



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
PHIL BRYANT, GOVERNOR

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
GARY C. RIKARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 5, 2015
Contact: Robbie Wilbur
601/961-5277

MDEQ Announces Two *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill Documents Available for Public Comment

Public Meeting in Mississippi October 20

(JACKSON, Miss.) – The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) announced today that two documents needed to forge the path forward for *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill restoration plans on the Gulf Coast are now available for public comment. Once approved, the total compensation to offset injuries resulting from the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill disaster will reach at least \$2.17 billion.

The Consent Decree, the Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan (PDARP)/Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) are the two documents available for public comment for the next 60 days.

“We have worked diligently with all parties to forge a path for the future environmental and economic restoration of Mississippi. Thousands of Mississippians have followed this journey of response, recovery and restoration from the beginning and have faithfully engaged to provide a vision for restoring Mississippi. We want to hear from the public on these documents because their insight is invaluable and vital to the process,” said Gary Rikard, MDEQ Executive Director.

Rikard serves as Mississippi’s Trustee for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment under the Oil Pollution Act and is tasked with leading Mississippi’s recovery from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

The Consent Decree details what BP must pay to the Gulf States and the United States to resolve environmental claims, economic governmental claims and civil penalties. It contains information on the proposed resolution of natural resource damage claims (NRDA) and the state's economic loss claim under the Oil Pollution Act. The Consent Decree also includes proposed civil penalties under the Clean Water Act, of which 80 percent will be directed to the Gulf States for environmental and economic restoration via the RESTORE Act. This Consent Decree must be approved by the court before any settlement is final and will only be finalized after the consideration of public comments.

The Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan (PDARP) and companion Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) describes the injury to the environment studied through the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) under the Oil Pollution Act. The PDARP/PEIS lays out the restoration pathway to restore natural resources and services that were injured and lost as a result of the oil spill. Once approved, additional restoration plans will be developed that identify specific restoration projects in Mississippi, the other Gulf States, and the Gulf of Mexico. It will only be final if approved by the Court and after the parties take into account public comment and review.

Following the public meetings and at the close of the public comment period, the NRDA Trustees and the United States Department of Justice will consider the input received on both documents, make appropriate modifications and present the final documents to the Court for review and approval.

The Consent Decree and PDARP/PEIS stem from the previously announced Agreement in Principle that called for \$1.5 billion in additional relief to Mississippi to recover environmental and economic damages resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Combined with \$659 million in early funding, Mississippi is on tap to receive a minimum of nearly \$2.17 billion in compensation. Total global settlement values to resolve civil claims under the Clean Water Act and natural resource damage claims under the Oil Pollution Act, as well as remaining economic claims of the five Gulf States and municipalities are worth more than \$20 billion.

A meeting will be held on October 20 to allow the public the opportunity to review these documents and to submit comments. It begins at 5:00 p.m. in the FEC Auditorium at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast campus, 730 East Beach Boulevard in Long Beach.

The documents and supplemental materials are available for review and comment at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov. Comprehensive information about all aspects of Mississippi's restoration efforts can be found at www.restore.ms.

###