



Public Participation Opportunities

This fact sheet reviews the recent and upcoming public participation opportunities associated with three key Gulf restoration and recovery processes initiated after the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment

What is early restoration?

In a typical damage assessment, the federal and state Trustees must first assess natural resource injuries and develop a restoration plan before they can start implementing restoration projects. In this case, however, in April 2011 BP agreed to provide up to \$1 billion to implement **early restoration projects** before the assessment process is complete. The Trustees are implementing these projects in phases. Phase I and II projects have already been selected. In Dec 2013, the Trustees proposed Phase III projects.

What is a PEIS?

A **Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**, or PEIS, is a planning document that analyzes proposed restoration projects, feasible alternatives, and likely environmental impacts. The Trustees are drafting a PEIS for early restoration in order to better understand the potential cumulative effects of early restoration projects.

Where can I find out about NRDA public participation opportunities?

Visit the Trustees' website: www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov

Early Restoration

NOV 2011 – DEC 2012: PHASE I & II RESTORATION PLANS

The Trustees received public comment on and held public meetings about the Draft Phase I (Nov 2011 – Feb 2012) and Draft Phase II (Nov – Dec 2012) early restoration plans.

JUN – AUG 2013: EARLY RESTORATION PEIS SCOPING

The Trustees received public comment and held public meetings to accept input on scope, content, and significant issues that should be considered in the PEIS.

DEC 2013 – FEB 2014: DRAFT PHASE III PLAN & DRAFT EARLY RESTORATION PEIS

The Trustees will receive public comment on both documents through Feb 19, 2014.

Restoration

MAR – MAY 2011: RESTORATION SCOPING

The Trustees solicited public comment and held public scoping meetings to gather public input on categories of restoration projects.

TIMING UNKNOWN: DRAFT PEIS

Once the Draft PEIS is released, it will be open for public comment.

2011

2012

2013

UPCOMING

The RESTORE Act

How are states planning for implementation of the RESTORE Act?

While states are receiving funds from two separate processes, most states have initiated only one process. To learn more about state implementation, visit:

Alabama:

www.restorealabama.org

Florida:

www.fl-counties.com/advocacy/gulf-consortium

Louisiana:

www.coastal.louisiana.gov

Mississippi:

www.restore.ms

Texas:

www.restorethetexascoast.org (site under development)

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The RESTORE Act requires the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to develop a comprehensive plan for restoring and protecting Gulf natural resources. The Council released a Proposed Comprehensive Plan in January 2013 and a Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan in May 2013. On August 28, 2013, the Council voted unanimously to approve the plan.

The Plan is available online at: www.restorethegulf.gov.

Where can I find out about regional RESTORE Act public participation opportunities?

Restoration Council:

www.restorethegulf.gov

The NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program:

www.restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov

Equal-Share State Allocations

ONGOING STATE MEETINGS

Some Gulf States and local political subdivisions allow the public to attend restoration planning meetings and provide input.

E.g., Louisiana's Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) is holding public meetings across the state and allowing the public to ask questions.

Note: These meetings address both the Equal-Share and the Impact-Based State Allocations.

Restoration Council

FEB 2013: PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
After releasing a proposed comprehensive plan, the Council held a series of public engagement sessions to gather initial input.

MAY – JUL 2013: DRAFT INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
The Council received public comment and hosted public engagement sessions in each of the Gulf states so that people could provide input on the draft initial comprehensive plan.

AUG 2013: COUNCIL VOTE ON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
The Council held a meeting to vote on the Comprehensive Plan. After the vote, time was reserved for public comment.

Impact-Based State Allocations

***ONGOING* STATE MEETINGS**
Some Gulf States and local political subdivisions allow the public to attend and provide input at restoration planning meetings.
E.g., Florida's Gulf Consortium has monthly meetings that are open to the public, with opportunities for public comment before and after each meeting.

Centers of Excellence

No specified opportunities to participate in Centers selection

Restoration Science Program

JUN – SEPT 2013: ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS
NOAA held its first engagement session in June in Tampa, to introduce the science program and solicit public input. NOAA held additional virtual engagement sessions in August and September to obtain further input on research needs.

U.S. TREASURY REGULATIONS
The RESTORE Act requires the Secretary of the Treasury to develop regulations establishing accountability mechanisms for the management and administration of the Restoration Trust Fund that holds RESTORE Act monies. The Treasury issued draft regulations on Sept 6, 2013. The draft regulations were open for public comment until Nov 5, 2013, and are in the process of being finalized.

How did NFWF and NAS receive funding?

The U.S. Department of Justice has settled some charges related to the disaster, including criminal charges against Transocean and BP. Among other things, the criminal plea agreements provide funds to two organizations: (1) the **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** will receive over \$2.5 billion to establish a Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund to conduct natural resource restoration in the Gulf; and (2) the **National Academy of Sciences** will receive \$500 million to establish a 30-year science program that focuses on human health, environmental protection, and oil system safety in the Gulf of Mexico.

What is the NAS Advisory Group?

The NAS appointed a 24-member advisory group of expert volunteers to begin program planning. The advisory group began working to develop a strategic vision and operational framework for the program in June 2013.

Where can I find out about public participation opportunities?

NFWF Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund:
www.nfwf.org/Pages/gulf

NAS Gulf of Mexico Program:
www.nationalacademies.org/gulf/index.html

Settlement Agreements

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

National Academy of Sciences (NAS)

ONGOING

PROJECT SELECTION

NFWF must consult with state and federal resource agencies in identifying projects to fund. The public will be permitted to submit projects through the state resource agencies.

JUL – DEC 2013: GULF ADVISORY SCOPING

The NAS Gulf Program Advisory Group is holding meetings to clarify what restoration activities are already underway in the Gulf and to generally guide the development of a strategic plan for the program.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION WEBSITES

Some states are working to set up or have already set up websites for project proposal submissions.

2012

2013

UPCOMING