



MISSISSIPPI STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN: PHASE I: ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY (BUCKET 3)



In May 2016, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) awarded a planning grant to the state of Mississippi for the development of the Mississippi State Expenditure Plan (MSEP). This process is divided into five phases, culminating in a MSEP that includes projects for funding under the Oil Spill Impact

Component of the RESTORE Act (Bucket 3). The planning grant will be utilized to establish an integrated and transparent process to identify potential projects for funding.

I. Establishing a Foundation: Aims and Targets

II. Project Contribution, Benefit, and Coordination

III. Project Filtering

IV. Project Vetting

V. MSEP Development

Phase I: Establishing a Foundation

In Phase I, the state of Mississippi worked to establish a foundation for the MSEP. The RESTORE Act requires that each program, project, and activity included on a MSEP must be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan developed by the RESTORE Council. Stakeholder groups were engaged throughout July 2016 to identify priority aims for the MSEP.

By establishing foundational components, the state of Mississippi ensures:

- ☑ That the MSEP contributes to the overall ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast;
- ☑ The MSEP takes into consideration and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the RESTORE Council’s Comprehensive Plan;
- ☑ Alignment of processes and project selection with the state of Mississippi’s commitment to transparency.

Stakeholder engagement began by asking the stakeholder groups to identify their priority aims from the established goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The goals of the Comprehensive Plan are:

1. Restore and Conserve Habitat
2. Restore Water Quality
3. Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources
4. Enhance Community Resilience
5. Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

MDEQ met with 13 environmental groups and 7 economic groups. Some of the groups included:





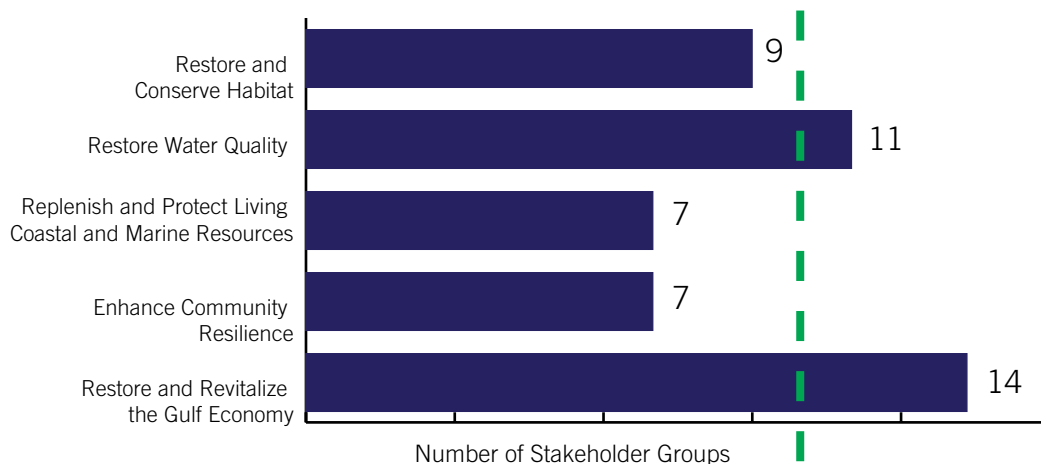

Stakeholder Priorities

By identifying priority aims, stakeholders helped to define the focus of this initial MSEP. In response to what aim or aims should be prioritized for the MSEP, the majority (>50% of stakeholder groups engaged) responded that the MSEP should focus on two of the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan:

Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine waters.

Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

2016 MSEP ENGAGEMENT



These goals align with stakeholder priorities identified during a 2015 public engagement effort under the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund program, where **Water Quality** and **Economic Development** were also identified. Thus, the state of Mississippi recognizes and understands that Water Quality and Economic Revitalization are top priorities for restoration along the Gulf Coast.

2015 ENGAGEMENT





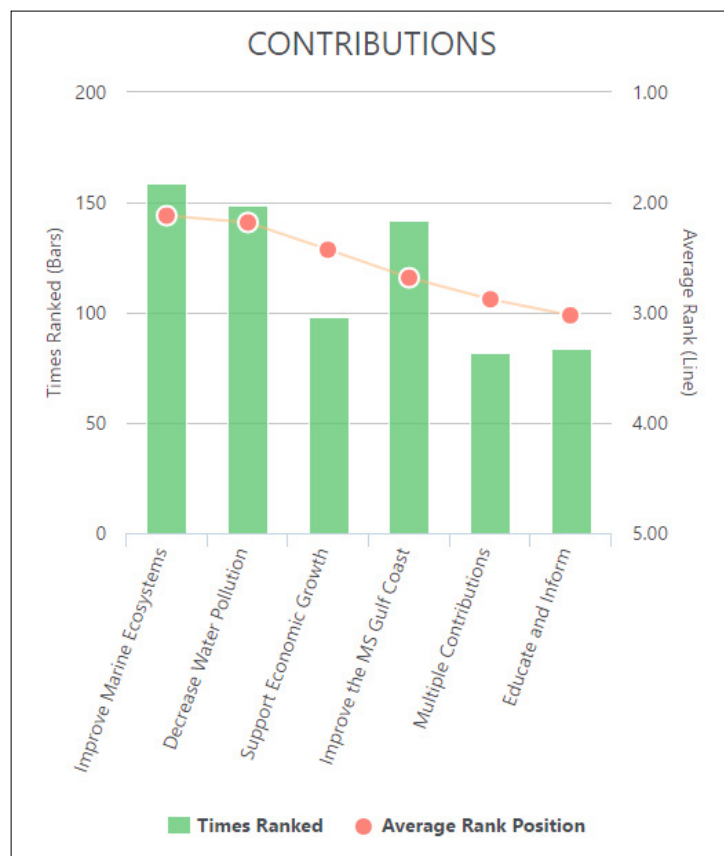
MISSISSIPPI STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN: PHASE II: PROJECT CONTRIBUTION, BENEFIT, and COORDINATION

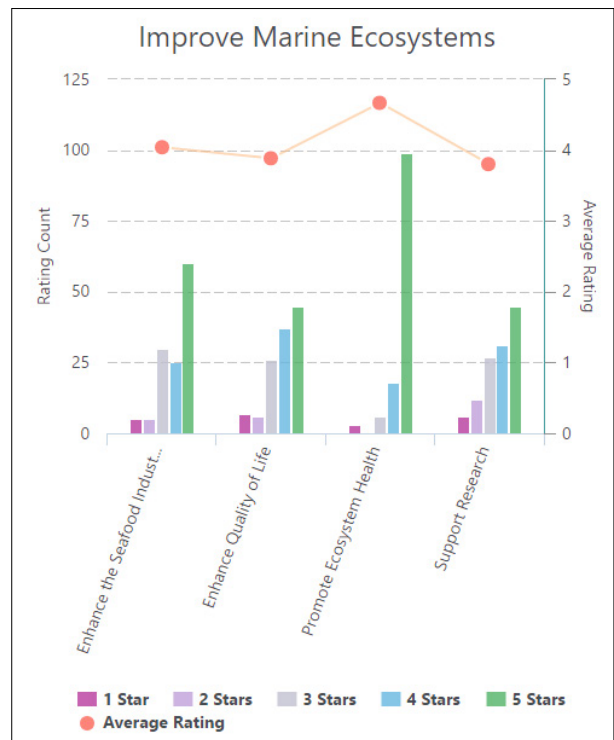
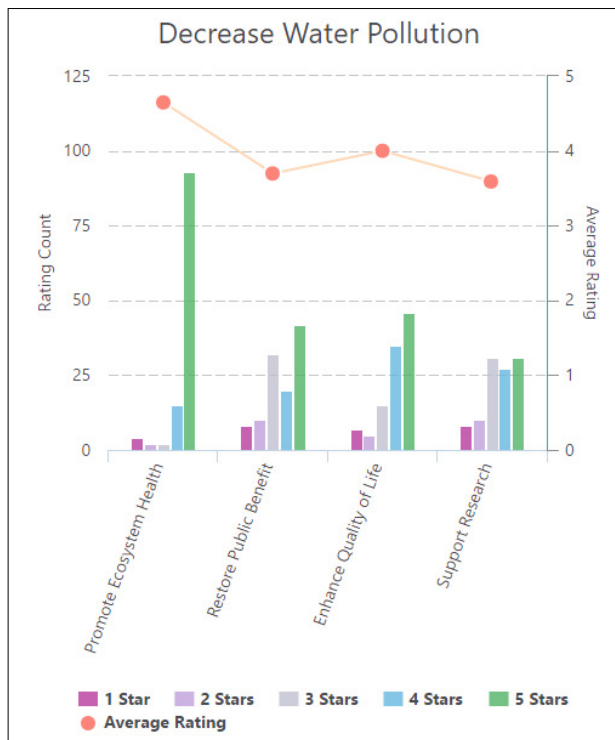


Phase II utilized the initial stakeholder input to engage a broader audience to identify the environmental and economic contributions and benefits a project can provide toward the identified priority aims of the MSEP. Project contributions and benefits were developed based on the RESTORE Act eligible activities, MSEP requirements, the Initial Comprehensive Plan, and review of existing restoration plans to further ensure coordination and compliance. For this exercise, MDEQ defined a contribution as an action that a project can take to meet the prioritized goal and a benefit as the outcome of a contribution. MDEQ utilized an online community engagement platform called MetroQuest to collect public input to identify what contributions and benefits a project should make in order to be included on the MSEP. Metroquest was available online for a 30-day period. In total there were 298 interactions with the online survey tool, and 184 individual data responses.

Utilizing MetroQuest, the public was asked to prioritize various contributions. Two contributions received the highest average rank positions. They were:

1. Improve marine ecosystems (Average position: 2.13; Times Ranked: 158).
2. Decrease water pollution (Average position: 2.18; Times Ranked: 148).





The corresponding highest ranking benefit for both contributions was:

1. Promote ecosystem health.

The contributions and benefit align with the following RESTORE Council Initial Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Restore, improve, and protect water resources.
- Protect and restore living and coastal marine resources.
- Promote community resilience.





MISSISSIPPI STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN: PHASE III: PROJECT FILTERING



Using stakeholder input on priority aims, contributions, and benefits, MDEQ created a project filtering mechanism that evaluated all of the Mississippi Restoration Project Idea Portal submissions. This filtering process is represented in the following table.

Mississippi Restoration Project Portal 833 Projects		
<i>Process</i>	<i>Factors Considered</i>	<i>Projects in Portal</i>
Step 1: Stakeholder Identified Aims and Initial Comprehensive Plan Goals	Project ideas must Restore Water Quality and Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy .	16%
Step 2: Evaluation of Impacts	Evaluation of project description and supporting documentation towards Restoring Water Quality and Restoring and Revitalizing the Gulf Economy .	3.8%
Step 3: Meets Priority Contribution of the Public	A project idea must meet both prioritized contribution criteria of Improved Marine Ecosystems and Decreased Water Pollution .	3.5%
Step 4: Meets the Associated Benefit Associated with Each Contribution	A project idea must promote the prioritized benefit of Ecosystem Health .	3.5%

Project ideas made it through the filtering process if they were in line with the aims that were selected during Phase I of the development of this SEP: Restore Water Quality and Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy. In order to be proposed for selection, project ideas must have checked both the water quality and economy identifier boxes during submission into the Mississippi Restoration Project Portal. Project ideas were eliminated if they did not address water quality or restoring and revitalizing the economy because they were not aligned with the aims selected for the SEP. Project ideas were also eliminated if they are currently being funded, or if they fell within the following categories: extension, education, and outreach; recreational improvement; research/monitoring; and public water distribution.



MISSISSIPPI STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN: PHASE IV: PROJECT VETTING



Following the project filtering process, remaining project ideas were evaluated exclusively for eligibility under the Oil Spill Impact Component; specifically: 1) eligibility of proposed activities with eligibility requirements of the RESTORE Act; and 2) review of proposed activity against applicable regulations, federal law compliance and OMB guidance. Preliminary environmental compliance reviews were also conducted with applicable agencies.

Of the 3.5% of the remaining project ideas, approximately 3.2% conform to the eligibility requirements.

Resulting List of Potential Projects:

After project vetting, 29 portal project ideas remained. From these 29 portal project ideas, one project and one program were developed:

1. Mississippi Gulf Coast Water Quality Improvement Program
 - Developed based on multiple portal ideas related to stormwater and wastewater improvement; however, there were no distinct tie-ins to specific water quality impairments, but rather suggestions that their repair/upgrade will result in changes to water quality.
2. Pascagoula Oyster Reef Complex Relay and Enhancement
 - Developed based on two projects that discussed the need to expand the Pascagoula reef complex, to relaying oysters for economic gain, and upon expansion consider augmenting reefs by setting oysters on cultch materials.

Additionally, the MSEP includes a planning project to support MDEQ's coordinated restoration planning effort to maximize the effectiveness of restoration in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region with the development of new and/or amended State Expenditure Plan(s).

Next Steps: Phase V - MSEP Development

The RESTORE Act requires Mississippi, through MDEQ, to prepare a MSEP describing each activity, project, or program for which Mississippi seeks funding under the Oil Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3). On November 15, 2016, a draft MSEP was released for public review and comment. To receive an email copy of the MSEP, [CLICK HERE](#).