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Next Steps

Following the scoping process, the Trustees will consider all public comments received, and prepare a draft Early Restoration PEIS and a draft Phase III Early Restoration Plan. The public will be encouraged to review and comment on these documents.

You may provide your comments at any of the six public meetings listed here, via the internet or through the U.S. Postal Service.

- Web: http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov
- Email (for electronic submissions containing attachments): earlyrestorationcomments@fws.gov
- U.S. Mail: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 2099, Fairhope, AL 36533

Deepwater Horizon NRDA
Early Restoration PEIS Scoping Meetings

Date	Time	Location
June 24, 2013	6:30 PM CST	**Texas A&M University at Galveston** Seawolf Parkway on Pelican Island Auditorium, Class Room Lab Building (Building #3007 on campus map) Galveston, TX 77553
June 27, 2013	6:30 PM CST	**The Battle House Renaissance Mobile Hotel** Room: Moonlight A 26 North Royal Street Mobile, AL 3660
July 16, 2013	6:30 PM CST	**University of Southern Mississippi** FEC Auditorium 730 East Beach Boulevard Long Beach, MS 39560
July 18, 2013	6:30 PM CST	**Marriott Courtyard** 142 Library Blvd. Houma, LA 70360
July 23, 2013	7:00 PM EDT	**U.S. Department of the Interior** Main Interior Building Auditorium 1849 C St. NW Washington, DC 20240
July 25, 2013	6:30 PM CST	**Pensacola Bay Center** 201 East Gregory Street Pensacola, FL 32502

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill
Natural Resource Damage Assessment
Early Restoration
Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees (Trustees) thank you for engaging in the scoping process for the Early Restoration Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). Your help identifying the important issues and information that the Trustees should consider as they develop the PEIS is critical to the success of this process. Your input will help define the appropriate scope and content of the Early Restoration PEIS.

This early restoration scoping process includes a 60-day public comment period that extends from June 4 through August 2, 2013. The Trustees will hold six public meetings to provide information about the process and to listen to and receive your comments.

Background

On April 20, 2010, an explosion and fire on the Deepwater Horizon mobile drilling unit killed 11 men and injured 17. The rig sank and left the oil well leaking millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. In what became the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history, natural resources were injured by both the oil and the spill response activities. In addition, the public suffered loss of use of those natural resources in and around the Gulf of Mexico. Under the Oil Pollution Act (OPA), those responsible for an oil spill are required to clean up the oil and to restore injured public natural resources and the services those resources provide.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment

A NRDA is the process under OPA used by natural resource trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for a spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and services provided by those resources. The goal of NRDA is restoration of the injured or lost resources.

The Trustees are entrusted under OPA and other applicable statutes and regulations to restore injured natural resources and lost services resulting from an incident involving a discharge or substantial threat of a discharge of oil. The Trustees include agencies from the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, along with the Department of the Interior (DOI), Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Early Restoration Framework Agreement

In April 2011, the Trustees and BP entered into the Framework Agreement for Early Restoration Addressing Injuries Resulting from the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill (Framework Agreement). Under the Framework Agreement, BP agreed to make $1 billion available for early restoration project implementation prior to completion of the injury and damage assessment. It represents a first step toward restoration of injured natural resources.

The $1 billion is to be divided among the seven Trustees that signed the Framework Agreement: the five state Trustees and DOI and NOAA are each receiving $100 million; $300 million will fund additional state-proposed restoration projects as selected by NOAA and DOI.

The Trustees' key objective in pursuing early restoration is to achieve tangible recovery of natural resources and natural resource services for the public's benefit while the longer-term injury and damage assessment is under way.

The Early Restoration PEIS

The purpose of the Early Restoration PEIS is to better inform the Trustees' consideration of the environmental effects of future early restoration actions, as well as the cumulative impacts of early restoration. This PEIS will include those projects announced by the Trustees in the Federal Register on May 6, 2013.

Examples of early restoration project types the Trustees intend to evaluate in the Early Restoration PEIS could include: create and improve wetlands; protect shorelines and reduce erosion; restore barrier islands and beaches; restore submerged aquatic vegetation; restore oysters; restore and protect finfish; restore and protect birds; restore and protect sea turtles; enhance public access to natural resources for recreational use; enhance recreational experiences; promote environmental and cultural stewardship, education, and outreach; enhance management of recreational uses; and remove and reduce land-based and marine debris.

The PEIS that is the subject of the current public scoping process is specifically focused on early restoration.

Phase I and Phase II Early Restoration

The Trustees finalized the first early restoration plan, the Phase I Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Assessment (Phase I ERP), in April 2012. The eight Phase I ERP projects provide for marsh creation, coastal dune habitat improvements, nearshore artificial reef creation, and oyster cultch restoration, as well as the construction and enhancement of boat ramps to compensate for lost recreational use of resources. The total estimated cost for the Phase I ERP is $62 million.

The Trustees completed the Phase II Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Review (Phase II ERP) in December 2012. The Phase II ERP projects, of which there are two, will help restore nesting habitats for beach-nesting birds and sea turtles impacted as a result of spill response activities. The total estimated cost for these two projects is $9 million.

More details about the Phase I ERP and Phase II ERP can be found at *www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/early-restoration*

The Comprehensive PEIS

The Trustees began development of a comprehensive PEIS in February 2011. This comprehensive PEIS will address long-term restoration of injuries to natural resources and the lost use of those resources as a result of the oil spill. The Trustees conducted a formal scoping process for the purposes of receiving public input on (1) identification of broad restoration types that can address natural resource injuries caused by the spill, and (2) the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of restoration. The public comment period included meetings held across the Gulf Coast states and in Washington, DC during March and April 2011. The comprehensive PEIS remains under development.

Additional Spill-Related Gulf Restoration Efforts

The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill NRDA is occurring concurrently with two other restoration efforts that are separate and distinct from the NRDA: (1) the development of plans to use a large portion of the civil penalties that have been or will be paid by parties responsible for the spill for ecological restoration and other projects authorized under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012, generally known as the RESTORE Act; and (2) the process, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), to apply $2.544 billion payable under two criminal plea agreements relating to the Deepwater Horizon spill to restoration actions of the types specified in the criminal plea agreements. The NRDA, RESTORE Act, and NFWF processes are independent of one another, and the PEIS currently being discussed only concerns decisions about the early restoration component of the NRDA and is not intended to inform decisions about projects or work undertaken under the RESTORE Act or with NFWF funding.