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**Gov. Bryant Announces Four Eco-restoration Projects
Following BP Disaster**

JACKSON— Gov. Phil Bryant announced today that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has awarded a third round of projects to the State of Mississippi totaling almost \$30 million. These four projects bring the total to more than \$68 million in restoration and planning projects awarded to the state through the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund.

NFWF's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (Gulf Fund) was created as part of the settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice, British Petroleum, and Transocean to resolve certain criminal charges against both companies in relation to the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Under the allocation formula and other provisions contained in the plea agreements, a total of \$356 million will be paid into the Gulf Fund over a five-year period for conservation projects in the State of Mississippi. Projects are designed to remedy harm or reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources that were affected by the 2010 oil spill.

"These projects were directly shaped by the public's input received as part of our planning efforts, and they will help the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast enhance and restore habitat, improve water quality, and study ways to increase oyster production," Gov. Bryant said. "Additionally, they will strengthen the partnerships among state and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations working together to improve the natural resources that are essential for recreational and commercial use that are vital to the Gulf Coast's economy and quality of life."

The four Mississippi projects are:

**●Habitat Restoration: Federal Lands Program – Phase I
(\$9,905,300)**

This project will enhance and restore habitat on federal lands in coastal Mississippi including restoration of over 30,000 acres through invasive species removal, forest thinning, and prescribed burns. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Forest Service will direct this effort.

**●Habitat Restoration and Conservation in Turkey Creek
(\$7,536,400)**

This project seeks to conserve important habitat and enhance

water quality in the 30,000 acre Turkey Creek watershed in Harrison County through habitat conservation and restoration along with stream restoration. MDEQ will partner with the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church Environmental Ministries, the North Gulfport Community Land Trust, the Turkey Creek Community Initiative, the Turkey Creek Watershed Team, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in carrying out these project activities.

●**Oyster Restoration and Management (\$11,780,000)**

This project seeks to improve oyster populations and sustainability by conducting several studies to better understand why oyster populations are not more resilient and how productivity can be improved. MDEQ will partner with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources for this project.

●**Design Challenge for Improvement of Water Quality from Beach Outfalls (\$544,600)**

Under the terms of this project, MDEQ will host a design challenge to address the water quality impacts of beach outfalls on the Mississippi Sound. Individuals and teams will compete to create innovative solutions for untreated storm water and it is expected that the winning design will be implemented at a larger scale across the Mississippi Coast.

“The selection of these projects involved more than a year’s worth of planning, significant public engagement, and the forging of partnerships with a variety of groups,” said Gary Rikard, MDEQ Executive Director. “All of that effort will result in the implementation of projects that will benefit the Coast and its residents for generations.”

Additionally, the U.S. Department of the Interior has appointed John Dane III, at the recommendation of Gov. Bryant, to the NFWF Board of Directors. His appointment is for a one-year term effective Oct. 14, 2015. The NFWF Board of Directors provides guidance and support to the foundation, whose mission is to protect and restore the nation’s fish and wildlife species and the habitats they need to survive.

Dane is Chairman of United States Marine, Inc. in Gulfport, Miss., and the recently retired President and CEO of the Gulf Coast Shipyard Group and its multiple operating divisions, which includes Trinity Yachts, a company Dane founded in 1988. He is also on the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality's Commission on Environmental Quality that creates policy, enforces rules and regulations, and conducts studies for using the Mississippi's natural resources.

More detailed information about these projects can be found at www.restore.ms. Access www.nfwf.org/gulf for more information about the Gulf Benefit Fund.

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