

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

MISSISSIPPI STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN

2025 AMENDMENT

Submitted Pursuant to the

Oil Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act

33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)

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## Introduction

Projects, and corresponding project details/provisions, approved in the Mississippi State Expenditure Plan (MSEP), as amended, remain in full force and effect to the extent not modified in this MSEP 2025 Amendment.

### *Overview of the Oil Spill*

On or about April 20, 2010, the mobile offshore drilling unit Deepwater Horizon, which was being used to drill a well for BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP) in the Macondo prospect (Mississippi Canyon 252 – MC252), experienced an explosion, caught fire, and subsequently sank in the Gulf of America<sup>1</sup> (the Gulf). This incident resulted in the discharge of oil and other substances into the Gulf from the rig and the submerged wellhead. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill (Spill) is the largest maritime oil spill in U.S. history. The Spill discharged millions of barrels of oil over a period of 87 days. In addition, well over one million gallons of dispersants were applied to the waters of the Spill area in an attempt to disperse the spilled oil. An undetermined amount of natural gas was also released to the environment as a result of the Spill. After several failed attempts to stop the release of oil, the well was declared “sealed” on September 19, 2010.

As a result of civil and criminal settlements with the parties responsible for the Spill, the State of Mississippi (Mississippi) has and will continue to receive funding from several sources to restore or benefit the natural resources or the economy of Mississippi including, but not limited to, funding received through the following: (1) the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA) and the corresponding Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA); (2) the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act); and (3) the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF).

The Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is the designated natural resource trustee under OPA and the Governor’s designee for the RESTORE Act and NFWF GEBF for the State of Mississippi.

### *RESTORE Act*

On July 6, 2012, the President signed into law the RESTORE Act, Subtitle F of Public Law 112-141. The RESTORE Act makes available 80% of the Clean Water Act (CWA) civil and administrative penalties paid by the responsible parties for the Spill (i.e., BP and Transocean) to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund established by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Under the Act, monetary penalties in the Trust Fund will be available for programs, projects, and activities that restore and protect the environment and economy of the Gulf Coast region. Within the RESTORE Act, there are five funding components (commonly referred to as “buckets”), which make funds available to each of the Gulf States in accordance with certain legal parameters. These components are:

- Direct Component (Bucket 1)
- Comprehensive Plan Component (Bucket 2)
- Oil Spill Impact Component (Bucket 3)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Science Program (Bucket 4)
- Centers of Excellence Research Grants Program (Bucket 5)

The Oil Spill Impact Component, also referred to as Bucket 3, accounts for 30% of the funds available in the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund. In accordance with the requirements of the RESTORE Act and as set out in the allocation regulation at 40 C.F.R. § 1800.500, the State of Mississippi will receive 19.07% of the 30% allocation of the Oil Spill Impact Component. The RESTORE Act requires Mississippi, through MDEQ, to prepare a Mississippi State Expenditure Plan (MSEP) describing each activity, project, or program for which Mississippi seeks funding under the Oil Spill Impact Component.

As defined in 31 C.F.R. § 34.503, the MSEP includes a narrative description for each activity, project, or program for which Oil Spill Impact Component funding is being sought. The narrative description for each

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to Executive Order 14172, the U.S. Continental Shelf area bounded on the northeast, north, and northwest by the State of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida and extending to the seaward boundary with Mexico and Cuba in the area formerly named as the Gulf of Mexico was renamed as the Gulf of America. References to the Gulf of Mexico have been changed throughout.

activity in the MSEP contains the following information:

- The need, purpose, and objectives of the activity;
- How the activity is eligible for funding and meets all requirements of § 34.203 and § 34.503;
- Location of the activity;
- Budget for the activity;
- Milestones for the activity;
- Projected completion dates for the activity;
- Criteria MDEQ will use to evaluate the success of each activity in helping restore and protect the Gulf Coast Region;
- If funding has been requested from other sources, including other components of the Act, the plan identifies the source, states how much funding was requested, and provides the current status of the request;
- How the activities in the plan contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast; and
- How each activity that would restore and protect natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands or the economy of the Gulf Coast, is based on the best available science.

New and/or amended MSEP(s) may be written as additional funds become available and as additional projects are identified for funding.

#### *Eligible Activities for the Oil Spill Impact Component*

The RESTORE Act dedicates 80% of any civil and administrative penalties paid under the Clean Water Act by responsible parties in connection with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund for ecosystem restoration (environmental), economic recovery, and tourism promotion in the Gulf Coast region. The RESTORE Act differs from other restoration funding sources (i.e., NFWF, NRDA) in that it specifically allows and anticipates that restoration projects will be developed for the restoration of natural resources and the restoration of the economy, both of which were affected as a result of the Spill.

The eligible activities for the Oil Spill Impact Component cover both ecological and economic projects. The RESTORE Act defines eligible activities for which the Oil Spill Impact Component funds may be used. The eligible activities, projects, and programs as defined in 31 C.F.R. § 34.203 are:

1. Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region;
2. Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources;
3. Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring;
4. Workforce development and job creation;
5. Improvements to or on state parks located in coastal areas affected by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill;
6. Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure;
7. Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure;
8. Planning assistance;
9. Administrative costs;
10. Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast Region, including recreational fishing; and
11. Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region.

## **Designated State Entity**

The State of Mississippi, Office of the Governor, is the entity designated under the Oil Spill Impact Component of the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012 (RESTORE Act) to develop the required State Expenditure Plan. The Office of the Governor appointed Chris Wells, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, as his appointee.

## **Point of Contact**

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## **Section I: State Certification of RESTORE Act Compliance**

### **Certifications of RESTORE Act Compliance**

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality hereby certifies to the following:

- Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B)(i)(I), the MSEP includes projects, programs, and activities which will be implemented within the Gulf Coast Region and are eligible for funding under the RESTORE Act.
- Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B)(i)(II), the projects, programs, and activities in the MSEP contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast.
- Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B)(i)(III), the MSEP takes into consideration and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan adopted by the RESTORE Council.
- Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(2)(B)(i), the projects and programs that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast included on the MSEP will be based on the best available science as defined by the RESTORE Act.
- Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(3)(B)(ii), not more than 25% of the funds will be used for infrastructure projects for the eligible activities described in 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(1)(B)(i)(VI-VII).
- Issues crossing Gulf State boundaries have been evaluated to ensure that a comprehensive, collaborative ecological and economic recovery is furthered by the MSEP.

### **Process Used to Verify Compliance**

The projects were prioritized using the following:

Mississippi utilized three stakeholder-driven components to identify and prioritize all projects for inclusion in the MSEP Amendment: Stakeholder Meetings; The Governor's Gulf Coast Advisory Committee (GCAC); and the Restoration Project Idea Portal. Items (a) through (f) below provide further explanation for the GCAC process:

- (a) Governor Tate Reeves created the GCAC to serve as an advisory body to the Governor for recommendation of projects to be funded for Mississippi under the RESTORE Act.
- (b) The GCAC is comprised of over 70 engaged stakeholders, including private citizens, non-governmental organizations, business owners, elected officials, and other community leaders from the Mississippi Coast.
- (c) The GCAC formed six sub-committees that focused on six key areas related to the activities specified in the RESTORE Act (Eco-restoration, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Seafood, Tourism, and Workforce Development/Research & Education).
- (d) On April 7, 2025, MDEQ released a public "call for projects" soliciting project ideas from the public for funding consideration on this amended MSEP.
- (e) June 5-6, 2025, Governor Reeves convened the GCAC to begin selection of recommended projects for this amended MSEP. Each sub-committee member was sent a list of projects previously selected for funding within their respective category and provided a list of remaining portal projects related to their respective committee category.
- (f) The GCAC sub-committees met, and each produced a list of recommended projects for submittal to the Governor's office. After deliberation, the Governor selected projects to fund.

Each of the projects identified in the MSEP Amendment was developed and informed directly from a project (or projects) submitted in the Restoration Project Idea Portal.

Additionally, MDEQ completed due diligence activities on each project to evaluate constructability, feasibility,

logistics, eligibility determinations, and environmental compliance reviews to confirm recommended projects could be funded by the Oil Spill Impact Component of the RESTORE Act.

## **Section II: Public Participation Statement**

There were multiple aspects of public engagement for the 2025 MSEP Amendment in order to gather the appropriate public participation necessary to conform with the public participation requirements outlined in 31 C.F.R. § 34.503(g). In accordance with 31 C.F.R. § 34.503(g), the MSEP will be available for public review and comment for a minimum of forty-five (45) days. The MSEP is available for public comment and review in a manner that is consistent with other MDEQ-administered public comment periods related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Each activity on the MSEP will only be adopted after consideration of all meaningful input.

## **Section III: Financial Integrity**

On behalf of the State of Mississippi, MDEQ understands its fiduciary responsibilities under the RESTORE Act and is committed to maintaining the highest level of fiscal accountability and transparency to assure the public and Congress that funds have been managed appropriately to further the purposes of the RESTORE Act. These responsibilities include RESTORE Act project administration functions, such as maintaining financial records and ensuring complete and accurate reporting through project oversight. MDEQ's financial system was developed around the basic principles of sound financial management. These principles are internationally accepted accounting and financial management practices recognized worldwide by leading public and private sector organizations. The basic principles of sound financial management include, among others, principles of transparency, internal checks and balances, and independent external auditing.

**Transparency** – MDEQ is committed to maintaining transparency with the public and to reporting on RESTORE Act projects, programs, and activities.

**Internal checks and balances** – To maintain effective controls, MDEQ properly segregates duties among state personnel performing financial functions for RESTORE Act projects, programs, and activities.

**Independent external auditing** – All state agencies are subject to annual audits to be conducted by the Office of the State Auditor, or its contracted designee as prescribed by state law. Agency audits are performed at the fund level in conjunction with the State Auditor's annual audit of the State's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

These principles of sound financial management are designed to:

- Prevent corruption and reduce or eliminate financial risk and loss;
- Ensure that funds are spent in accordance with the respective grant awards, state law and federal law, as applicable;
- Ensure that personnel responsible for implementing the activities in the project work plans have the resources needed to support the job; and
- Assist state personnel in spending funds efficiently and effectively and reporting expenditures accurately.

MDEQ is responsible for:

- Fiscally managing and safeguarding RESTORE Act project funds;
- Disbursing funds to sub-recipients in a timely manner for reimbursement of eligible project expenditures;
- Keeping accurate and up-to-date records of all financial transactions related to project activities;
- Providing accurate financial reports as requested or required;
- Assisting state personnel with financial planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation;
- Assisting state personnel in understanding and complying with financial policies and procedures needed to ensure efficient and effective stewardship of RESTORE Act funds;
- Effective financial operations depend on clear policies and procedures for different areas of activity such as:

- Cash management policies (e.g., project budgets, requests for funds, and disbursement of funds);
- Personnel policies;
- Policies regarding delegation of signature authority for expenditures or reimbursements in excess of established thresholds;
- Purchasing and procurement laws, regulations, and policies;
- Policies regarding reimbursement of administrative expenses;
- Policies regarding supporting documentation required for disbursement of funds; and
- Policies establishing financial reporting requirements and schedules, including documented review processes by appropriate supervisory personnel.

### **Financial Controls**

Financial controls are designed to enable state agencies to accomplish fiduciary responsibilities. These controls also reduce the risk of asset loss, ensure that RESTORE Act project documentation is complete and accurate, that financial reports are reliable, and ensure compliance with laws and regulations. A financial control system includes both preventative controls (designed to discourage errors or fraud) and detective controls (designed to identify an error or fraud after it has occurred).

Mississippi law requires “...each state agency, through its governing board or executive head, to maintain continuous internal audit covering the activities of such agency affecting its revenue and expenditures, and maintain an adequate internal system of pre-auditing claims, demands and accounts against such agency as to ensure that only valid claims, demands and accounts will be paid...”. Miss. Code Ann. § 7-7-3(6)(d), (2016). Consistent with the RESTORE Act and the MSEP, sub-recipients must operate and use resources with minimal potential for waste, fraud, and mismanagement. The State’s financial control system provides assurance that significant weaknesses that could affect the State’s ability to meet its objectives would be prevented or detected in a timely manner.

Project management, other personnel, and those charged with governance will apply internal control processes that are designed to provide reasonable assurance in the reliability of project financial reporting. The system includes characteristics such as:

- Policies and procedures that provide for appropriate segregation of duties to reduce the likelihood of deliberate fraud;
- Personnel training materials that ensure employees are qualified to perform their assigned responsibilities;
- Sound practices to be followed by personnel in performing their duties and functions; and
- Proper authorization and recording procedures for financial transactions.

MDEQ’s internal control system has been modeled after the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations (COSO) internal control framework and the following five interrelated components. Annually, each state agency is required to certify that it has performed an internal control risk assessment, identify weaknesses, and describe a corrective action plan, if applicable.

**Control Environment** – In Mississippi, responsibility for implementing internal controls at each state agency begins with the chief executive officer and extends to everyone in the agency. Each agency director personally holds those in leadership positions responsible for helping to design, implement, maintain, and champion an internal control program that encompasses all agency fiscal programs and related activities. Each agency’s chief financial officer shares this leadership role, yet ultimate accountability remains with the agency head.

Personnel are adequately trained to carry out their responsibilities and are required to understand their responsibilities. The State provides its employees with the authority to perform the tasks assigned to them.

**Risk Assessment** – As part of establishing proper controls and procedures, an assessment is performed to identify, analyze, and manage risks relevant to achieving the state’s goals and objectives for RESTORE Act projects. This assessment identifies internal and external events or circumstances that could adversely affect the state’s ability to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities. Identified risks according to potential impact on the RESTORE Act projects and the likelihood of occurrence will be considered. The MSEP is considered in the



risk assessment process by considering the goals and objectives of the RESTORE Act activities while assessing the control environment, the overall financial management process, the role of the accounting system, and other financial management activities.

The identification of component systems comprising the complete accounting system is also included in the risk assessment process. Transaction cycles were identified and considered along with inherent risks. These will be continuously reviewed, and strategies will be updated as needed to manage the risks.

**Control Activities** – MDEQ’s internal control activities include written policies, procedures, techniques, and mechanisms that help ensure management’s directives are carried out in compliance with the RESTORE Act criteria. Control activities help identify, prevent, or reduce the risks that can impede accomplishment of state objectives. Control activities occur throughout the financial department, at all levels and in all functions; control activities include things such as approvals, authorizations, verifications, reconciliations, documentation, separation of duties, and safeguarding of assets.

For each transaction cycle identified in the risk assessment, the flow of information through the process and the internal control activities taken will be documented and analyzed.

Documentation may include organizational charts, standard operation procedures, manuals, flowcharts, decision tables, questionnaires, and/or review checklists.

**Communication and Information** – The state’s financial system provides adequate processes and procedures to ensure that each agency or department has relevant, valid, reliable, and timely communications related to internal and external events to effectively run and control its operations. Agency directors can obtain reliable information to make informed business decisions, determine their risks, and communicate policies and other important information to those who need it.

Communication is vital to effective project management, and MDEQ’s financial information system has mechanisms in place to properly capture and communicate RESTORE Act project financial data at the level appropriate for sound financial management. Policy manuals, accounting and financial reporting manuals, internal memoranda, verbal directives, and management actions are a few of the means of communicating across state agencies.

**Monitoring** – Monitoring of the internal control system will be performed to assess whether controls are effective and operating as intended. Monitoring is built into normal, recurring operations, is performed on a real-time basis, reacts dynamically to changing conditions, and is ingrained in each state agency. On-going monitoring occurs through routine managerial activities such as supervision, reconciliations, checklists, comparisons, performance evaluations, and status reports. Monitoring may also occur through separate internal evaluations (e.g., internal audits/reviews) or from external evaluations (e.g., independent audits, comparison to industry standards, surveys). Any deficiencies found during monitoring will be reported to the appropriate authority.

MDEQ requires prompt evaluation of any findings and recommendations. Formal procedures are documented for responding to findings and recommendations. Those that generate action items are properly outlined for timely response and resolution. Responsible parties are required to complete action items to correct or otherwise resolve the deficiencies within an established timeframe. The monitoring process also includes analysis of whether exceptions are reported and resolved quickly.

### **Accountability**

While each state employee has personal internal control responsibility, the state agency director holds ultimate responsibility and assumes ownership for internal control over financial reporting of RESTORE Act funds. Other directors and managers support the state’s internal control philosophy, promote compliance, and maintain control within their areas of responsibility. Chief financial officers have key oversight and policy enforcement roles over fiscal matters. Other state personnel hold lead responsibility for compliance with nonfinancial aspects of laws, directives, policies, procedures, and codes of ethics.

The state agency director has designated a senior manager as the RESTORE Act project manager specialist

who is responsible for coordinating the overall state-wide effort of evaluating, improving, and reporting on internal controls over RESTORE Act project management. A risk assessment of project internal control systems will be performed annually. If the risk assessment indicates a high level of risk associated with the financial control system, internal controls will be evaluated. Any serious deficiencies will be reported to the appropriate authority.

### **Key Controls**

MDEQ applies key controls for financial operating functions that serve as strategic risk mitigation tools within each area. These key controls are developed around financial management policies of segregation of duties, systematic reviews and reconciliations, and documented approval processes. These key controls serve as the framework for financial processes used in the flow of information for capturing and reporting financial data.

### **Other Financial Integrity Mechanisms**

MDEQ has developed detailed written policies and procedures as part of its financial control systems and financial control system plan. The plan, policies, and procedures provide assurance that RESTORE Act funds are being safeguarded, and that applicable statutes, rules, and regulations are being followed while also ensuring that the goals and objectives of the RESTORE Act are being met.

The financial control system plan is more than just a list of procedures or flowcharts of how activities operate. Rather, the plan is a comprehensive document that encompasses all components of internal controls. Likewise, the plan documents the financial control structure as it relates to those functions. Key financial integrity mechanisms of internal control over financial reporting are described in the following paragraphs.

**Risk assessments of sub-recipients** – Pursuant to the Uniform Guidance requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, MDEQ will emphasize components of sub-recipients' financial system internal checks and balances that address fraud, waste, and performance. MDEQ's financial management system is designed for the prevention of fraud, waste, and abuse. As such, risk assessments of all sub-recipients' financial management systems will be conducted before awarding RESTORE funding. MDEQ's formalized risk assessment process for sub-recipients is described in the document titled "Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Restoration, Sub-recipient Monitoring Procedures," which outlines MDEQ's process to assess the capabilities of sub-recipients to implement activities in the MSEP consistent with the requirements of 2 C.F.R. § 200, including the sub-recipient risk evaluation in 2 C.F.R. 200.332(b).

**Project budgets** – Project budgets represent the financial plans for projects throughout their lifespans. The budgets match planned expenditures with revenues that the state expects to receive, which is essential for effective cash flow planning and management. Budgets also help prevent the misuse of project funds and control spending.

**Segregation of duties** – MDEQ employs several levels of control to achieve proper segregation of duties in financial processes. Departmental controls allow for proper segregation among functions related to the recording and reporting of project transactions. Supervisory approval is required for all expenditures by personnel independent of the recording process. Stewardship over project funds is essential for proper fiduciary accountability, and the State has established the framework to achieve this component of internal control.

**Safeguarding of assets** – Access to financial project information is restricted to essential personnel. Passwords and other physical safeguards are employed by the State to restrict access to financial data. By restricting access, the risk of misappropriation and fraud is reduced because only the personnel who will be working on the financial data for the projects have access to those functions. Regular backups of financial information are done and stored off-site to minimize loss of data due to an unforeseen occurrence.

**Sub-recipient monitoring** – MDEQ developed a process for sub-recipient monitoring using an effective risk assessment model. As part of the initial risk assessment process, sub-recipients are required to complete an Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA) questionnaire and provide copies of standard financial policies and procedures that the state evaluates as part of designing the sub-recipient monitoring program. The OSA is required to be updated annually by each sub-recipient. On-site assistance and reviews for a sub-recipient based on appropriate risk levels will be provided throughout the life of the projects. MDEQ will require and review

financial and progress reports for accuracy, completeness, and alignment with RESTORE goals. Budget reports may also be required for comparison to actual expenditures, in detail if necessary.

MDEQ may also employ other financial integrity mechanisms if necessary or for specific RESTORE Act project types. Modifications will be based on updated risk assessments for the RESTORE Act financial control system.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The processes that MDEQ uses to prevent conflicts of interest in the development and implementation of the MSEP, as required by 31 C.F.R. § 34.503(b)(3), are guided by applicable Mississippi law. Under Mississippi Code § 25-4-1, it is essential to the proper operation of democratic government that public officials and employees be independent and impartial, that governmental decisions and public policy be made on the proper channels of the government structure; that public office is not used for private gain other than the remuneration provided by law; that there be public confidence in the integrity of government; and that public officials be assisted in determinations of conflicts of interest.

Further, MDEQ requires, where applicable, the completion of a non-collusion and conflict of interest affidavit certifying that there are no present or currently planned interests (financial, contractual, organizational, or otherwise) relating to the work to be performed under any contract resulting from the proposed work that would create any actual or potential conflict of interest (or apparent conflicts of interest)(including conflicts of interest for immediate family members: spouses, parents, children) that would impinge on its ability to render impartial, technically sound, and objective assistance or advice or result in it being given an unfair competitive advantage. MDEQ also requires sub-recipients and contractors to notify MDEQ immediately of any potential or actual conflicts that may arise. If any potential or actual conflict cannot be resolved to MDEQ's satisfaction, MDEQ reserves the right to terminate the sub-award agreement or contract in place pursuant to the Termination for Convenience clause of the sub-award agreement or contract.

## **Section IV: Overall Consistency with the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan**

Mississippi's 2025 MSEP Amendment focuses on two of the goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy

Mississippi's 2025 MSEP Amendment focuses on three objectives identified in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Protect and Restore Living and Coastal Marine Resources
- Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
- Promote Community Resilience

## Section V: Projects, Programs, and Activities

	<i><b>Project Title</b></i>	<i><b>Estimated Cost</b></i>	<i><b>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Start Date</b></i>	<i><b>End Date</b></i>	<i><b>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</b></i>	<i><b>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
1	Mississippi Gulf Coast Water Quality Improvement Program	\$56 Million	No	08/01/2018	07/31/2026	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2016 Initial MSEP). Activity Amended (2017 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2019 MSEP Amendment).
2	Pascagoula Oyster Reef Complex Relay and Enhancement	\$4.1 Million	No	08/01/2018	07/31/2029	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2016 Initial MSEP). Activity Amended (2017 MSEP Amendment).

	<i><b>Project Title</b></i>	<i><b>Estimated Cost</b></i>	<i><b>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Start Date</b></i>	<i><b>End Date</b></i>	<i><b>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</b></i>	<i><b>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
3	Compatibility, Coordination, and Restoration Planning	\$3.8 Million	No	08/01/2018	06/30/2030	8	No	Activity Approved (2016 Initial MSEP). Activity Amended (2017 MSEP Amendment). Scope clarification (2018 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2022 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2023 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2024 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2025 MSEP Amendment).
4	Gulf of Mexico Citizen Led Initiative (GMCLI)	\$1.9 Million	No	08/01/2018	1/31/2027	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2017 MSEP Amendment).
5	Remote Oyster Setting Facility	\$9.36 Million	No	01/01/2019	07/31/2026	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2017 MSEP Amendment).
6	Coastal Headwater Land Conservation Program	\$8 Million	No	08/01/2018	12/31/2021	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2017 MSEP Amendment).

	<i><b>Project Title</b></i>	<i><b>Estimated Cost</b></i>	<i><b>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Start Date</b></i>	<i><b>End Date</b></i>	<i><b>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</b></i>	<i><b>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
7	Round Island Living Shoreline Demonstration and Protection Project (Planning)	\$2.2 Million	No	08/01/2018	10/31/2027	8	Yes	Activity Approved (2017 MSEP Amendment).
8	Mississippi Sound Oyster Shell Recycling Program	\$1.259 Million	No	12/01/2019	02/28/2030	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2018 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2025 MSEP Amendment).
9	Beneficial Use of Dredge Material for Marsh Creation and Restoration in Mississippi	\$19 Million	No	12/01/2019	11/30/2025	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2018 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2019 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2023 MSEP Amendment).
10	Hancock County Marsh Living Shoreline Extension	\$6 Million	No	10/01/2019	02/28/2026	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2018 MSEP Amendment).
11	Mississippi Beachfront Resilience	\$9.95 Million	No	10/01/2020	10/31/2027	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2019 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2021 MSEP Amendment).

	<i><b>Project Title</b></i>	<i><b>Estimated Cost</b></i>	<i><b>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Start Date</b></i>	<i><b>End Date</b></i>	<i><b>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</b></i>	<i><b>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
12	Public / Private Training Partnership (Accelerate MS)	\$2.2 Million	No	1/1/2023	12/31/2027	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2021 MSEP Amendment).
13	Coastal Habitat Management Program	\$3.3 Million	No	1/1/2023	07/31/2029	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2021 MSEP Amendment).
14	Gulf Coast Center of Security and Emerging Technology (CSET) Fusion	\$5.5 Million	No	1/1/2023	12/31/2027	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2021 MSEP Amendment).
15	Improvement of Wastewater Quality and Solid Waste Disposal from Shrimp Processing Industry	\$5.5 Million	No	1/1/2023	12/31/2027	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2021 MSEP Amendment).
16	D'Iberville Working Waterfront and Commercial Seafood Harbor	\$8.8 Million	Yes	1/1/2023	03/14/2029	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2021 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2023 MSEP Amendment).
17	Harbor Expansion Parking Area (Jones Park)	\$1.65 Million	Yes	1/1/2024	12/31/2026	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2023 MSEP Amendment).
18	Walter Anderson Museum of Art Creative Complex	\$1.21 Million	No	1/1/2024	12/15/2026	10	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment).

	<b><i>Project Title</i></b>	<b><i>Estimated Cost</i></b>	<b><i>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</i></b>	<b><i>Start Date</i></b>	<b><i>End Date</i></b>	<b><i>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</i></b>	<b><i>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>
19	Workforce Training – Meeting the Needs of the Supply Chain	\$5.5 Million	No	1/1/2024	12/31/2028	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment).
20	Health Professions (HEALP) for Our Community: Health Professions Center of Excellence	\$6.6 Million	No	1/1/2024	12/31/2028	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment).
21	Recreational Enhancements at Front Beach	\$5.5 Million	Yes	1/1/2024	12/31/2026	10	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2024 MSEP Amendment).
22	IMMS Outreach and Ecotourism	\$825,000	No	1/1/2024	07/15/2027	10	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment).
23	Coastal Science Program for Mississippi High Schools	\$1.88 Million	No	1/1/2025	12/31/2029	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2022 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2023 MSEP Amendment).
24	Nonspecific Invasive Species Detection and Treatment	\$1.1 Million	No	1/1/2025	06/30/2031	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).
25	Pascagoula River Scenic Trail	\$2.75 Million	No	1/1/2025	06/30/2026	10	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).
26	Artificial Reef Project	\$1.98 Million	No	1/1/2025	12/31/2026	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).



	<b><i>Project Title</i></b>	<b><i>Estimated Cost</i></b>	<b><i>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</i></b>	<b><i>Start Date</i></b>	<b><i>End Date</i></b>	<b><i>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</i></b>	<b><i>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</i></b>	<b><i>Status</i></b>
27	Mississippi Aquarium – Interactive Exhibit	\$5.6 Million	No	1/1/2025	06/30/2026	10	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment). Activity Amended (2024 MSEP Amendment).
28	Natural Gas Improvements	\$0	Yes	1/1/2025	06/30/2026	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).
29	KHSA Taxilane Sierra Extension	\$0	Yes	1/1/2025	12/31/2026	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).
30	Classrooms and Dormitories for the Center for Marine Education and Research	\$2.75 Million	Yes	1/1/2025	12/31/2027	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2023 MSEP Amendment).
31	Living Shorelines Assistance Program	\$1.1 Million	No	1/1/2026	12/31/2031	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
32	Stock Enhancement of Spotted Seatrout in Mississippi	\$1.1 Million	No	1/1/2026	12/31/2031	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
33	Mississippi Sound Estuary Program	\$1.1 Million	No	1/1/2026	12/31/2028	1	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
34	Career Pathway for Hydrographic Technicians	\$1.93 Million	No	1/1/2026	12/31/2031	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
35	Mississippi Artificial Intelligence Network (MAIN)	\$7.14 Million	No	1/1/2026	12/31/2030	4	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).

	<i><b>Project Title</b></i>	<i><b>Estimated Cost</b></i>	<i><b>Infrastructure (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Start Date</b></i>	<i><b>End Date</b></i>	<i><b>Primary Eligible Activity (number 1-11; see section 4.1.1 of Submittal Guidelines)</b></i>	<i><b>Informed by Best Available Science (Yes/No)</b></i>	<i><b>Status</b></i>
36	Port of Gulfport Expansion	\$1.21 Million	Yes	1/1/2026	12/31/2029	6	No	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
37	Highway 63/Escatawpa Natural Gas Pipeline Installation	\$0	Yes	1/1/2026	12/31/2027	6	Yes	Activity Approved (2024 MSEP Amendment).
38	Port of Pascagoula New Wharf	\$3.09 Million	No	1/1/2027	12/31/2029	6	No	New Activity (2025 MSEP Amendment).
39	Diamondhead Nature Trail	\$4.164 Million	No	1/1/2027	12/31/2029	10	Yes	New Activity (2025 MSEP Amendment).
40	Pearl River Community College GulfEDGE Training Center	\$4.4 Million	No	1/1/2027	12/31/2029	4	Yes	New Activity (2025 MSEP Amendment).
41	MGCCC Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Center Program	\$1.595 Million	No	1/1/2027	12/31/2030	4	Yes	New Activity (2025 MSEP Amendment).

The following projects and programs are proposed for the 2025 MSEP:

### **Activity #3: Compatibility, Coordination, and Restoration Planning**

**Project Summary:** The Compatibility, Coordination, and Restoration Planning project was approved in the 2016 MSEP and amended in the 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023, and 2024 MSEP Amendments. This project will provide planning assistance to support MDEQ's coordinated restoration planning effort to maximize the effectiveness of coordination of restoration in the Gulf Coast Region and the development of new and/or amended State Expenditure Plan(s). Additional information about the approved scope of work for this program can be found in the 2016 MSEP and the 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023, and 2024 MSEP Amendments.

**Project Modifications – 2025 MSEP Amendment**

The 2025 MSEP Amendment increases the program budget by \$500,000 to support activities approved in the MSEP as amended.

The approved 2016 MSEP and the 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023, and 2024 MSEP Amendments can be found at the following links: [2016 MSEP](#); [2017 MSEP Amendment](#); [2018 MSEP Amendment](#); [2022 MSEP Amendment](#); [2023 MSEP Amendment](#); [2024 MSEP Amendment](#).

**Activity #8: Mississippi Sound Oyster Shell Recycling Program**

**Project Summary:** This program supports the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast Region through the collection and utilization of discarded oyster shells for oyster cultch placement in the Mississippi Sound.

**Project Modifications – 2025 MSEP Amendment**

The 2025 MSEP Amendment increases the project budget by \$609,312 to support activities approved in the 2018 MSEP.

The approved 2018 MSEP Amendment can be found at the following link: [2018 MSEP Amendment](#)

**Activity #38: Port of Pascagoula New Wharf**

**Project Summary:** This project will provide planning assistance to support infrastructure benefiting the economy in the Gulf Coast Region through planning activities of a new wharf and associated improvements at the Port of Pascagoula's South Terminal.

The Port of Pascagoula, located on the southeastern coast of Mississippi, is a full-service deep-water port strategically located on federal shipping channels. The Port is nine miles from Interstate 10 giving access to U.S. interstate/highway systems and has close working partnerships with rail service providers. The Port's two harbors (Pascagoula River and Bayou Casotte) include a combination of public and private terminals handling a combined 32 million tons of cargo through its channels annually. Without new wharf facilities and associated improvements, Jackson County's ability to support existing industry and recruit new industry is limited by current wharf and facility capacity at the Port of Pascagoula. The addition of the new wharf provides a significant long-term impact on the commercial life span of the facility.

This proposed project anticipates engineering, design and permitting of activities such as dredging, excavation and shoreline stabilization, and construction of a new wharf at the Port of Pascagoula's South Terminal in the Pascagoula River Harbor to the north and tie into the existing docks. Additional activities may include, but are not limited to, planning, oversight and management, and coordination of subawards between MDEQ and sub-recipients.

**Need:** There is a need to facilitate development along this shoreline at the Port of Pascagoula to increase the available space for existing and new industry to utilize the terminal.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to plan for infrastructure improvements at the Port of Pascagoula.

**Objective:** Plan for port improvements to support economic growth of the Port of Pascagoula.

**Location:** This project will take place at the Port of Pascagoula, Jackson County, Mississippi.

**Timeline:** This project is anticipated to start 01/01/2027 and end 12/31/2029.

**Additional Information:** The project would be administered by MDEQ.

**Overall Economic or Ecological Contribution to the Recovery of the Gulf Coast:** This project would

support infrastructure benefitting the economy in the Gulf Coast Region by planning for the construction of a new wharf and associated improvements at the Port of Pascagoula's South Terminal.

**Eligibility and Statutory Requirements:** This project is located in the Gulf Coast Region as defined by 31 C.F.R. § 34.2. This project qualifies as an eligible activity for Oil Spill Impact Component funding through 31 C.F.R. § 34.201 (f) – infrastructure benefitting the economy, and 33 U.S.C. §1321(t)(1)(B)(i)(VI) of the RESTORE Act. This project would be implemented by the Port of Pascagoula.

**Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives:**

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Promote Community Resilience

**Major Milestones:**

*Milestone* – Planning, Engineering & Design, and Permitting

**Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes:**

The anticipated success criteria that would be measured are:

- Number of engineering design plans and permits acquired

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics/ Outcomes:	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Planning	100% engineering design drawings and signed permits	Engineering and Design and Permitting complete	N/A

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The success of this project would be evaluated by the number of engineering and design plans and permits acquired to implement the construction of the wharf.

**Best Available Science:** A Best Available Science (BAS) review is required for programs and activities that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands, and economy of the Gulf Coast. The primary focus of this project is to design and permit port improvement activities.

**Budget/Funding**

**Estimated Cost of the Project and Amount to be Requested from Oil Spill Impact Component Funds:** \$3,093,068.00 (100% Planning)

**Partnerships/Collaboration:**

- Jackson County Port Authority; Port of Pascagoula

**Leveraged Resources:** N/A

**Funds Used as Non-Federal Match:** None currently anticipated.

**Other:** None currently anticipated.

**References:** N/A

### **Activity #39: Diamondhead Nature Trail**

**Project Summary:** This project would support promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region through the construction of a nature trail and associated features in the City of Diamondhead.

The City of Diamondhead is proposing a nature trail that will stretch approximately 2.6 miles, linking Montjoy Creek Natural Trail to Noma Drive Boat Launch, to Noma Drive multi-modal path. The nature trail will be tailored to walkers, hikers, fishermen, bird watchers, and other nature enthusiast within the community. It will feature access points to waterways and low-lying regions, incorporating pedestrian bridges, boardwalks, natural elements, and viewing platform/rest area equipped with benches. This nature trail will allow additional access to the Rotten Bayou Watershed. The nature trail will allow visitors to explore the Rotten Bayou Blueway and provide a nature-based experience along the Jourdan River that is currently accessible only by boat. The trail will connect the Noma Drive Boat/Kayak Launch and the Montjoy Creek Boardwalk/Observation Tower. It will also connect to the existing walking path at Noma Circle. The trail will allow a connection to the newly constructed Noma Drive waterfront which includes a boat launch, kayak launch, comfort station, fishing pier, and a boardwalk over the Jourdan River that has three observation decks.

This proposed project would fund engineering, design, permitting and construction of a nature trail and associated features including, but not limited to, pedestrian bridges, deck walks, viewing platforms, benches and other amenities. Additional activities may include, but are not limited to, planning, oversight and management, and coordination of subawards between MDEQ and sub-recipients.

**Need:** There is a need to enhance public access to natural areas along the Rotten Bayou corridor.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the project is to enhance and extend a nature trail to increase tourism opportunities to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

**Objective:** Construct a nature trail and associated amenities to connect Noma Drive Boat Launch to Montjoy Creek Walking Trail.

**Location:** This project would take place in the City of Diamondhead, Hancock County, MS.

**Timeline:** This project is anticipated to start 01/01/2027 and end 12/31/2029.

**Additional Information:** The project would be administered by MDEQ.

**Overall Economic or Ecological Contribution to the Recovery of the Gulf Coast:** This project would support promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region through the design and construction of a nature trail that would enhance public access to natural areas along the Rotten Bayou corridor.

**Eligibility and Statutory Requirements:** This project is located in the Gulf Coast Region as defined by 31 C.F.R. § 34.2. This project qualifies as an eligible activity for Oil Spill Impact Component funding through 31 C.F.R. § 34.201 (h) - promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region, including recreational fishing, and 33 U.S.C. §1321(t)(1)(B)(ii)(I) of the RESTORE Act. This activity would be implemented by the City of Diamondhead. The primary purpose of the project is to support planning and construction activities to develop a nature trail in the Rotten Bayou corridor.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives:**

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education

**Major Milestones:**

*Milestone* – Planning, Engineering & Design, and Permitting

*Milestone* – Construction

**Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes:**

The anticipated success criteria that would be measured are:

- Number of engineering design plans and permits acquired.
- Number of improvements to recreational resources.

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics/ Outcomes:	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Planning	100% engineering design drawings and signed permits	Engineering and Design and Permitting complete	N/A
Construction	Construction of the nature trail	Build out of the nature trail	Public use of a nature trail offering recreational opportunities, promoting environmental awareness, and enhancing the quality of life.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The success of this project would be evaluated by the number of engineering and design plans and permits acquired to implement the construction of the nature trail. Additionally, the number of improvements to recreational resources would be measured based on final engineering and design specifications.

**Best Available Science:** Nature trails are associated with multiple benefits. Trails and walkable features are consistently associated with greater physical activity, helping communities convert natural areas into low-barrier walking and exercise opportunities (Kaczynski & Henderson, 2007). Trails also support mental well-being because they pair light-to-moderate activity with nature exposure and provide improvements in mood and self-esteem following “green exercise” (Barton & Pretty, 2010). From a tourism perspective, trails function as a nature-based destination product. Trail investment and supporting services are linked with visitor expenditure and local economic development (Lukoseviciute et al., 2022) and provide meaningful per-day user spending among greenway and trail users (Manton et al., 2016). These dynamics are especially relevant on the U.S. Gulf Coast, where new/expanded trail assets can help diversify and extend coastal visitation and provide substantial regional economic contributions from visitor spending (Guo et al., 2017).

**Budget/Funding**

**Estimated Cost of the Project and Amount to be Requested from Oil Spill Impact Component Funds:** \$4,164,820.00 (20% Planning/80% Implementation)

**Partnerships/Collaboration:**

- City of Diamondhead

**Leveraged Resources:** \$600,000. (Mississippi Outdoor Stewardship Trust Fund; Tidelands – Approved)

**Funds Used as Non-Federal Match:** None currently anticipated.

**Other:** None currently anticipated.

**References:**

Barton, J. and Pretty, J., 2010. What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health? A multi-study analysis. *Environmental science & technology*, 44(10), pp.3947-3955.

Guo, Z., Robinson, D. and Hite, D., 2017. Economic impact of Mississippi and Alabama Gulf Coast tourism on the regional economy. *Ocean & coastal management*, 145, pp.52-61.

Kaczynski, A.T. and Henderson, K.A., 2007. Environmental correlates of physical activity: a review of evidence about parks and recreation. *Leisure sciences*, 29(4), pp.315-354.

Lukoseviciute, G., Pereira, L.N. and Panagopoulos, T., 2022. The economic impact of recreational trails: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 21(4), pp.366-393.

Manton, R., Hynes, S. and Clifford, E., 2016. Greenways as a tourism resource: a study of user spending and value. *Tourism planning & development*, 13(4), pp.427-448.

**Activity #40: Pearl River Community College GulfEDGE Training Center**

**Project Summary:** This project would support workforce development and job creation in the Gulf Coast Region through the construction of the GulfEdge Training Center, a dynamic new facility designed to bridge Mississippi's growing aerospace and blue economy sectors located at PRCC's Hancock County campus.

The GulfEdge Training Center will deliver high-impact technical education at the intersection of sea, sky, and industry. The project strategically leverages Mississippi's coastal infrastructure that supports aerospace, marine technology, and industrial innovation. It will serve as a seamless extension of Pearl River Community College's (PRCC) Aviation Academy, expanding access for high school students and strengthening pathways into postsecondary credentials and high-wage technical careers. The GulfEdge Training Center will feature state-of-the-art demonstration and simulation labs serving both noncredit workforce training and credit-bearing Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Focus areas may include Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), Hydrography Technician Training, and customized training programs for the region's existing workforce—addressing needs in marine technology, port logistics, and defense manufacturing.

This proposed project would fund activities such as engineering, design, permitting, and construction of a new instructional training facility as well as targeted upgrades to the existing aerospace complex. Additional activities may include, but are not limited to, planning, oversight and management, and coordination of subawards between MDEQ and its sub-recipients.

**Need:** There is a need for additional workforce training capacity in Hancock County, MS to meet the workforce training needs of existing industry and support industry growth.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to improve the capacity of PRCC to provide the necessary workforce development to grow the economy.

**Objective:** To construct an innovative workforce training center on PRCC's Hancock County campus to meet industry demand for jobs.

**Location:** This project would take place on the PRCC Hancock County Campus, Hancock County, MS.

**Timeline:** This project is anticipated to start 01/01/2027 and end 12/31/2029.

**Additional Information:** The project would be administered by MDEQ.

**Overall Economic or Ecological Contribution to the Recovery of the Gulf Coast:** This project would contribute to workforce development and job creation of the Gulf Coast Region through the construction of a workforce training center.

**Eligibility and Statutory Requirements:** This project is located in the Gulf Coast Region as defined by 31 C.F.R. § 34.2. This project qualifies as an eligible activity for Oil Spill Impact Component funding through 31 C.F.R. § 34.201(d) – workforce development and job creation, and 33 U.S.C. § 1321(t)(1)(B)(i)(IV) of the RESTORE Act. This activity would be implemented by the Pearl River Community College. The primary purpose of the project is to provide workforce training to the Gulf Coast Region.

**Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives:**

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

**Major Milestones:**

*Milestone – Planning, Engineering & Design, and Permitting*

*Milestone – Construction*

**Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes:**

The anticipated success criteria that would be measured are:

- Number of engineering design plans and permits acquired
- Square footage of constructed areas

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics/ Outcomes:	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
Planning	100% engineering design drawings and signed permits	Engineering and design and permitting complete	N/A
Construction	Construction of the workforce training facility	Construction of the workforce training facility	Trained workforce to meet industry needs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The success of this project would be evaluated by the number of engineering and design plans and permits acquired to implement the construction of the workforce training facility as well as the square footage documented by as-built drawings of the project features.

**Best Available Science:** Planning and coordination of job needs and filling those needs with educational requirements is the fundamental building block for economic development and state prosperity (Ozturk, 2008; Berger and Fisher, 2013). Workforce training is increasingly essential in both aerospace and the blue economy because these sectors are being reshaped by rapid digitalization and automation, changes that directly alter safety-critical work and the baseline competencies employers require. Emerging technology trends are already being linked to shifting skill demands and new competency profiles for implying that traditional degree-to-job



pathways need continuous upskilling and credentialing (Talib et al., 2025). Community colleges are a natural focal point for blue economy workforce training because the sector's fastest-growing needs cluster around technician and mid-skill roles (port and vessel operations, marine manufacturing, aquaculture/seafood support, hydrography and marine electronics, uncrewed systems, and ocean/coastal data handling) where short-cycle credentials and employer-aligned curricula can respond faster than traditional degree pipelines (Caesar et al., 2023). The "blue economy" increasingly depends on specialized, interdisciplinary hands-on skills that are difficult to obtain without structured training environments, reinforcing the need for scalable workforce models and applied learning pathways (Seroy et al., 2025). Through implementation of this project, PRCC would be capable of fulfilling the workforce needs that are rapidly growing in South Mississippi.

#### **Budget/Funding**

**Estimated Cost of the Project and Amount to be Requested from Oil Spill Impact Component Funds:** \$4,400,000.00 (20% Planning/80% Implementation)

#### **Partnerships/Collaboration:**

- Pearl River Community College

**Leveraged Resources:** N/A

**Funds Used as Non-Federal Match:** None currently anticipated.

**Other:** None currently anticipated.

#### **References:**

Berger, N. and Fisher, P., 2013. A well-educated workforce is key to state prosperity. Economic Policy Institute, 22(1), pp.1-14.

Caesar, L.D., 2023. Emerging dynamics of training, recruiting and retaining a sustainable maritime workforce: a skill resilience framework. Sustainability, 16(1), p.239.

Ozturk, I., 2001. The role of education in economic development: a theoretical perspective.

Seroy, S., Airola, L., Rupan, R., Kohlman, C., Stahr, F. and Eriksen, C., 2025. The Student Seaglider Center: A Model Student-Run Laboratory for Scalable Training and Authentic Research Experiences in Marine Science. Oceanography, 38.

Talib, M.A., Nasir, Q., Dakalbab, F. and Saud, H., 2025. Future Aviation Jobs: The Role of Technology in Shaping Skills and Competencies. Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, p.100517.

#### **Activity #41: MGCCC Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Center Program**

**Project Summary:** This project would support workforce development and job creation in the Gulf Coast Region through a workforce development training program to support the growing technology fields in coastal Mississippi.

As a national leader in shipbuilding and a critical player in the defense industrial base, Mississippi is uniquely positioned to accelerate its growth in advanced manufacturing technologies. According to the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), Mississippi's manufacturing industry contributes over \$18 billion annually to the state's GDP and supports more than 144,000 jobs. To support these industries, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC) proposes to establish the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation

Center on the Jackson County, MS Campus. This facility will serve as a state-of-the-art hub for advanced manufacturing training, workforce development, and industry partnership, focused on preparing Mississippians for high-wage, high-skill careers in modern industry. This program will be developed in collaboration with regional employers and defense contractors, ensuring alignment with real-time industry demands. Hands-on training, nationally recognized certifications, and access to cutting-edge manufacturing equipment will empower students to enter the workforce with applicable skills. MGCCC will also partner with high schools, universities, and workforce development agencies to create seamless pipelines into these programs.

This proposed project would fund activities such as the support of program implementation in the area of industrial robotics and automation including but not limited to training equipment, facility personnel, outreach and recruitment, and other activities. Additional activities may include, but are not limited to, planning, oversight and management, and coordination of subawards between MDEQ and sub-recipients.

**Need:** New training programs are needed to meet rising demand for manufacturing jobs.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the project is to implement workforce training programs for in-demand manufacturing jobs on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

**Objective:** Provide innovative workforce training through the development of training programs at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Center on MGCCC Jackson County campus to meet industry demand for manufacturing jobs.

**Location:** This project will take place at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jackson County, MS campus.

**Timeline:** This project is anticipated to start 01/01/2027 and end 12/31/2030.

**Additional Information:** The project would be administered by MDEQ.

**Overall Economic or Ecological Contribution to the Recovery of the Gulf Coast:** This project would contribute to workforce development and job creation in the Gulf Coast Region through the MGCCC, which would provide workforce training to students in robotics and automation.

**Eligibility and Statutory Requirements:** This project is located in the Gulf Coast Region as defined by 31 C.F.R. § 34.2. This project qualifies as an eligible activity for Oil Spill Impact Component funding through 31 C.F.R. § 34.201 (d) – workforce development and job creation, and 33 U.S.C. §1321(t)(1)(B)(i)(IV) of the RESTORE Act. This project would be implemented by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. The primary purpose of the project is to create a training and workforce development program to provide hands-on learning and skill development.

**Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives:**

This project aligns with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy

**Major Milestones:**

*Milestone* – Development of workforce training materials

*Milestone* – Curriculum implementation

**Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes:**

The anticipated success criteria that would be measured are:

- Number of students enrolled in the program

- Number of students completing the program

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics/ Outcomes:	Short-term outcome	Long-term outcome
MGCCC training materials	Development of specific training materials	Implementation of job specific workforce training	Graduation and job acceptance of graduates from MGCCC
Curriculum implementation	Implement and provide workforce training	Implementation of job specific workforce training	Graduation and job acceptance of graduates from MGCCC

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The success of this project would be evaluated by the number of workforce development programs developed. Once a program and curricula have been developed, the number of students enrolled in the respective programs and the number of students completing the respective programs would be additional success criteria measured.

**Best Available Science:** The need for robotics and automation workforce training at community colleges is high because “Industry 4.0” technologies are expanding faster than incumbent workers and traditional degree pipelines can adapt, creating persistent skill gaps in areas like automation, controls, data-enabled maintenance, and human-machine collaboration, gaps that recent research identify as a central barrier to Industry 4.0 adoption (Rikala et al., 2024). Community colleges are particularly well-positioned to close this gap because they specialize in mid-skill technician pathways (e.g., certificates) that can be updated quickly and delivered through hands-on, work-based learning aligned to local employers, which is critical for robotics and automation roles where competence depends on practice with real equipment (PLCs, sensors, robots, networking, troubleshooting). Peer-reviewed research on mechatronics credentialing underscores that industry expects different and specific content mastery for two-year “career pathway” certificates versus longer programs, evidence that employers are actively differentiating skill requirements and that community-college curricula must be deliberately tuned to those expectations (Raghunath et al., 2023). Growing automation and networked systems are driving demand for industry-ready technicians, motivating community-college “earn-and-learn” programs that embed experiential learning and industry-recognized credentials specifically in smart manufacturing/automation domains (Azhikannickal et al., 2024). Through implementation of this project, MGCCC would be capable of fulfilling the workforce needs that are quickly growing in south Mississippi.

### **Budget/Funding**

**Estimated Cost of the Project and Amount to be Requested from Oil Spill Impact Component Funds:**  
\$1,595,000.00 (20% Planning/80% Implementation)

### **Partnerships/Collaboration:**

- Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College

**Leveraged Resources:** N/A

**Funds Used as Non-Federal Match:** None currently anticipated.

**Other:** None currently anticipated.

**References:**

Azhikannickal, E., Hua, F., Urbach, B., White, M., Haas, B. and Ku, K.S., 2024. Development of a Smart Manufacturing Technology Earn and Learn Program at a Rural Community College. *Journal of Advanced Technological Education*, 3(1).

Raghunath, N., Haapala, K.R. and Sanchez, C.A., 2023. Examining industry expectations for content knowledge in mechatronics across career and professional certificate programs. *Manufacturing Letters*, 35, pp.1230-1235.

Rikala, P., Braun, G., Järvinen, M., Stahre, J. and Hämäläinen, R., 2024. Understanding and measuring skill gaps in Industry 4.0—A review. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 201, p.123206.

