the surface and nearshore environment from Texas to Florida, coming into contact and injuring a diverse set of natural resources. Extensive response actions, including cleanup activities and actions to prevent the oil from reaching sensitive resources, were undertaken; however, many of these response actions had collateral impacts on the environment and natural resource services. The oil and other substances released from the well, in combination with the extensive response actions, together make up the DWH oil spill.

Pursuant to the Oil Pollution Act (OPA), Title 33 United States Code §§ 2701 *et seq.*, and the laws of individual affected states, federal agencies, state agencies, Indian tribes, and foreign governments act as trustees on behalf of the public to assess injuries to natural resources and their services¹ that result from an oil spill incident, and to plan for restoration to compensate for those injuries. Under the authority of OPA, the DWH Trustees conducted a natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) to assess the impacts of the DWH oil spill on natural resources and their services and prepared the *2016 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan/Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PDARP/PEIS)*² which outlines the type of restoration needed to compensate the public for the diverse suite of injuries that occurred at both regional and local scales as well as the funding allocations to each Restoration Type.

In the PDARP/PEIS, the DWH Trustees identified the need for a comprehensive restoration plan at a programmatic level to guide and direct an ecosystem-level restoration effort, based on four Restoration Goals: Restore and Conserve Habitat; Restore Water Quality; Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources; and Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities. In addition, a fifth Restoration Goal, addressing monitoring and adaptive management and administrative oversight for restoration implementation, supports the Restoration Types under the Restoration Goals and informs overall decision-making (Figure 5.4-1 in the PDARP/PEIS).

Final Restoration Plan 1 and Environmental Assessment

The Florida Trustee Implementation Group (FL TIG) is responsible for restoring natural resources and their services within the Florida Restoration Area that were injured by the DWH oil spill. The FL TIG

¹ Services (or natural resource services) are defined as the functions performed by a natural resource for the benefit of another natural resource and/or the public (15 Code of Federal Regulations § 990.30).

² The PDARP/PEIS can be found at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-planning/gulf-plan/.

includes two state Trustee agencies and four federal Trustee agencies: the Florida Department of Environmental Protection; the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; the United States Department of Commerce, represented by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the United States Department of the Interior, represented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management; the United States Department of Agriculture; and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

The FL TIG has prepared this Final Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (RP/EA) to address, in part, injury to natural resources in the Florida Restoration Area as a result of the DWH oil spill. The purpose of restoration, as discussed in this document and detailed in the PDARP/PEIS, is to make the environment and the public whole by implementing restoration actions that return injured natural resources and their services to baseline conditions and compensate for interim losses, in accordance with OPA and associated OPA NRDA regulations. This RP/EA includes a description and evaluation of 32 restoration projects, also called restoration alternatives,³ consistent with four of the Restoration Types from the PDARP/PEIS, as follows:

- Habitat Projects on Federally Managed Lands: six alternatives;
- Nutrient Reduction (Nonpoint Source; hereafter referred to as Nutrient Reduction): three alternatives;
- Water Quality (e.g., Stormwater Treatments, Hydrologic Restoration, Reduction of Sedimentation, etc.; hereafter referred to as Water Quality): 12 alternatives; and
- Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities: 11 alternatives.

Table ES-1 lists the reasonable range of alternatives, noting those that are preferred for funding by the FL TIG at this time. The FL TIG has selected 23 of the 32 alternatives evaluated in this RP/EA for funding and implementation at this time.

Table ES-1 List of the reasonable range of alternatives proposed in this RP/EA, by Restoration Type and location (west to east)

Reasonable Range of Restoration Alternatives	Estimated Project Costs
Restoration Type: Habitat Projects on Federally Managed Lands (FM)*	
FM1. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Beneficial Use of Dredged Materials at Perdido Key	\$4,783,847
FM2. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Night Sky Restoration (P&D)**	Preferred*** \$432,093
FM3. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Night Sky Restoration (Implementation)	- \$7,669,834
FM4. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Beach and Dune Habitat Protection	Preferred \$853,821
FM5. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Invasive Plant Removal	Preferred \$875,765
FM6. St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Predator Control	Preferred \$580,772

³ The terms “project” and “alternative” are used interchangeably throughout this RP/EA.

Reasonable Range of Restoration Alternatives			Estimated Project Costs
Restoration Type: Nutrient Reduction (NR)*			
NR1. Pensacola Bay and Perdido River Watersheds - Nutrient Reduction	Preferred		\$2,100,000
NR2. Apalachicola Bay Watershed - Nutrient Reduction	-		\$3,150,000
NR3. Lower Suwannee River Watershed - Nutrient Reduction	Preferred		\$3,150,000
Restoration Type: Water Quality (WQ)*			
WQ1. Carpenter Creek Headwaters Water Quality Improvements	Preferred		\$1,689,900
WQ2. Pensacola Beach Reclaimed Water System Expansion	Preferred		\$4,683,404
WQ3. Rattlesnake Bluff Road and Riverbank Restoration	Preferred		\$3,149,091
WQ4. Pensacola Bay Unpaved Roads Initiative (P&D)	Preferred		\$705,473
WQ5. Alligator Lake Coastal Dune Lake Hydrologic Restoration	Preferred		\$1,382,400
WQ6. Grand Lagoon Regional Stormwater Facility	-		\$3,210,910
WQ7. St. Andrew Bay Unpaved Roads Initiative (P&D)	-		\$705,473
WQ8. City of Port St. Joe Stormwater Improvements	Preferred		\$961,000
WQ9. MK Ranch Hydrologic Restoration	-		\$27,484,932
WQ10. City of Carrabelle's Lighthouse Estates: Septic Tank Abatement - Phase II	Preferred		\$3,237,986
WQ11. Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge Hydrologic Restoration (P&D)	Preferred		\$500,000
WQ12. Lower Charlotte Harbor Flatwoods Hydrologic Restoration Initiative, Yucca Pens Unit (P&D)	Preferred		\$636,500
Restoration Type: Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities (REC)*			
REC1. Perdido Bay Sunset Islands Snorkeling Trail	-		\$840,000
REC2. Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park Improvements	-		\$2,719,670
REC3. Perdido River and Bay Paddle Trail	Preferred		\$1,165,488
REC4. Carpenter Creek Headwaters Park Amenities	Preferred		\$446,080
REC5. Gulf Islands National Seashore (Florida) Rehabilitation of Okaloosa Unit Recreational Facilities	Preferred		\$3,201,383
REC6. Joe's Bayou Recreation Area Improvements	Preferred		\$12,202,891
REC7. Topsail Hill Preserve State Park Improvements	Preferred		\$3,926,811
REC8. Camp Helen State Park Improvements	Preferred		\$3,326,027
REC9. St. Andrews State Park Improvements	Preferred		\$10,875,855
REC10. T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park Improvements	-		\$977,945
REC11. St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Trail Connection, Spring Creek to Port Leon	Preferred		\$1,200,000
		Subtotal for Preferred Alternatives	\$61,282,740
*FM = Habitat Projects on Federally Managed Lands; NR = Nutrient Reduction; WQ = Water Quality; REC = Provide and Enhance Recreational Opportunities. **P&D indicates projects that include planning, feasibility, design, engineering, and/or permitting activities only (i.e., not actions related to implementation or construction). ***Preferred indicates projects that are preferred for funding by the FL TIG and have been selected for implementation at this time.			

Public Participation in the Draft Restoration Plan 1 and Environmental Assessment

The FL TIG prepared the Draft RP/EA to (1) inform the public about DWH NRDA restoration planning efforts in the Florida Restoration Area, (2) present analyses on the potential restoration benefits and environmental consequences of the restoration alternatives, and (3) seek public comment on this RP/EA. The Draft RP/EA was released for public review and comment on September 20, 2018. The FL TIG continued to accept public comments until December 28, 2018. The FL TIG also held a public meeting on October 2, 2018 in Tallahassee and held a public webinar on December 13, 2018 to facilitate public understanding of the RP/EA. The FL TIG considered the comments received, which informed the FL TIG's analysis of alternatives in this final RP/EA. A summary of the public comments received and the FL TIG's responses to those comments are addressed in Chapter 6 of this RP/EA.

Hurricane Michael Impacts to the Area

On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall near Mexico Beach in the Florida Panhandle. In the Florida coastal region, Bay and Gulf counties were severely impacted, with Mexico Beach, Port St. Joe, Tyndall Air Force Base, and parts of the Panama City area almost destroyed. In addition, Franklin and Wakulla counties also saw impacts from wind and storm surge. The FL TIG public webinar was postponed and rescheduled from October 10 to December 13, 2018 to allow the FL TIG to assess potential impacts.

In light of the devastation, the FL TIG worked with the affected counties to determine whether proposed projects in areas that were heavily impacted (i.e., FM16, WQ8, REC9, REC10, and REC11) remained viable. Of these five projects, the only project location that was impacted to the degree that the project viability was affected was REC10, T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park on Cape San Blas in Gulf County. Hurricane Michael severed the peninsula inside the park, leaving the park entrance, the boat ramp at Eagle Harbor, and a restroom on the peninsula. To the north, the camping areas, cabins, primary recreation and gulf access areas, and staff residences are now separated from the peninsula by a pass that is several hundred feet across. The park road was also significantly damaged in many places. Due to the impacts to the park, including the damage to the road, how access to areas and amenities beyond the breach will be restored is unknown at this time. As such, the FL TIG determined that this project is unlikely to be successfully implemented at this time and therefore the project is not identified as preferred in this final RP/EA.