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Public Webinar:
Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource
Damage Assessment

Florida Trustee Implementation Group
Draft Restoration Plan 2 and
Environmental Assessment (RP2-EA)

Thursday, March 11, 2021
5:00 p.m. through 5:44 p.m. Eastern Time

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1 PUBLIC WEBINAR STAFF:
 2 NADIA MARTIN
 3 GARETH LEONARD
 4 AMY RAKER
 5 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
 6 Commission
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1 PROCEEDINGS
 2
 3 MS. MARTIN: Hello and welcome. The
 4 purpose of today's webinar is to provide
 5 information on the Florida Trustee
 6 Implementation Group's Draft Restoration Plan 2
 7 and Environmental Assessment and to receive your
 8 comments. Thank you for taking the time to join
 9 this presentation tonight.
 10 After today's webinar, in the next few
 11 days, we will post this presentation and the
 12 script to the Florida page of the Trustee
 13 website, www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov, and
 14 we'll provide that website link again at the end
 15 of the presentation.
 16 My name is Nadia Martin, and I will be
 17 providing an overview of the webinar features
 18 that are available for your use today.
 19 Hopefully, you are now logged into the
 20 webinar and connected via audio, either by
 21 Computer or Phone Audio. You should be able to
 22 see the control panel on the right-hand side of

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 3 SPEAKERS: PAGE
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 5 Resident, City of Pensacola, Florida
 6 JULIE WRAITHMELL, 30
 7 Executive Director, Audubon Florida
 8 JESSICA BIBZA, 34
 9 National Wildlife Federation
 10 RICK GORDON, 38
 11 Resident, Pensacola Beach, Florida
 12 KENT WIMMER, 40
 13 Defenders of Wildlife, Northwest Florida
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1 your screen, and you may need to click the
 2 orange arrow to expand the panel.
 3 As a reminder, all attendees are muted
 4 automatically, but we will unmute you when it is
 5 your turn to speak. If you have called in on a
 6 phone, as shown in the slide, please make sure
 7 that Computer Audio is not clicked. You need to
 8 make sure that the Phone Call Audio is checked.
 9 If you are planning to speak during the
 10 public comment portion of this webinar, you must
 11 enter your individual audio PIN, and keep in
 12 mind that this PIN is different than the access
 13 code. However, if you are using Computer Audio,
 14 you do not need a pin, and we will unmute you
 15 when it's your turn to speak.
 16 Please take a moment to locate the
 17 Questions box in the control panel. You may
 18 need to expand the box. If you are having any
 19 technical issues hearing or seeing the webinar,
 20 please let us know via this box, and we'll do
 21 what we can to help you.
 22 The link to the draft plan and the project

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1 fact sheets is going to be provided in the
 2 Questions box in a moment in case you need to
 3 reference those materials during the webinar.
 4 It will also be provided on the next slide.
 5 Now let's go ahead and begin the
 6 presentation. I will now hand it off to Gareth
 7 Leonard with the Florida Fish and Wildlife
 8 Conservation Commission.
 9 MR. LEONARD: Thank you, Nadia.
 10 This is Gareth Leonard with FWC.
 11 I am joined today by the following TIF
 12 members: Dianne Ingram with DOI, Stella Wilson
 13 with NOAA, Amy Newbold with EPA, Ben Battle with
 14 USDA, and Lisa Robertson with FDEP. Please note
 15 that the link to the draft plan and fact sheets
 16 is provided at the bottom of this slide.
 17 Today's agenda will begin with background
 18 on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural
 19 Resource Damage Assessment process, more
 20 commonly referred to as NRDA, and the Florida
 21 Trustee Implementation Group, or Florida TIG.
 22 As part of the NRDA process, Trustees undertake

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1 restoration planning, including drafting
 2 restoration plans for public review and comment,
 3 followed by implementation of approved
 4 restoration projects.
 5 Today we will be discussing the Florida
 6 TIG's Draft Restoration Plan 2 and Environmental
 7 Assessment, which is the TIG's second
 8 post-settlement restoration plan.
 9 This webinar will include an overview of
 10 the planning timeline, screening process, and
 11 proposed projects for the draft plan.
 12 As a note, the Florida TIG's first
 13 post-settlement plan was approved in March 2019
 14 and included 23 preferred projects at an
 15 estimated cost of approximately \$61.3 million.
 16 More information on that plan and previous
 17 restoration efforts of the Florida TIG can be
 18 found on the Florida TIG page of the Trustee's
 19 website.
 20 As we have discussed, after presentation of
 21 the plan, there will be a virtual public comment
 22 session. At that time, attendees will be able

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1 to submit formal comments which will be included
 2 in the administrative record for this plan and
 3 will be addressed by the Florida TIG in the
 4 final plan. Additional details will be provided
 5 during that portion of the webinar.
 6 Finally, we will review the public
 7 commenting process following the webinar and
 8 next steps for this draft plan.
 9 What is NRDA? NRDA is a mandatory legal
 10 process based on the Oil Pollution Act of 1990
 11 that the Federal agencies and affected States
 12 implement after an oil spill.
 13 It is a process that the Trustee agencies
 14 use to assess the degree to which natural
 15 resources and the services they provide may have
 16 been injured by an oil spill and response
 17 activities.
 18 Trustees then determine how to compensate
 19 the public through on-the-ground restoration
 20 activities. The goal is to restore injured
 21 resources to the condition they would have been
 22 in had the spill not occurred and provide

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1 compensation for interim losses of resources and
 2 those services provided by the injured
 3 resources.
 4 Through NRDA, the Trustees develop the
 5 public's claim for natural resource damages
 6 against the parties responsible and seek
 7 restoration or compensation for the harm done.
 8 When we say injury, we not only mean the
 9 environmental injuries caused by the oil spill
 10 and associated response activities but also the
 11 effect those injuries had on the public use and
 12 enjoyment of the many natural resources across
 13 the Gulf. Therefore, it is important to
 14 remember that NRDA not only assesses ecological
 15 injury but also the loss of recreational use of
 16 those resources because of the spill.
 17 Following the assessment of the injury, the
 18 NRDA process includes restoration planning
 19 generally to determine what needs to be done to
 20 restore the natural resources, determining the
 21 cost of those needed restoration activities, and
 22 finally, assessing and seeking monetary damages

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1 to pay for restoration.

2 The 2016 Deepwater Horizon settlement

3 included \$8.8 billion in damages to be paid by

4 BP over 15 years to address the natural resource

5 damages and loss of use caused by the oil spill.

6 This included approximately \$1 billion already

7 committed for early restoration projects. The

8 Florida TIG continues to implement its early

9 restoration projects in the Florida Restoration

10 Area. For more information on early restoration

11 projects, please visit the Florida TIG page on

12 the Trustee's website which is listed on the

13 bottom of the slide.

14 In addition, the Trustees set aside an

15 additional \$700 million for adaptive management

16 and unknown conditions. These funds will

17 currently address unknown conditions that may be

18 uncovered in the future.

19 In conjunction with the settlement, the

20 Trustees also prepared a Programmatic Damage

21 Assessment and Restoration Plan, more commonly

22 referred to as the PDARP, which presented the

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1 Trustees' injury assessment and considered the

2 environmental impacts of the proposed

3 restoration alternatives at a programmatic

4 level. The draft plan we are presenting today

5 contains specific restoration projects that are

6 consistent with the goals and objectives

7 outlined in the PDARP for restoring natural

8 resources and the services they provide.

9 The Deepwater Horizon Settlement also

10 formally established the Trustee Council

11 Structure. This graphic shows the

12 post-settlement structure of the Deepwater

13 Horizon NRDA Trustee Council, which now serves

14 in an oversight role.

15 The settlement and associated legal

16 documents established Restoration Areas, one for

17 each Gulf State, as well as for the Open Ocean

18 and Regionwide Restoration Areas, which are

19 represented by OO and RW on the figure.

20 Restoration Area-specific TIGs conduct the

21 work to develop restoration plans and implement

22 approved projects within their respective

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1 Restoration Areas.

2 As a reminder, for Florida, the TIG is

3 comprised of Federal and State agencies,

4 including DOI, EPA, NOAA, USDA, FDEP, and FWC.

5 Representatives from these agencies work

6 together to ensure that the pre- and

7 post-settlement restoration goals of the

8 Trustees are met.

9 Pursuant to the Deepwater Horizon

10 settlement, the total Florida TIG allocation of

11 restoration funds is approximately \$680 million,

12 which is spread over five programmatic

13 restoration goals. Moving clockwise around the

14 figure, you will see that Restore and Conserve

15 Habitat has been allocated \$38 million. Next is

16 Restore Water Quality, which has been allocated

17 \$335 million. Replenish and Protect Living

18 Coastal Marine Resources has been allocated \$93

19 million, while Provide and Enhance Recreational

20 Opportunities has been allocated \$184 million.

21 And finally, Monitoring, Adaptive Management,

22 and Administrative Oversight has been allocated

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1 \$30 million.

2 Here is another way to look at the Florida

3 TIG allocation. This slide is adapted from

4 Table 1-1 of the draft plan. I'd like to draw

5 your attention to the nine restoration types

6 outlined in blue to which funds are allocated to

7 in the Florida Restoration Area.

8 In addition to the Florida TIG settlement

9 funds, this table also shows the funds allocated

10 for restoration planning, early restoration

11 projects, and projects selected in the FL TIG's

12 first post settlement restoration plan.

13 For this plan, we are proposing projects

14 under three restoration goals and five

15 restoration types, which are Habitat Projects on

16 Federally Managed Lands, Sea Turtles, Marine

17 Mammals, Birds, and Provide and Enhance

18 Recreational Opportunities.

19 Now we will move on to the draft plan

20 portion of the presentation, where I'll present

21 the plan, including the planning timeline,

22 screening process--[audio break].

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1 [Pause.]
 2 MS. MARTIN: Oh, I think we're having some
 3 audio difficulty. So just give us a moment
 4 here. Apologies for the delay.
 5 [Pause.]
 6 MS. RAKER: Okay. Hello, everyone. It
 7 appears that Gareth is having some audio
 8 difficulties. This is Amy Raker with the
 9 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
 10 Commission, and I will take over for Gareth and
 11 finish out the remainder of the presentation.
 12 Thank you for your patience.
 13 So let's begin with an overview of the
 14 planning milestones of the Florida TIG in
 15 developing this draft plan. So, on August 20th,
 16 2019, the Florida TIG posted a public invitation
 17 on the Trustee website to submit project ideas
 18 for restoration in Florida related to six
 19 restoration types, and those included Habitat
 20 Projects on Federally Managed Lands, Oysters,
 21 Sea Turtles, Marine Mammals, Birds, and Provide
 22 and Enhance Recreational Opportunities.

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1 Then on July 29th, 2020, the Florida TIG
 2 posted a public notice on the Trustee website
 3 indicating that the TIG was initiating
 4 restoration planning.
 5 Subsequently, on February 25th, 2021, the
 6 plan's notice of availability was posted in the
 7 Federal Register. The public is encouraged to
 8 review and comment on this draft plan during the
 9 ongoing public comment period, which will end on
 10 March 29th, 2021.
 11 This is Figure 2-1 in the draft plan. By
 12 restoration type, it summarizes the Florida
 13 TIG's screening process used to develop the
 14 reasonable range of alternatives in this draft
 15 plan.
 16 The Florida TIG began the screening process
 17 by reviewing the 2,162 project ideas that were
 18 in the Deepwater Horizon Trustee and Florida
 19 portals and removing project ideas that did not
 20 address one or more of the five restoration
 21 types identified for this restoration plan.
 22 This initial review resulted in the Trustees

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1 identifying 1,005 project ideas that need to be
 2 screened.
 3 The Florida TIG then performed three steps
 4 of screening--primary, secondary, and
 5 final--which resulted in the 1,005 project ideas
 6 being reduced to the 24 project ideas, with one
 7 being proposed under two restoration types that
 8 are included in Florida TIG's reasonable range
 9 of alternatives for this draft plan.
 10 For more detail on the screening process,
 11 please see Chapter 2 of the draft plan.
 12 And I believe that Gareth has resolved some
 13 of his audio difficulties. So I am going to
 14 hand it back over to him. Thank you.
 15 MR. LEONARD: Appreciate it, Amy. Of
 16 course, your internet goes out at exactly the
 17 wrong time.
 18 So picking back up, in this draft plan,
 19 there are a total of 19 preferred projects; in
 20 other words, recommended for funding. This
 21 total includes one project jointly proposed and
 22 described under two restoration types--Habitat

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1 Projects on Federally Managed Lands and Provide
 2 and Enhance Recreational Opportunities.
 3 All 19 projects are consistent with the
 4 PDARP and the six OPA evaluation criteria, which
 5 are cost-effectiveness, Trustee goals and
 6 objectives, likelihood of success, collateral
 7 injury, benefits to multiple natural
 8 resources/services, and public health and
 9 safety.
 10 The Florida TIG proposes to use
 11 approximately \$62.2 million of the Florida TIG
 12 settlement funds plus a little over \$39,000 in
 13 interest earned on the Florida TIG accounts to
 14 fund the preferred projects in this draft plan.
 15 This would leave a balance of approximately \$398
 16 million and any unallocated earned interest
 17 remaining for future restoration plans.
 18 The Florida TIG would coordinate
 19 implementation of certain projects with the
 20 Regionwide TIG, which is currently planning
 21 restoration for living coastal and marine
 22 resources, where project goals and/or activities

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1 are complementarily, specifically for the sea
 2 turtle and bird restoration types.

3 On the next few slides, we will look at the
 4 preferred projects in more detail by restoration
 5 type. Note there are fact sheets for both the
 6 preferred and nonpreferred projects. Detailed
 7 information on all projects can be found in
 8 Section 2.5 of the draft plan.

9 For the Habitat Projects on Federally
 10 Managed Lands Restoration Type, this draft plan
 11 identifies five restoration alternatives, with
 12 four of them being preferred. These four
 13 projects are Johnson Beach Access Management and
 14 Habitat Protection; Perdido Key Sediment
 15 Placement; Pensacola Beach Fort Pickens Road
 16 Wildlife Lighting Retrofits; and St. Vincent
 17 National Wildlife Refuge Access and Recreational
 18 Improvements through Acquisition at Indian Pass
 19 which is jointly proposed and described under
 20 two Restoration Types, Habitat Projects on
 21 Federally Managed Lands and Provide and Enhance
 22 Recreational Opportunities.

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1 This suite of projects would help restore
 2 beach and dune habitat by managing visitor
 3 access at Gulf Islands National Seashore with
 4 designated parking and dune crossovers and
 5 installing other habitat disturbance-deterrent
 6 measures, placing dredged material on Perdido
 7 Key to partially supplement the natural sediment
 8 budget, retrofitting existing streetlights on
 9 Ft. Pickens Road with more wildlife friendly
 10 fixtures, and ensuring access to St. Vincent
 11 National Wildlife Refuge for continued habitat
 12 protection and management activities.

13 For the Sea Turtle Restoration type, this
 14 draft plan identifies four restoration
 15 alternatives, with three of them being
 16 preferred. The first preferred project is
 17 Increased Observers and Outreach to Reduce
 18 Incidental Hooking of Sea Turtles in
 19 Recreational Fisheries along Florida's Gulf
 20 Coast, which would target a reduction in
 21 incidental capture of sea turtles.
 22 The other two preferred projects are

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1 Reducing Threats to Sea Turtles through Removal
 2 of In-water Marine Debris along Florida's Gulf
 3 Coast, which would address the threat and
 4 impacts of marine debris on sea turtles, and
 5 Assessing Risk and Conducting Public Outreach to
 6 Reduce Vessel Strikes on Sea Turtles along
 7 Florida's Gulf Coast, which would gather and
 8 provide information to help reduce the mortality
 9 of multiple sea turtle species from injuries due
 10 to strikes by motorized watercraft.

11 For the Marine Mammals restoration type,
 12 this draft plan identifies two restoration
 13 alternatives, with the preferred alternative
 14 being the Florida Gulf Coast Marine Mammal
 15 Stranding Network. This project would maintain
 16 the stranding network's enhanced capabilities to
 17 increase marine mammal survival through
 18 improving understanding of key causes of
 19 morbidity and mortality.

20 For the Birds restoration type, this draft
 21 plan identifies five restoration alternatives,
 22 with four of them being preferred. These four

Page 21

1 projects are Gomez Key Oyster Reef Expansion and
 2 Breakwaters for American Oystercatchers;
 3 Egmont Key Vegetation Management and Dune
 4 Retention; Northeast Florida Coastal Predation
 5 Management; and
 6 Florida Shorebird and Seabird Stewardship and
 7 Habitat Management, 5 years.

8 This suite of projects would help address
 9 injuries to birds by restoring and enhancing
 10 nesting and foraging habitat for multiple
 11 Deepwater Horizon-injured bird species through
 12 habitat restoration, invasive species control,
 13 predation management, and bird stewardship.

14 For the Provide and Enhance Recreational
 15 Opportunities Restoration Type, this draft plan
 16 identifies nine restoration alternatives, with
 17 eight of them being preferred. The first four
 18 preferred projects are
 19 Pensacola Community Maritime Park Public Fishing
 20 Marina,
 21 Baars Park and Sanders Beach Kayak Fishing Trail
 22 Access Upgrades, Engineering and Design for

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1 Pensacola Beach Park West Fishing Pier and
 2 Access Improvements, and Gulf Breeze Parks
 3 Boating and Fishing Access Upgrades.
 4 These four projects would help address lost
 5 recreational fishing opportunities in Florida
 6 through the engineering design of a new fishing
 7 pier on Pensacola Beach, enhancement or
 8 construction of recreational fishing amenities
 9 at existing parks in the Cities of Pensacola and
 10 Gulf Breeze, and construction of a public
 11 day-use fishing marina in the City of Pensacola.
 12 The other four preferred projects are
 13 Lincoln Park Boat Ramp and Dock Improvements,
 14 St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge Access and
 15 Recreational Improvements through Acquisition at
 16 Indian Pass, Florida Artificial Reef Creation
 17 and Restoration Phase 2, and Apollo Beach
 18 Recreational Sportfish Hatchery Facility.
 19 These four projects would also contribute
 20 to addressing lost recreational fishing
 21 opportunities in Florida through the enhancement
 22 of an existing boat ramp facility in the City of

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1 We already have several people who have signed
 2 up to comment. If you signed up, you should
 3 have received an email yesterday with your
 4 number and your speaking order. However, we
 5 will do our best to adhere to that order, but we
 6 probably will have some adjustments this
 7 evening.
 8 If you did not sign up to speak but would
 9 like to do so, please type your name in the
 10 Questions box. Again, if you would like to make
 11 a comment, but you did not make that known
 12 during registration, go ahead and just type your
 13 name in the Questions box at this time, and we
 14 will get you in to the lineup shortly.
 15 As a reminder, we will unmute you when it
 16 is your turn to speak. If you have called in
 17 using a phone and are planning to speak, you
 18 must enter your individual audio PIN, and again,
 19 this is different than the access code. If
 20 you're having any trouble, definitely put in a
 21 comment in the Questions box, and we'll do
 22 everything we can to help you. Also note if you

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1 Valparaiso, the acquisition of land and
 2 installing recreational fisheries enhancements
 3 to support St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge,
 4 creation of new artificial reef sites in State
 5 and Federal waters off the Florida Panhandle,
 6 and the design and construction of a fish
 7 production facility of juvenile red drum and
 8 spotted seatrout in Apollo Beach.
 9 That concludes the overview of the draft
 10 plan. I will now hand it back to Nadia.
 11 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Gareth.
 12 We will now move into the Public Comment
 13 portion of the webinar. The Florida TIG will
 14 not be verbally responding to comments or
 15 questions during today's webinar; however, a
 16 chapter will be included in the final plan that
 17 summarizes the comments received, responses, and
 18 how the plan was revised based on any comments.
 19 Comments will also become part of the
 20 administrative record for this plan.
 21 When you registered, you were asked if you
 22 wanted to make a comment during today's webinar.

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1 are using Computer Audio, you do not need that
 2 individual audio PIN.
 3 Once we get started, I will call the first
 4 person's name and at the same time call the name
 5 of the couple people in line so that you have
 6 time to prepare. When I call your name, we will
 7 unmute your line, and you will have 3 minutes to
 8 speak. We will have a timer on the screen to
 9 let you know when a comment is in progress and
 10 when you have one minute remaining and again at
 11 30 seconds and 10 seconds remaining.
 12 I want to thank everyone in advance for
 13 respecting the 3-minute rule when giving your
 14 comment. Also, please state your name when you
 15 begin to speak, and if you are representing an
 16 organization, please state the name of the
 17 organization prior to making your comments.
 18 Please note if you do not want to make a
 19 comment on today's webinar, there are other ways
 20 to submit comments, which we will describe after
 21 we take the verbal comments.
 22 Let's go ahead and get started. Our first

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1 commenter will be Jacob Dalton followed by Julie
 2 Wraithmell and Jessica Bibza.
 3 Again, please remember to state your name
 4 and your affiliation before beginning your
 5 comment.
 6 Jacob, we are going to unmute you now. You
 7 should be unmuted. So go ahead and proceed with
 8 your comment.
 9 MR. DALTON: Thank you. My name is Jacob
 10 Dalton. I'm a resident of Escambia County,
 11 Florida. I reside in the City of Pensacola. I
 12 do not have any affiliation with anyone.
 13 MS. MARTIN: Jacob? I'm sorry to interrupt
 14 you, Jacob. We're having a little trouble
 15 hearing you. Do you mind kind of moving closer
 16 to your mic? I just want to make sure we
 17 capture your comment accurately.
 18 MR. DALTON: Yes, ma'am. That's about as
 19 close as I can get out it the most.
 20 MS. MARTIN: Okay. Okay, thanks. Go
 21 ahead. Sorry about that.
 22 MR. DALTON: No worries.

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1 Again, I appreciate everyone's time. My
 2 name is Jacob Dalton. I'm a resident of
 3 Escambia County. I live in the City of
 4 Pensacola. I do not have any affiliation with
 5 government agencies or private. I'm only a
 6 private citizen.
 7 I am a diver in the Pensacola area. My
 8 comment is about NRDA's Artificial Reef funding
 9 being limited to only modules. I believe the
 10 divers in the area are being unrestored due to
 11 reef structures being put back through modules,
 12 precast concrete structures, or rubble,
 13 essentially.
 14 I want to voice my support specifically for
 15 vessel reefs in the upcoming draft Restoration
 16 Plan. I understand that there is concern about
 17 the dangers that could possible be posed to the
 18 Brydes whale habitat. It's, however, my
 19 understanding the best available science shows
 20 that this habitat is primarily between 100 and
 21 400 meters, and the wholesale disallowing of
 22 vessel reefs in considerably shallower waters,

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1 typical of restored areas in waters such as 50
 2 meters or less, does not make sense to me. It
 3 leaves our community unrestored.
 4 I further understand there is also concern
 5 also focused on marine turtle entrapment and
 6 entanglement with vessel reefs. Florida
 7 Wildlife Commission has submitted extensive
 8 documentation to NRDA for review of current and
 9 active permits, allowing the vessel deployments.
 10 I understand that the Federal pass-through of
 11 NRDA funds involves the National Marine
 12 Fisheries Service reviewers, which places us in
 13 a higher expectation, a higher level of scrutiny
 14 of review, which is one of the reasons I'm left
 15 to understand that these vessel reefs are not
 16 allowed.
 17 Because there is a separate biological
 18 opinion that is going to be required for vessel
 19 reefs, that pushes these outside of funding.
 20 Availability will be years down the road. I
 21 believe that the documentation of FWC has been
 22 sufficient and that this item needs to be

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1 revisited so that the area, community, and
 2 divers can be left as fully restored as
 3 possible.
 4 Thank you for your time and consideration.
 5 Thank you.
 6 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Jacob.
 7 Also, if you don't mind, Jacob, could you
 8 please also submit your comment to the webinar's
 9 email. We just want to make sure we capture
 10 that correctly since we did have a little bit of
 11 trouble hearing you there. So if you don't mind
 12 doing that, we can answer any questions you have
 13 over the chat box, if needed, on that.
 14 All right. We are going to move on to our
 15 next speaker. So our next speaker will be Julie
 16 Wraithmell, and we will follow her with Jessica
 17 Bibza and Rick Gordon.
 18 So, Julie, we are going to unmute you now.
 19 As a reminder, please state your name and your
 20 affiliation, if you have one, before you get
 21 started.
 22 Julie, go ahead.

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1 [No audible response.]
 2 MS. MARTIN: Oh, Julie, you might be muted
 3 on your end. If you want to try to unmute
 4 yourself, then we can see if we can hear you.
 5 MS. WRAITHMELL: Can you hear me now?
 6 MS. MARTIN: Yes. Excellent. Thank you.
 7 Go ahead, Julie.
 8 MS. WRAITHMELL: Wonderful. I'm so sorry
 9 about that.
 10 This is Julie Wraithmell. I'm the
 11 executive director for Audubon Florida, where
 12 the State office is the National Audubon
 13 Society. We'll submit more comprehensive
 14 comments on the entire RP2, but this evening, I
 15 specifically wanted to comment on the FM1,
 16 Johnson Beach Access Management and Habitat
 17 Protection proposal.
 18 It's Audubon's opinion that this proposal
 19 is a miscarriage of the intent of this category
 20 of restoration funding, which was intended to
 21 remedy injury to habitat on Federal lands, and
 22 in fact, it's a shortsighted waste of public

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1 trust resources.
 2 Specifically, the project proposes to use
 3 funding intended to protect and restore habitat
 4 that pave habitat that's used annually by State
 5 imperiled species for nesting.
 6 Providing infrastructure for recreational
 7 use and destroying habitat of imperiled least
 8 terns and snowy plovers not only should not
 9 qualify as habitat projects on federally managed
 10 lands, but it actually runs counter to the
 11 intended goals of this funding.
 12 This barrier island unit is extremely
 13 vulnerable to overwash and storm surge and
 14 struggles frequent damage and loss of
 15 infrastructure from hurricanes in all of Gulf
 16 Islands National Seashore. Rubble from pavement
 17 and other infrastructure further degrades this
 18 resource, and in fact, the Gulf Restoration
 19 Trustees have already spent millions of dollars
 20 of restoration funds to remove asphalt and other
 21 debris that originated as parking lots and roads
 22 on the seashore when they were destroyed by past

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1 tropical storms. It's hard to believe that
 2 these parking lots won't face a similar fate and
 3 become a subsequent burden of restoration that
 4 will need to be attended to.
 5 Other alternatives for public access exist.
 6 Gulf Islands National Seashore already employs
 7 trams and ferries in other locations to convey
 8 visitors to appropriate access points. There
 9 could also be other ways of configuring the
 10 infrastructure that is suggested in this
 11 proposal that simply has been dismissed without
 12 further consideration.
 13 While some dismiss these options as more
 14 costly, it's likely to actually be the more
 15 affordable option when the impacts to imperiled
 16 species' habitat and the cost of eventual
 17 removal of storm debris caused by the parking
 18 lots are factored in.
 19 Given this administration's priorities on
 20 coastal resilience, migratory bird protection,
 21 and climate adaptation, we struggle to see how
 22 this could be such a priority for this

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1 restoration category, and so Audubon
 2 respectfully requests that the Department of
 3 Interior withdraws this proposal from its
 4 current consideration in order to evaluate
 5 whether it truly represents the best opportunity
 6 for habitat protection, restoration on Federal
 7 Islands and at Gulf Islands National Seashore.
 8 The reality is that penalties resulting
 9 from the Deepwater Horizon disaster's egregious
 10 harm to Gulf habitats should not be used to do
 11 further harm to those habitats, especially in
 12 such important and valuable protected areas as
 13 our National Park System.
 14 So thanks so much to the Trustees for your
 15 consideration on this. Again, we will be
 16 submitting formal written comments of a more
 17 thorough nature on the entire RP2, and our
 18 members will be commenting as well on this
 19 particular project.
 20 Thank you.
 21 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Julie.
 22 So we have a couple more folks who have

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1 signed up to speak tonight. So next up would be
 2 Jessica Bibza, and after her, Rick Gordon. But
 3 I just want to make a plug again. If you have
 4 not already registered to speak tonight or if
 5 you'd like to make a comment verbally, please go
 6 ahead and just put your name in the Questions
 7 box, and we will get you into the lineup if you
 8 would like to make a comment tonight.

9 So, as I mentioned, Jessica Bibza is up
 10 next and then Rick Gordon. Please do remember
 11 to state your name and affiliation before you
 12 proceed with your comment.

13 Jessica, we should have unmuted you. Now
 14 you can go ahead.

15 MS. BIBZA: Hi. Thank you very much. This
 16 is Jessica Bibza with National Wildlife
 17 Federation, and I do appreciate you all having
 18 us at the webinar tonight. But I do have to
 19 admit that I miss the in-person meetings, which
 20 include that open-house format before the formal
 21 meeting where we have the opportunity for a
 22 dialogue and a question-and-answer. I know I

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1 would welcome the opportunity to have a
 2 conversation about some of the points that I'm
 3 going to make now, and actually, results of that
 4 conversation might negate my need to make some
 5 of these comments.

6 I'm glad to see the Restoration Plan 2
 7 address the living marine and coastal resources,
 8 especially sea turtles and marine mammals. I'm
 9 going to touch quickly on a couple projects, but
 10 I will be submitting more comments in writing as
 11 well.

12 FP3 assessing the risk of vessel strikes of
 13 sea turtles along Florida's Gulf Coast, I'd ask
 14 that you consider including sites in the Florida
 15 Keys National Marine Sanctuary, specifically the
 16 Marquesas Key Wildlife Management Areas and the
 17 Marquesas Key Turtle Wildlife Management Area,
 18 conservation areas. You might know that the
 19 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is
 20 currently looking at areas for doing additional
 21 protection, and that is one place where they are
 22 looking at putting in some speed zones or

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1 restrictions to assist sea turtles. So we know
 2 that there are vessel strikes in that area,
 3 don't know what's going to happen with the
 4 sanctuary regulations, but it would be great if
 5 through the NRDA process, through that project,
 6 that they can be looking at that site, as it
 7 definitely falls in the Gulf Coast Region.

8 To the other sea turtle projects, ST1 and
 9 ST2, really encourage the implementation of
 10 portions of those projects such as the observers
 11 and the coordination with pier operators and
 12 looking at the marine debris, to look at the
 13 impacts to other species as well, such as birds
 14 and dolphins.

15 Really supported both of the Marine Mammal
 16 projects that were in the proposal and hope that
 17 some of the other TIGs, Open Ocean or
 18 Regionwide, will pick up the feeding project.

19 I also wanted to speak quickly about that
 20 Johnson Beach project that Julie mentioned. I
 21 think that certain elements align with the
 22 Florida TIG Trustee, the goals and objectives of

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1 restoring dunes and beaches, but a lot of the
 2 other elements do not--and also encourage you to
 3 really look at whether or not constructing paved
 4 parking lots align with the TIG's objectives and
 5 goals.

6 And finally, the Perdido Key Sediment
 7 Placement, I just wanted to know--obviously,
 8 that's going to help some aspects of habitat but
 9 impact others and just hoping you're going to be
 10 looking at mitigating possible loss of function
 11 as forage habitat for imperiled species.

12 Thanks very much. Last thing is just this
 13 is a really short comment period for a 450-page
 14 document that was 2 years in the making. Thank
 15 you.

16 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Jessica.

17 We have one other speaker signed up so far.
 18 So, Rick Gordon, you are up next. Again, please
 19 state your name and affiliation, if you have
 20 one, before you start your comment. Rick, you
 21 can go ahead. We should be unmuted you now.
 22 [No audible response.]

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1 MS. MARTIN: Rick, we can't hear you yet.
 2 Do you want to try to--
 3 MR. GORDON: Im sorry. Im sorry.
 4 MS. MARTIN: There you are.
 5 MR. GORDON: Okay. My name is Rick Gordon.
 6 Im just a citizen, a resident of Pensacola
 7 Beach, and I have comments about proposed
 8 fishing pier and other changes made to the Park
 9 West area of Pensacola Beach.
 10 They're really very short, I believe, but I
 11 am concerned about the aspects of--several
 12 aspects of the proposed project. Currently,
 13 there are numerous fishing piers in Pensacola
 14 Beach. They are available on both sides of the
 15 Bob Sikes Bridge. There's, of course, the main
 16 bridge, main fishing pier in downtown Pensacola
 17 Beach, and also the fishing pier out at Fort
 18 Pickens. So those are there and available for
 19 public use today. Currently--and Park West,
 20 which is a relatively small, constrained area at
 21 the end of the Pensacola Beach property.
 22 We are very fully utilized. Parking is

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1 limited, and it's fully utilized during the
 2 summer. There are no spaces available. It is
 3 primarily a family area used for family picnics
 4 and especially with a lot of young children who
 5 feel more--families feel more comfortable there
 6 than in the Casino Beach area.
 7 Im concerned about things like fishing
 8 hooks are not suitable necessarily for where
 9 young children are swimming in the water quite a
 10 lot. It's a very shallow area, both on the
 11 Sound and the Gulf side. So Im concerned about
 12 it being disruptive to the current usage, which
 13 the public, both from the mainland of Pensacola
 14 as well as Pensacola Beach makes full use of
 15 during the season, and parking and just noise
 16 and congestion.
 17 We have one road in and one road out, as
 18 you know, Fort Pickens, and that's it. So I
 19 would like to say if we are going to expand and
 20 put in another fishing pier, consider putting it
 21 within the Gulf Islands National Seashore where
 22 there's a lot of open space, and surely a spot

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1 could be found for it. But I do not think it's
 2 suitable to put it in the Park West area of
 3 Pensacola Beach.
 4 That's my thought and my comments. I
 5 appreciate the opportunity to make them.
 6 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Rick.
 7 We have one more person who has signed up
 8 to give a comment tonight so far, Kent Wimmer,
 9 but I want to put another plug in that if you
 10 would like to make a comment tonight, please go
 11 ahead and put your name into the Questions box.
 12 So next up is Kent. Kent, please do state
 13 your name and affiliation, if you have one,
 14 before you give your comment. We should be
 15 unmuting you now. Please go ahead and proceed.
 16 MR. WIMMER: Kent Wimmer, Defenders of
 17 Wildlife representing Northwest Florida.
 18 Im sorry I have not had the opportunity to
 19 read the whole report. I just had a simple
 20 question as IA was going through all the
 21 one-page flyers.
 22 In the titles, you have classifications of

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1 preferred and nonpreferred, and I'd like to know
 2 what that means for establishing priorities for
 3 project funding. Does that mean you're going to
 4 fund the preferred projects and not the
 5 nonpreferred projects, or what does that
 6 actually mean?
 7 I don't have a comment beyond that question
 8 at this point. Im sorry.
 9 MS. MARTIN: Thanks, Kent.
 10 Please feel free to submit that in writing,
 11 and the TIG can get back to you in response on
 12 that as well.
 13 So, again, we have no other speakers signed
 14 up as of right now to provide a comment. So I
 15 am going to pause for a little bit here. So
 16 bear with us with some dead space here, but want
 17 to give folks a chance to put their name into
 18 the Questions box if there is anyone else who
 19 would like to provide a verbal comment tonight,
 20 so just going to pause for a few seconds here.
 21 [Pause.]
 22 MS. MARTIN: All right. We're not getting

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1 any other names in the Questions box so far. So
 2 I think we will go ahead and proceed and provide
 3 some additional information on the Public
 4 Comment process on the next slide here.
 5 So in addition to this webinar, there are
 6 two other ways that you can provide comments.
 7 Comments can either be submitted electronically
 8 via the Florida page of the Trustee website,
 9 with the link there on the slide, or can be
 10 submitted by mail to the address that's on the
 11 slide.
 12 I wanted to remind everyone that all
 13 comments must be received by Monday, March 29th,
 14 2021.
 15 Again, the Public Comment period for this
 16 plan will close on March 29th. The Florida TIG
 17 will then review and consider all of the
 18 comments received and finalize the plan. The
 19 project selected by the Florida TIG in the final
 20 plan will then proceed to implementation.
 21 We want to thank you all for your interest
 22 and your participation in the webinar tonight.

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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
 2
 3 I, CHERYL NICHOLSON, Certified Court
 4 Reporter, Certified LiveNote Reporter, and
 5 Certified Realtime Systems Administrator, hereby
 6 certify that the foregoing proceedings were
 7 recorded by me in shorthand and electronically
 8 at the time and place mentioned in the caption
 9 hereof and thereafter transcribed by me; that
 10 said proceeding is a true record of the
 11 testimony given by said participants; that I am
 12 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by
 13 any of the parties to the action in which this
 14 proceeding was taken; and further, that I am not
 15 a relative or employee of any counsel or
 16 attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor
 17 financially or otherwise interested in the
 18 outcome of this action.
 19
 20 EsigCherylLNicholson____
 21 CHERYL L. NICHOLSON
 22

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1 This now concludes the public webinar for the
 2 Florida TIG's draft Restoration Plan 2. We hope
 3 you have a great evening, and we will now end
 4 this webinar.
 5
 6 [Whereupon, at 5:44 p.m., the public
 7 webinar concluded.]
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