

December 14, 2011

## **Mississippi Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustee Releases Draft Early Restoration Plan**

*Announces Meetings for Public Comment on Proposed Projects*

**Jackson, MS** ( Dec. 14, 2011) -- The *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) Trustees today released the ***Deepwater Horizon Draft Phase I Early Restoration Plan &***

**Environmental Assessment (DERP/EA)** for public input and suggestions. This draft plan is the first in

an anticipated series of plans to begin restoration of the Gulf of Mexico to compensate for natural

resource injuries, including the loss of human use of Gulf resources, from the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil

Spill.

A series of public meetings will be held at various locations throughout the coastal communities.

“In

Mississippi, three public meetings are being offered, one in each coastal county, to ensure our citizens

have ample opportunity to contribute to the restoration process,” said Mississippi’s Natural Resource

Trustee Trudy D. Fisher, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

The meetings are scheduled for:

**January 17, 2012, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Jackson County:**

Gautier Convention Center

2012 Library Lane

Gautier, MS 39553

**January 18, 2012, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Harrison County:**

Westside Community Center

4006 8th Street

Gulfport, MS 39501

**January 19, 2012, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Hancock County:**

Bay St. Louis Community Hall

301 Blaize Avenue

Bay Saint Louis, MS

Fisher says the format of the meetings will consist of an open-house session from 6 to 7 p.m., followed

by a more traditional session beginning at 7 p.m. in which a formal presentation will be made and verbal

public comments accepted in a group setting. During the open house portion of the meetings, individuals

may review the plan, ask questions of subject-matter experts and provide comments about the proposed

DERP/EA.

Along with Fisher, the meetings will be attended by federal Trustee Council members from the

Department of the Interior and NOAA, as well as subject-matter experts from Mississippi and the region. In addition to the three Mississippi public meetings, the Trustees will hold an additional nine public meetings in January and February 2012 throughout Gulf Coast communities and in Washington, D.C. to solicit public input on the DERP/EA. Visit [www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov](http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov) to view the DERP/EA, access public meeting details, and view additional details of the proposed Early Restoration projects and ways to submit public comments. The public comment period will end Feb. 14, 2012.

The DERP/EA outlines the initial eight projects proposed to receive funding from the \$1 billion Early

Restoration agreement announced by the Trustees and BP on April 21, 2011. This proposed plan includes two projects each in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi with a total estimated cost of

more than \$57 million. These projects reflect the ideas and input received by the Trustees through

project solicitation and outreach efforts. Specifically, the Phase I DERP/EA proposes the following

projects:

- **Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation** - Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana; approximately 104 acres of marsh creation; benefitting brackish marsh in the Barataria Hydrologic Basin; estimated cost: \$13,200,000.

- **Louisiana Oyster Cultch Project** - St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Lafourche, Jefferson, and Terrebonne Parishes, Louisiana; approximately 850 acres of cultch placement on public oyster seed grounds; construction of improvements to an existing oyster hatchery; benefitting oysters in coastal Louisiana; estimated cost: \$14,874,300.

- **Mississippi Oyster Cultch Restoration** - Hancock and Harrison Counties, Mississippi; 1,430 acres of cultch restoration; benefitting oysters in Mississippi Sound; estimated cost: \$11,000,000.

- **Mississippi Artificial Reef Habitat**. Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties, Mississippi; 100 acres of nearshore artificial reef; benefitting nearshore habitat; estimated cost: \$2,600,000.

- **Marsh Island (Portersville Bay) Marsh Creation** - Mobile County, Alabama; protecting 24 existing acres of salt marsh; creating 50 acres of salt marsh; 5,000 linear feet of tidal creeks; benefitting coastal salt marsh in Alabama; estimated cost: \$9,400,000.

· **Alabama Dune Cooperative Restoration Project** - Baldwin County, Alabama; 55 acres of primary dune habitat; benefitting coastal dune and beach mouse habitat in Alabama; estimated cost: \$1,145,976.

· **Florida Boat Ramp Enhancement and Construction** - Escambia County, Florida; four boat ramp facilities; benefitting human use in Escambia County, Florida; estimated cost: \$4,406,309.

· **Florida (Pensacola Beach) Dune Restoration** - Escambia County, Florida; 20 acres of coastal dune habitat; benefitting coastal dune habitat in Escambia County, Florida; estimated cost: \$585,898. Early Restoration provides an opportunity to implement restoration projects prior to the completion of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment. The damage assessment will continue while Early Restoration planning is under way. BP and other responsible parties are obligated to compensate the public for the full scope of the natural resource injury resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill, including the cost of assessing such injury and planning for restoration.

“Public participation is a critical factor in developing plans for restoring the Gulf following the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill,” said Fisher. We understand that the people who make their living from the Gulf and those who choose to live or vacation here offer insightful and important perspectives that will help determine the types of restoration needed. As a member of the Trustee Council, I strongly urge everyone to become involved by attending the public meetings that have been scheduled throughout the Gulf in order to ensure their thoughts are heard.”