



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Phil Bryant
Governor

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Jamie M. Miller, Executive Director

February 4, 2014

Stephanie L. Willis
Senior Attorney
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
Office of General Counsel
263 13th Avenue South, Suite 177
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Re: DMR-120259; Draft Phase III Early Restoration Plan and Draft Early Restoration
Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Phase III DERP)

Dear Ms. Willis:

The Department of Marine Resources (Department) in cooperation with other state agencies is responsible under the Mississippi Coastal Program (MCP) for managing the coastal resources of Mississippi. Proposed activities in the coastal area are reviewed to insure that the activities are in compliance with the MCP.

The Department has reviewed the proposed selection of four (4) early restoration projects within Mississippi's Coastal Zone (see attached list). The selection of the listed projects and the preliminary project descriptions have been reviewed based upon provisions of the Mississippi Coastal Program and Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (as amended). The selection of the listed projects as Phase III early restoration actions for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill has been determined to be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the Mississippi Coastal Program.

It appears from the preliminary descriptions that the projects themselves will include impacts regulated by both this Department and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Once the plans for the four projects have been finalized, applications should be submitted to this office for review. An application packet has been included with this letter, and the application form can also be found on the Department's web site at <http://dmr.ms.gov/images/permitting/joint-application-notification-form2.pdf>.

The above granted consistency certification was based upon the information presented. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Greg Christodoulou with the Bureau of Wetlands Permitting at (228) 523-4109 or greg.christodoulou@dmr.ms.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie M. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

Jamie M. Miller
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

JMM/gsc

Enclosures

cc: Harriet M. Deal, U.S. Department of the Interior

APPENDIX A:

COMPILATION OF PHASE III EARLY RESTORATION PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS PROPOSED FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN MISSISSIPPI

Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline Project

The Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline project is located in western Hancock County between Bayou Caddy and the mouth of the East Pearl River. The 20,909-acre Hancock County Marsh complex, one of the largest in Mississippi, is part of the extensive Pearl River estuary and is partially owned and managed by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) as part of the Coastal Preserves of the State of Mississippi. Historically, there were extensive, prolific reefs of the American oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) in the shore zone and nearshore areas of lower Hancock County that provided natural protection from shoreline erosion. Historical erosion rates, particularly at St. Joseph's Point, make this shoreline a priority for protection and marsh creation. The living shoreline (breakwater) would help protect the Hancock County Marsh complex that includes estuarine and estuarine marine deepwater habitats, estuarine and estuarine marine wetlands, freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater forested and scrub shrub wetlands.

Breakwaters would be constructed along the marsh shoreline in two locations: from the Pearl River to the western limit of Heron Bay (western reach) and from the eastern limit of Heron Bay to approximately four miles to the northeast towards (eastern reach) approximately 1.86 miles past the heel of St. Joseph's Point. Construction activities could include placement of linear structures that may utilize artificial and/or shell-based materials within the -3 to -5 foot Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) contour. Approximately 46 acres of marsh would be constructed in the St. Joseph's Point area to protect and restore marsh areas that experience the historical rates of erosion. A total of 46 acres of subtidal oyster reef would be created using oyster shell in northeastern Heron Bay to protect the shallow embayment and to increase oyster production in the area.

Restoration Initiatives at the INFINITY Science Center

The INFINITY Science Center is located southwest of the intersection of Highway 607 and Interstate 10 in southern Hancock County, Mississippi, and is adjacent to coastal estuarine habitats including the Hancock County Marsh Preserve. The project site is bordered by the Pearl River to the west and will connect to the "Logtown Scenic Byway to Space" trail to the south to facilitate beach access through the scenic byways in Hancock County, Mississippi. The majority of the total available gallery space in the INFINITY Science Center will be reserved for exhibits about the Gulf of Mexico and its coastal ecosystem. Exhibits will cover a number of topics including marsh ecosystems, oceanography, gulf species, hurricanes, and restoration monitoring. These exhibits will be designed to allow visitors (using computers, simulations and graphics) to experience how scientists model and study the Gulf's ecosystem. The exhibits will highlight the

¹ Additional information on each project may be found in Chapter 10 of the Draft Plan.

importance of science and scientific research, natural processes, and environmental stewardship, as well as wise economic utilization of these resources.

The Heritage Trail-Possum Walk will bring visitors through multiple coastal habitats that occur throughout the immediate area including marsh, bayhead swamp, cypress swamp, and pine flatwoods. The proposed project would enhance access to a coastal trail system that connects with sandy beach habitats. The Heritage Trail-Possum Walk includes a public outdoor education center to inform visitors of the ecologically sensitive nature of coastal habitats injured by the Oil Spill. The project also includes development of a native landscape/nursery area.

Popp's Ferry Causeway Park Project

The mostly unimproved 10-acre Popp's Ferry Causeway property is a parcel of land and marsh located just to the west of the Popp's Ferry Bridge. It is owned by the City of Biloxi, Mississippi. It is surrounded by water on all sides, including the Biloxi River to the north, Big Lake to the west and the Back Bay to the south and east. The property was purchased by the City of Biloxi in the year 2000. Improvements were started in 2001 but these were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Construction commenced again in 2011, and the following work has been completed and is not included in this proposed early restoration project: boardwalk system (north of the boat launch), some shoreline stabilization, a marsh boardwalk and shelters in the northern portion of the area, some utility work, construction of an entry sign, construction of one fishing pier, some roadway lighting, and roadway repairs on the east side of the causeway.

The early restoration project currently being proposed would upgrade the existing site and amenities by creating the Popp's Ferry Causeway Park, an interactive location where the public would continue to fish, crab, and walk through a system of boardwalks and nature trails that allow viewing of the waterfront and marshes. One of the project goals is to build upon what the public perceives as the "best fishing spot without a boat in Biloxi, Mississippi." The proposed conceptual plan includes components that will enhance visitor access to coastal estuarine habitats such as: roadway repair and lighting; construction of a concession and bait stand where the public can also rent kayaks; construction of new fishing piers; and continuation of an eight-foot-wide concrete walkway/wooden boardwalk on the west side of the site with benches and lighting. Riprap water edge treatment would replace existing treatments west of the concrete walkway/wooden boardwalk for additional shoreline stabilization. In addition, picnic areas, nature trails, visitor parking and construction of a new interpretive center with outdoor exhibits would take place in upland areas, and a marsh overlook pier and boardwalk would be included.

Pascagoula Beachfront Promenade Project

The Pascagoula Beachfront Promenade project is located immediately south of and parallel to Beach Boulevard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, in Jackson County and will extend approximately 8,200 feet from Point Park on the western end to the eastern edge of the drainage channel east of Oliver Street. It is immediately adjacent to a sand beach on the Mississippi Sound, which was oiled during the Oil Spill. In addition to the promenade, amenities may be constructed as funding allows (e.g. fire pits, playgrounds, volley ball courts, public art, parking, and shower stations). The promenade would be constructed from the southern edge of the curb on Beach Boulevard

and extend over the sand beach, which was recently funded through a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' \$12 million seawall protection ("beach creation") project.