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Gov. Bryant Announces RESTORE Projects for Mississippi

BILOXI— Gov. Phil Bryant addressed the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (RESTORE Council) at its meeting today in Biloxi and announced several projects for the State of Mississippi designed to help restore and protect the environment and economy of the state following the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

The RESTORE Council, consisting of representatives from the five Gulf states and six federal agencies, met to vote on approval of the *Initial Funded Priorities List* and the Spill Impact Component Rule pursuant to the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act). Included in that vote were four projects recommended by Mississippi.

“We continue to propose and implement projects to support the economic and natural resource recovery of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the entire Gulf region resulting from the oil spill,” Gov. Bryant said. “We have formed effective partnerships with the other states and the federal agencies to ensure funds are spent in the most effective and strategic ways to restore and enhance our natural resources and our economy.”

The four projects recommended today by Mississippi that focus on ecosystem restoration are funded under the RESTORE Act.

Strategic Land Protection, Conservation, and Enhancement of Priority Gulf Coast Landscapes (\$15.5 million) -- This project will protect lands through acquisition and conservation easement programs in areas

across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Priority areas include the Gulf Islands National Seashore, Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and the DeSoto National Forest.

Enhancing the Opportunities for Beneficial Use of Dredge Sediments (\$2.18 million) --This project will provide funding for planning, engineering and design, and permitting to use dredge material for coastal restoration.

The Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program: A Programmatic Vision for Bridging Coastal Restoration (\$2.27 million) -- The Mississippi Sound Estuarine Program will act as a coordinating body to ensure Mississippi restoration success is maximized. The program will look across the Gulf to leverage existing restoration efforts to the benefit of Mississippi.

SeaGrant Education and Outreach – Undertake education and outreach activities to describe the values of land protection for habitat, water quality improvement and for securing the future of the Gulf of Mexico in Mississippi (\$750,000) -- This project will establish an education and outreach program in Mississippi. The program will provide grants to fund education activities focused on restoration activities such as land conservation, habitat stewardship, and water quality.

The four ecosystem restoration projects recommended today total \$20.7 million and are in addition to over \$180 million of oil spill related funds for ecosystem restoration projects received to date.

Gov. Bryant also announced today Mississippi's initial Multiyear Implementation Plan (MIP) which includes nine proposed projects totaling more than \$54.1 million. The projects were proposed to the governor by the GoCoast 2020 Commission.

GoCoast 2020 was established by Gov. Bryant in 2012 to serve as the official advisory body for the allocation of funds received by the state under the RESTORE Act. The RESTORE Act requires the state, through the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), to prepare the MIP for Direct Component Funding which is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Some of the eligible activities that can be included in the state's MIP include: restoration and protection of natural resources; mitigation of damage to natural resources; workforce development and job creation; improvements to state parks; infrastructure projects, including ports; coastal flood protection; and promotion of tourism and Gulf seafood. The projects have to be approved by the U.S. Department of the Treasury after a 45 day public comment period.

The proposed economic development projects include:

Stennis International Airport Hangar (\$2 million) -- The proposed hangar facility will increase the capability of Stennis International Airport to provide aeronautical services to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Port Bienville Trans-Loading Dock Completion (\$8 million) -- The proposed Port Bienville Trans-Loading Dock Completion Project would improve the terminal use for trans-loading, become functional for containers on barge operations, extend an existing rail line, and be used to support supply vessels in the offshore industry.

Affordable Ultra-High Speed Internet Access (\$5 million) -- The proposed project would improve access to ultra-high speed internet, one-gigabit or more, by advancing fiber optic networks along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Mississippi Aquarium (\$17 million) -- The proposed Mississippi Aquarium is envisioned as a family and education and research-centered tourism facility for the Gulf Coast market.

Jackson County Corridor Connector (\$10.2 million) -- The proposed Jackson County Corridor Connector will provide a critical link between major commercial developments in the St. Martin/D'Iberville area.

Work-Ready Community Program (\$4 million) -- The proposed Mississippi Gulf Coast Work-Ready Community Program is designed to aid coastal citizens in the attainment of basic skills, employability skills, and specific industry skills that are needed in high-demand industry sectors.

Support for William Carey University School of Pharmacy (\$1 million) --

The proposed project will support William Carey University in establishing its School of Pharmacy on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Off-Bottom Oyster Aquaculture Program (\$1 million) --The proposed project would establish a program to provide training on the ecological, economic, and business components of off-bottom aquaculture to support the seafood workforce.

Project Management System (\$900,000) -- The proposed project management system would assist MDEQ in the management of projects that restore or protect the Gulf Coast Region.

Additionally, Direct Component Funding will also include \$5 million for Strategic Stream Restoration. This project would undertake various aspects of stream restoration such as engineering and design, planning, and implementation across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It is designed to improve the water quality that empties into the Mississippi Sound and reduce the amount of beach closures due to water quality.

Comprehensive information about these projects and all of Mississippi's restoration efforts can be found at www.restore.ms.

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