



August 17, 2011

**To: Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees**

Last year's Gulf oil disaster was not just an environmental catastrophe. It was also an economic one.

The Gulf of Mexico is unique because its ecosystems, communities and economies are all intrinsically linked. The Gulf's environmental well-being is directly tied to the economic strength of the region and the nation:

- The Gulf currently supports a \$34 billion per year tourism industry ([Oxford Economics](#)), and its fisheries support more than \$23 billion in seafood and commercial and recreational fishing-related activity ([National Marine Fisheries Service](#)).
- The Gulf produces roughly 40 percent of all the seafood in the lower 48 states ([National Marine Fisheries Service](#)).
- The region is home to 10 of our nation's 15 largest ports by tonnage. More than 25 percent of the nation's waterborne exports pass through Louisiana ports alone ([American Association of Port Authorities](#)).

As a coalition of environmental and economic organizations, we wholeheartedly support the work of NRDA trustees to address ecosystem injury in the Gulf of Mexico resulting from last year's oil spill.

By strengthening the region's environment, we will make it more resilient so it can continue to be the backbone of our nation's economy, and a safe home to the communities that make it a national treasure.

Toward this end, our coalition is submitting a list of suggested guiding principles and criteria for early restoration projects that can help you evaluate which projects will be most helpful for the environment, communities and economies of the Gulf region.

Please consider our coalition an on-going resource as you conduct your work.

Sincerely,

The Environmental Defense Fund  
National Audubon Society  
The National Wildlife Federation  
The Nature Conservancy  
Ocean Conservancy  
Oxfam America

Enclosure: *Policies and Guidelines for Environmental Restoration Funding in the Gulf of Mexico*

## **Policies and Guidelines for Environmental Restoration Funding in the Gulf of Mexico**

These principles and criteria can and should be applied to both early and long-term restoration projects.

### **Core Principles:**

1. Restoration will contribute to a healthy, productive and biologically diverse coastal and marine ecosystem that is the backbone of the economic and cultural well-being of the Gulf region.
2. Restoration uses an ecosystem approach based on an understanding of factors that control the populations of species or condition of habitats found in coastal and marine areas.
3. Restoration priorities and activities will be re-evaluated as information on the extent and significance of injury to natural resources is obtained from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and from other scientific sources.
4. Restoration activities will be subject to independent, scientific review within the timeframe required by other evaluations and decision-making processes.
5. Restoration must include meaningful public participation and NEPA compliance at all levels throughout the process.
6. Restoration should facilitate accountability and reflect public ownership of the process by timely release and reasonable access to information and data.
7. Long-term scientific monitoring programs and decision support tools shall be established to assess performance of restoration activities, allow for adaptive management, and measure the health of the Gulf ecosystem on a continuing basis.

### **Project Selection Criteria:**

1. Priority will be given to restoration projects that facilitate recovery of injured natural resources and lost services by addressing systemic problems facing the ecosystem, including historical degradation.
2. Priority will be given to restoration of natural resources and ecosystem services that have economic, cultural and subsistence value to people living and working along the Gulf Coast.
3. Extra consideration should be given to projects that increase the resilience of socially vulnerable communities.
4. Priority will be given to projects that benefit multiple species or resources.
5. Restoration activities should have clear, measurable and achievable endpoints.
6. Possible harmful effects on non-target resources and services should be considered when evaluating proposed restoration activities.
7. Competitive, innovative, collaborative, and cost-effective proposals for restoration projects will be encouraged.

8. Projects that are scalable may be funded in part provided that the funded component stands alone in terms of its benefits, even if the rest of the project is not funded.
9. Project sponsors demonstrate due diligence. The due diligence process will include scientific, technical, economic and social evaluation of design, design alternatives and implementation of the effort.
10. Priority will be given to restoration projects which include plans integrating workforce development and job creation benefiting people who live and work in the area, including disadvantaged and underemployed populations.