Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Early Restoration - Phase I

Early restoration provides an opportunity to implement restoration projects prior to the completion of the natural resource damage assessment process.

A natural resource damage assessment is the process used by natural resource trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for the spill. It also seeks compensation for the harm done to natural resources and those services they provide.

Potential restoration type: planting

Typically, natural resource trustees develop a restoration plan(s) to compensate for the impacts following a damage assessment. Plans for early restoration projects, however, may be developed prior to the completion of the injury assessment to achieve restoration faster.

Natural resource damage assessments can be prolonged and complex, in some cases lasting many years. In the case of the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), early restoration is fundamental to beginning the restoration of natural resources and their services prior to the completion of the full injury assessment.

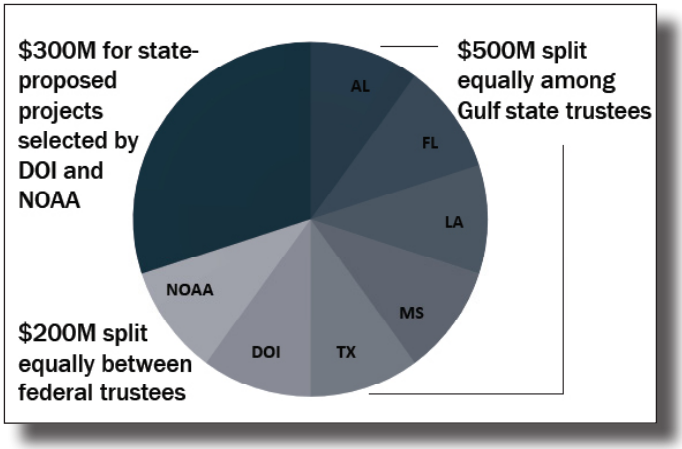
Potential restoration type: oyster reef formation

Early Restoration for the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill

On April 21, 2011, the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill NRDA Trustees (Trustees) announced an agreement under which BP committed to provide $1 billion toward implementation of early restoration projects.

This agreement is the largest of its kind ever reached. It represents an initial step toward fulfilling the responsible parties' obligation to fund the complete restoration of injured natural resources. These funds are divided as shown below:

- $500 million split equally among Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Texas
- $200 million split equally between NOAA and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)
- $300 million to fund additional state-proposed restoration projects to be selected by NOAA and DOI



Allocation of $1 billion early restoration agreement

Phase I Early Restoration

Announcement of the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill NRDA Phase I Early Restoration Plan & Environmental Assessment (Phase I ERP/EA) came on April 18, 2012. The Phase I ERP/EA is the first early restoration plan resulting from the unprecedented agreement with BP to fund up to $1 billion in early restoration projects. This agreement enables the Trustees to begin restoration before the completion of damage assessment activities. Eight Phase I early restoration projects are now set to begin restoration of the Gulf of Mexico following the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill.

The 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 human use of resources. The total estimated cost for the Phase I ERP/EA is $62 million.

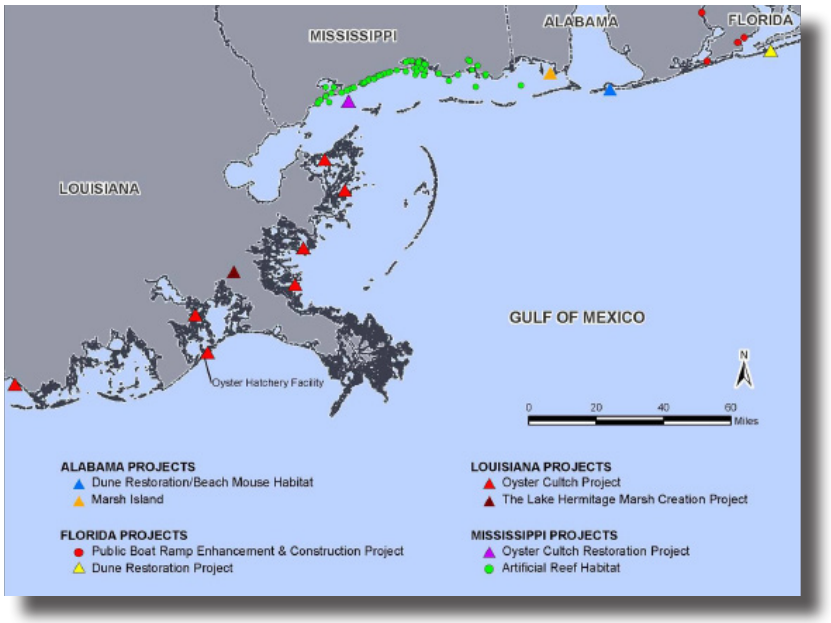
The Phase I ERP/EA projects at listed in the box on the right. Two each are located in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The projects will provide services benefiting impacted marshes, coastal dune habitats, nearshore sediments, oysters and human uses (such as beach-going and fishing).

The Phase I ERP/EA, available online, describes the projects in detail. See **www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/early-restoration**.

PHASE I ERP/EA - Project Title	Estimated Cost*
Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation (Louisiana)	$14,400,000
Louisiana Oyster Cultch Project	$15,582,600
Mississippi Oyster Cultch Restoration	$11,000,000
Mississippi Artificial Reef Habitat	$2,600,000
Marsh Island (Portersville Bay, AL) Marsh Creation	$11,280,000
Alabama Dune Restoration Cooperative Project	$1,480,000
Florida Boat Ramp Enhancement Construction	$5,067,255
Florida (Pensacola Beach) Dune Restoration	$644,487
Total Estimated Cost	$62,054,342

**Actual costs may differ depending on future contingencies, but will not exceed the amount shown without further agreement between the trustees and BP.*



Map of Phase I ERP/EA projects

Public Involvement

Trustees listen as a citizen comments at a public meeting

In addition to soliciting project ideas from the public, the Trustees also listened to public input on the initial round of early restoration projects set forth in the draft Phase I ERP/EA.

The public was encouraged to review and comment on the proposed plan beginning Dec. 15, 2011, and ending Feb. 14, 2012. Comments were accepted online, in writing and verbally at public meetings held throughout the Gulf and in Washington, DC, in January and February 2012. More than 750 people attended the 12 meetings.

More than 500 people commented at the meetings, online and via mail. The Trustees considered all comments received before completing and publishing the Phase I ERP/EA.