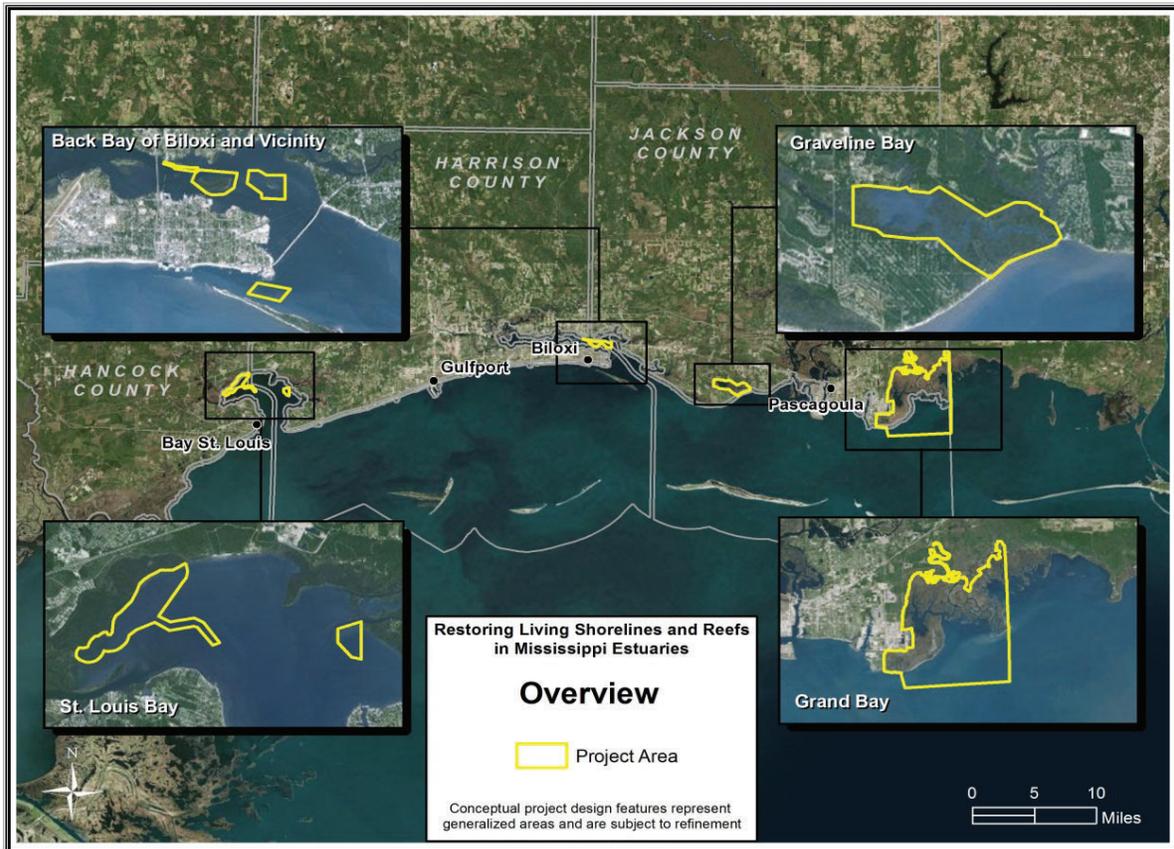


Notice of Project Change for the Phase IV Early Restoration Project: Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries



The Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries project was analyzed in the **2015 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Final Phase IV Early Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (Final Phase IV RP/EA)** and selected by the **Trustees** for implementation. The Trustees approved eight project components in four bays: St. Louis Bay; the Back Bay of Biloxi and vicinity; Graveline Bay and Grand Bay (See Table 1). The project includes construction of up to 4.1 miles of living shoreline/breakwaters, approximately 267 acres of subtidal reef habitat creation, and 5 acres of intertidal reef habitat creation. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is the Implementing Trustee for this \$30 million early restoration project.

Table 1. Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries-Project Components for Approved Project

| Project Components | Breakwater Structure Length (feet) | Subtidal Reef Habitat (acres) | Intertidal Reef Habitat (acres) |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Grand Bay and Graveline Bayou (Jackson County) | | | |
| Grand Bay Intertidal and Subtidal Reefs | 0 feet | 77 acres | 3 acres |
| Graveline Bay Intertidal and Subtidal Reefs | 0 feet | 70 acres | 2 acres |
| Back Bay of Biloxi and Vicinity (Jackson and Harrison County) | | | |
| Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reefs | 2,385 feet | 70 acres | 0 acres |
| Big Island Living Shoreline | 5,011 feet | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| Little Island Living Shoreline | 2,316 feet | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| Deer Island Subtidal Reef | 0 feet | 20 acres | 0 acres |
| St. Louis Bay (Harrison and Hancock County) | | | |
| Wolf River Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef | 1,388 feet | 30 acres | 0 acres |
| St. Louis Bay Living Shoreline | 10,812 feet | 0 acres | 0 acres |
| TOTAL | 21,912 feet | 267 acres | 5 acres |
| | 4.1 miles | | |

MDEQ initiated engineering and design for project components in 2016. As a result of preliminary engineering and design MDEQ, as the Implementing Trustee, has determined that termination of three of the eight project components is necessary: the St. Louis Bay Living Shoreline, the Little Island Living Shoreline and the Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef. The components are being eliminated for the following reasons:

St. Louis Bay Living Shoreline Component and the Little Island Living Shoreline Components: After conducting further due diligence on properties adjacent to the project areas it was determined that at least some of the adjacent property may not be owned by the State of Mississippi. Due to the dynamic nature of the shoreline, a tidelands survey is necessary in order to delineate private from public ownership. However, since the areas in question are of considerable size, it has been determined that moving forward with these components at this time would be cost prohibitive and not feasible.

The Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef: During the engineering and design phase of the project, it was determined that this project component, as designed, could potentially result in creation of a navigational hazard. Moving forward with Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef as described in the Phase IV RP/EA is not feasible at this time.

Notification of evaluation of a material project change and finding of consistency with Final Phase IV RP/EA

The MS TIG evaluated the decision to eliminate the St. Louis Bay Living Shoreline, Little Island Living Shoreline and Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef project components based on the criteria established in Section 9.5.2 of the Trustee Council Standard Operating Procedures for Implementation of the Natural Resource Restoration for the DWH Oil Spill (SOPs). The MS TIG evaluated whether eliminating the components would result in a modified



project that remains consistent with the environmental review in the Final Phase IV RP/EA or whether the modification would result in substantial changes that are relevant to environmental concerns. The MS TIG also assessed whether there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns not addressed in the impact analysis of the RP/EA (40 C.F.R. § 1502.9 (c)). Finally, the MS TIG evaluated whether elimination of the three project components would affect the project's selection under OPA. The MS TIG concluded that elimination of the St. Louis Bay Living Shoreline, Little Island Living Shoreline and Channel Island Living Shoreline and Subtidal Reef project components does not affect the overall project objectives and that there are no changes to the environmental consequences evaluated in the Final Phase IV RP/EA as a result of the decision to eliminate these project components that warrant additional NEPA analysis. Further, the elimination of these project components does not affect the selection of the project under OPA. The five remaining project components will provide the shoreline protection and secondary productivity benefits that were contemplated for the three eliminated components. In sum, the Project is consistent with the environmental review conducted for the Final Phase IV RP/EA and no further analyses under OPA or NEPA are necessary for the eliminated components of the Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries Project at this time.

Next steps

MDEQ is in the process of completing engineering design and permitting of the remaining five project components (See Table 1), which may include further refinements and changes. MDEQ intends to submit individual environmental permitting applications for the remaining five components. If applicable, a notification of project change will be provided for each respective component in accordance with SOP Section 9.5.2, Project Changes. Final costs for implementation of the remaining components will be more certain when permitting and final engineering design is completed; therefore, funds allocated to the eliminated components will continue to be held by MDEQ until implementation of all remaining project components is complete. If any project funds remain after the remaining components of the Restoring Living Shorelines and Reefs in Mississippi Estuaries project are implemented, including project monitoring and adaptive management, those funds will be handled in accordance with SOP Section 7.1.3.1, Excess Project Funds.

