President Obama Signs Executive Order
Officially Forming Gulf Coast Ecosystem
Restoration Task Force

EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson to oversee national transition
from emergency response to coastal recovery in the gulf

WASHINGTON. – With an executive order in place setting up the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force to continue the recovery after the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, EPA Administrator and Task Force Chair Lisa P. Jackson today started a series of meetings in the region to focus on the next steps. “The president has made clear that he wants restoration plans to come from the gulf coast, and not be imposed on the gulf residents by Washington. We’re counting on the people who know these areas best -- the people who call the gulf home -- to shape our work,” Administrator Jackson explained during her meetings on Tuesday. “As someone who grew up here, I know the ecosystem is the key to our future. Our economy, our health and our culture are built on the coastline and the gulf waters. I know this, the president knows this, and we are going to stand with you.”

Jackson was a key part of the Obama Administration’s immediate response efforts following the oil spill, and her deep expertise in environment-related issues will be central in spurring actions that help to restore the region’s ecosystem while providing important support for the economy.

President Obama today signed the executive order formally creating the task force. Its mission is to coordinate efforts to implement restoration programs and projects in the gulf coast region. The task force also will coordinate with the Department of Health and Human Services on public health issues and with other federal agencies on ways to enhance the economic benefits that ecosystem restoration will bring to the region.

It will have five state representatives, appointed by the president upon recommendation of the governors of each gulf state, along with one senior official each from many federal departments and agencies, including the departments of Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation. The task force may also include representatives from affected tribes.

The executive order follows the release last week of the long-term restoration proposal, written by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus -- an aggressive plan that included a call for dedicated funds to support the gulf coast’s environmental and economic recovery. Included in the Mabus report was a recommendation for Congress to authorize a Gulf Coast Recovery Council to manage the overall restoration efforts in the gulf coast. The president created the task force to enhance the coordination and implementation of important restoration efforts, even before Congress acts.