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**GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL
RELEASES DRAFT
INITIAL FUNDED PRIORITIES LIST**

Mississippi's public meeting to be held September 10 in Biloxi

NEW ORLEANS – The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) today released a draft Initial Funded Priorities List (draft FPL). The Council, which is comprised of trustees from the five coastal states, affected by the spill, and the federal partners, is proposing to focus on 10 key watersheds across the Gulf. Using funds from the settlement with Transocean Deepwater Inc., the Council is seeking to provide near-term, on-the-ground ecosystem benefits, while also conducting planning activities designed to build a foundation for future success as additional funds become available from other parties. The Council is proposing to focus on 10 key watersheds across the Gulf in order to concentrate and leverage funds to address critical ecosystem needs in high priority locations. The Council also proposes a suite of Gulf-wide investments designed to support holistic ecosystem restoration and lay the foundation for future success.

This draft FPL would fund approximately \$139.6 million in restoration activities such as hydrologic restoration, land conservation and planning for large-scale restoration projects. In addition, the Council is reserving approximately \$43.6 million for implementation of additional activities in the future, subject to

further Council review.

The draft FPL is available for public and tribal review and comment through Sept. 28, 2015.

The Council will host a series of public meetings across the Gulf Coast to discuss the draft FPL and seek public and tribal comments.

“This draft FPL focuses on key watersheds and estuaries across the Gulf, using foundational restoration techniques tailored to the needs of specific areas,” said Justin R. Ehrenwerth, executive director of the Council. “We’re fortunate to have a diverse and dedicated group of stakeholders who have helped to get us to this point. Once again, we ask for your feedback and assistance in ensuring that we do the right thing for the Gulf.”

“Today’s announcement means more than \$21 million is directly being invested in Mississippi’s continued efforts to restore our Gulf Coast. An additional \$11 million through Gulf-wide investments will touch Mississippi in some shape or form. We believe all of these investments further our principle of making Mississippi whole, and represent priorities as established by the broader Mississippi stakeholder community,” said Gary Rikard, MDEQ Executive Director.

The proposed Mississippi projects that are included on the draft FPL include:

- Land Conservation (~\$15.5 million)
- Education and Outreach of the benefits of Land Conservation (~\$750,000)
- The Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program (~\$2.3 million)
- Enhancing Beneficial Opportunities for Use of Dredge Sediments(~\$2.2million)

The schedule of upcoming public meetings to discuss the draft FPL and seek public input is as follows:

Aug. 20, 2015	Texas A&M University 6300 Ocean Drive Corpus Christi, TX 48412	6:00 p.m. CST
Aug. 26, 2015	FWC Fish & Wildlife Research Institute 100 Eighth Ave. SE St. Petersburg, FL 33701	6:00 p.m. EST
Aug. 27, 2015	Gulf Coast State College 5230 West US Hwy. 98 Panama City, FL 32401	6:00 p.m. CST
Sept. 1, 2015	Battle House Renaissance Mobile 26 North Royal St. Mobile, AL 36602	6:00 p.m. CST
Sept. 10, 2015	Coast Coliseum & Convention Center 2350 Beach Blvd. Biloxi, MS 39531	5:00 p.m. CST
Sept. 15, 2015	Homer L. Hitt Alumni Center 2000 Lakeshore Drive New Orleans, LA 70148	5:30 p.m. CST
Sept. 16, 2015	Morgan City Municipal Auditorium 728 Myrtle St. Morgan City, LA 70380	5:30 p.m. CST

The draft FPL can be found on the Council's website at www.RestoreTheGulf.gov.

The public is encouraged to provide comments online at www.RestoreTheGulf.gov (preferred method); by mail to Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council, Attention: Draft FPL Comments, Hale Boggs Federal Building, 500 Poydras Street, Suite 1117, New Orleans, LA 70130; by e-mail to draftfplcomments@restorethegulf.gov; or in person during formal public comment periods at any of the public meetings.

Background

The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act) established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) and the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund), and dedicates 80 percent of Clean Water Act penalties resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill to the Trust Fund, for restoration projects in the Gulf Coast region. The Council is responsible for administering 60 percent of the total funding allocated from the Trust Fund: 30 percent (plus interest) under the Council-Selected Restoration Component and 30 percent under the Spill Impact Component. The Council is chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce, and members include the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, as well as the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Homeland Security, the Army and the Interior, and the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Council is responsible for helping to restore the ecosystems and economies of the Gulf Coast region by developing and overseeing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and carrying out other responsibilities. Read more about the Comprehensive Plan, the RESTORE Act and the Council at www.RestoreTheGulf.gov.

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