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# GO COAST 2020 FINAL REPORT

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JANUARY, 2013







# WELCOME

Welcome to the final Report of the GoCoast 2020 Commission. We are very grateful to all of the members of the Commission who volunteered their time and energy to set priorities and establish a vision for the Mississippi Gulf Coast's future. We are also appreciative of the hundreds of residents of the Coast who participated in public meetings and provided input about their ideas for the process.

At the outset, GoCoast 2020 was envisioned as a Coast-driven process, and we are pleased to say this goal has been achieved due to the wide range of input and new ideas from all across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Members of the GoCoast 2020 Commission were tasked with developing information about several key areas of focus. They were not asked to develop specific lists of projects for consideration but rather to define how key priorities and leveraged resources can help overcome challenges faced by the Coast in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

This Report, which has been presented to us—and to all Mississippians—is a testament of the unwavering commitment that Coast residents have to their home area. GoCoast 2020 brought people together from all three counties on the Coast in a cooperative spirit that encouraged everyone to think regionally for the benefit of the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast.

We encourage you to read this Report to learn more about the results from the GoCoast 2020 Commission, the ideas and priorities that came forward, and how this process has set a firm foundation to ensure that Mississippi is well-prepared for how the RESTORE Act can positively affect the Coast.



**Governor Phil Bryant**  
State of Mississippi



**Trudy D. Fisher**  
Executive Director

Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality





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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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*The most important resource on the Mississippi Gulf Coast is our people.*

In August, 2012, Governor Phil Bryant announced the creation of GoCoast 2020 to serve as the official advisory body for the allocation of funds received by the State of Mississippi under the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunity, and Revived Economies of the Gulf States Act of 2011 (RESTORE).

The federal RESTORE Act directs that 80 percent of certain penalties assessed as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill be directed to the five Gulf Coast states impacted by the spill. GoCoast 2020 was established to set a foundation and road map of priorities for Mississippi so the state will be better prepared as the final federal guidelines and regulations are set forth under RESTORE.

Created by an Executive Order from Governor Bryant, GoCoast 2020 was comprised of more than one hundred business and community leaders, elected officials and citizens from across the three Mississippi Gulf Coast counties. At the Governor's direction, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Trudy Fisher, took a leadership role in the GoCoast 2020 Commission and compiling this final Report.

As a Coast-driven process with the goal of including a broad representation of input into this document, the GoCoast 2020 Commission relied on involvement from a wide range of people and expertise. Several hundred citizens attended and participated in the three listening sessions that were held in each of the three coastal counties in October, 2012.

The GoCoast2020 website ([www.GoCoast2020.com](http://www.GoCoast2020.com)) also provided an easy way for citizens to learn more about the process and to submit their ideas to the commission. The public was actively engaged throughout the work of GoCoast 2020, which provided valuable insight for this final Report.

Through several months of meetings, workshops, public listening sessions, and extensive research, GoCoast 2020 focused on eight key areas related to the activities specified in the RESTORE Act. The purposes of this activity were to chart a vision and to provide a framework of recommendations that will protect the environment as the foundation of the coastal lifeblood, improve the job creation climate to increase economic opportunities, and enhance the unique quality of life for Mississippi's coastal residents in the near term and for generations to come.

#### GoCoast 2020's eight key areas of focus were:

- Eco-restoration
- Economic development
- Seafood
- Infrastructure
- Tourism
- Workforce development
- Small business
- Research and education

The eight committees, referred to as GoTeams, compiled individual reports that were utilized in preparing this final GoCoast 2020 Report. Each GoTeam was tasked with providing a narrative of priorities, benefits, and its potential overall impact



for their area of focus for the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast—on a regional basis—not just for a particular city or county.

Additionally, each GoTeam reviewed ways to leverage resources from local, state or federal funding sources that could be accessed to compliment any potential forthcoming RESTORE Act funds. GoTeams also examined any existing or ongoing programs that are now in place or in the development stages that could help supplement the priorities they identified.

This final Report is not intended to be a list of specific project funding requests. At the time of the writing of this report, federal guidelines and regulations are still in the process of being finalized and until that important component of the RESTORE Act has been completed, it would not be appropriate to begin outlining specific funding requests for individual projects.

This final GoCoast 2020 Report is published to serve as a Coast-driven vision for the future that charts a course and lays a foundation for what is to come in the implementation of the RESTORE Act. That way, Mississippi can be as prepared as possible to maximize the use of RESTORE funding in a way that is responsible and prudent with a major emphasis placed on preserving and advancing the unique region of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

“The most important resource on the Mississippi Gulf Coast is our people.” That statement was made by a citizen at one of the GoCoast 2020 public listening sessions. That essential truth guides the restoration efforts that will result from the work of GoCoast 2020 and the implementation of the RESTORE Act.







## 2 ECO-RESTORATION

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*Mississippi Coastal Ecosystems include an extensive integrated array of habitats and natural resources which sustain each other and provide for numerous ecosystems services and assets utilized by residents and visitors.*

## Introduction

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A healthy coastal ecosystem provides numerous assets and services which enhance our coastal communities and contribute to their overall welfare. The ecosystem provides numerous fisheries products and opportunities, which if utilized in a sustainable manner, lead to a healthy and vibrant marine and fisheries industry. Coastal habitats help mitigate the impacts from storms. These resources also provide aesthetic and social benefits, which enhance the quality of life along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, translating into more jobs and residents. This in turn leads to increased utilization related to these ecological assets, and increases local use and tourism. All of these activities lead to a healthier economic base for our coastal communities.

## Mississippi Coastal Ecosystems

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Mississippi Coastal Ecosystems include an extensive integrated array of habitats and natural resources which sustain each other and provide for numerous ecosystems services and assets utilized by residents and visitors. These coastal ecosystems are rich sanctuaries of biodiversity and include a variety of coastal and marine habitats, including barrier islands, beaches, numerous tidal and freshwater wetlands, and soft bottom habitats and oyster reefs (see map below). Extensive wetland complexes along the shoreline and within the embayments and deltas provide foraging and nesting habitats for numerous species of animals along one of the most productive areas of the world. Immediately inland, the coastal areas include extensive pine savannas with diverse flora and

fauna, and which integrate with the coastal wetlands and tidal systems and provide areas for future habitat expansion. These ecologically important areas also provide essential nursery habitat for ecologically, commercially, and recreationally important species of fish and invertebrates.

Collectively, these habitats are connected to the urban systems and are integral to not only the local economy, but also to the entire regional and national economies. These habitats and the unique cultural fabric of our coast provide a range of natural resource services including fisheries, food production, nutrient assimilation, energy production, infrastructure protection, and recreational opportunities.

Healthy habitats, especially the barrier islands and marshes, also help to protect coastal communities, providing a line of defense against powerful storms. Mississippi's wetlands provide natural flood attenuation, which may reduce the impacts of flooding associated with storms and long-term sea level rise.

## Mississippi Coastal System Water Dependency

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Mississippi's abundant water resources, and the natural ecological systems connected by them, underpin virtually all facets of life on the Gulf Coast. In addition to providing habitat for marine and estuarine organisms, these water resources are critical to:

- Commercial and recreational fishing
- Transportation
- Economic development
- Tourism
- Ship building
- Oil and gas
- Storm mitigation
- Recreation



## Overall Approach

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**Use Existing Work** – There are several current and past programs that have been created for the purpose of evaluating the Gulf of Mexico ecosystems and in particular Mississippi’s Gulf Coast. Much of this work is based on long-term monitoring and more recently monitoring focused on impacts from hurricanes and the BP oil spill. Scientists and engineers have evaluated this information and written reports of their findings and recommendations. This information was reviewed by the Eco-Restoration GoTeam and became the source data from which further decisions can be made.

**Develop Priority Issues** – The Team reviewed existing reports and compared their recommendations and conclusions. From this review the Team identified the following four priority areas:

- Healthy water resources – Both quality and quantity
- Habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement
- Sustainable living coastal and marine resources
- Resilient coastal communities

**Create Working Groups** – Five working groups were created to further drill down into the process:

- RESTORE Act compliance
- Priorities evaluation
- Funding alternatives
- Localities needs
- Marine resources

## Review of Existing Programs

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The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by Executive Order in October 2010 and included representatives of the five Gulf Coast states and nearly a dozen federal agencies. The Task Force was charged with development of a restoration strategy that proposes Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration goals. The Gulf Coast

Ecosystem Restoration Task Force prepared a document summarizing the results of numerous meetings and extensive public input, which was published December, 2011. In April, 2012, the Task Force’s Science Coordination Team produced its Report outlining coastal restoration goals. The Report details a restoration framework and series of actions that Task Force member agencies can take to support each of the restoration goals. It also lays out a series of next steps that will better align agency programs and leverage scientific and fiscal resources.

The Task Force goals, which have essentially been incorporated into the Eco-Restoration GoTeam goals, were identified in that report as follows:

- Restore and conserve habitat
- Restore water quality
- Replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources
- Enhance community resilience

In addition to the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, other programs listed below represent the culmination of many years of work, including public meetings, by numerous stakeholders. These efforts provide a tremendous framework for implementing a wide array of ecosystem and coastal restoration projects. Implementation of the RESTORE Act should be based on previous efforts of other groups and activities which have been described by many precedent programs. It was the desire of the Eco-Restoration GoTeam that these previous efforts be recognized and incorporated into the planning effort. A listing and brief description of the major existing programs that were reviewed by the team is shown below:

### **Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Science Assessment and Needs Report April 2012**

– This report is a product of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Science Coordination Team. The goals are to ensure:

- Coastal habitats are healthy and resilient
- Living coastal and marine resources are healthy, diverse and sustainable
- Coastal communities are adaptive and resilient

- Storm buffers are sustainable
- Inland habitats and watersheds are managed to help support healthy and sustainable Gulf of Mexico ecosystems
- Offshore environments are healthy and well-managed

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA)** – Implementing the Governors’ Action Plan II, 2009-2014, is a strategy for tangible results in the following priority areas:

- Water quality for healthy beaches and seafood
- Habitat conservation and restoration
- Ecosystems integration and assessment
- Reducing nutrient impacts to coastal ecosystems
- Coastal community resilience
- Environmental education

**Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP)** – Provides federal grants in five areas:

- Conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas including wetlands
- Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources
- Planning assistance and the administrative costs of complying with these objectives
- Implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan
- Mitigation of the impact of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) activities through funding of onshore infrastructure projects and public service needs

**Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP)** – MsCIP is a comprehensive plan consisting of structural, non-structural, and environmental project elements:

- Hurricane and storm damage reduction
- Salt water intrusion
- Shoreline erosion
- Fish and wildlife preservation
- Other water-related resource projects

**Gulf of Mexico Program** – The Gulf of Mexico Program is a non-regulatory program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to promote partnerships, science-based information, and citizen involvement. Headquartered at the Stennis Space Center, the program’s main mission is to facilitate collaborative actions between its partners to protect, maintain, and restore the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in ways consistent with the economic well-being of the region.

The priorities of the program parallel those of GoCoast 2020 and are:

- Water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds
- Habitat conservation and restoration
- Ecosystems integration and assessment
- Nutrient reduction and nutrient impacts
- Coastal community resiliency
- Environmental education

**Gulf of Mexico Security Act (GOMESA)** – This program provides a funding stream to states with Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) exploration to fund the five authorized purposes:

- Coastal protection and restoration activities
- Mitigation of natural resource/habitat damage
- Implementation of federally-approved marine, coastal, and conservation management plans
- Mitigation of damage resulting from OCS activities
- Associated planning and administrative costs

**Northern Gulf Institute (NGI)** – Located at Stennis Space Center, the Institute is a collaborative academic program that includes Mississippi State University, the University of Southern Mississippi, Louisiana State University, Florida State University, the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The NGI conducts research that builds an integrative and comprehensive understanding of the interactions between the northern Gulf of



Mexico ecosystems and human systems. The goal is to develop holistic ecosystem strategies which enable managers and communities to improve the resilience and health of ecosystems and people and the sustainability of resources in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

**Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA)/Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)** – A NRDA 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 a spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and the services provided by those resources. NRDA restoration means any action, or combination of actions to restore rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured natural resources and services they provide.

**Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Commission** – Produced a plan by the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus in September, 2010, titled Americas Gulf Coast: A Long-Term Recovery Plan after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The plan focuses on the environment, the economy, and health/human services.

**Gulf of Mexico Research Plan (GMRP)** – With leadership by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Sea Grant College Program, the plan has five priorities:

- Ecosystem health indicators
- Freshwater input and hydrology
- Habitats and living resources
- Sea level change, subsidence, and storm surge
- Water quality and nutrients

## Funding Opportunities

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There are a number of existing funding sources for the Gulf in addition to the RESTORE Act. These funding sources can be utilized along with RESTORE Act funds to further the implementation of many of the projects proposed under Mississippi’s RESTORE Act plan. These funding sources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)
- Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP)
- Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP)
- Tidelands Trust
- Other Federal funds
- State & local real and in-kind match

However, given the large number of programs and projects identified to date, there are more needs than there are funds to meet those needs. Therefore, specific projects will require prioritization and identification of funding sources for efficient utilization of those funds. It is critical that projects that are already funded through existing programs or agencies be completed using those existing funds. Many proposed projects qualify under one or more funding programs. By combining funding from different sources, some systems (groups of inter-related projects in a single location) that are too large for a single funding source can be completed.

## Project Eligibility Criteria

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As a condition of funding, each state or locality receiving funds must develop a science-based multi-year implementation plan describing how recommended projects meet RESTORE's stated funding purposes. To assist in selecting appropriate projects under the plan, a scoring mechanism will be needed to assist in project recommendations.

The following evaluation criteria will be recommended as a suggestion of how to score individual projects:

### Does the project meet authorized use/uses of RESTORE Act funds?

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- Restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands
- Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources
- Implementation of a federally approved marine/coastal management plan,



- including fisheries monitoring
- Workforce development and job creation
- Improvements to state parks affected by the oil spill
- Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecological resources, including ports
- Flood protection and infrastructure
- Planning assistance
- Promotion of tourism, including recreational fishing
- Promotion of Gulf seafood consumption
- Administrative costs (up to 3 percent)

### Additional Requirements:

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1. All states/localities receiving funds must meet audit and other requirements of the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury; develop a multi-year implementation plan; and certify that:

- Each project is “designed to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, or economy of the Gulf Coast”
- Each project carries out one or more of the allowable uses as above
- Projects are selected based on “meaningful” and “broad-based” public input, including from individuals, businesses, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Each natural resource restoration or protection project is based on the best available science
- Project selections are consistent with the procurement rules for a comparable project in that state, including any competitive bidding and audit requirements

2. Priority will be given to projects that include citizens and their homesteads, a direct impact on residents' quality of life, and projects that can be performed in a timely manner. People are part of the environment and emphasizes on localities need to be incorporated in any project selected. An example of activities that are connected to localities



would include the working portions of the coast, such as ports and shipyards. Another example would be the ecosystem functions that are tied to unique cultural communities and groups along the coast and other projects that enhance our visitors' experience. Therefore, citizen involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring should be considered in all projects. Additionally, Mississippi Senate Bill 2622 and Section 1603 of the RESTORE Act provide for preference in local hiring.

3. A proposed project should meet the regional objectives of the GoCoast 2020 Commission. Support must improve multiple ecosystem components or systems to promote resilience along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

4. The cost effectiveness of project where projects of a similar nature can be compared.

5. Multiple funding sources (state, federal, and/or private) will be utilized whenever possible.

6. The ability of construction projects (or individual phases of the projects) to be completed in a timely manner should take precedence.

7. Defining the tangible, sustainable, long-term benefits that will result from the implementation of the project. (This implies some monitoring and/or project assessment must be implemented to evaluate the success of the project in meeting its goals.) Efforts which include community and citizen-based monitoring in its implementation are preferred.

8. The feasibility of a project's success based on the applicant's resources and personnel, sufficient funding, planning, and implementation of the project.

9. The applicant has demonstrated commitment and ability to maintain and/or monitor projects.

10. Duplication of projects or programs has been avoided. However, interface and leverage with other restoration plans are encouraged.

11. The level of collaboration with state and/or federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, local governments, or other entities, has been fully considered and incorporated.

## Conclusion

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In order for RESTORE Act expenditures to be assessed, and to account for the benefits from the various projects, the Eco-Restoration GoTeam considered a variety of success measures to be incorporated into the project monitoring and reporting process. These measures should provide sufficient data so that the efficacy of the program can be assessed. The measures should provide sufficient ecosystem indicators so that health of the restored systems can be followed. However, they should also include productivity and economic indicators to demonstrate that the goals envisioned are realized.

## Eco-Restoration GoTeam

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**Co-Chair**      **Sen. Brice Wiggins** (*District 52*)  
**Co-Chair**      **Trudy Fisher**, *Mississippi*  
*Department of Environmental Quality*

**Laura Bowie**, *Gulf of Mexico Alliance*  
**Rep. Billy Broomfield** (*District 110*)  
**Bob Fairbank**, *Mississippi Power Company*  
**Les Fillingane**, *Mayor, City of Bay St. Louis*  
**Sen. Tommy Gollott** (*District 50*)  
**Kay Kell**, *Commission on Environmental Quality*  
**Anice Liddell**, *Mayor, City of Moss Point*  
**Brandon Pike**, *Wetland Solutions*  
**Judy Steckler**, *Land Trust, Mississippi*  
*Coastal Plain*  
**LaDon Swann**, *Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant*  
*Consortium*  
**Rep. Hank Zuber** (*District 113*)

**Non-governmental Organization Advisors:**  
**Thao "Jennifer" Vu**, *Mississippi Coalition for*  
*Vietnamese American Fisher Folk*  
**Tom Mohrman**, *The Nature Conservancy*





## 3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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*The RESTORE Act provides a unique opportunity to help rebuild communities and lives.*

## Introduction

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It is important now more than ever to invest in the long-term sustainability of economic growth and prosperity of business and industry along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Gulf Coast residents and businesses have struggled to overcome the effects of Hurricane Katrina, the decline of the national economy, and the BP Oil Spill. The RESTORE Act provides a unique opportunity to help rebuild communities and lives.

Economic Development can be broken into three primary areas: recruitment of new industry, retention and expansion of existing businesses, and entrepreneurial development. Each of these will play an important role in the long-term economic recovery from the oil spill. For economic development to thrive, the following must be in place:

**Infrastructure** – the “hard” infrastructure of roads, rail, ports, airports, and technology

**Human Capital** – this includes “soft” infrastructure that delivers support services geared toward technical assistance to businesses and start-ups, workforce development, and education

**Marketable Locations** – this includes project-ready sites, industrial and technology parks, and buildings, but also proactive community leadership and a business-friendly environment

**Quality of Life and Place** – the attractions, amenities, and civic pride of a community help in the recruitment and retention of businesses and talent and are directly dependent upon coordination between elected officials, business, and community leaders

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is already home to some of the most exciting and dynamic job-creators in the country. A vibrant gaming and recreational industry, major shipbuilding and defense-related industries, manufacturing, health care, military, and retail sectors all add up to a diverse and sustainable coastal economy.

Please note that because the gaming and recreational sectors are covered under a specific Tourism GoTeam, the Economic Development Team focused primarily on other business sectors that benefit from traditional recruitment, expansion, or entrepreneurial assistance typical in the economic development profession.

The Economic Development GoTeam divided into three subcommittees: Retention and Expansion; Recruitment; and Entrepreneurship.

## Priorities

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### Asset Development and Capacity

As stated above, there are investments that should be made in the coastal counties to ensure that they are positioned for long-term growth and recovery. These investments should be made with job creation as a top priority, but not always as an immediate requirement for the project. The economic recovery requirements of the Mississippi Gulf Coast are longer term in nature and should be allowed to be justifiable prospective investments into future growth. For instance, investments in major infrastructure like a rail line may not have a direct job creation component, but will lead to regional economic growth by opening up transportation and access efficiencies for using businesses. In addition, the creation of a technology industrial park near Stennis Space Center could aid in the recruitment of aerospace and technology companies to the area, but that project would be prospective in nature.

Investments in infrastructure are critical to improving the economic competitiveness of the Coast and fostering a long-term economic recovery. Projects should be judged on their impact to using businesses and the potential for increased job creation and new investment associated with the project.



Infrastructure is the backbone of economic development, but there must be marketable sites in order to recruit new industry or help existing businesses expand. Marketable sites require extensive preliminary activities to prepare a site to be ready for operations on Day One. These include but are not limited to: acquisition and development of sites, site preparation, storm water drainage structures, potable and fire protection water, wastewater collection and treatment, wetlands delineation, mitigation and permitting. This could also include Brownfield sites re-development to take advantage of what could otherwise be marketable space for new investment.

In addition to the physical improvements that can assist in economic development, the Coast must display a willingness at all levels of government and throughout the business and civic leadership to welcome new economic opportunities. States do not compete for economic development, communities do. It is vital that coastal leadership work cooperatively and professionally toward portraying the region as a business-friendly location that is willing to work with companies to see them locate in the area and provide jobs to their citizens. Having marketable sites and communities on the Mississippi Gulf Coast will position the area for increased economic activity and jobs. Long-term investments into those assets will drive the recovery for many years to come.

### **Enhancing Broadband Infrastructure**

In order to effectively recruit new industries, retain and expand existing ones, and nurture and attract entrepreneurial ventures to the Mississippi Gulf Coast, a community must be armed with innovative technology infrastructure. For many businesses, broadband internet is as vital to its success as other infrastructure assets such as roads, rail, and ports. The Mississippi Gulf Coast currently has some of the highest levels of broadband access and adoption in the state, but through a concerted effort to make available very high-speed broadband and to market the Gulf Coast as a destination for information and computational-intensive companies, a high-tech economy can develop on the Coast.

There is already high-speed broadband infrastructure running along the Gulf Coast, including the National Lambda Rail which is dedicated for research institutions. Tapping into this infrastructure to bring very high-speed capacity to the Gulf Coast could help recruit technology-based companies and grow local innovative potential. Many options exist, but one model that has been tried in other places is to develop a high-tech park or innovation complex where speeds up to 10 gigabits per second are possible. That would be a difference-maker for the Gulf Coast and could lead to increased economic growth.

### **Educate and Train a Productive Workforce**

Workforce development and training is a critical component in the successful economic recovery of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In Mississippi, workforce development, job skills training, and work placement are provided through a collaboration of the community college system, the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and the Mississippi Development Authority.

The Entrepreneurship Subcommittee identified a need to establish programs designed to educate, train, and prepare youth interested in developing ideas for new products and services – the tools necessary for successful new ventures. At least one program, the Southern Entrepreneur Program which is an educational outreach initiative housed within USM's Center for Economic and Entrepreneurship Education, appears to be working well in the Gulfport and Biloxi School Districts at the high school level. Other resources are available through the state's universities as well as local non-profits that should be examined for expansion along the Gulf Coast.

### **Enhance the Quality of Life/Place and Business Environment**

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is already home to some of the most diverse amenities and activities in the region. Quality of life is of great importance to Economic Development, and the Coast provides incredible opportunities that continue to grow and improve. After Hurricane Katrina, many communities were devastated, but the resiliency of the people of the Coast brought those communities back

stronger than ever. Public spaces, green spaces, walking trails, and a restored beachfront run along all three counties. The Creative Economy, which is the collection of the artist, literary, musical, culinary, and creative professions, is alive and well. Ocean Springs and Bay St. Louis may be the best known, but the Coast is bursting at the seams with creative people and places that represent a cultural heritage that attract visitors and companies to Mississippi from all over the world.

Building on this existing high quality of life and place was identified as a key factor in all aspects of economic development as well as for the recruitment and retention of key talent. Advances in quality of life and place are directly related to the community, business, and political leadership of an area. The whole community has to support the concept and work together to create the best and most attractive community possible to market to the world.

### **Incubators and Accelerators**

Business incubators are programs that help start-ups and early stage companies grow by providing business support services, technical assistance, and mentoring. Accelerators are slightly different in that they are time-limited programs geared toward intensive mentoring and concept development for early stage companies seeking rapid growth and access to investors. Both concepts can play a role in creating a high impact entrepreneurial environment based on the incredible assets and talent on the Gulf Coast to spark some home-grown economic development.

The Coast currently has two operational incubators and one under development. Each incubator fills a need for entrepreneurial specialties and successfully graduates new ventures all along the Coast. However, there appears to be a lack of affordable incubator programs and space in some coastal counties. Also, many would-be entrepreneurs are not aware of existing incubator opportunities. Recovery funds could be leveraged to fill those gaps and help promote the opportunities on the Coast to small entrepreneurs.

There are currently no accelerators on the Gulf Coast. However, the presence of Stennis Space

Center, high-tech aerospace companies, defense industries, advanced manufacturing, and strong academic institutions provide ample opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop and grow cutting edge concepts, technology, and businesses on the Coast. An accelerator program, fueled by very high capacity broadband and in partnership with some of the institutions mentioned previously, could help position the Coast as a destination for creative minds.

Incubators and accelerators each can and should serve important needs. Entrepreneurship Subcommittee members recognized that in order to be successful in the entrepreneurial arena, adequate space for entrepreneurs should be provided in specialized innovative technology parks, perhaps in concert with business accelerators.

### **Funding Programs**

While certain capital assets (broadband access, technology parks, etc.) can give a community a competitive edge in entrepreneurial recruitment, one of the most formidable impediments to entrepreneurial growth is capital or the lack thereof. Although generally available, loans for entrepreneurial activities are typically high risk, high cost. In order to create a nurturing environment for entrepreneurial opportunities, programs to fund these gaps must be explored to provide affordable, direct lending.

### **Other Important Issues**

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The Economic Development GoTeam discussed other challenges and opportunities on the Coast. Although these issues may or may not be appropriate for RESTORE Act funding, the Team wanted to acknowledge their role in economic development strategic planning:

#### **Health Care**

The Mississippi Gulf Coast has a large health care infrastructure, with many hospitals in Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson counties, but the opportunity for growth still remains. Governor Phil Bryant recognized that the delivery of health care services can be a strong tool for economic development. That is why he championed the Mississippi Health

Care Industry Zone Act, which includes incentives for companies that provide new healthcare-related projects within the State of Mississippi. This is a potentially important growth area for the Coast, considering the large population of retirees and military veterans on the Coast. MDA and local developers are focused on that opportunity.

### Real and Personal Property Insurance

While not an exclusively Mississippi issue, insurance costs across the Gulf Coast are a serious issue for those individuals and businesses that work and live near the Gulf. There are many efforts underway at the federal and state levels to address this issue.

### Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport

Additional affordable air service options into and out of Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport to a variety of destinations is essential to generating more tourists and business travelers. There is a need to stimulate the overall Coast economy by adding new air service utilizing an infusion of public and private resources. Expansion of the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport could be enhanced through land acquisition, helping to increase future development and alleviate potential encroachment.

### Proposed Criteria and Ranking

The Business and Industry Recruitment Subcommittee recommends the following criteria against which potential projects should be ranked for funding priority:

- Leveraging of other funding sources
- Demonstrated return on investment in terms of leveraging jobs, capital investment, or financial return
- Compelling reasons for how improvements will position sites, airports, ports, etc. for new locations, job creation, expansion, and/or new capital investment
- Demonstrated value relative to target sector and competitive advantage
- Demonstrated project feasibility/necessity validated by third party expert
- Projects should not be eligible for funding from the eco-restoration source of funds, where improvements are proposed for industrial, technology, or aviation parks

### Leveraging Resources

RESTORE Act funds should leverage the resources and expertise of the private sector, including private nonprofit development organizations through public-private partnerships.

There are multiple sources of local, state, federal, and private resources and programs which can be leveraged to achieve the priorities for new, existing, and expanding business and industry. Identification of funding sources is a constant component of the long-range capital projects planning process. Most industrial parks, aerospace parks, port facilities, airports, and related infrastructure are publically-owned. As such, the following sources have the potential to leverage RESTORE Act funding: bond issues; port multi-modal funding; several low-interest loan programs and grants for public infrastructure available through the Mississippi Development Authority; Electric Cooperatives (Rural Development); USDA Rural Development Tax Credit program; New Market Tax Credits; grant sources with specific match requirements include Economic Development Administration Funding; additionally, development agencies have reserve funds that are programmed for these projects.

Also, it is clear that many of the GoCoast 2020 teams' efforts and priorities overlap with those of the Economic Development team. Infrastructure, including water, wastewater facilities, and roads are all required for business and industry to operate and succeed. The priorities defined by the Small Business, Infrastructure, and Workforce Development Teams have a major impact on the focused priorities of the Economic Development Team. In order for business and industry to expand and grow, a larger skilled labor pool will be required, which is also being addressed by the Workforce Development Team. The preparation and availability of sufficient infrastructure allows the region to compete for both new and expanding manufacturing and related technology projects. Circumstances also exist where tourism-related infrastructure could also better position those aspects of the Coast's economy for new and/or expanded investment. The combination provides a diverse and stable economic structure.

## Present vs. Future

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### The Present

There are multiple existing strategic plans and outreach programs that are working to address the priorities of the Economic Development GoTeam. Below is a list of existing programs currently in place to assist in all aspects of economic development. Most are public entities, and some are private. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but serves as a snapshot of programs available to develop and nurture economic growth.

#### Mississippi Development Authority (MDA)

MDA is responsible for promoting and fostering economic and community development statewide. MDA awards both state and federal funds to support the recruitment and retention of businesses, the promotion of the state's tourism economy, and the development of public assets in communities around the state.

#### Harrison County Development Commission, Hancock County Development Commission, and the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation, Inc.

Charged with promoting and fostering economic development in their respective counties.

#### Mississippi Power Company, Economic Development Department

The Economic Development Department is responsible for promoting and fostering economic development and community development in their twenty-three county area.

#### Coast Electric Power Association and Singing River Electric Power Association

The Economic Development Departments are responsible for promoting and fostering economic development in their respective service territories on the Coast.

#### Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson County Chambers of Commerce

Promote community and economic development on the Mississippi Gulf Coast while improving the

business climate through facilitating, advocating, and providing information on behalf of the region.

#### Gulf Coast Business Council

The Gulf Coast Business Council is the united voice of business on public policy issues of importance to the Mississippi Gulf Coast region. Through leadership and collaboration on targeted strategic issues, it promotes and advances the economic vitality and quality of life in the region.

#### Small Business Alliance (SBA)

Among other services, the SBA provides guaranty loans to finance start-up and existing small businesses.

#### Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District (SMPDD)

Serving the 15-county region in south central and southeastern Mississippi, the SMPDD operates various direct loan programs designed to finance new and expanding businesses that otherwise would not be able to obtain conventional financing.

#### Magnolia Business Alliance (MBA)

The Magnolia Business Alliance is a not-for-profit corporation acting as a support organization and forum for the advancement of small and medium-sized businesses in the southeastern U.S. MBA manages the Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions which supports the growth of the geospatial technology enterprise cluster at Stennis Space Center. MBA also runs the Waveland Business Center, which serves as a small business incubator.

#### Mississippi Enterprise for Technology (MSET)

The Mississippi Enterprise for Technology is a private, non-profit organization that facilitates regional economic development by leveraging the resources of Stennis Space Center, the state, and the region to foster business opportunities among public and private entities.

#### The Southern Entrepreneur Program (SEP)

The Southern Entrepreneur Program is an educational outreach initiative housed within USM's Center for Economic and Entrepreneurship Education, which sponsors forums for young entrepreneurs throughout Mississippi and provides a pilot training



and educational experience for high school students in the Gulfport and Biloxi school systems.

## Conclusion

MDA's Priority One Survey revealed several positive indicators: 85 percent of existing businesses surveyed on the Coast would recommend the area to another company and 90 percent responded that their current footprint allows for growth and expansion. It is important to capitalize on these positive survey results through marketing efforts. Ways to improve and foster a sustainable economic development environment on the Mississippi Gulf Coast must be identified. The preparation and availability of sufficient infrastructure allows the region to compete for both new and expanding manufacturing and related technology projects. Economic Development organizations in the three county area are addressing priorities through long range capital project planning.

Mississippi Power Company's Project Ready, with their certificated, "shovel ready" program, has the potential to create immediate and long-term employment opportunities. To effectively expand job creation along the Coast, target industry assets must be in place or available within a reasonable timeframe at a reasonable cost. A publicly-owned wetlands mitigation bank would be an effective and integral part of this effort. The development of a revenue source with sustainability is needed to finance the identified priorities necessary to attract, expand, and retain jobs in the business, industry, and entrepreneurial sectors. Resources are limited, and the use of RESTORE Act funds would ensure that priority assets are built and sites developed in order to compete with other communities and locations, while protecting and rebuilding the Coast's natural resources. The following table demonstrates the current established jobs located in the three coastal counties of Mississippi:

**Table 1: Mississippi Gulf Coast Establishment Jobs**

Source: Mississippi Department of Employment Security

	2012
Manufacturing	18,770
Agri., Forestry, Mining, Utilities	2,110
Construction	10,310
Wholesale Trade	2,350
Retail Trade	16,880
Transportation and Warehousing	4,370
Information	1,670
Finance & Insurance, Real Estate	6,010
Professional Services	6,120
Management of Companies	1,340
Waste Mgt.	9,420
Educational Services	990
Health Care	12,000
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	450
Leisure & Hospitality	28,910
Other Services and Government	2,970
Government and Education	33,430
<b>Total Establishment Jobs</b>	<b>158,100</b>

## Economic Development GoTeam

**Co-Chair**      **Ed Day**, *Mississippi Power Company*  
**Co-Chair**      **Brent Christensen**, *Mississippi Development Authority*

**Chris Anderson**, *Singing River Health Systems*

**Rep. Charles Busby** (*District 111*)

**Rep. Scott Delano** (*District 117*)

**Dave Estorge**, *Memorial Hospital Foundation*

**George Freeland**, *Jackson County Economic Development Foundation*

**John Harral**, *Butler, Snow, O'Mara, Stevens and Cannada*

**Billy Hewes**, *Hewes Insurance*

**Tom Kovar**, *Chevron*

**Jack Norris**, *Gulf Coast Business Council*

**Bob Occhi**, *Coast Electric Power Association*

**Supervisor Kim Savant**, *Harrison County*

**Patrick Scheuermann**, *Stennis Space Center*

**Sen. Tony Smith** (*District 47*)

**Shorty Sneed**, *Stewart, Sneed, Hewes*

**Clay Wagner**, *Hancock Bank*

**Clay Williams**, *Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport*





## 4 SEAFOOD

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*Mississippi has a unique opportunity to use RESTORE Act funding to turn these unprecedented challenges into a success story that creates a vibrant, fully self-sustaining, profitable recreational and commercial seafood industry.*

## Introduction

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The seafood industry had its beginnings in the 19th century along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and residents along the Coast and across the nation have long enjoyed the bounty of Mississippi's harvests. The Coast's rich maritime history has through the centuries weathered economic upheaval, recessions, storms, and disasters (both man-made and natural), yet this tradition of supplying seafood and fishing opportunities for residents and visitors endures. In terms of pounds of seafood harvested, Mississippi is the sixth largest seafood producing state in the nation and second in the Gulf of Mexico region behind Louisiana. The Mississippi Gulf Coast provides wild American harvested seafood, primarily shrimp, oysters, crabs, and finfish, to families across the state and the nation.

Looking back at the last quarter century, it's apparent that while the state is a leading seafood supplier, and the Gulf is a global recreational fishing destination, the current generation of fishers and small businesses that support the industry are operating during one of the most economically difficult times in modern history. Unlike some regions of the country, this is largely not due to a lack of natural resources to harvest but instead is due to the rapid rise of the global aquaculture industry and the unprecedented string of calamities that began with Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and worsened after the BP oil disaster.

The Gulf of Mexico is the largest supplier of fresh, wild caught shrimp. However, prior to Hurricane

Katrina in the 2005, the Gulf's shrimping industry confronted competition from farm-raised imports that resulted in reduced prices and new market realities. While consumers prefer wild, fresh caught shrimp to farm-raised shrimp, they were largely not aware that imported shrimp is farm-raised. Due to increasing supply from these producers, and lack of sustained marketing campaigns by domestic producers, the prices paid for shrimp by consumers declined and were passed on to harvesters. Meanwhile there were increased costs due to harvesting and processing increases, higher fuel, regulatory requirements, and maintaining working waterfront locations.

Just prior to Katrina, the shrimp industry successfully brought court action designed to end dumping on the U.S. market to level the playing field; then Katrina disrupted supply chains. However, even with countervailing duties in place, the domestic shrimp industry, which is the backbone of the Gulf Coast fishery, has gone from being the primary supplier to U.S. markets to representing today about only 10 percent of what Americans consume.

For more than a decade, Americans have consumed more shrimp than any other type of seafood, and the amount of shrimp that Americans are consuming continues to rise. In fact, in 2009 Americans ate an average of 4.1 pounds of shrimp per person--nearly twice the per-capita consumption in 1990. Competition within the U.S. shrimp markets with foreign producers is expected to continue as aquaculture producers utilize more direct transportation routes and find lower ways to reduce production and transportation costs.

The aquaculture industry also has the ability to grow products to meet expected consumer preferences and deliver those products to markets in a uniform manner. They also have significantly larger and more aggressive marketing campaigns that are funded by multi-national corporations and national marketing boards. What they do not have is a preferred consumer preference for wild-caught product and the proximity



to U.S. markets that Mississippi has. The Seafood GoTeam proposes using RESTORE Act funds to implement voluntary supply chain change from the boat to the consumer while also increasing marketing budgets to differentiate Mississippi products and increase job growth and small business opportunities in Mississippi.

Mississippi has a unique opportunity to use RESTORE Act funding to turn these unprecedented challenges into a success story that creates a vibrant, fully self-sustaining, profitable recreational and commercial seafood industry. The seafood industry should incorporate and safeguard the best elements of the past integrated with urgently needed financial investments in technology, infrastructure, and marketing concepts to create a vibrant, environmentally sustainable maritime environment.

The Seafood GoTeam identified six priorities necessary to sustain and improve the industry-- seafood promotion, habitat development and restoration, infrastructure, workforce and economic development, seafood research, and commercial and recreational fishing. Each of these areas is intertwined into the rich cultural heritage of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and each of these plays a key role in determining the future of the seafood industry and how the Gulf Coast will be seen by the next generation of residents and visitors. These priorities may or may not be eligible for RESTORE Act funding as the processes and criteria have not yet been instituted at the time of the GoTeam's report. The priorities' inclusion in the report represent the work of the GoTeam in identifying current issues and possible remedies for the seafood industry.

## Seafood Promotion

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The seafood industry recognizes that the only way to grow the industry is to enhance the value of existing production. An effective marketing program should be developed and utilized not only in the Gulf region, but nationally to help increase Gulf seafood value. Options that should be researched and considered include the establishment of certification and traceability

programs, which are being developed and implemented in other states such as Louisiana, to increase the value of Mississippi seafood products.

Gulf seafood should be marketed as a healthy, quality, American product. An effective marketing program will differentiate wild-caught as a superior product compared to imported products. As restaurant owners and chefs seek inspiration, there is an opportunity to share the benefits of cooking Mississippi Gulf seafood. Once they are aware that Gulf seafood is the safest, highest quality product available, this image will be transferred to their customers, which in turn will drive demand and influence what seafood distributors buy and make available to their customers.

## Habitat Development and Restoration

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There is limited habitat for marine resources in Mississippi waters and offshore. Increasing both commercial and recreational seafood species such as crab, oyster, shrimp, and finfish, requires a two-fold solution:

- Increasing available habitat for these species provides more area for marine populations to thrive;
- Utilization of fish re-stocking programs, which will in turn increase seafood populations.

This benefits both the commercial and recreational areas of the seafood industry while helping the overall economy as well.

## Infrastructure

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While some seafood-related businesses can be located away from the water, many are water dependent. The Gulf Coast is losing its "working waterfronts," the water access along coastal and estuarine areas that support commercial and recreational fishing and other seafood related industries. Focus needs to be placed on preserving these areas by the purchase and designation of

areas specifically as “working waterfronts.”

The GoTeam identified a need for safe harbor for all vessels. Access to waterfront and safe anchorage should be purchased and designated as such to ensure the safety of the seafood fleets.

## Seafood Research

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The Gulf of Mexico is an evolving ecosystem. Current and ongoing research regarding the dependence of seafood resources on this ecosystem is critical to the vitality of the Gulf. Specific research areas include:

- Water movement patterns to determine movement of larval life stages of shrimp, crabs, oysters, and some finfish
- Understanding of water quality issues that can guide management issues focused on improving water quality throughout the Northern Gulf, and in particular in the areas supporting oysters
- Identification of declining species and management decisions that can be made to reduce or eliminate these declines
- Bi-catch reduction to ensure that finfish food sources are maximized

Each of these research areas will serve to sustain vibrant and healthy marine populations as we move into the future.

## Commercial and Recreational Fishing

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The commercial and recreational marine fishing community provides a significant economic impact to the State of Mississippi. In order for fishing to thrive, the natural marine environment has to be protected and re-established. The continued increase of marine populations through the development of habitat and “population enhancement” projects should be undertaken to ensure a vibrant marine population to support fishing along the Coast.

The establishment of educational programs can encourage children and youth to view fishing as a healthy pastime and possible career. Teaching the importance of the Coast’s marine habitat and environment and the need for the continued conservation of these is vital to the future success of the seafood industry.

## Workforce Development

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Workforce development and training touches all facets of the seafood industry. This not only includes fishermen and processors, but also distributors, wholesalers, retailers, chefs, and all areas of foodservice. Fishermen can benefit from educational programs in how to bring in the highest quality product--reinforcing the adage that there is more to a quality catch than just throwing out one’s nets. This enables them to obtain the highest price per pound for their efforts.

Restaurant owners and chefs turn to retailers and wholesalers for knowledge and information about the seafood they purchase and serve to their customers. They should be well informed with the most accurate and current information. Training should be made available for all Mississippians who perform jobs associated with the seafood industry from harvesting to processing to retail and wholesale. Not only is training needed for seafood-specific jobs, but also for off-season jobs that traditional fisherman can perform to supplement their commercial fishing careers.

An additional issue that should receive focused attention within the seafood workforce is the language barrier along the Coast.

Once these areas have been addressed, and a stable and growing workforce is in place, the growth of the seafood industry will be seen well into the future.

## Leveraging Resources

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The keys to having a successful sustainable long-term seafood industry and vibrant recreational



2020 GoTeams. Each overlap strengthens the need to focus resources in that program or project, which can be seen in the main areas the seafood industry is focused on:

- The overall need for infrastructure improvements for fishermen
- Habitat restoration and development to create marine habitat and increase marine populations
- Workforce development to have the necessary and properly trained workforce to benefit from these improved infrastructure areas and marine population
- Economic impacts from commercial and recreational fishing along the Gulf waters
- Focused research into seafood specific resources and proper management of those resources
- Promotion of seafood to the consumer and to markets which boost industry sales

fishery can be seen by examining and leveraging the “supply chain needs” in both industries while aggressively leveraging resources to engage in prolonged multi-year, multi-tiered, multi-layered marketing campaigns that promote and differentiate Mississippi and Gulf seafood products over imports and highlight the recreational fishing opportunities and experiences.

Essential to the success of making investments in these small businesses is identifying and leveraging resources to ensure that the natural resources that are at the heart of these businesses are recovered and positioned to be sustainable and used repeatedly in the future.

Both fishery sectors need to have access to modern, advanced market intelligence that takes into account existing and expected consumer demand and the promotional opportunities that exist to expand current markets while opening new markets in the U.S. and globally. Both sectors also need to have available a suite of financing options and small business tools that are specific to the unique needs of managing a natural resource-based industry. Decisions about the success of a fishery need to be made at the individual firm or boat level as owners know best how to revitalize, retool, refinance, diversify, or re-position their operations so that they can compete with competitors.

The other key to leveraging resources available to the seafood industry is to find the common themes with a seafood focus with other GoCoast

When viewing the long-term focus areas of the seafood industry in comparison to the other areas focused on in the overall Mississippi GoCoast 2020 Report, the needs are great and necessary for the creation of a vibrant and sustainable seafood industry for the future Gulf Coast.

To properly develop a plan to create a self-sustainable seafood industry for future generations, one must look at what programs are currently in place that are beneficial, and what should be done in the future to complement those programs.

## **The following are programs currently in place addressing the needs of the seafood industry and coastal habitat:**

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**Tidelands Trust Fund Program (Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State)** – The program is dedicated to the conservation, reclamation,

and preservation of Mississippi's tidelands, while enhancing its current public access areas. Additional financial investments from the RESTORE Act could be used to augment these programs to further protect areas that fall under this existing program.

**Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program** – This program is focused on effectively preserving, conserving, restoring, and managing Mississippi's coastal ecosystems to perpetuate their natural characteristics, features, and ecological integrity, safeguarding these assets so that the social, economic, and aesthetic values exist for future benefit. The long-term vision of the program is the management of Mississippi's Coastal Preserve sites to provide long-term benefits to the natural resources and economic value of the region. To date this is being accomplished by the enhancement and perpetuation of approximately 83,000 acres of important coastal wetland resources, providing compatible recreational use, research in coastal resource management, and protection of native, threatened, or endangered species. Additional financial investments from the RESTORE Act could be used to augment these programs to further protect areas that fall under this existing program.

**Mississippi Seafood Marketing Program (Mississippi Department of Marine Resources)** – After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, BP committed funding to the State of Mississippi for three years (ending in 2014) for seafood marketing campaigns along the Gulf and around the country.

The Mississippi Seafood Marketing Program has developed a long-range marketing program geared to increasing the value of Mississippi seafood through campaigns directed at consumers, distributors, retailers, wholesalers, chefs, restaurants, and other organizations related to the seafood and foodservice industries. It works cooperatively with the Mississippi Restaurant Association, tourism entities, the recreational fishing industry, and the Gulf Coast Seafood Coalition, which includes representatives from the five Gulf States.

The program components include:

- Use of a website (msseafood.com), Facebook, Twitter, and other social media to increase interest and demand for Mississippi seafood products
- Exhibiting and promoting Mississippi Gulf seafood at major seafood and food shows locally, regionally, and nationally. This face-to-face contact with consumers, buyers, and distributes foodservice personnel offers an opportunity to taste Mississippi Gulf seafood, provides sources to purchase the products, and information on the safety, health, and the superior quality of the seafood
- Promotional advertising in various magazines directed to consumers and the restaurant industry, use of television such as Mississippi Public Broadcasting's "Fit to Eat," and billboards along the Gulf Coast.

**NOAA Emergency Disaster Relief Program (Hurricane Katrina)** – Following Hurricane Katrina, Congress provided Emergency Disaster Relief funds which were focused on direct aid to fishermen, restoration of marine and coastal habitat, and other projects. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources used some of those funds to create and restore near shore and offshore marine habitats.

The Seafood GoTeam identified the following initiatives that could have a positive impact on Mississippi's seafood industry:

**Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program (MsCIP)** – MsCIP is a \$1.2 billion comprehensive program of proposed improvements for coastal Mississippi consisting of structural, non-structural, and environmental project elements. These elements are intended to address hurricane and storm damage reduction, salt water intrusion, shoreline erosion, and fish and wildlife preservation. MsCIP is structured in three phases, the first of which is to address the most urgent storm protection and restoration priorities to include restoration of the barrier islands and other identified interim needs. Phases Two and Three





of MsCIP consist of identified potential projects that are recommended for further study and intended for possible implementation over a 30- to 40-year period. Provisions under the MsCIP program for purchase of developed properties from willing sellers for the purpose of converting those properties to wetland habitats were not funded by Congress. They could be supported with RESTORE Act funding. Additional financial investments from the RESTORE Act could be used to fully fund the MsCIP program to quickly protect areas that can benefit coastal communities while strengthening the resiliency of habitats.

#### **Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force –**

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by Executive Order in October, 2010, to coordinate the long-term conservation and restoration of the Gulf Coast. The Task Force developed their own restoration strategy for the Gulf Coast, the Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy. The overall goals for this effort were to restore and conserve habitat, restore water quality, replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources, and enhance community resilience. Public-private partnerships are emphasized in addition to collaboration among state and federal agencies.

#### **Housing and Urban Development – Community Development Block Grant Funds (HUD-CDBG) –**

After the 2005 and 2008 hurricanes, Gulf Coast states were provided emergency HUD-CDBG funds to implement community recovery. With great flexibility states were allowed to design a range of programs to address community recovery needs with even greater flexibility allowed for programs

that benefitted low to moderate income individuals. Annually states are provided traditional CDBG funds to address the needs of low-moderate individuals and communities. As a matching program, and with fishing communities and the industry comprised of low-moderate income individuals, any unused disaster CDBG funds could be used to address the needs of the commercial fishery and to provide match for communities to engage in projects that address a storm-related impact. As a matching program, RESTORE Act funds could be leveraged and provided as match to assist communities engaged in projects that benefit the fishery, including land acquisition and/or to return facilities to commerce under a working waterfront model.

#### **DHS FEMA – Public Assistance (PA) Funds –**

Public Assistance funds are made available to assist state, county, and local governments and specific NGOs rebuild and or replace storm impacted infrastructure. For the fishery industry, PA funds can help rebuild publicly-owned infrastructure and equipment like boat ramps, ports, docks, and harbors along with the associated infrastructure that is based on publicly-owned facilities. FEMA also provides funds to remove and clear marine debris with documentation, and they can pay to restore and rehabilitate impacted barrier islands. FEMA provides hazard mitigation funds to develop projects that could use natural systems to reduce storm impacts to coastal structures. Following Katrina, Mississippi was able to do some cleaning of storm-related marine debris. As a cost share program, FEMA funds, while more cumbersome than RESTORE dollars, provide an excellent opportunity for the seafood industry to position critical assets in areas that are eligible so

that if critical infrastructure is damaged it would require a much smaller “pay-out” to repair when future storms hit the area.

## Additional Seafood Resources

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**US Small Business Association:** Provides a range of programs. The U.S. Export Assistance Center is staffed by professionals from the SBA, the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Export-Import Bank, and other public and private organizations. Together, their mission is to provide small- or medium-sized business with assistance on competing in today’s global marketplace.

## Conclusion

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The Seafood GoTeam agreed that Mississippi has a unique opportunity to use RESTORE Act funding to turn the unprecedented challenges facing the seafood industry into a success story, one that is vibrant, fully self-sustaining, and profitable. The seafood industry should incorporate and safeguard the best elements of the past and integrate them with financial investments in technology, infrastructure, and marketing to create a robust, environmentally sustainable maritime environment.

The Seafood GoTeam identified six priorities necessary to sustain and improve the industry- seafood promotion; habitat development and restoration; infrastructure, workforce and economic development; seafood research; and commercial and recreational fishing. Each of these areas are intertwined with the rich cultural heritage of the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and each of these will play a key role in determining the future of the seafood industry and how the Gulf Coast will be seen by the next generation of residents and visitors.

## Seafood GoTeam

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**Co-Chair**      **Rep. Jessica Upshaw** (*District 95*)  
**Co-Chair**      **Dr. Bill Walker**, *Mississippi*  
   *Department of Marine Resources*

**Sen. Debbie Dawkins** (*District 48*)  
**Sean Desporte**, *Desporte & Sons*  
**Richard Gollot**, *Golden Gulf Coast Packing*  
**Rep. Jeffrey Guice** (*District 114*)  
**Brent Gutierrez**, *Custom Pack, Inc.*  
**A.J. Holloway**, *Mayor, City of Biloxi*  
**Joe Jenkins**, *Crystal Seas Oysters*  
**Mark Mavar**, *Biloxi Freezing & Processing, Inc.*  
**Capt. Jay Trocheset**, *Silver Dollar Fishing Charters*

**Non-governmental Organization Advisors:**  
**Kaitlin Troung**, *Asian Americans for Change*  
**Kris Van Orsdel**, *Ocean Conservancy*







## 5 INFRASTRUCTURE

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*Infrastructure is a keystone for prosperity.*

## Introduction

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Infrastructure includes the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, region, city, or community. It is generally publicly-owned or regulated and often capital-intensive. Roads, airports, ports, railways, and water and sewer systems are all examples of characteristic infrastructure investments. Working as a complex network to address the needs of citizens, industry, and government, infrastructure comprises the backbone of economic development for any area. Without modern, efficient, and capable infrastructure, opportunities for job creation, manufacturing, and services cannot be effectively pursued and cultivated. This is especially true in today's competitive economic development environment. Often an afterthought in everyday lives, like education and a well-trained workforce, infrastructure is a keystone for prosperity.

At a time when much of the nation is dealing with aging and crumbling infrastructure, the Mississippi Gulf Coast has a unique opportunity. As a by-product of the natural and man-made disasters of the past several years, the Gulf Coast has funding available for significant infrastructure improvements which greatly exceeds that available through the traditional funding channels. Through potentially available funding from the RESTORE Act, the region has an opportunity to greatly enhance its infrastructure and offset both environmental and economic damages which have impaired the region in recent years. In order to capitalize on this opportunity, funding should be utilized for infrastructure projects which promote sustainable economic development on a local and regional basis and are crucial in achieving the vision established by the GoCoast 2020 Commission.

The GoCoast 2020 Infrastructure Team realized that although it was premature to suggest actual projects, the members distilled the thinking and passion of the entire Gulf Coast community to provide to the Governor and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) the importance of infrastructure to the health of the region and to suggest criteria by which infrastructure projects

funded by state specific RESTORE Act funds could be vetted. The team objectives included:

- Establishing a working knowledge of current and on-going infrastructure planning efforts throughout the Gulf Coast Region, including anticipated sources of funding;
- Hosting dialogue to define priority infrastructure needs throughout the Gulf Coast Region
- Developing a priority listing for types of programs and example projects to be considered under the "Infrastructure" umbrella
- Developing ranking criteria for priorities generated under the "Infrastructure" umbrella
- Assembling the aforementioned objectives into a cohesive document complementary to other GoTeam reports

Specifically, the Infrastructure GoTeam outlined three areas of economic development that recommended projects should address:

- Job Creation and/or retention
- Enhancement of existing industries
- Establishing future revenue streams for long-term maintenance and operation of infrastructure developed with RESTORE Act funds

The purpose of focusing on these areas is to recommend projects which promote economic development without burdening cash-strapped government entities with additional infrastructure they cannot afford to maintain or operate. After surviving the nation's worst natural disaster and the nation's worst environmental disaster within a five-year period, in addition to the current economic status of the country, municipalities in the region understand the importance of sustainable infrastructure.

## Leveraging Resources

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There are numerous existing state and federal funding programs which can be leveraged

by RESTORE Act funds. An ideal and simple leveraging approach would be to use these dollars as local “match” funds for existing grant and loan programs. For example, the federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) provides 80 percent of needed funds for a variety of transportation projects. Many of the local, approved STP projects remain unfunded as local government entities cannot provide the 20 percent match given the status of the Coast’s recovery and current economic conditions. Other approaches could include using these funds in coordination with private funds for projects that are not possible through existing funding mechanisms. A good example would be combining funds with tourism-centric businesses such as gaming and hospitality to promote tourism. These types of businesses, a major economic driver for the region, could realize substantial benefits, leading to new opportunities for job creation and industry enhancement.

It would be nearly impossible to overstate the overlap between infrastructure and the goals established by other GoCoast 2020 teams. As previously stated, infrastructure is the backbone of sustainable economic development as well as vitally important to environmental protection efforts. Without the necessary infrastructure to support the needs of people and businesses, the goals of all the GoTeams cannot be met. For example, improved roadways foster economic development engines such as small businesses and tourism. Improved wastewater treatment facilities lead to improved water quality--an important component to both the Eco-Restoration and Seafood GoTeams.

The series of natural and man-made disasters since 2005 which have affected the Gulf Coast have resulted in numerous major infrastructure planning efforts, in addition to typical and on-going regional planning initiatives. The major ongoing infrastructure planning efforts are listed below. They include a wide variety of funding sources and types of infrastructure projects.

## Gulf Regional Planning Commission (GRPC)

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GRPC serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the urbanized areas of Gulfport-Biloxi and Pascagoula-Moss Point. The Mississippi Gulf Coast MPO provides a planning process that is used to identify needs and deficiencies in the transportation system and make recommendations for roadway improvements that may be integrated into the Gulf Coast’s Long Range Transportation Plan, Gulf Coast Area Transportation Study, and the Transportation Improvement Program.

## Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan

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The Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan identified water, wastewater, and storm water infrastructure needs for long-term growth and recovery in the counties of Hancock, Harrison,



Jackson, Pearl River, and Stone. More than \$640 million of water and sewer infrastructure is currently under construction or complete throughout the five-county region. Counties and cities are currently pursuing funding for complementary projects to build on to the backbone system that has been developed. This effort is critical for economic development and environmental protection. For example, through this program, thousands of individual on-site septic systems are being replaced with centralized wastewater treatment systems, enhancing the environment, reducing sources of pollution, and protecting groundwater and surface water.

There are also several efforts in various stages of planning that could be beneficial to improving the Coast's infrastructure:

## Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program (MsCIP)

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MsCIP is a \$1.2 billion comprehensive program for coastal Mississippi consisting of structural, non-structural, and environmental project elements. These elements are intended to address hurricane and storm damage reduction, salt water intrusion, shoreline erosion, and fish and wildlife preservation. The MsCIP is structured in three phases, the first of which is to address the most urgent storm protection and restoration priorities to include restoration of the barrier islands and other identified interim needs. Phases Two and Three of MsCIP consist of identified potential projects that are

recommended for further study and intended for possible implementation over a 30- to 40-year period.

Approximately \$550 million of the authorization was funded by the federal government following Hurricane Katrina to address identified Interim Projects and Barrier Island restoration. Thus far, these funds have required no state matching requirements due to the fact that the program is related to emergency recovery. Mississippi DMR hopes to receive the balance of funding (an additional \$700 million) over the next two funding cycles with no cost share requirement, though given ongoing budget conditions, funding for the balance of this program remains uncertain.

## Latin America Trade and Transportation Study, Mississippi Report, March 2001

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The Southeastern Transportation Alliance (the state transportation agencies in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia along with the Federal Highway Administration) prepared a study assessing:

- Trade with Latin America (existing vs. forecasted through 2020)
- Identifying strategic transportation elements (ports, airports, railroads, and highways)
- Identifying investment needs
- Developing investment strategies

The study concluded that in order to meet trade demands in 2020, the following investments would need to be made:

- Ports – total of 707 acres of cargo facilities by 2020 (163 acres at time of study)
- Airports – an additional 305,458 square feet of cargo building area and an additional 54,304 square yards of cargo apron area to serve the additional cargo building





- Railroads – relocation of CSXT main line along the Gulf Coast to north of I-10 with two freight track lines and one Amtrak line. Upgrade KCS track from Gulfport to Hattiesburg to allow double-stack capabilities
- Highways – upgrade capacity of I-10

The study also evaluated intermodal connections among ports, airports, and major highways.

## Conclusion

The opportunity presented by the RESTORE Act and other funding sources should be used to continue the types of regional infrastructure approach promoting regionwide sustainable economic development outlined above.

As with all funding opportunities, it is recognized that the needs will far outnumber the available funds. Even though the processes and criteria for funding under the RESTORE Act have yet to be determined, the GoTeam discussed a ranking system to identify criteria that could be used to objectively determine which projects are best suited for funding under these programs. In addition to being eligible under RESTORE Act project guidelines, the criteria may include how well proposed projects protect ecosystems, promote economic development, and have multi-jurisdictional and regional benefits.

## Infrastructure GoTeam

**Co-Chair**      **Sen. Michael Watson (District 51)**  
**Co-Chair**      **Trudy Fisher**, *Mississippi*  
*Department of Environmental Quality*

**Rep. Richard Bennett** (*District 120*)  
**Commissioner Leonard Bentz**, *Public Service*  
*Commission*

**Steven Bevilaqua**, *John Fayard Moving and*  
*Warehousing*

**Wally Carter**, *Mississippi Gaming Commission*

**Kevin Coggin**, *Coast Transit Authority*

**Mayor Chuck Ingraham**, *City of Diamondhead*

**Commissioner Tom King**, *Mississippi Department*  
*of Transportation*

**Stephen Landry**, *Hancock County Port and*  
*Harbor Commission*

**Travis Lott**, *Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport*

**Dane Maxwell**, *Transportation Compliance*  
*Services, USA*

**Mark McAndrews**, *Port of Pascagoula*

**Supervisor John McKay**, *Jackson County*

**Jerry St. Pé**, *retired*

### Non-governmental Organization Advisors:

**Howard Page**, *Steps Coalition*

**Noni Debardeleben**, *Women of the Storm*





## 6 TOURISM

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*The good news is that no other market today in the region – not one – has the combination of assets that are enjoyed on the Mississippi Coast.*

## Introduction

Today, tourism makes up 18 percent of all employment on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and is the largest segment of employment second only to government. That means that nearly one in every five jobs on the Coast is tourism-related, making it an incredibly important sector of the economic engine of the area.

Due to the diversity of tourism employment, the Tourism GoTeam initially formed six subcommittees to collect information and recommendations. These subcommittees were: Attractions, Convention/Trade Shows, Food and Beverage, Gaming, Lodging, and Retail. The Attractions subcommittee was broken further into more detailed work areas of Cultural and Museum, Defense, Ecotourism, Golf, Music, Recreation, Sports and Family Sports. Additionally, two subcommittees were added to focus on areas where support may be needed – Government and Transportation.

The Tourism GoTeam did extensive research and analysis of the existing tourism inventory of products and attractions as well as examining the challenges facing the Coast's tourism economy today and in the future.

## The Current Landscape

The following charts and graphs make clear the diversity of the current tourism industry, as well as its value to the Mississippi coastal economy. The charts and graphs below illustrate some key findings from the Tourism GoTeam including:

- Total Gross Sales reported for the Mississippi Gulf Coast exceeded \$6.2 billion in Fiscal Year 2011. The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) projects that visitors spent \$1.7 billion on the Mississippi Gulf Coast during the same fiscal cycle.
- The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) estimates that 11 percent of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the Gulfport/Biloxi area is related to Leisure

and Hospitality, and just under 2 percent in the Pascagoula area.

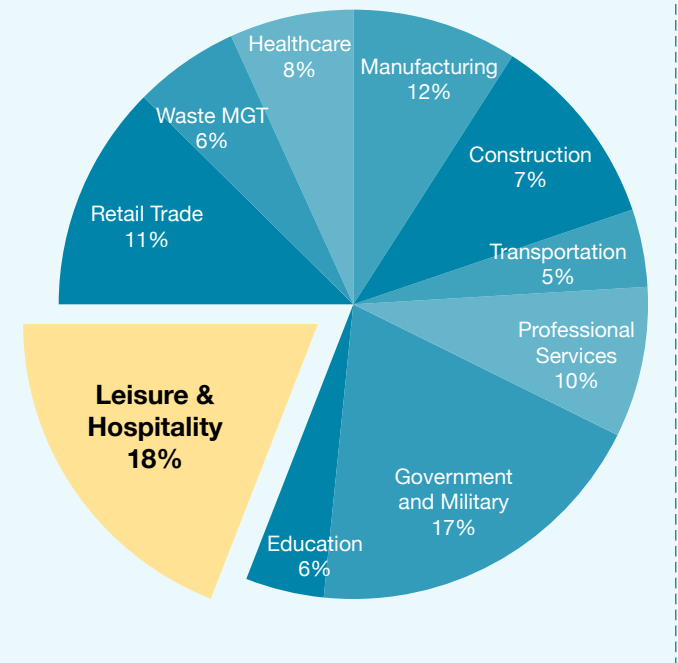
- When comparing current job inventories to pre-Katrina levels, the Leisure and Hospitality sector on the Mississippi Gulf Coast is the industry with the largest opportunity as this segment of the economy is gaining more jobs every year.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast currently lacks approximately 4,000 hotel rooms when compared to pre-Katrina levels. Notably, the gap between pre-Katrina and today along the beach exceeds the overall gap, as most redevelopment has occurred along the Interstate 10 corridor and near the Gulfport/Biloxi Airport.

## Employment

**Chart 1: Establishment Jobs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as of September 2012**

Source: Mississippi Department of Employment Security



**Table 1: Mississippi Gulf Coast Establishment Jobs Comparing Sept. 2012 to August 2005 (pre-Katrina)**

Source: Mississippi Department of Employment Security

	9/30/12	8/31/05	Change
Manufacturing	18,690	21,570	(2,880)
Agri., Forestry, Mining, Utilities	2,080	2,130	(50)
Construction	10,570	7,240	3,330
Wholesale Trade	2,300	2,310	(10)
Retail Trade	17,060	18,890	(1,830)
Transportation and Warehousing	4,260	3,880	380
Information	1,680	2,880	(1,200)
Finance & Insurance, Real Estate	6,040	5,920	120
Professional Services	6,160	5,960	200
Management of Companies	1,350	1,370	(20)
Waste Mgt.	9,480	9,180	300
Educational Services	1,000	550	450
Health Care	12,080	12,010	70
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	440	280	160
<b>Leisure &amp; Hospitality</b>	<b>27,890</b>	<b>33,410</b>	<b>(5,520)</b>
Other Services and Government	2,980	3,540	(560)
Government and Education	33,880	31,720	2,160
<b>Total Establishment Jobs</b>	<b>158,100</b>	<b>162,840</b>	<b>(4,900)</b>

storm, but was stalled by the recession and then stalled again in 2010 due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Hotels typically cannot be constructed without a combination of capital injection and lending, both of which became harder to secure by the oil spill. The preponderance of off-beach hotels are along I-10, at the Gulfport/Biloxi International Airport, or on US-90 in Hancock and Jackson counties.

When comparing peak months (March-August) versus offseason (September-February) months the Mississippi Gulf Coast fills approximately 50,000 fewer hotel rooms per month, and the Coast's casinos fill approximately 23,000 fewer hotel rooms per month. Casino visitation in the offseason relies heavily on snowbird visitation, including the ability to attract Midwest and Northern visitors who are vacationing in the Florida Panhandle, as well as golf visitors.

The inventory of hotel rooms slowly built back after Katrina, but swings in occupancy widened, creating a weekend-crunch and weekday-excess of room availability.

## Economics

**Table 2: Total Industry Sales Reported (\$ Million) Mississippi Gulf Coast**

Industry Group	FY 2011 Sales
Automotive	\$652
Machinery	\$211
Food and Beverage	\$1,174
Furniture and Fixtures	\$112
Public Utilities	\$379
Apparel & General Merchandise	\$1,120
Lumber & Building Materials	\$351
Miscellaneous Retail	\$457
Miscellaneous Services	\$392
Wholesale	\$88
Contracting	\$1,346
Recreation	\$19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$6,298</b>

## Lodging Usage Differs Between Locales

There are also widely differing uses for lodging among coastal counties. In Hancock and Jackson counties, hotel operators report that government and defense contractors drive room nights rather than tourists. Occupancy is generally good during the work week but less on weekends. Concentrations in occupancy also vary between I-10 rooms and "downtown" rooms in Jackson County. Hancock and Harrison counties lose the majority of overnight Stennis Space Center visitors to Slidell, Louisiana, primarily due to the perception of limited nearby hotel rooms. The hotels in Mississippi are actually closer to Stennis and have availability during the week. Attention to this perception gap is very much warranted. Visitors to Stennis who eventually relocate their job to this region are more likely to establish residence in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, because they became familiar with the area during extended hotel stays in Slidell.

## Lodging Discussion

The lodging landscape of the Coast was altered dramatically by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Hotel room construction quickly rebounded after the

In Harrison County, the opposite is generally true. Occupancy is concentrated more on the weekends, with weaker occupancy during the week. In fact, non-gaming hoteliers suggested that additional hotel rooms would be unattractive until they can improve weekday stays, suggesting concern that more hotels would drive down the average daily rate. In contrast, virtually every subcommittee opined the need for more hotel rooms on weekends.

## Impact of Katrina and Deepwater Horizon on Visitation

As stated earlier, Hurricane Katrina devastated the preponderance of hotels along the beachfront. Many gaming hotels were rebuilt and reopened within two years. Non-gaming hotels followed shortly behind, but almost all are new construction. Many new hotels were constructed along the interstate, where dirt and insurance are inexpensive relative to the beach. Lost are approximately 4,000 hotel rooms along the beach, primarily of mature construction, mature repeat business, and affordable rates.

Then the Deepwater Horizon incident delivered a double blow. Nearly all rooms were taken by temporary labor for an entire peak summer cycle, and the media repeatedly declared the air, water, seafood, and beaches were fouled. All momentum gained during post-Katrina efforts was lost, as was the preponderance of the repeat visitor book. The occupancy of temporary labor covered the loss of tourists for that year, but has not yet recovered

the extended stay visitors. There is a need for more weekend hotel rooms, but it is difficult to build them to fit demand until more occupancy is generated during the week.

Another consideration of post-Katrina impact was the massive shift in hotel categories. The loss of older properties meant that replacement rooms were very nice and fresh but also more expensive. Replacement properties were rebuilt in tightly compacted classes – so there is now very little differentiation between quality and price of rooms. Inventory of upper midscale hotel rooms and better is steadily growing and makes up nearly two-thirds of the entire hotel room base. The Coast lacks enough cost-effective rooms for extended stays on the weekends and not enough demand for all hotel classes on the weekdays. Therefore, more demand is needed during the week while creating more capacity on the weekends.

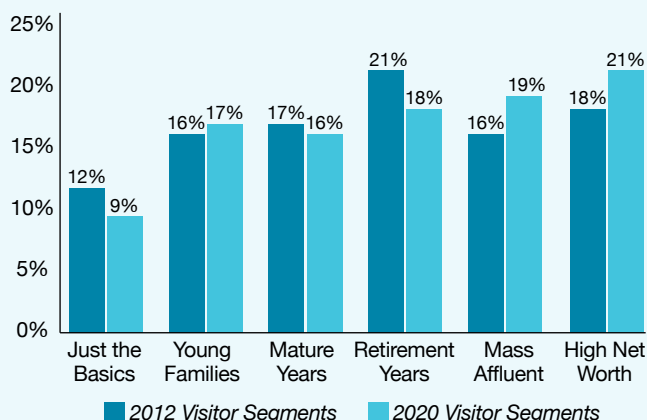
Tourists can be broken into groups of similar spending behavior, or segments. This section will share the combined subcommittee estimated mix, as well as project the mix in the year 2020. It is expected that there will be increases in visitors to every segment, with differing levels of anticipated growth for each segment. The table below describes the major categories of visitors.

Chart 2 reflects the consolidated expectations of all reporting subcommittees. Again, each tourism segment is desirable, but they should grow at different paces given the offerings that are available. For example, until there are more

**Table 3: Characteristics of Tourism Segments**

Target Segment	Typical Age	Average Annual Household Income
Just the Basics	18-34	Less than \$50,000
Young Family	18-45	\$50,000-\$99,000
Mature Adults	45-65	\$50,000-\$99,000
Retirement Years	65 and older	Up to \$99,000
Mass Affluent	35-55	\$100,000-\$250,000
High Net Worth	55 and older	Greater than \$250,000

**Chart 2: Current and Projected Tourism Segments**



affordable hotel rooms, focus should not be put on the segment who is interested uniquely on cost.

## Envisioned Future

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The Tourism GoTeam acknowledges that much work is to be done, but the outlook is bright for tourism on the Mississippi's Gulf Coast. The following are conclusions from the Tourism GoTeam about the envisioned future that can be achieved:

- There is expected to be an overall increase in annual visitation from 5 million people in 2012 to 7 million in 2020
- Visitor spending can be transformed from its current \$1.6 billion annual spending level to \$2.3 billion in 2020
- 10,000 new tourism-related jobs can be created on the Mississippi Gulf Coast by 2020
- Cultural and Museum, and Ecotourism attractions estimate more than a 300 percent increase in the number of tourists visiting in 2020, while golfing anticipates an increase of more than 100,000 rounds played

## Value Propositions

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What will bring substantially more visitors to the Coast? What can be done to ensure they come back?

The Tourism GoTeam outlined a series of value propositions to demonstrate the offering made by the Coast to current and prospective visitors. If the proposition is deemed valuable, they will visit. If the visit meets or exceeds their expectations, then the guest may develop into the coveted loyal repeat visitor. The Tourism GoTeam produced three general propositions that are as follows:

### Value Proposition 1: "Great Value for Low Cost"

The Mississippi coast is centrally located in the Gulf South region. Visitors can drive there by vehicle in less time and cost than required to other markets. Generally speaking, costs for activities, food, beverage, nightlife, and outdoor activities are

attractive compared to other markets, provided such experiences are packaged in an easily procurable fashion.

### Value Proposition 2: "Unique Offering"

Many decades ago, simply having a public beach was a unique offering. People didn't drive as far without the current interstate system, navigation technology, web accessible peeks at things to do, and safe, comfortable family vehicles. Beaches are now available to the target segments on a broad basis. Markets that reached the Coast in seven hours in the 1940s can now be on beaches in five states in a similar drive. Therefore, beaches and outdoor activities alone are no longer a unique offering to the markets from which visitors are recruited.



In the aftermath of Hurricane Camille in 1969, the Mississippi Gulf Coast lost a great deal of drive-in family tourism business. Legalized gaming in the early 1990s resulted in growth of tourists visiting the Coast again. Gaming was the next great "Unique Offering," replacing the beaches of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Mississippi wisely adopted a capitalism-driven model, and soon a great variety of gaming options were available in Hancock and Harrison counties. But, other states legalized gaming, too, and began to allow a combination of private sector and Native American casinos. As of now, from any point in the Gulf South, a visitor can get to a casino within three and a half hours. This

is projected to decrease each year. Consequently, gaming is no longer a unique offering.

The Coast casinos feel that same pressure, but because the Coast is not limited to one unique offering, they have held up a bit better. There are museums, nearly 400 festivals, entertainment, tremendous golf diversity, sports venues, and a high-end convention center. However, other markets have museums, festivals, concerts, and sports, too, so the question becomes what individual unique offering does the Mississippi Gulf Coast have to establish itself as unique as in the early days of beaches and the later days of gaming?

The Tourism GoTeam determined that the answer is simple but encouraging at the same time. The Mississippi Gulf Coast has no single, individual unique offering. The good news is that no other market today in the region – not one – has the combination of assets that are enjoyed on the Mississippi Coast. No other market can offer – from the same hotel room – access to NASA, almost 400 festivals, big name entertainment, gaming, world class golf, white sand beaches, sport fishing, sports tournament facilities, four and five star cuisine, pristine unspoiled habitat, Civil War era history, top-tier convention space, and big city nightlife. The variety of the experiences from one hotel is the Unique Offering.

### Value Proposition 3: “Outstanding Service”

Southern hospitality on the Mississippi coast was legendary in decades past. Surveys continue to suggest that visitors encounter friendly people, but the Coast is not known as an “outstanding service” market. Markets who apply deliberate and relentless focus on providing quality service as a differentiator will benefit against competition. The Tourism GoTeam believes the Mississippi Gulf Coast, with focus, can achieve differentiation from other markets by authentic, constant hospitality-driven tourism to encompass all attractions, locations and events.

### Gaps:

Clearly, there are some gaps that exist which inhibit the success of the Value Propositions outlined

above. These gaps include the following issues identified by the Tourism GoTeam:

- There are too few weekend hotel rooms available, particularly in the months when school is not in session. A need exists to improve the number of affordable rooms. Proximity of hotel rooms to attractions is a further impediment.
- Complicating room availability is the massive gap between weekend and weekday stays. There are too few visitors during the week to provide financial support for the construction of additional rooms thereby providing more weekend availability.
- There are bright spots in the technology landscape for particular activities, like lodging and golf. But the Coast is weaker than many of its competitors in enabling technology to book an overall and integrated experience.
- Harrison County taxpayers made a substantial investment in the Coliseum and Convention Center. The facility earns premium ratings from convention clientele, but the lack of a Headquarters Hotel at the site handicaps the procurement of a very large percentage of target conventions. Further, there is a shortage of “walkable” hotel rooms within a half-mile of the convention complex. This is the worst ratio of on-site/walkable hotel rooms compared to rentable convention space of any competing convention center.
- Visitors to the Mississippi Coast are left to their own to find the robust attractions available. Mature tourism markets have branded signage, such that visitors determine when they are near a site. A recent study in a competing market indicated that 20 percent of their visitors pass through one or all of the three coastal counties on their way to their market. Other than concerts at gaming venues, primarily for single night shows, there is very little directional signage on the major highways appealing to visitors.
- Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the Coast offered a large variety of family activities



available at all price points. Miniature golf, go karts, water slides, wave pools, and more used to dot Beach Boulevard(s) in all three coastal counties. They are essentially gone, and the current attractions are poorly marked, challenging to schedule and book on-line, and an immense impediment to improving length of stay.

- There are successful sports facilities at various coastal sites, such as the Gulfport Sportsplex, Harrison County Fairgrounds, and the Ocean Springs Sports Fields. However, facility size and offering limit visitation much under what it could be. Competitive markets routinely field tournaments four or five times the size, with most of the attending teams driving right through the market as they travel. The Coast market is centrally located, with great weather and access, but there are no existing facilities to compete for the larger and longer events.
- The Convention Center has the space available to host indoor sporting tournaments, such as volleyball, basketball, table tennis, bowling, etc. These are huge tournaments with high-yield visitors, but there is no equipment available to host such events. Similarly, the harbors and marinas have very poor staging/weight master/audiovisual facilities to operate game fish tournaments.
- There is no Coast-wide sharing of labor resource to conduct large sporting events and no central workforce training for event volunteers. There is no cadre of full-time professionals who have expertise in planning and executing massive events, nor enough reusable workforce available for event staging and management.
- Mississippi has extended public beach areas which are rare in many other states. No other market has contiguous, public beaches like Mississippi within the view shed of a major transportation corridor. Unfortunately, multiple jurisdictions along the Coast have a stake in keeping the property attractive. The counties are tasked with cleaning the beach, but do not have the hardware to respond to periodic high demands (after storms, etc.). The cities manage the landscaping, but are similarly not equipped. The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) has responsibility for Beach Boulevard and some cities have responsibility for their adjacent roadways, but they do not have equipment intended for sand removal. One of the greatest tourism assets is the beach and adjacent roadways, but not having matching hardware, staff, and strategy to the speed bumps that routinely occur is a hindrance.
- There is a major need for a Coast-wide Tourism leadership organization where the public and private sectors come together to make great progress towards the GoCoast 2020 envisioned future.
- There is no low cost airline with robust access. Enplanements/deplanements went down by 80,000 (10 percent) in the year after AirTran exited the market. This is a tremendous impediment to moderate to high convention business, an impediment to attracting extended stay visitors, and an impediment to general business and job creation. Landing a low cost airline would attract an influx of travelers to the region.
- There are tremendous unspoiled natural



assets to explore, and worldwide eco-tourism is exploding. But the Coast lacks quality campgrounds, walking trails, recreational parks, biking trails, etc.

- There is a vast concentration of military retirees, and there are billions of dollars in military and military contractor investments in the Coastal counties. But there is no tourism venue for this investment, whereas other markets have done very well.
- The State Port at Gulfport has flexible-use, but there is no home-ported cruise ship.
- Limited mass transit and congested roads hinder access between attractions.
- The Coast now has almost 400 annual festivals, and is widely known for very good musical entertainment. But the acts are generally limited to more of a local audience, or to specifically acquire a gaming audience. There are no major acts which command a high percentage of visitors, either as stand-alone events, or part of a major music festival (like Jazzfest), or as a very large enhancement to a festival (like Cruising the Coast).

## Conclusion

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With nearly one in five people on the Coast being employed in the tourism industry, this sector is a critically important and leading component of the economic makeup of the area. Growth in tourism provides jobs, income, tax revenues, and promotes many different businesses to prosper which results in a better quality of life on the Coast.

The Tourism GoTeam identified many specific recommendations that can be fully utilized in the

future as details about how the RESTORE Act will be implemented come available.

The Tourism GoTeam's thorough examination of the needs, gaps, and opportunities for tourism on the Mississippi Gulf Coast demonstrates the potential for a very bright future if decisions are well-researched and planned to position the Mississippi Coast to attract more visitors.

## Tourism GoTeam

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**Co-Chair**      **John Hairston**, *Hancock Bank*  
**Co-Chair**      **Brent Christensen**, *Mississippi Development Authority*

**Woody Bailey**, *Bailey Lumber and Supply*

**Frank Bertucci**, *F.E.B. Distributing*

**Rick Carter**, *Island View Casino Resort*

**Richard Chenowith**, *Scranton's Restaurant & Catering*

**George Corchis**, *Beau Rivage*

**Rep. Casey Eure** (*District 116*)

**Chet Harrison**, *Hollywood Casino*

**Bill Holmes**, *Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center*

**Mark LaSalle**, *Pascagoula River Audubon Center*

**Beverly Martin**, *Harrison County Tourism Commission*

**Denny Meachim**, *Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art*

**Margaret Miller**, *Ocean Springs Chamber of Commerce*

**Kimberly Nastasi**, *Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce*

**Sen. Sean Tindell** (*District 49*)

**Kathy Wilkinson**, *Harrison County Tourism Commission*

**Frank Genzer**, *Genzer-WHLC Architecture*







## 7 WORKFORCE

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*The ultimate outcome of workforce training is the awarding of nationally-recognized credentials and certifications to trained workers who possess skills and knowledge that measure up to industry standards.*

## Introduction

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The Mississippi Gulf Coast faces the challenge in the next decade—and beyond—of developing and sustaining a highly-qualified and well-trained workforce. Meeting this challenge will provide greater employment opportunities and help industries of all kinds meet the needs of its customers. It will also drive an increase in the per capita income and improve quality of life.

The Workforce GoTeam carefully examined the challenges and opportunities for a workforce development strategy as part of the economic restoration of the Gulf Coast. These recommendations provide an overarching strategic direction for long-term workforce development initiatives and economic development activities focused on the goal of producing skilled workers in sufficient numbers to meet ongoing and future needs.

The high schools and community colleges serving the coastal counties will be the primary delivery mechanism of workforce training and development on the Gulf Coast. To better enable these educational providers, new and innovative ways of offering training and technical skills instruction will be key elements of making sure there is an abundance of highly-skilled workers on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## Priorities

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Several priorities were identified by the Workforce GoTeam to achieve the goal of having a highly-trained workforce on the Mississippi Coast. The priorities centered on the following components:

- Promoting workforce training programs as well as dual path/dual enrollment (from high school-to-work) programs as a successful career track as an alternative to the college-to-work route
- Implementing programmatic and curriculum-related activities focusing on a

diverse array of workforce development and training opportunities, as well as basic life skills for all segments of the population

- Collaboration of education and training providers in high schools, community colleges, and universities through partnerships and career pathways to meet the current and projected needs of the Coast's employers

The Workforce GoTeam also supported infrastructure improvements and expansions, and suggested the establishment of various Centers of Excellence, with links to the Mississippi Department of Employment Security WIN Job Centers, as a way to further elevate a broad range of workforce training initiatives.

Additionally, the Workforce GoTeam strongly supports the development of kindergarten through PhD formal education curriculum within the Mississippi Department of Education and the Institutions of Higher Learning guidelines that emphasizes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) to help develop a workforce that will successfully compete on a regional to global scale.

Preparing individuals for the jobs available today and for the future not only means technical skills and knowledge but also the traditional basic skills required for success. Those skills include basic reading, mathematics, and critical thinking, as well as soft skills such as verbal/non-verbal communications and teaming skills, work ethic, healthy lifestyles, presentation and interview skills, and leadership development.

One of the most important factors impacting the ability to attract, prepare, retain, and sustain a competitive workforce is the availability of instructors and trainers who possess and maintain industry-recognized credentials and certifications. The ultimate outcome of workforce training is the awarding of nationally-recognized credentials and certifications to trained workers who possess skills and knowledge that measure up to industry standards. Career readiness certificates have

become the basis for certifying skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, reading, applying mathematics, and locating information.

Part of the discussion and formula for implementing any future workforce development programs under the RESTORE Act should be considered against the backdrop of existing resources that are currently available and accessible.



and state resources. Perkins funding, federal funds for career-technical education, may also be used for equipment. Business and industry partnerships have assisted the community colleges by leveraging resources through equipment donations, student scholarships, internships, and advisory committee participation.

MGCCC and PRCC have existing and ongoing programs designed to prepare individuals

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) and Pearl River Community College (PRCC), the two community college districts serving the three-county coastal area, have been preparing individuals for entry into the labor force for 100 years. With market sectors readily apparent on the Gulf Coast, these community colleges are able to respond to business and industry by developing training programs for start-up or upgrade training.

Special efforts must be made to coordinate the community colleges' efforts with high school training and guidance counseling so that young Mississippians are ready with basic skills when they enter the workforce training process.

Leveraging resources will be critical in accomplishing the priorities outlined by the Workforce GoTeam. MGCCC and PRCC both currently utilize local, state, and federal funds to achieve their respective missions. These funds could be leveraged with RESTORE Act funds to successfully achieve proposed infrastructure and programmatic priorities including new training programs, instructional personnel, equipment, facility needs, and student scholarships.

Funding for training programs and services is allocated based on full-time equivalent students for academic and career-technical programs with workforce funding allocated from the taxes that Mississippi employers pay into the Workforce Enhancement Training (WET) Fund. Adult basic education funding is a match with both federal

for transfer to four-year institutions or entry into the workforce immediately upon completion of programs. These programs address labor shortages and provide new skills required to accommodate expansion in existing jobs.

The following programs and services represent typical offerings in respective market sectors on the Mississippi Gulf Coast:

**Energy Technology:** Without access to sufficient supplies and transmission of safe, affordable and efficient energy, all sectors of the economy would cease to operate. Given the need for energy technicians in the future—combined with the lengthy training and certifications required for energy technicians—additional programs will be required to increase the capacity for training process operators and instrumentation technicians as the industry expands into new energy technologies.

**Shipbuilding/Marine Fabrication:** MGCCC and PRCC actively support Gulf Coast shipyards in the coastal counties by providing pre-employment and incumbent worker upgrade training in multiple craft areas documented by industry-recognized certification testing. Local shipyards hire from these pre-employment and entry-level maritime training programs, and also provide equipment, materials, and subject-matter experts. Workforce trainers are in constant dialogue with industry representatives to ensure that training meets current industry testing standards.

**Logistics/Supply Chain Management:** Logistics is a two-year technical degree program designed to prepare workers to plan, implement and control the efficient, effective forward and reverse flow and storage of goods, services, and related information between the point of origin and point of consumption.

**Information Systems Technology:** The growing need for a well-trained Information Technology (IT) workforce will require increased skills and knowledge to meet job requirements. A cloud labor force will dramatically impact the shape and deployment of the Gulf Coast IT workforce. This necessitates the need for the design and development of additional innovative programs with highly credentialed instructors to prepare workers for such a rapidly changing IT environment.

**Commercial Truck Driving:** Mississippi employs a truck classification system and truck drivers are required to possess a commercial drivers' license to operate a vehicle with a gross weight rating in excess of 26,000 pounds. While PRCC has operated a truck driving program in the past, the projections for growth in this industry will require expanded services in training with additional equipment and teaching personnel.



**Vehicular Technology:** Maintaining updated equipment and resources necessary for preparing certified vehicular technicians is an ongoing challenge. The existing training program for this field

could be enhanced to prepare students for high-tech vehicles designed by transportation manufacturers.

**Collision Repair Technology:** MGCCC currently offers a Collision Repair Technology program. Maintaining updated equipment and resources necessary for preparing certified collision repair technicians requires updated technology to repair damaged automobiles.

**Heavy Equipment Operations:** PRCC offers this training. Future employment needs require additional focus on this area of training leading to nationally-recognized certifications in specialized areas. Many aspects of the restoration and preservation of the Mississippi Gulf Coast region will be accomplished through massive infrastructure and construction projects.

## Collaboration

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By establishing a collaborative effort of public and private agencies representing education, workforce development, and economic development, programs can be implemented that will help new and existing businesses meet their growth needs as well as prepare individuals for high-skilled, high-paying jobs that are in demand.

The community colleges are positioned to partner with public and private sectors to develop and implement new programs to address labor shortages and new skills required as well as accommodate expansion in existing jobs. In addition, the colleges propose to expand multiple program offerings as part of the workforce development strategies presented.

The following section outlines programmatically the priorities – new and existing – that are proposed in anticipation of the projected growth for skilled workers for industry sectors on the Mississippi Gulf Coast from 2010 to 2020:

**Petroleum Technology:** To prepare a world-class workforce in land-based and offshore energy and related fields, new programs and curricula must be



developed, and equipment in existing programs must continue to be updated.

**Diesel Engine Technicians:** Diesel service technicians and mechanics inspect, repair, or overhaul buses, cranes, bulldozers, tractors, trucks, and other equipment with a diesel engine, including the disassembly and reassembly of diesel engines and systems. With the hospitality and tourism market expected to remain a dominant sector on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as well as the expansion of ports with trucking lines, a trained workforce will be required to meet the needs of the industry requiring trucks and buses.

**Physical Therapy:** Physical therapy is a high-demand career field helping people who have injuries or illnesses to improve their movement and manage their pain. Future job projections for physical therapy assistants are a 39 percent increase for the next ten years.

**Occupational Therapy:** Occupational Therapy is a career field dedicated to helping patients develop, recover, and improve skills needs for daily living and working. There are currently no technical training programs in this field on the Mississippi Gulf Coast for this growing field of work.

**Aviation Maintenance Technology:** A skilled labor force in aviation maintenance will be essential in attracting and retaining manufacturers, vendors, and suppliers in this industry that has a growing presence in the Gulf Coast region.

## Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment

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Exposure to various vocations is critical to educating young minds about their options in the workforce. High school graduation is not the lone goal of a K-12 education. Rather, the ultimate goal of education and training is a good-paying job and lifelong career. Collaboration of educational institutions from K-12 to the community college to the university system in both the private and public sector has proven to be an effective approach to developing an educated citizenry and workforce.

A critical component to providing an optional path for students to achieve a career is the concept of dual credit/dual enrollment. Mississippi must continue to develop and implement a basic and consistently applied curriculum for non-collegiate career paths. This effort must integrate high schools with community and four-year college Teacher Prep/Teacher Training assets, aligned with Gulf Coast employers' needs in existing and potential future business areas.

Community colleges provide opportunities for eligible high school students to earn college and high school credit simultaneously (dual credit) or to be enrolled in college courses while in high school (dual enrollment). With a joint agreement, students could enroll in academic or career-technical courses and be awarded both college credit and Carnegie units. For example, students could be enrolled in college courses in English, algebra, computer-related or welding classes and could receive college credit and high school credit for the same course. If a course is not offered at the secondary level, then students could dual enroll to earn college credit while completing high school. Courses may be offered at a college location, a secondary school site or online. Dual enrollment is a significant concept proposed for dropout prevention and recovery for high school dropouts.

## Multicultural Access

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The Asian and Hispanic populations on the Gulf Coast have historically been underserved by postsecondary institutions, as many of their preferred occupations have not required advanced education. As result of the natural disasters in the Gulf of Mexico, demand for these traditional occupations has been reduced significantly or eliminated. Community colleges propose to recruit this segment of the population for multilingual training programs and providing financial assistance to the participants.

## Industrial Arts for High School Students

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In addition to making it easier for high school students to gain exposure and interest in high-skilled technical training as part of dual credit/dual enrollment programs, it is important to note that 65 percent of the jobs in the future will require some technical skill at the postsecondary education level, and enrollment in secondary career-technical education is declining. Students often enter the workforce without essential, industrial technology skills such as applied mathematics, ruler reading, metric conversion, blueprint reading, tool identification, and other related skills. These skills have been condensed by the National Center for Construction Education and Research to a core skill set referred to as the NCCER Common Core. Incorporating this curriculum in high schools is a way to help provide essential skills for students to be better prepared in the future.

## Job Training for Seafood Workers

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As the seafood industry in the three-county Mississippi Gulf Coast is a major component of the economic restoration and recovery, the future preparation of the labor force for the seafood processing, sales, and distribution will be critical. With environmental and regulatory issues and the natural migration of wetlands, the seafood industry will change dramatically. New fishing and processing techniques and safety regulations will require the need for formal training of these workers. Community colleges have recently been impacted by the number of multicultural individuals seeking retraining or cross-training due to man-made and natural disasters. Language barriers often pose difficulty in traditional enrollment in training programs. Interpreters are required for most technical training areas. Programs through the RESTORE Act can potentially help assist in addressing specific language barriers, training programs, interpreters and assistance for displaced and incumbent workers.

## Conclusion

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The Workforce Development GoTeam, and several of the other GoTeams, recognized the challenge that developing and sustaining a highly-qualified and well-trained workforce has for the Gulf Coast and the entire State of Mississippi. Meeting and conquering this challenge will help industries of all kinds meet the needs of their customers while providing employment opportunities, increasing incomes, and improving the quality of life for many Mississippians.

The Workforce Development GoTeam carefully examined the challenges and opportunities for a workforce development strategy as part of the economic restoration of the Gulf Coast. These recommendations will provide an overarching strategic direction for long-term workforce development initiatives and economic development activities focused on the goal of producing skilled workers in sufficient numbers to meet ongoing and future needs.

The high schools and community colleges serving the coastal counties will be the primary delivery mechanism of workforce training and development; however, new and innovative ways of offering training and technical skills instruction will be key elements of making sure there is an abundance of highly-skilled workers on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## Workforce GoTeam

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**Co-Chair**      **Jim McIngvale**, *Ingalls Shipbuilding*  
**Co-Chair**      **Mark Henry**, *Mississippi Department of Employment Security*

**Rep. Manly Barton** (*District 109*)

**Donald Evans**, *International Longshoremen Association*

**Mary Graham**, *Mississippi Gulfcoast Community College*

**Jonathan Jones**, *Grand Casino*

**Jimmy Lane**, *Lane Construction Company*

**Rep. Doug McLeod** (*District 107*)

**Marilyn Minor**, *South Mississippi Planning & Development District*

**Chris Monforton**, *Habitat for Humanity*

**Sen. Phillip Moran** (*District 46*)

**Les Newcomb**, *South Mississippi Planning & Development District*

**Diann Payne**, *Jackson County Civic Action Committees*

**Ron Peresich**, *Page, Mannino, Peresich & McDermott*

**Rep. Sonya Williams-Barnes** (*District 119*)

**Non-governmental Organization Advisor:**

**Daniel Le**, *Boat People SOS*







## 8 SMALL BUSINESS

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*It is evident that the small business community is the backbone of the state's and the nation's economy.*

## Introduction

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Small businesses make up 96.5 percent of all employers in the State of Mississippi and employ 49.4 percent of the private-sector workforce. It is evident that the small business community is the backbone of the state's and the nation's economy and in struggling economic times it is important, now more than ever, to invest in small business and provide sustainable solutions to keep them growing and succeeding. As small businesses are able to grow and expand, so does the state's tax base, which benefits everyone.

The Mississippi Gulf Coast has experienced setbacks over the past several years due to disasters including Hurricane Katrina, the national economic decline, and, most recently, the BP oil spill. These disasters have significantly impaired growth and development, particularly hitting small business owners and entrepreneurs throughout the Coast. The Mississippi Gulf Coast has now been given a unique opportunity through GoCoast 2020 and potentially available funding from the RESTORE Act to provide the needed resources for small businesses to recover and prosper.

The Small Business GoTeam's analysis provided the following recommendations that may or may not be eligible for RESTORE Act funding. Some may, however, be implemented by other means and provide a blueprint for strengthening the Coast's small businesses.

## Business/Management Succession

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Experts state that only 30 percent of small businesses survive the second generation of management and that only 12 percent survive the third generation. As a result, it is essential that small businesses both develop and employ adequate succession plans well in advance of the events that trigger their implementation.

A well thought out and written business succession plan is imperative for the continued operations of a business in the event the owner or a key member

of management leaves the company as a result of death, disability, divorce, or retirement. Advance planning can provide a smooth transition to facilitate an expected or unexpected change in the composition of the business. It involves a written plan that will address the orderly transfer of the operations, management, and ownership of the business.

## Financing

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It has been identified through various research that financial and service resources exist for small business; however, it does not appear the resources are effectively communicated to the end user. There appears to be a vast array of technical assistance available to start up business, while the assistance to existing business is not as readily available. The opportunity exists to create co-ops to cost share expenses that can be costly to small business (i.e. legal fees).

The identification of resources available to bring financial capital to the Mississippi Gulf Coast can bring jobs, sales tax revenue, and economic stimulus to the area. The effective communication of resources is vital to this process. If the end user doesn't have the knowledge of the resource it could result in a failed business, an expansion of an existing business not moving forward, or a new business never becoming a reality. The continued education and partnerships of small business owners will assist the owners with expanding as the business grows and reacting appropriately to market conditions.

## Business Resource Centers

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There are numerous incubators, financing, training, marketing, and employee treatment programs that currently exist on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, but many small business owners and entrepreneurs are unaware of these great resources and what each offers. A key priority for the Small Business GoTeam is increasing accessibility to information, training, and education for Gulf Coast small businesses.

## Technology/Technology Transfer Center

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Technology is ever-changing, and it is difficult for a small business to keep up with and remain knowledgeable of the most current software, marketing tools, and other aspects of technology. Small businesses are in constant need of professional services for marketing, social media expertise, website development, and IT, but are unable to afford these services. There are several existing training programs and access to affordable professional services that assist businesses, both new and existing, but the issue is the lack of knowledge and accessibility to these programs and initiatives. Education is yet again fundamental for small businesses' continued growth and sustainability. It is necessary to connect this need with services already provided by Incubator systems and Chambers of Commerce. Capitalizing on what already exists is important for maximizing potential and securing long term success.

The Coast has a great resource in the Technology Transfer Center at the Stennis Space Center that provides an opportunity to leverage resources for expanding technology and product lines for existing businesses. In addition, the National Oceans and Applications Research Center (NOARC), which focuses on research and development, is another great resource for up-and-coming businesses on the Coast. It is focused on creating a real world impact on economic development and the private sector and providing innovative technology and solutions to businesses.



## Tourism

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The Mississippi Gulf Coast faced a lot of hardship following the BP oil spill, particularly the tourism industry. Tourism is a major economic driver for the Gulf Coast and has a direct impact on small businesses. When people travel to the coast, they are more likely to spend money in local establishments, thereby boosting the local economy.

An important component of tourism is hospitality. Educating employees in the tourism industry about all the Coast has to offer is an effective way in selling every aspect of the region including hotels, attractions, historical references, and events. These employees will, in turn, pass on invaluable information about the Coast to travelers and tourists, creating greater awareness and increased

revenue throughout the Gulf Coast. In order to educate tourist industry employees on the Coast, the creation of a What to do and How to do It film on South Mississippi is essential.

The Small Business Committee of GoCoast 2020 realizes that this subject appears to pertain to Tourism which is being handled by a separate GoCoast Tourism Committee. However, the Committee also recognizes that the small businesses of the Gulf Coast can benefit immeasurably by such a film. The small businesses that actually “deliver” the services of food, beverage, recreation, sports events, retail merchandising, arts and crafts, and entertainment can be featured and displayed in such a film.

## Leveraging Resources

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There is a vast array of resources available to small business, and these federal, state, and local

funds can all be leveraged with potential RESTORE Act funds. Many of the initiatives described don't require a lot of investment but rather coordination of existing efforts. The greatest need for investment is in providing a comprehensive plan for efficient use of existing resources and expanding upon these programs in order to provide sustainability to the priority areas identified by the Small Business Team.

It is clear that many of the GoCoast 2020 teams' efforts overlap with the Small Business team. Infrastructure including water and wastewater facilities, roads, and bridges are all needed for a business to operate and succeed. As noted above, tourism has a major impact on small businesses as well as economic development. The need for skilled labor is great for a business to expand and grow their products; therefore, sharing a connection with workforce development. This overlap clearly shows the importance of the defined priority focus areas for small businesses and should be taken into consideration should RESTORE Act funds become available.

## Current Initiatives Aiding Small Businesses

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**Small Business Development Centers** are cooperative efforts of the private sector, the educational community and federal, state, and local governments devoted to assisting and encouraging individuals who want to start a business or grow one they already own. Below is a list of existing programs currently in place to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs:

### Chambers of the Gulf Coast

- Mississippi Coast Chamber
- Hancock County Chamber of Commerce
- Jackson County Chamber of Commerce
- Ocean Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Biloxi Bay Chamber

The Chambers of the Gulf Coast strive to promote community and economic development on the Mississippi Gulf Coast while improving the business climate through facilitating, advocating, and providing information on behalf of the region.

### Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation

The Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation (GCRC) has helped make distinct improvements to the communities through its focus on bridging the affordable housing gap in South Mississippi and promoting community and economic development through various programs implemented by GCRC to deliver effective and meaningful results.

### The Innovation Center

A business "incubator" that provides basic business services to start-up businesses; office and light manufacturing space, business counseling, access to shared services, office equipment, telecom/internet capabilities, and access to common areas. The Innovation Center has had a great success rate in "graduating" successful small businesses.

### Gulf Coast Business Council

The Gulf Coast Business Council is the united voice of business on public policy issues of importance to the Mississippi Gulf Coast region. Through leadership and collaboration on targeted strategic issues, it promotes and advances the economic vitality and quality of life of the Coast.

### WIN Job Center

The Workforce Investment Network (WIN) in Mississippi is an innovative strategy designed to provide convenient, one-stop employment and training services to employers and job seekers. It combines federal, state, and community workforce programs and services into physical locations and electronic sites.

### South Mississippi Contract Procurement Center

SMCPC provides assistance to Mississippi businesses in identifying and pursuing federal, state, and local government contracting opportunities through electronic bid matching. SMCPC also works with the business community in marketing themselves to these agencies, prime contractors, and other private and public companies. SMCPC assists businesses in becoming registered in CCR, ProNet, and ORCA, certified as 8(a), HUBZone, WBE, MBE, and any other programs of interest.



### **Mississippi Development Authority**

MDA provides services such as the Entrepreneur Center to foster investment in Mississippi businesses and industry. Counseling and professional assistance is also provided. It maintains extensive resource materials including demographic data, industry reports, census statistics, as well as maintaining several databases pertaining to resources throughout the state.

The MDA also utilized the State of Mississippi's SSBCI allocation to develop the Small Business Loan Guaranty Program to provide loan guaranties to help finance small businesses. MDA's program facilitates capital accessibility for small businesses by providing loan guaranties to banks and other small business lenders. The program's purpose is to enable lenders to make term loans or provide lines of credit to new or existing small businesses in a difficult credit environment

### **Mississippi Small Business Development Center –University of Mississippi**

The Gulf Coast Small Business Development Center provides a variety of services to small businesses in the south six counties in Mississippi. Services include counseling, workshops, and information services. Resources that are available include business plan development, market analysis, capital sources, technology transfer, federal grant information and other managerial and technical support services.

### **Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson County Development Commissions**

These commissions promote and foster economic development in their respective counties.

### **Service Corps of Retired Executives**

SCORE is a nonprofit organization of working and retired business managers/owners and other professionals who provide free and confidential business counseling and mentoring to entrepreneurs.

### **Small Business Administration**

The SBA provides guaranty loans to finance start-up and existing small businesses, disaster loans for commercial and residential property, and procurement programs such as 8(a) and HUB Zone to help small businesses sell their goods and services to the federal government.

### **Magnolia Business Alliance**

The Magnolia Business Alliance (MBA) is a 501(C)6 not-for-profit corporation acting as a support organization and forum for the advancement of small and medium businesses in the southeastern U.S. Programs run by MBA include the Magnolia Minority Enterprise supporting minority-owned and -operated businesses; the Enterprise for Innovative Geospatial Solutions which nurtures and supports the growth of the geospatial technology small and medium enterprise cluster, and the Waveland Business Center which serves as a small business incubator.

### **Mississippi Enterprise for Technology**

The Mississippi Enterprise for Technology (MSET) is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that facilitates regional economic development by leveraging the resources of Stennis Space Center, the State, and the region to foster business opportunities among public and private entities.

### **Mississippi Procurement Technical Assistance Program (MPTAP)**

The Mississippi Procurement Technical Assistance Program is an integral element of the Mississippi



Development Authority and operates as a bureau in the MDA Minority and Small Business Development Division. The MPTAP, which serves as a Procurement Technical Assistance Center, is funded in part through a cooperative agreement from the Department of Defense through a program that is administered by the Defense Logistics Agency. The MPTAP delivers its services through a statewide network of procurement technical assistance centers.

### **Hope Enterprise Corporation**

HOPE, one of the nation's leading Community Development Financial Institutions, provides financial products and services in the States of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, and the Greater Memphis area of Tennessee. HOPE works closely with Hope Credit Union to provide services directly to individuals around the region. HOPE also manages the Mississippi Economic Policy Center (MEPC).

### **U.S. Naval Research Laboratory**

NRL is the corporate research laboratory for the Navy and Marine Corps and conducts a broad program of scientific research, technology, and advanced development.

future of space exploration, scientific discovery, and aeronautics research.

### **Southern Mississippi Planning and Development**

The Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District operates various direct loan programs designed to finance new and expanding businesses that otherwise would not be able to obtain conventional financing. It serves 15 counties in south central and southeastern Mississippi. SMPDD also provides some training and census/ demographic information.

### **Trent Lott Center for Economic Development**

The Trent Lott National Center for Excellence in Economic Development and Entrepreneurship (TLNC) is the leader in economic development for the State of Mississippi and beyond. TLNC is a catalyst, resource, and convener--providing research and educational resources to economic development practitioners and local, regional, and state leaders, as well as engaging the community with a full spectrum of economic development topics.

### **Partners for Stennis**

Partners for Stennis is a 501(c)6 nonprofit organization that supports space, ocean, and earth research and exploration at NASA Stennis Space Center.

### **Hancock Community Development Foundation**

Hancock Community Development Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that serves as a funding conduit for recovery projects with a broad community focus. The specific purposes of incorporation are to sponsor and support recovery and rebuilding projects; provide grant research, development, and administration to community non-governmental organizations; fund educational and community programs that stimulate job creation, foster small business growth, and support workforce development; support scholarships for the purpose of youth in Hancock County attaining a college education; and fund Hancock Chamber programs that further the purpose of the foundation and economic development and business growth in Hancock County.



### **Stennis Space Center Office of Small Business Programs**

The Office of Small Business Programs promotes and integrates all small businesses into the competitive base of contractors that pioneer the

## USM Business and Innovation Assistance Center (USM/BIAC)

USM/BIAC's primary function is the identifying, networking, and facilitating of partnerships and opportunities between the state/universities, federal agencies, nonprofits, and industry (focus on small businesses) that leverage their combined resources and capabilities in support of promoting applied technology R&D, its commercialization, and related STEM education.

## Conclusion

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As previously stated, there are a vast array of financial and service resources available to small businesses with differing funding structures and benefits. Current programs are designed to provide entrepreneurs and small business owners with individual consultation, comprehensive education, and information necessary to help their businesses start, grow, and prosper. However, there is a lack of awareness of these available resources. RESTORE Act funds could potentially be used to better coordinate and enhance existing programs and increase awareness creating a strong foundation for future generations.

A matter of great interest identified by the team as a serious obstacle not only to small businesses but throughout the Coast is insurance. Currently, the Wind Pool is the primary wind insurer on the Mississippi Gulf Coast with approximately 46,000 policies in force totaling approximately \$7.1 billion in coverage in the southern six Mississippi counties. Although Wind Pool premiums have not increased since 2007, rates are still high for secondary homeowners and businesses, and subsidies are only provided to primary homeowners.

The answer to the current dilemma is for commercial insurance companies to come back into the market and create competition among the insurers which would cause a reduction in premiums. This would help property owners stimulate the real estate market and cause the Wind Pool to depopulate. Another solution lies in fortifying homes and businesses to withstand strong winds, an effort in which the state is currently making progress. There is also a need

for strict enforcement of floodplain management. Building officials, permitting officers, city and county officials must be highly trained in flood management regulations and building code enforcement in order to effectively manage the floodplain. Accurate information is imperative for people building new homes in flood prone areas.

Mississippi is not the only state on the Gulf facing these issues. Partnering with other Gulf States in creating a regional pool that will spread the risk and stabilize loss experience should be considered. The challenge is to create a plan to utilize BP funds in a prudent way to assist in creating a competitive insurance environment on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## Small Business GoTeam

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**Co-Chair** **George Schloegel**, *Mayor, City of Gulfport*

**Co-Chair** **Mark Henry**, *Mississippi Department of Employment Security*

**Farrell Alman**, *S.F. Alman, Ltd.*

**Rep. David Baria** (*District 122*)

**Mark Cumbest**, *Cumbest Realty, Inc.*

**Don Halle**, *Gulf Commercial Construction*

**Rep. Greg Haney** (*District 118*)

**David Hughes**, *Community Bank*

**Kim LaRosa**, *Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation*

**Bob Mahoney**, *Mary Mahoney's Restaurant*

**Robbie Maxwell**, *Mayor, City of Pascagoula*

**Kent Nicaud**, *Memorial Hospital of Gulfport*

**Rep. John Read** (*District 112*)

**Chevis Swetman**, *The Peoples Bank*

**Tish Williams**, *Hancock County Chamber of Commerce*

### Non-governmental Organization Advisor:

**Bishop James Black**, *Center for Environmental and Economic Justice*





## RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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*Developing an increased and strengthened capacity for research and education will promote the sustainability of Mississippi Gulf Coast resources and ecosystem value.*

Early in its deliberations, the Research and Education GoTeam identified basic premises to guide it through the GoCoast 2020 planning process:

- A recognition that the future viability of the Gulf of Mexico depends on understanding the value of the Gulf's resources and the industrial base it supports
- A desire to develop the capacity and capability to conduct sustainable research and education that will benefit this and future generations of Mississippians

The Research and Education GoTeam's vision is that the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economy of the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 (RESTORE Act) funds will build a sustainable economic environment in Mississippi based on jobs demanding a well-trained, technology-capable workforce to improve the understanding of the Gulf of Mexico, its natural resources, and its future.

To accomplish this vision, a comprehensive plan is needed focusing on the creation of multi-disciplinary, sustainable research and education opportunities that would concurrently enhance economic development. This plan should include the following goals:

1. Foster research capacity, both multi-disciplinary and technological in nature, with emphases on building local expertise and infrastructure to position Mississippi as a global leader in coastal and oceanographic research and development;
2. Create research and technology development partnerships among research institutions, the private

sector, non-governmental organizations, State of Mississippi agencies, and U.S. government agencies to leverage capabilities and RESTORE Act funds

3. Develop kindergarten through PhD formal education within state pre-college curricula and Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) guidelines with emphases on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and necessary infrastructure and technology upgrades to develop a work force that will successfully compete on a regional to global scale

4. Increase public awareness concerning the economic and ecological importance and benefits of a healthy Gulf of Mexico ecosystem leading to an increased ocean literacy that nurtures stewardship of these invaluable coastal resources

The following areas should be Research priorities:

- Fisheries
- Aquaculture
- Ecosystem-based management
- Endangered, threatened, and protected species
- Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping
- Habitat restoration
- Coastal and ocean ecosystem forecasting.

The following areas should be Education priorities:

- Technology-targeted programs competitive on regional to global scales for workforce development
- Outreach programs to increase public awareness and understanding concerning the ecological and economic importance of a healthy, sustainable Gulf of Mexico
- Infrastructure and technology upgrades to meet the needs of a STEM-focused workforce

Results and specific deliverables from research will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of resource management, enhance economic utilization of Mississippi's coastal resources, provide critical data for response to natural and human catastrophes, and



provide a comprehensive understanding of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. With this new understanding of the ecosystem, past and present data can be used to predict the future. Economic benefits from these efforts include enhanced decision-making for resources based on sound science, promoting Gulf of Mexico seafood (e.g., commercial fisheries, seafood processing, and restaurants), Mississippi Gulf Coast tourism (e.g., recreational fishing, bait shops, charter boats, hotels, and the casino industry), and Gulf Coast workforce development along an east-west marine technology/aerospace corridor spanning the three coastal counties. Key technologies and observational-forecast systems will enhance resource management and promote human safety by providing ocean now-casts and forecasts to mariners, emergency responders, recreational boaters, search and rescue teams, fishers, and other stakeholders.

Developing an increased and strengthened capacity for research and education will promote the sustainability of Mississippi Gulf Coast resources and ecosystem value. Creating institutions and businesses that will provide technologically-advanced jobs in diverse marine science fields will not only allow highly qualified Mississippi graduates to find employment within the state, but will also attract nationally competitive graduates and scholars, thereby fostering the state's capacity for research and the growth of the research clusters integrating all of the research assets of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Precautionary ecological and health constraints on resource utilization can be relaxed by improved science providing an improved understanding of the Gulf ecosystem and heightened predictive capacity. This will permit expansion of businesses dependent upon the Gulf's marine resources, thereby increasing economic growth.

Incorporating this world-class research into formal and informal education will enrich the intellectual growth of Mississippi's citizenry, especially children, the future decision-makers and leaders in the Mississippi and national workforce. This will further GoCoast 2020 goals and objectives over the long term.

The above priorities are currently being addressed through Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi Gulf Coast

assets and institutional expertise as follows:

- Fisheries – Stock assessments and survey design; Population dynamics; Community and ecosystem ecology of commercial species; Population genetics; Fishery economics
- Aquaculture – Stock enhancement of commercial species; Commercial production of high-valued species for human consumption; Development of cultured bait to support recreational fishing; Seafood safety program
- Ecosystem-based management – Science-based characterization of marine and coastal ecosystem; Marine and coastal spatial and development planning; Ecosystem modeling
- Endangered, threatened, and protected species – Stock assessments and population dynamics; Health assessments (pathology and toxicology); Satellite telemetry; Critical habitat monitoring and restoration
- Comprehensive observation, monitoring, and mapping – Development and novel integration of multi-scale monitoring, mapping, and observational technologies for oceans, land, and atmosphere; Marine contaminant monitoring; Near-shore modeling and ocean mapping; Critical marine and wetland habitat mapping; Commercial species ecological modeling
- Habitat restoration – Commercial and protected species' critical habitat restoration; Coastal habitat restoration; Resource management
- Coastal and ocean ecosystem forecasting – Predicting future events based on past and current data

Numerous research and educational institutions provide the framework for RESTORE-based Research and Education activities:

- University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) Gulf Coast campuses in Long Beach and Gulfport
- USM's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs

- USM’s Department of Marine Science at Stennis Space Center
- Mississippi State University’s (MSU) College of Veterinary Medicine
- MSU’s College of Engineering
- MSU’s Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi
- Northern Gulf Institute
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Pearl River Community College
- Other public and private colleges and universities
- Institute for Marine Mammal Studies (IMMS) in Gulfport
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Stennis Space Center with federal agencies including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US Navy (NAVOCEANO and Naval Research Lab), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the United States Geological Survey (USGS)

The existing expertise and the institutions listed above provide unparalleled research opportunities and rich learning environments in traditional and non-traditional classroom settings to the state’s children, college students, and professionals. Expanding and enhancing these opportunities and programs with necessary infrastructure and technology upgrades through RESTORE Act funding will result in an environmentally stable Gulf Coast, a more competitive work force, and a stronger economy.

## Leveraging Resources

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The collective research and educational investment by numerous Mississippi entities has resulted in a leadership role in marine and coastal research, kindergarten through PhD education, and outreach that is internationally-recognized. Funding from state agencies such as the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR), Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (MDWFP) and federal agencies such as the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), United States Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) can assist in reaching GoCoast 2020 goals for research and education. The state provides substantial assets in the form of the research and teaching faculty at its academic institutions that can be harnessed in support of GoCoast 2020 goals and objectives. Additionally, federal funding from such entities as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health will be of benefit. Finally, private sector support both financially and in-kind can provide an important contribution in supporting applied research and educational GoCoast 2020 goals.

While the current economic environment of decreased state and federal funding opportunities hampers research, the largest obstacle to moving forward is the lack of a regional, cross-coast research and educational effort to focus on the abundance of intellectual capital available on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Utilizing federal, state, higher education and research, non-profit marine centers, and private industry, the region has tremendous untapped capacity to develop comprehensive strategies to meet the technical and research needs of the state. Further, building into this existing capacity has great potential for economic and workforce development.

Non-governmental organizations can provide intellectual expertise and infrastructural resources that will be essential in achieving the research and education goals proposed in this plan.

The results of work associated with the Research and Education GoTeam’s priorities will complement the efforts of every other GoTeam. Examples include the enhancement of commercial and recreational fisheries and aquaculture (Seafood, Tourism, Small Business, and Economic Development), habitat restoration and coastal and ocean forecasting (Eco-Restoration), eco-based tourism (Tourism, Economic Development), and marine engineering and trade (Small Business, Economic Development). Expanding and enhancing educational opportunities will promote growth and support a competitive work force (Workforce, Economic Development). Developing



and expanding marine and fisheries research and educational opportunities, as well as leadership development in technical fields, will require substantial new infrastructure in the form of cyber-infrastructure and broadband access, laboratories and classrooms, ocean observational networks, and research vessels (Infrastructure).

## The Present vs. The Future

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Current research programs (e.g., fisheries and aquaculture; oceanography and ocean forecasting; endangered, threatened, and protected species) and formal and informal education institutions (e.g., University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast Community College, Pearl River Community College, other public and private colleges and universities, Institute for Marine Mammal Studies [IMMS], Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, and INFINITY Science Center) are well established along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The following are programmatic opportunities for RESTORE Act funds where the critical mass is poised to elevate Mississippi into a strengthened position of leadership among Gulf of Mexico states, nationally, and even globally:

**Resource Oceanography** – Understanding species population dynamics in a period of climate change requires application of sophisticated oceanographic models, well-designed survey methodologies, detailed information on responses to habitat gradients and food web dislocations, understanding of community dynamics through stable isotope methodologies and ecosystem modeling, and advanced assessment models. No academic program in the U.S. offers comprehensive training in this field. Mississippi is favorably positioned to rapidly become the leading trainer of resource oceanographers given the present expertise at GCRL, USM-Marine Sciences, and Stennis Space Center.

**Marine Modeling and Forecasting** – Ecologically sensitive economic development of the coastal zone, optimal management of marine resources, and protection from coastal hazards are absolutely

dependent on sophisticated mathematical models of the marine realm. These models link complex processes into a computational framework providing advanced forecasting and guidance for management, regulation, and ecologically-wise development. Mississippi is well positioned to become a leader in the development of the next generation of such software and its application. Integration and expansion of the modeling capabilities at USM-Marine Science, Stennis federal labs, and GCRL can position Mississippi as the ‘go to’ location for marine modeling expertise on the Gulf coast.

**Comprehensive Observation, Mapping and Monitoring** – The dynamic coastal and oceanic environment continues to present challenges to scientific, social, and economic endeavors. Data are used in now-casts and forecasts to support mariners, emergency responders, recreational boating, search and rescue operations, fishers, and other stakeholders. USM-Marine Science and GCRL are at the cutting edge of providing high quality ocean environmental data through field-deployed and remotely sensed data collection.

**Marine Aquaculture** – The demand for seafood in the U.S. continues to expand, but the ocean’s resources are almost fully exploited. GCRL and MSU offer the leading facilities in marine and aquatic aquaculture on the Gulf Coast with potential in: (1) Stock enhancement to promote expansion of the tourism industry in supporting recreational fisheries; (2) Culture of bait (shrimp, crabs, and finfish) supporting the bait dealer industry; (3) Culture of endangered species to help protect them from extinction and to restore them to areas where local extinction has occurred; and (4) Development of aquacultured products for human consumption, such as freshwater catfish, crayfish, blue crabs, shrimp, sea trout, and red snapper.

**Endangered, Threatened, and Protected Species** – Mississippi waters support an abundance of marine biodiversity, including marine mammals and turtles. These top-level predators represent sentinel species that can serve as important bioindicators providing critical insight into the health of the ecosystem. Additionally, effective management of these species will benefit economic sectors, such as commercial

and recreational fisheries, tourism, shipping, and port activities. Studies that investigate current population dynamics, genetics, health, and ecology will nurture proper conservation and management in the future. Methodologies will include in-water surveys, satellite telemetry, pathological and toxicological analyses. IMMS has been leading research efforts in endangered, threatened, and protected species in Mississippi and northern Gulf of Mexico for almost three decades and will continue with its new partnership with MSU.

**Resource Genetics** – Advanced technologies now allow the tracing of specific genes quickly. Federally, a significant fraction of R&D funding is focused on genetics applications; however, very few states offer cutting edge marine genetics capabilities and none of them offer the integration of genetics with oceanographic expertise. GCRL offers the first gene-based population dynamics model for application to marine species. USM-Marine Science and Stennis Space Center agencies offer essential oceanographic expertise. A critical mass of expertise exists in Mississippi, if properly integrated with cutting-edge technology, to rapidly position Mississippi at the forefront of marine resource genetics.

**Pathology and Toxicology** – Marine diseases and contaminants offer serious obstacles to economic development and ecological management of Mississippi's coastal resources. Increasingly stringent Food and Drug Administration (FDA), EPA, and other federal guidelines constrain business and raise human health concerns that impact seafood consumption. GCRL is a member of a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded research coordination network focused on marine diseases and supports one of the world's leading programs in disease modeling. GCRL performs all analyses for the Mississippi shellfish sanitation program, conforming to International Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) guidelines and provides expertise in molecular microbiology, quantitative pathology, pollutant monitoring in marine food webs, and biological effects of anthropogenic contaminants, natural toxicants, and biotoxins. Integration and expansion of these capabilities can position Mississippi as the 'go to' location for expertise in marine diseases and toxicology on the Gulf coast.

**Marine Technology and Sensor Development** – Technology and ocean sciences are inseparable in the 21st century; USM-Marine Science and other Mississippi institutions are at the forefront of many new advances in technology development and application. Ongoing research at private, nonprofit, federal, and state facilities provides 'end-to-end' marine technology solutions by designing and building novel environmental sensors in the laboratory through systems integration, field testing, and operational deployment on a variety of platforms. Current research areas include applying robotic undersea vehicles for seafloor mapping, developing and applying coastal remote sensing platforms for ocean observation, and using nanotechnology to sense pollutants in the environment.

**Marine Education** – Educational assets on the Gulf Coast include the necessary components to implement programs that will increase the public's knowledge of the Gulf of Mexico and its ecological and economic importance. Examples are GCRL's proposed Gulf Literacy Initiative (GLI), IMMS' Ocean Expo Aquarium and Learning Center, and the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center. Through undergraduate academic programs at community colleges and universities, formal K-12 programs, workforce training through community colleges and universities, and informal education and outreach programs, numerous capabilities for marine education exist: degree-based programs for research scientists, professional development programs for teachers, field-based experiences for students, master's degree programs for resource managers, workforce training certification for ecotourism industry members. A fully implemented GLI or a similar program along with existing resources will produce an informed community that understands the value and vulnerability of coastal resources, improving decisions regarding the future health and recovery of the Gulf of Mexico.

## Conclusion

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Opportunities exist for cooperative research between the private sector (nonprofit organizations, fishermen, environmental consultants, and other similar entities) and the public sector (universities, state, and

federal agencies). Improving current cooperative research relationships among Gulf Coast research and educational organizations and increasing opportunities to develop future collaborative relationships will result in innovative and sustainable strategies and solutions. Improving ties between the GoCoast 2020 committees to foster inter-group synergies will develop increased interaction between academia, the business community, and local and regional political organizations.

Current funding is mostly in the form of competitive grants from state and federal entities. Limited funding is currently available for expansion of existing programs. However, increased integration of existing programs can occur through the GoCoast 2020 process despite present funding constraints.



The Research and Education GoTeam recognizes that RESTORE Act funds will be limited in amount and in duration and that any programs, activities, or projects initiated should be designed to be self-sustaining after RESTORE funds are exhausted. For this reason, it is the team’s desire that any activities initiated be ones that could proceed without RESTORE funds, get them functioning properly before RESTORE funding becomes available, then utilize the “once in a lifetime” RESTORE resources to enhance, accelerate, and make them self-sustaining.

Opportunities to develop projects that meet the missions of multiple GoTeams will provide the most cost effective solutions. Cooperative academic/ industry partnerships have been hugely successful (the Industry/University Cooperative Research Center program at NSF being a prime example). In the field of fisheries, examples of this synergy include the cooperative research programs supported by the surf clam, ocean quahog, summer flounder, and sea scallop fisheries that have resulted in quota increases of 33 percent or more over the last decade. Results of these programs directly feed back into business expansion and job creation. Return on investment has routinely exceeded \$50 for every \$1 of industry

investment. Fostering the development of industry/ academic partnerships along the Gulf Coast will provide Mississippi with a competitive advantage in economic development.

Development of the National Oceans and Applications Research Center (NOARC) is another example of partnerships between universities and private industry that can leverage against the federal agencies located along the Mississippi coast (e.g., US Navy, NOAA, NASA, EPA and USGS). While the organizational framework for NOARC is still being established, the potential exists to consolidate research and educational needs from RESTORE planning with industry and state management needs. These would be developed under the research and technical leadership and expertise of Mississippi’s major research universities as well as private and nonprofit facilities.

## Research and Education GoTeam

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## 10 CONCLUSION

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The GoCoast 2020 Commission's GoTeams all identified several common threads that should be followed as the Mississippi Gulf Coast prepares for the implementation of the RESTORE Act.

First and foremost, each GoTeam focused on the need for any project considered in the future under RESTORE to have as positive an impact as possible on the entire Coastal region, not just one single area.

Among the other shared goals of each GoTeam included the need for the long-term sustainability of any projects that are ultimately undertaken as a result of RESTORE. That includes financial stability so that there is a strong foundation in place for the Coast's continued growth in the future.

Several GoTeams produced sample criteria and scoring systems as to how proposed projects in the future would be judged so that there would be real, measurable goals and results that accompany the consideration of how RESTORE dollars are allocated. This type of approach provides a framework for a responsible and accountable way to utilize available funds.

It was also a priority of each GoTeam that just as the GoCoast 2020 Commission process was inclusive, the path for implementing the RESTORE Act should also be inclusive to ensure that all ethnic groups and communities are key parts of the equation. This includes making sure that public-private partnership and nonprofit organizations play a role in providing valuable input.

There was also a strong recognition by all GoTeams that there is an overarching need to ensure the Mississippi Gulf Coast has a well-prepared, well-trained workforce now and for the future. A skilled workforce is crucial to the success of all segments of the economy and brings about more opportunities for future job creation and industry recruitment to the Gulf Coast region.

Finally, it was the recommendation of each GoTeam that in any efforts undertaken as part of RESTORE, that Mississippi must build on past research, work, and existing organizations and programs that can benefit the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Utilizing existing resources combined with work that has been done by GoCoast 2020, Mississippi can now be poised to maximize the RESTORE Act in a way that is environmentally and fiscally responsible for the future.





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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The GoCoast 2020 Commission was made up of a broad range of citizens from across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They are to be commended for their time, effort, and creativity in helping formulate this Report.

Because of their dedication to GoCoast 2020 and the entire Mississippi Coast, the result is a Report that can be used as a road map for the future implementation of the RESTORE Act so Mississippi can be well-prepared to move forward.

The following is a list of Co-Chairs, Members and Advisors who worked closely and collectively to produce the contents of this Report:

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