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PHIL BRYANT
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

November 17, 2014

CONTACT: Robbie Wilbur, MDEQ, 601-961-5277

Governor Bryant Announces Three New Restoration Projects Totaling \$28 Million

(Jackson, Miss.) -- Governor Phil Bryant announced today that Mississippi has been awarded more than \$28 million dollars from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for three new restoration projects spanning across Harrison, Hancock, and Jackson counties. This brings to date nearly \$39 million in restoration and planning projects awarded to Mississippi through the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund.

NFWF's Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund was created 18 months ago as part of the settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice, BP, and Transocean to resolve certain criminal charges against both companies in relation to the 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.

"This money means Mississippi is going to be able to restore valuable lost marsh habitat, enhance and protect the habitat of our wildlife throughout the coast, and strengthen our fishing industry," Governor Phil Bryant said. "These three new projects will help continue to build our coastal economy, while improving our coastal way of life, as we address vital issues such as invasive species, shoreline erosion, and overfishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

"For those Mississippians who enjoy fishing for red snapper, you will be glad to know that today's award means we are going to spend more than \$4 million to bolster our fishing industry through the expansion of a Reef Fish Assessment Program. This two year project will gather vital fishery data on abundance, distribution and life-history characteristics of red snapper and other reef fish occurring at the more than 16,000 acres of permitted offshore artificial reef sites," said Bryant.

More than \$21 million of the money will be used for vital marsh creation and restoration in three priority bay systems along the Gulf Coast including St. Louis Bay, Back Bay of Biloxi, and the Pascagoula/Escatawpa system. Over many decades, these priority bays have experienced significant impacts due to shoreline erosion, storm damage, and alterations to sediment transport -- contributing to the loss of thousands of acres of tidal marsh habitat. This project will advance Mississippi's beneficial use program to facilitate a cost-effective, sustainable approach to restoring and protecting significant coastal marsh and bay shorelines.

"By restoring these vital marsh areas we will create habitat that is vital to our coastal and marine resources, and is essential to our Mississippi economy. The project will also reduce erosion along our crucial bay shorelines while providing protection for coastal communities from storm surge and the rising sea level. At the end of the day, this project will help fulfill one of our most important goals for restoring our coast -- to improve water quality -- as we improve water quality on the Gulf Coast we ultimately improve our coastal economy and our way of life," Bryant added.



The third project, totaling more than \$2.6 million, will continue enhancement of habitat value of state lands in coastal Mississippi through improved management of invasive species. This project is an expansion of the 2013 Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund awarded to address invasive species management on land within Mississippi's Coastal Preserves Program.

Invasive species management work will take place in Buccaneer and Shepard State Parks as well as in the Ward Bayou Wildlife Management Area. An invasive species assessment will take place in the Pascagoula River Wildlife Management Area. Work to control persistent invasive species will include prescribed burning, mechanical and chemical control of invasive vegetation, and feral hog control. This project will focus on improving significant coastal marsh and transitional upland habitat through the control and eradication of non-native and invasive plant species and the improved tidal connectivity of these habitats to the Mississippi Sound.

The three projects were developed in consultation with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and federal resource agencies, and are designed to remedy harm or reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources that were affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

"The projects announced today signify another crucial step in Mississippi's commitment to restore the Gulf Coast and remedy the harm to our natural resources that were affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill," said Gary Rikard, MDEQ Executive Director.

"The model for the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund is one of partnership," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. "In order to succeed, NFWF must bring together state resource agencies, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations and private partners, all working in harmony to fund the best projects that will do the most good for the Gulf of Mexico and the communities that depend on it each and every day.

"These projects demonstrate the value of our efforts to work in a collaborative fashion to select projects that will provide significant benefits to wildlife and people for many years to come."

More information can be found at www.restore.ms and www.nfwf.org.

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Media Contact:
Rob Blumenthal, NFWF
Director, Communications
(202) 595-2457
rob.blumenthal@nfwf.org

NFWF Announces Nearly \$100 Million for New Restoration Projects on the Gulf Coast

Second Round of Grants from the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund

WASHINGTON, D.C., Nov. 17, 2014 – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced today the award of more than \$99.2 million from its Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (Gulf Fund) to 25 projects in the states of [Alabama](#), [Florida](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#) and [Texas](#). The projects, developed in consultation with state and federal resource agencies, are designed to remedy harm and reduce the risk of future harm to natural resources that were affected by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Today's announcement represents the second obligation of funds available to support projects in each state from the payments received thus far by the Gulf Fund. To date, the Fund has received \$511 million, and has obligated \$390 million, or more than 75

percent of available dollars.

NFWF created the Gulf Fund 18 months ago as the vehicle to receive and administer funds resulting from remedial orders in the plea agreements between the U.S. Department of Justice and BP and Transocean. The plea agreements resolved certain criminal charges against both companies relating to the 2010 oil spill.

Provisions within the agreements direct a total of \$2.544 billion to NFWF over a five-year period to be used to support projects that remedy harm to natural resources in the Gulf States.

“The model for the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund is one of partnership,” said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and CEO of NFWF. “In order to succeed, NFWF must bring together state resource agencies, federal agencies, and other public and private partners, all working in harmony to fund the best projects that will do the most good for the Gulf of Mexico and the communities that depend on it each and every day. The projects we announce today demonstrate the value of our efforts to work in a collaborative fashion to select projects that will provide significant benefits to wildlife and people for many years to come.”

Under the allocation formula and other provisions contained in the plea agreements, the Gulf Fund will receive a total of roughly \$1.2 billion for barrier island and river diversion projects in Louisiana, in addition to roughly \$356 million each for projects in the states of Alabama, Florida and Mississippi, and \$203 million for projects in Texas.

“The Gulf of Mexico is a national treasure, supporting a vast network of native wildlife and coastal ecosystems while providing jobs and economic growth to millions of Americans. That's why every American has a stake in restoring the Gulf,” said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. “This week's announcement builds on the initial steps we took last year with the Foundation and our Gulf state partners to begin restoring important parts of the Gulf and its watershed. As we move forward, the Foundation, our partners, and our employees will continue to play a key role in restoring the Gulf and its watershed, thereby meeting the long-term needs of our citizens and these natural resources.”

“NOAA is excited to see the next round of projects coming out of the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund. NFWF's efforts are an important component of comprehensive restoration in the Gulf and will allow us to pursue holistic restoration above and beyond the work being done under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment,” said Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “NOAA values our partnerships with NFWF, the Gulf States and others as we collectively work to restore and revitalize the Gulf of Mexico resources and communities.”

As required under the plea agreements, NFWF consulted with

state resource agencies, as well as with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to identify potential project priorities and funding needs. The discussions ensured coordination between NFWF's Gulf Fund and the agencies' related activities under the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) and RESTORE Act programs.

The projects announced today will complement those previously announced or under consideration under these two additional significant programs. Collectively, and where appropriate, these efforts will be coordinated and leveraged to advance Gulf Coast conservation and maximize sustainable environmental benefits. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a congressionally chartered non-profit corporation, is one of the largest conservation funders in the United States. It is subject to oversight by Congress and a board of directors that includes the heads of the USFWS and NOAA, as well as representatives from states, non-governmental organizations and industry. The board is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior.

For additional information on state-specific projects, please follow the links below:

[Alabama](#)

[Florida](#)

[Louisiana](#)

[Mississippi](#)

[Texas](#)

Mr. Robbie Wilbur
Communications Director
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Post Office Box 2261
Jackson, Mississippi 39225
601/961-5277
601/421-5699 (c)
601/961-5715 (f)
rwilbur@deq.state.ms.us
@MDEQ

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