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Deepwater Horizon
Natural Resource Damage Assessment
& Restoration
Annual Public Meeting and
Regionwide Trustee Council Implementation Group
(Conducted via Webinar)
Thursday, July 16, 2020
6:00 p.m. through 7:30 p.m. Central

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. FRANKLIN: Good evening, and welcome to

4 tonight's annual meeting. My name is Perry
5 Franklin, and I will serve as your facilitator
6 for the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource
7 Damage Assessment Trustee Council's fifth annual
8 meeting. This meeting also serves as the annual
9 meeting of the Regionwide Trustee Implementation
10 Group, or TIG, as you may hear later on tonight.

11 The Trustees and their representatives will
12 present a lot of useful information tonight, and
13 then you will have an opportunity to give the
14 Trustees some important feedback.

15 As you may be aware, while other Trustee
16 Implementation Groups have held them, this
17 meeting is the Trustee Council's first virtual
18 meeting. Welcome again, and thank you for
19 taking time out of your busy schedule this
20 evening.

21 Whether you are listening in via telephone
22 or your computer's audio, please know that we

5

1 have all incoming audio muted at this time. If
2 you are experiencing technical difficulties and
3 would like to request assistance, please use the
4 Questions box located on the right-hand side of
5 the webinar interface, and we will try to help

6 you.

7 We have a court reporter who will
8 transcribe the entire meeting, including your
9 comments. The PowerPoint presentation and the
10 transcript will be posted on the Trustee
11 Council's website in the very near future. We
12 are providing an American Sign Language
13 interpreter via live video.

14 The Trustees want me to point out that
15 there are fact sheets on the Trustee Council's
16 website: Gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov. Once
17 again, that is gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov.

18 When you registered for the webinar, you
19 received an email from webinars@dwhtig.org
20 confirming your registration. That email
21 contains helpful instructions on how to manage
22 your audio during this webinar.

6

1 Additionally, you were asked if you would
2 like to make a verbal comment. We received a
3 number of requests and responded to each person
4 via email with instructions on making verbal
5 comments to our listening panel. After the
6 presentation portion of tonight's webinar, we
7 will then take public comments.

8 If you didn't make a request before the
9 meeting, that's okay as well. We will explain
10 how to do so before we open the public comment
11 portion of tonight's meeting.

12 So, at this time, let's go ahead and get
13 started with tonight's actual meeting. I'd like
14 to introduce you to Bren Haase, Executive
15 Director of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and
16 Restoration Authority and Chair of the Trustee
17 Council.

18 Bren?

19 MR. HAASE: Thank you, Perry. Are you able
20 to hear me?

21 MR. FRANKLIN: Yes.

22 MR. HAASE: Excellent, excellent.

7

1 Well, good evening, everyone, and welcome
2 to this annual meeting of the Trustee Council
3 and Regionwide Trustee Implementation Group, and
4 thank you all for your interest and attendance
5 this evening.

6 We do know that we have a number of elected
7 officials who are in attendance with us this
8 evening. We're not able to recognize all of
9 them, but we'd like to extend a special thanks

10 to those that are representing the citizens of
11 the Gulf Coast. We thank you for your interest
12 and attendance this evening certainly as well.

13 So since the settlement with BP in 2016,
14 the Trustees have held a meeting very year to
15 bring you up to speed on our efforts to restore
16 the natural resources injured by the Deepwater
17 Horizon oil spill, and tonight marks our fifth
18 annual public meeting, of course.

19 In tonight's presentation, I want to go
20 over some slides that give you an update of what
21 we've been doing since our last meeting. Then
22 you will hear an update from each of the

8

1 restoration area Trustee Implementation Groups
2 as well, and of course, after that, we certainly
3 want to hear from you. We want to hear from the
4 public that are attending this meeting, and
5 Perry will facilitate that public comment
6 portion of the meeting at the end of the agenda
7 here this evening.

8 So before we kind of get into things, I'd
9 certainly like to start by taking a moment to
10 recognize, obviously, this year marks 10 years
11 since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the

12 reason why we're all here today. That's why the
13 Trustee Council, our staff, and our partners
14 continue to work hard to restore the Gulf Coast.

15 As you all know, the rig explosion led to
16 the largest marine oil spill in U.S. history and
17 caused the death of 11 men and injury to 17
18 others. For months, millions of barrels of oil
19 flowed into the Gulf of Mexico, and our coastal
20 communities were severely impacted.

21 So in these trying times, we recognize the
22 human cost of the oil spill and continue to

9

1 extend our deepest condolences to those whose
2 loved ones were lost or injured during this
3 tragedy. So I just wanted to take a moment to
4 recognize this before we continue with our
5 presentation.

6 So restoration doesn't happen overnight,
7 but through careful design, successful
8 implementation, and robust monitoring, we know
9 and we are confident that we can restore the
10 Gulf Coast.

11 So I'd like to introduce you, to let you
12 know who the Trustee Council Representatives
13 are, introduce you to each of those

14 representatives. So we do have a member
15 representing each of the five Gulf Coast States
16 and a member who represents each of the four
17 Federal agencies involved with the Trustee
18 Council.

19 So, first, I'll introduce Leslie Reed.
20 She's the Trustee Council Representative for
21 Florida. Chris Blankenship represents the State
22 of Alabama. Chris Wells represents Mississippi.

10

1 I'm the Trustee Representative for the State of
2 Louisiana. Robin Riechers represents Texas.
3 Mary Josie Blanchard represents the United
4 States Department of Interior. Lee Forsgren
5 represents the United States Environmental
6 Protection Agency. Chris Doley represents the
7 U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic
8 and Atmospheric Administration, and Homer Wilkes
9 represents the United States Department of
10 Agriculture.

11 So just a quick review of our
12 responsibilities, the Trustees are responsible
13 for restoring the environment and compensating
14 the public for the natural resources injuries
15 that resulted from the Deepwater Horizon oil

16 spill.

17 So we used a Natural Resource Damage
18 Assessment that was released in 2016 to
19 determine the extent of the injuries to natural
20 resources and to seek restoration of those
21 injuries from the responsible parties.

22 The goal is to restore injured natural

11

1 resources, such as wetlands, fish, and birds, to
2 the condition that they would have been had the
3 spill not occurred in the first place.

4 So we're also responsible for addressing
5 recreational uses like boating, fishing,
6 hunting, and swimming that were lost or affected
7 as a result of the oil spill.

8 So I'll give you a little bit of background
9 before I talk about our recent activities. What
10 you see here on this slide, of course, is a
11 timeline. This shows the oil spill began
12 obviously in April of 2010. At that time, we
13 began the Natural Resource Injury Assessment, of
14 course, right away.

15 In April of 2011, BP agreed to make up to
16 \$1 billion available for early restoration, even
17 before the injury assessment was complete, so

18 that we were able to get a jump start on
19 restoration along the Gulf Coast.

20 From 2011 to 2016, we approved a total of
21 five early restoration plans, 65 projects, with
22 a combined cost of \$866 million. Some of those

12

1 projects have been completed, and others are
2 still under way.

3 In April of 2016, the Federal Government
4 and the five Gulf States reached a settlement
5 with BP totaling about \$20.8 billion. Of the
6 \$20.8 billion, the settlement provided \$8.8
7 billion in Natural Resources Damage Assessment
8 funds, or NRDA, NRDA funds, to support our work
9 restoring the Gulf. That total includes \$1
10 billion for early restoration, so that means
11 another \$7.1 billion was allocated to fund
12 post-April 2016 planning and restoration, and
13 \$700 million for adaptive management of unknown
14 conditions.

15 On this timeline, you can see the
16 settlement date indicated here. You can also
17 see "Today" indicated along the 15-year timeline
18 for payment by BP of the restoration funds.

19 In the 10 years since the spill, the

20 Implementation Groups have approved more than
21 200 projects for an estimated cost of about \$1.4
22 billion.

13

1 So along with the settlement, the Trustee
2 Council finalized a programmatic restoration
3 plan. That plan is programmatic, as I just
4 mentioned, which means that it includes
5 overarching restoration goals for the entire
6 Gulf ecosystem and broad restoration types that
7 guide development and selection of restoration
8 projects. It does not include a list of
9 individual restoration projects like you might
10 typically see in an Implementation Group
11 restoration plan.

12 Besides determining the total amount of
13 money BP will pay in NRDA damages, the
14 settlement also determined where those funds
15 will be spent. So the funds are assigned to
16 geographic restoration areas, one for each State
17 and restoration areas called "regionwide" and
18 "open ocean." And then within each restoration
19 area, funds are assigned to the restoration
20 types that were injured within those areas.

21 So I know this slide is difficult to read,

22 but please know that this is published to the

14

1 website. You can refer to this and much other
2 information for that matter on the fact sheets
3 that have been posted to our website if you'd
4 like to look at the details a little more
5 clearly.

6 To accomplish this huge restoration
7 effort--it's a big restoration effort--the
8 settlement established Trustee Implementation
9 Groups, often referred to as the TIGS, focusing
10 on different restoration areas.

11 So the Trustee Council provides
12 coordination and ensures transparency, fiscal
13 and scientific accountability, and consistency
14 with the programmatic plan and across those
15 implementation groups.

16 As we all know, the Gulf ecosystem, of
17 course, is very diverse with a wide variety of
18 natural resources and habitats that depend on
19 each other, and you can see sort of that
20 diagrammed here in this figure that's on the
21 slide today here this evening.

22 The spill, of course, injured a wide range

1 of wildlife and their habitats. It also
2 negatively impacted the recreational
3 opportunities, like fishing and boating, as I've
4 mentioned, and those injuries, of course, were
5 across the entire Gulf Coast ecosystem.

6 So because of those ecosystem-wide
7 injuries, the Trustees, through the
8 Implementation Groups, are taking a
9 comprehensive and integrated ecosystem-level
10 approach to restoring the Gulf. This is
11 consistent with our programmatic restoration
12 plan that we discussed just a few moments ago,
13 and we're seeing some common themes across all
14 of these restoration activities.

15 A lot of our projects are benefiting
16 multiple restoration types, as mentioned before.
17 For example, projects focused on improving water
18 quality, also benefit recreational
19 opportunities, making areas more enjoyable
20 essentially to visitors, and restoration
21 projects in wetland, coastal, and nearshore
22 habitats can also benefit birds, oyster

1 populations, and water quality, for that matter.

2 Also, I'd like to point out that when
3 appropriate, the Trustees certainly strive to
4 develop projects for restoration types across
5 broad geographic regions. So an example of that
6 is we have multiple bird projects that restore
7 habitat in several States across the Gulf Coast,
8 and there's a 10-year early restoration project
9 restoring sea turtles across Florida, Louisiana,
10 and Texas.

11 We also are coordinating across funding
12 sources to maximize Gulf ecosystem restoration.
13 Along with NRDA funding, we're leveraging funds
14 managed through other bodies, including the
15 RESTORE Council, the Gulf Environmental Benefit
16 Fund that's managed by the National Fish and
17 Wildlife Foundation, and NOAA's National
18 Estuarine Research Reserve program.

19 Some examples here include the Bahia Grande
20 Coastal Corridor Habitat Acquisition project,
21 the McFaddin Beach and Dune Restoration, and
22 Weeks Bay Land Acquisition project--that's the

17

1 East Gateway Tract of that project--which
2 leverage some of these funds across programs.

3 The TIGs are also leveraging funds with
4 local and State agencies. One example in
5 Florida is Norriego Point Restoration and
6 Recreation Project, which uses not only NRDA
7 dollars but also State funding as well, and all
8 of this, of course, is to accomplish more than
9 we could with just one program in the mix.

10 Finally, we're working with local experts,
11 like commercial fishermen and recreational
12 fishermen, to offer short- and long-term
13 benefits for the fisheries while restoring
14 targeted species of fish as well. So an example
15 of this is the Oceanic Fish Restoration Project,
16 which is restoring tuna and other species, in
17 partnership with pelagic longline fishermen both
18 in Florida and here in Louisiana.

19 As we implement restoration projects, it is
20 important that we manage them well and monitor
21 their success, even though that they are working
22 or if they happen not to be working. So this

18

1 monitoring and adaptive management evaluates the
2 successes of current projects and adapts them,
3 if needed, to ensure that we are maximizing
4 resource restoration. We can also use our

5 monitoring information for future projects and
6 hopefully to make those projects that we can
7 build on the future better than they would have
8 been otherwise and improve their results.

9 So here is an update you see on this slide,
10 on the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Work
11 Group, which is overseen by the Trustee Council,
12 and supports the TIGs in their Monitoring and
13 Adaptive Management work.

14 This year, the work group released new
15 monitoring guidance for oysters, submerged
16 aquatic vegetation, and projects that restore
17 and conserve marine, coastal, estuarine, and
18 riparian habitat. They are also supporting
19 programmatic evaluation efforts across TIGs and
20 across restoration types

21 Finally, the Monitoring and Adaptive
22 Management Work Group is continuing to evaluate

19

1 and make recommendation regarding our data
2 management.

3 The Trustee Council, of course, is
4 committed to proactively communicating and
5 report out the work that we do. As I mentioned
6 before, this is the 10-years Deepwater Horizon

7 anniversary. It's been 10 years since the spill
8 occurred. To commemorate that, the Trustee
9 Council produced a statement on our website,
10 which was also distributed to thousands of email
11 subscribers. That statement included summaries
12 of different efforts aligned with those common
13 themes that I mentioned earlier in the
14 presentation.

15 We're also continuing to communicate
16 progress through our annual reporting. This
17 year, we produced more than 200 project reports
18 and, of course, our annual financial summary as
19 well. All of this can be found on the Gulf
20 Spill website.

21 We work to get projects under way quickly
22 after they are approved, and 80 percent of the

20

1 over 200 approved projects have already started
2 construction or we expect to start construction
3 on those in this year.

4 In 2019, we posted almost 60 articles and
5 updates to our website driving more than 100,000
6 visits to the site to view those materials.

7 Looking forward, we're working on a program
8 review of all of our work as well, and that

9 review may include summaries of administrative
10 and financial information, public engagement
11 activities, monitoring data, and project
12 accomplishments, as well as other metrics that
13 support restoration program evaluation.

14 We look forward to sharing all that
15 information with you and what we have
16 accomplished and what we have learned so far in
17 the near future.

18 So now we will start the updates from the
19 TIGs on what they are doing for their
20 restoration areas. As you hear from each TIG
21 about the work they have undertaken this year
22 and anticipate in the future, you'll hear some

21

1 common themes. First, as we plan for future
2 restoration, we are getting public input early
3 in the process. Also, generally speaking, the
4 TIGs have focused on a variety of activities
5 that restore the Gulf's coastal habitats and
6 access to those habitats. The TIGs are also
7 looking to improve water quality and address
8 living coastal marine resources, which includes
9 birds, oysters, turtles, in addition to marine
10 mammals.

11 And perhaps most importantly for many of
12 you, you'll hear that restoration projects are
13 continuing and that they're moving forward, both
14 on the ground and in the water across the Gulf
15 Coast.

16 So, with that, first, we will hear from
17 Chris Blankenship, for the State of Alabama and
18 a member of the Alabama TIG.

19 Chris, I will turn it over to you. Thank
20 you very much.

21 MR. BLANKENSHIP: Thank you, Bren.

22 Good evening, and thank you for joining us.

22

1 I am Commissioner Chris Blankenship from the
2 Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
3 in Alabama, and I'm the Lead Trustee for the
4 State of Alabama.

5 Next slide.

6 To date, Alabama has committed
7 approximately \$180 million for projects and
8 planning activities. The total allocation for
9 Alabama is \$295 million that will be deposited
10 through 2032. So to date, Alabama has projects
11 approved for 61 percent of the total that will
12 be funded for Alabama TIG projects.

13 Next slide.

14 Recently, we released the Alabama TIG
15 Restoration Plan III. We did that in December
16 of 2019, approving seven projects. Five of
17 those projects provide and enhance recreational
18 opportunities, and two of those projects restore
19 bird and bird habitat.

20 We also continued implementation and
21 monitoring of projects from the Early
22 Restoration Plan and Restoration Plans I and II.

23

1 Next slide.

2 The project that I want to feature tonight
3 is renovations to the Gulf State Park Pier. The
4 Alabama TIG provided funding to the Alabama
5 State Parks Division of the Department of
6 Conservation and Natural Resources for
7 renovations to the Gulf State Park Pier, which
8 is the second longest pier in the Gulf of
9 Mexico. I believe Florida nailed one board to
10 the end of a pier in Destin to make it 6 inches
11 longer than our pier a few years ago.

12 All kidding aside, renovations include
13 replacement of pine decking with material that's
14 more tolerance of the marine conditions, new

15 fish cleaning station, and best-in-class
16 wildlife-friendly pier and parking lot lighting
17 for the sea turtles and other wildlife.

18 We're also in Restoration Plan I funded
19 renovations to a pier at Fort Morgan. So both
20 of those piers, the work is under way now and
21 should be available for the public in the next
22 couple of months.

24

1 Future activities. We plan to continue
2 implementation and monitoring of all of the
3 projects that have been approved to date, and we
4 will have an annual meeting of the Alabama TIG
5 this fall. And it has yet to be determined
6 whether that will be an in-person or a virtual
7 meeting like we're doing tonight.

8 I also want to thank and appreciate the
9 work of our Federal partners on the Alabama TIG.
10 Working together, I feel like we have been able
11 to accomplish a lot of excellent restoration
12 work over the past few years.

13 Now I'd like to turn it over to my friend
14 from Florida, Ms. Leslie Reed, to update you on
15 Florida TIG activity.

16 MS. REED: Thank you, Chris, and I'd like

17 to say there's nothing better than some friendly
18 competition between neighbors.

19 But I am Leslie Reed with the Florida
20 Department of Environmental Protection, and I
21 have the pleasure of representing the Florida
22 Trustees Implementation Group tonight.

25

1 So there are 57 projects and planning
2 activities that have been approved in the
3 Florida Restoration Area. These 57 projects
4 have a total estimated cost of \$187 million. As
5 our total allocation is \$680 million, we still
6 have over \$490 million in funds to conduct
7 future restoration.

8 As of today, we have completed construction
9 of about 12 projects through early restoration
10 and our first post-settlement restoration plan.
11 Over the past year, we have held our first
12 Florida Deepwater Horizon Summit, which also
13 served as our Florida TIG annual public meeting,
14 and we as a TIG approved the third phase of our
15 Florida Coastal Access project, which involved
16 the acquisition of a 5-acre inholding parcel at
17 the Navarre Beach Park in Santa Rosa County. We
18 were also able to acquire that parcel late last

19 year.

20 In addition, the Florida TIG is actively
21 working on our second post-settlement
22 restoration plan, and we had a call for projects

26

1 in August of last year.

2 I'd like to highlight one of the projects
3 we've recently completed construction on from
4 our first restoration plan, which is known as
5 the Alligator Lake Coastal Dune Lake Hydrologic
6 Restoration Project.

7 The coastal dune lakes are rare worldwide,
8 and Florida is fortunate to have over 15 of
9 these, mostly clustered in Walton County. What
10 makes these lakes unique is that their mostly
11 freshwater content sits just within a few feet
12 of the Gulf's salt water. After heavy rains or
13 storm surge, a flood of fresh water pours into
14 the Gulf, and salt water can also flood back
15 into these dune lakes. This results in a rare
16 brackish ecosystem that's home to both fresh and
17 saltwater species.

18 Alligator Lake was one of the last of the
19 dune lakes in Walton County with a barrier
20 separating the lake from the Gulf. This NRDA

21 project removed the barrier, allowing the
22 exchange of fresh and salt waters, and the

27

1 project also includes 5 years of monitoring to
2 see how water quality changes with this periodic
3 tidal exchange.

4 Looking forward, the Florida TIG will
5 continue implementation and monitoring of early
6 restoration projects and also continue
7 implementation of Final Restoration Plan 1
8 projects. We'll also continue restoration
9 planning on our second restoration plan, which
10 will include habitat projects on federally
11 managed lands; recreational use projects,
12 specifically those that enhance fishing
13 activities; and projects meant to replenish and
14 protect birds, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

15 As I said earlier, the call for projects
16 was done in August of 2019. Currently, the TIG
17 is in the final stages of screening and project
18 development and finalizing the reasonable range
19 of alternatives.

20 We anticipate releasing the draft plan late
21 this year or early next year.

22 With that, I'd like to thank everyone for

1 the opportunity to present on the Florida TIG,
2 and I'd like to turn things over to Maury
3 Chatellier, representing Louisiana.

4 MR. CHATELLIER: Thank you, Leslie, and
5 good evening, everyone.

6 My name is Maury Chatellier. I'm the
7 Deepwater Horizon Program Administrator for the
8 Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority,
9 here in Baton Rouge. I am excited tonight to
10 share the good work we've accomplished since our
11 last update. So as others had done, we'll start
12 with the funding component, the funding update.

13 As you can see, the State of Louisiana has
14 committed approximately \$734 million for
15 projects and planning activities as of May of
16 this year. To put that in perspective, it shows
17 that 15 percent of the total allocation we'll
18 receive, which will be \$5 billion, while that
19 comes across as a small percentage, it's about
20 40 percent of the \$1.8 billion that has been
21 allocated to the TIG to date.

22 As other States, we'll receive payments

1 through 2031, '32. Louisiana will receive about
2 \$319 million a year to complete our \$5 billion
3 component.

4 Next slide, please.

5 So to talk about what we've accomplished
6 over the past year, we had a lot of good work.
7 Restoration Plan 1.3 was finalized in February
8 of this year and approved construction dollars
9 for two large-scale projects for birds and
10 habitats on federally managed lands.

11 Rabbit Island Restoration Project was
12 designed and has already gone out to bid as of
13 May of this year to restore avian injury on the
14 west side of the State over in Cameron Parish.
15 That project has a fully funded cost of a little
16 over \$15 million.

17 Also in RP1.3, the Shoreline Projection
18 Project at Jean Lafitte National Historic Park
19 and Preserve, this is an SAV project with a
20 shoreline protection component. Fully funded
21 cost on this one is a little over \$20 million,
22 and this project is being implemented by our

30

1 friends at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2 Restoration Plan 6 was completed in April
3 and approved a little over \$200 million for the
4 construction of three large-scale projects.
5 These projects were originally funded through
6 the RESTORE program for E&D, and we moved them
7 over to the NRDA program for construction
8 implementation.

9 West Grand Terre Beach Nourishment recently
10 went out for bid. This is a beach and dune
11 habitat restoration project with intertidal
12 marsh along Barataria Pass and Barataria Bay,
13 just east of Grand Island, Jefferson Parish.
14 The project has a total cost about \$92.5
15 million. Again, this project was just awarded
16 this month.

17 Golden Triangle Marsh Creation Project in
18 the eastern portion of the Golden Triangle
19 Marsh, which is adjacent to New Orleans, this
20 will be about an 800-acre marsh restoration of
21 broken marsh and open water. This is about a
22 \$50 million project, and we anticipate

31

1 construction in August of this year.

2 Finally, the Biloxi Marsh Living Shoreline
3 will create oyster barrier reef along the

4 eastern Biloxi Marsh over in Jefferson Parish.
5 About 9 to 11 miles of oyster barrier reef will
6 be installed. This is about a \$66 million
7 project, and we anticipate construction
8 beginning in December of this year.

9 Restoration Plan 3.3 was also finalized and
10 approved construction funding for a large-scale
11 marsh creation project in Barataria Basin. This
12 project is looking at creating about 1,200 acres
13 of intertidal marsh in Upper Basin, utilizing
14 sediment dredged from the Mississippi River.
15 This is about \$176 million total project cost,
16 and it is being implemented by folks at NOAA.

17 As wrap-up on this, the Louisiana TIG has
18 completed a number of Supplemental Restoration
19 Plans and Environmental Assessments on some of
20 our Recreational use Projects, including
21 Point-aux-Chenes Wildlife Management Wetlands
22 Center in Lakes Charles and Cypremort Point Park

32

1 improvements down in St. Mary Parish.

2 Next slide.

3 So the project I'd like to emphasize
4 tonight is our Queen Bess Island project. This
5 project is located in the Barataria Basin, just

6 northeast of Grand Isle. Queen Bess is one of
7 the largest colonial water bird rookeries in the
8 State and one of the only brown pelican colonies
9 in Barataria Basin.

10 This project is important because
11 approximately 30 percent of the country's brown
12 pelicans nest in Louisiana, and it has been
13 estimated that over the past decade, we've lost
14 close to 50 percent of our colonies.

15 This project was completed with a
16 construction cost of about \$18.7 million. The
17 top image that you can see, the sediment and
18 sand was filled open water and restored the
19 nesting bird habitat. The work on the project
20 was finished in February, and in March, the
21 pelicans came back en masse. It was originally
22 estimated that we would see about 1,500 nests

33

1 on--or hopeful to see 1,500 nests on this
2 project. The last count estimated about 8,000
3 nests, brown pelican nests on the 36-acre
4 project. That does not include the other water
5 birds--the terns, skimmers, gulls, any of the
6 wading birds. So it has been a very, very
7 impressive project and very, very successful.

8 Next slide, please.

9 So for the future and ongoing activities,
10 currently, the State of Louisiana has three
11 Draft Restoration Plans that we intend to
12 complete this year. If approved, these three
13 plans will move forward--two large-scale marsh
14 and ridge projects and shoreline protection and
15 nourishment projects, with an estimated cost of
16 about \$215 million.

17 Also, a number of projects to restore for
18 oysters and marine mammals that will allocate
19 almost \$30 million for those resources.

20 Restoration Plan 1.2 seeks the construction
21 funding for two NRDA projects that are currently
22 in E&D. Lake Borgne will create about 2,800

34

1 acres of intertidal marsh on the southeastern
2 side of Lake Borgne, and the Spanish Pass
3 project will hope to construct about 1,700 acres
4 of marsh and ridge habitat with Mississippi
5 River borrow material.

6 Restoration Plan 5 recently completed the
7 public comment period and has shown the \$28.7
8 million restoration plan includes multiple
9 components for marine mammals and oysters,

10 including work for marine mammal strandings,
11 oyster reefs, and spawning stock reefs and
12 oyster cultch plant as well as funding to
13 support the hatchery on Grand Isle, so a lot of
14 good work coming up in support of the Louisiana
15 oyster industry.

16 Finally, what we've got coming up, the
17 Louisiana TIG has recently begun drafting
18 Restoration Plan No. 7, which will focus on
19 near-shore habitat and bird projects. This
20 draft plan is under way. We intend to have it
21 completed by the end of the year, so a lot of
22 good work, very, very busy time here in

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1 Louisiana and will be for some time.

2 So, with that, that's the Louisiana update,
3 and I'll turn it over to Mr. Chris Wells and the
4 State of Mississippi.

5 MR. WELLS: Thank you, Maury.

6 This is Chris Wells. I'm the interim
7 Executive Director for the Mississippi
8 Department of Environmental Quality and pleased
9 to be able to represent the Mississippi Trustee
10 Implementation Group tonight and provide this
11 update on our activities since the last annual

12 meeting.

13 As you heard from the other presenters, we
14 with the Mississippi, as like everyone else,
15 have been very busy since the last update, and
16 I'll start with the funding update.

17 We have to date committed approximately 50
18 percent of our total allocation under the
19 settlement of \$295 million. Those funds have
20 been allocated to a wide variety of restoration
21 types, including wetlands, coastal, and
22 near-shore habitats, nutrient reduction,

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1 oysters, birds, and recreational opportunities.

2 Since the last annual meeting, in September
3 of 2019, we released the Final Supplemental
4 Restoration Plan related to the Grand Bay Land
5 Acquisition and Habitat Management Project.
6 This amendment added \$10 million to an existing
7 project to further enhance habitat management
8 and monitoring and adaptive management as well
9 as potentially acquire additional properties to
10 be added to the Grand Bay NRDA.

11 This brings the total budget for this
12 project to \$16 million, and again, it was
13 finalized in September of last year.

14 In April of this year, 2020, we released
15 the Draft Restoration Plan II for public review
16 and comment. This plan would fund \$14 million
17 in wetlands coastal and near-shore habitats as
18 well as oyster projects. The activities
19 contemplated by this plan include habitat
20 restoration on the Mississippi Coastal Preserves
21 property, up to 400 acres of oyster restoration,
22 and the continuation of an oyster gardening

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1 program. And we intend to publish the final
2 plan later this summer or in the fall of this
3 year.

4 The project that we'd like to highlight
5 tonight is our Hancock County Marsh Living
6 Shoreline Project. This is a \$50 million
7 project for which MDEQ and NOAA are
8 co-implementing trustees. This is a
9 multi-component project and included 6 miles of
10 living shorelines, 46 acres of subtidal reef,
11 and 46 acres of marsh creation.

12 We completed the construction of the
13 shoreline component between 2016 and March of
14 2019, and the inset image that you see here on
15 the screen shows the effectiveness of the break

16 waters in reducing wave energy, which was a
17 major contributing factor to erosion. And it's
18 estimated that without the project, we would
19 lose over 100 acres of marsh over the lifespan
20 of the project.

21 The 46 acres of subtidal reef was
22 constructed in 2017 in Heron Bay, and the

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1 estimated start date for construction of the 46
2 acres of marsh is September of 2020, and we hope
3 to have that completed by February of 2022.

4 This newly created marsh will provide
5 additional habitat for the severely eroded St.
6 Joseph Point, and the source material for the
7 project is a nearby dredge project for
8 maintenance of this Pearl River Ship Channel and
9 the Port Bienville Channels.

10 Overall, this project provides protection
11 to the Hancock County Marsh Preserve and
12 restores lost secondary productivity, which
13 could include oyster production from the 46-acre
14 subtidal reef as well as the 6-mile living
15 shoreline.

16 Moving forward, the Mississippi TIG will,
17 of course, continue restoration project

18 implementation for those projects that are
19 contained in Plans I and II and monitoring and
20 continue restoration planning.

21 We also released the Final Restoration Plan
22 II, as I indicated earlier, and initiated

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1 implementation of the approved Wetlands,
2 Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats and Oysters
3 projects.

4 We also anticipate holding our annual
5 meeting in conjunction with our annual
6 Restoration Summit in fall of this year, but as
7 with everything 2020, in the year 2020, we don't
8 know at this point whether that meeting will be
9 held virtually or in-person. But we do intend
10 to carry through with that annual event and look
11 forward to having everyone there.

12 With that, I'm going to turn it over to
13 Robin Riechers with the great State of Texas.

14 MR. RIECHERS: Thank you, Chris, and good
15 evening to everyone.

16 As Chris indicated, my name is Robin
17 Riechers, and I'm with the trustee agency of the
18 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, here
19 tonight representing the Texas Trustee

20 Implementation Group for our Federal trustee
21 agencies as well as my sister agencies at the
22 State level, the General Land Office and the

40

1 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

2 To date, approximately \$107 million, or 45
3 percent, of the \$238 million of the total Texas
4 allocation has been spent or encumbered for
5 projects or planning activities as of May of
6 this year.

7 The Texas TIG recently completed
8 construction and monitoring of all three
9 Artificial Reef Projects in this last year and
10 completed the construction of park amenities at
11 Sea Rim State Park, which were all part of our
12 early restoration phase.

13 In addition, the TIG has completed land
14 acquisitions and conveyed those purchased
15 properties to the Laguna Atascosa National
16 Wildlife Refuge and the Texas Mid-Coast National
17 Wildlife Refuge Complex.

18 To aid in future restoration planning for
19 the Nutrient Reduction Restoration Type, the TIG
20 also developed watershed selection criteria and
21 nonpoint source nutrient reduction strategies.

22 Our featured project tonight is the Indian

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1 Point Shoreline Erosion Protection Project that
2 was selected in our Texas TIG Final 2017
3 Restoration Plan. This project constructed
4 breakwaters to protect critical seagrass,
5 coastal marsh, lagoons, and associated upland
6 habitats.

7 As mentioned earlier by Bren, this project
8 build upon a 2015 Coastal Erosion Planning and
9 Response Act grant that was received by the
10 local city which constructed a revetment and
11 breakwater to stabilize an eroding shoreline and
12 protect habitat at Indian Point Park in San
13 Patricio County.

14 This project built out that initial work
15 more and continued previous stabilization and
16 habitat protection efforts. The project
17 constructed six breakwater segments that extend
18 from that previously constructed shoreline,
19 resulting in a total of 2,800 linear feet of
20 shoreline being protected against erosion,
21 saltwater intrusion, wave action, and in
22 preserving the 50 acres of critical seagrass,

1 coastal marsh, lagoons, and uplands of Indian
2 Point Park and the Sunset Lake Bird Sanctuary.

3 The project construction was initiated in
4 August of 2019 and completed in December of
5 2019.

6 As far as future activities that are under
7 way and ongoing, the Texas TIG will continue to
8 acquire suitable habitat included on Follets
9 Island and in the Bahia Grande Coastal Corridor.
10 Those are focal areas that we had identified,
11 and we're going to continue with those efforts.

12 In addition, the TIG will continue the
13 construction efforts on the hydrologic
14 restoration of the Bahia Grande in South Texas
15 and the McFaddin Beach and Dune Restoration,
16 which is also part of an overall hydrologic
17 restoration plan on the northeast coast of Texas
18 and our Pierce Marsh Wetland Restoration, which
19 is just west of Galveston Isle or Galveston Bay.

20 Additional future activities also will
21 include to complete the current design and
22 engineering work we have ongoing for oyster

1 restoration, use of beneficial dredge material
2 for wetland restoration, and we will continue
3 also the work for design and engineering on Bird
4 Island Cove and Essex Bayou.

5 To finish, additionally, we will want to
6 work to finish our implementation and monitoring
7 of early restoration and the 2017 restoration
8 plan, and we look forward to initiating the next
9 restoration plan soon.

10 I want to thank all of you for the
11 opportunity to present the work of the Texas
12 Trustee Implementation Group tonight and for you
13 being with us tonight.

14 With that, I'll turn the presentation over
15 to Laurie Rounds, who will be representing the
16 Open Ocean Trustee Group tonight.

17 MS. ROUNDS: Thank you very much, Robin.

18 Hello, everybody. My name is Laurie
19 Rounds, and I am with NOAA. I'd like to provide
20 the update for the Open Ocean Trustee
21 Implementation Group. In this Group, we work to
22 restore the wide-ranging and migratory species

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1 injured by the spill, including fish, sea
2 turtle, marine mammal, deep-sea coral, sturgeon,

3 and birds.

4 Next, I'll talk a little bit about our
5 funding update. The Open Ocean Trustee
6 Implementation Group has committed approximately
7 \$326 million for restoration planning and
8 implementation or about 26 percent of our total
9 allocation of \$1.2 billion. These funds are
10 being used to implement 26 restoration projects
11 across all restoration types in the Open Ocean
12 Restoration Area as well as three Monitoring and
13 Adaptive Management Activities.

14 In addition, these funds are used to
15 conduct stakeholder outreach and to provide
16 oversight and comprehensive planning by the
17 Federal trustees serving on all seven of the
18 Trustee Implementation Groups.

19 Some of the recent activities of the Open
20 Ocean Trustees include those shown here on this
21 slide. We completed the Bon Secour National
22 Wildlife Refuge Trail Enhancement Project, an

1 Early Restoration project in coastal Alabama,
2 led by the Department of the Interior. Through
3 this project, we repaired and enhanced the
4 existing Jeff Friend Trail. The aged boardwalk

5 and gravel trail were repaired and improved to
6 enhance public access. We also constructed an
7 observation platform along the trail and widened
8 two accessible parking spaces to better
9 accommodate visitors.

10 We are continuing to implement and monitor
11 our other Early Restoration Projects, including
12 the Oceanic Fish Restoration Project and
13 projects to restore for lost recreational uses
14 on federally managed lands in Mississippi and in
15 Florida.

16 We are excited to have finalized two
17 restoration plans in 2019 that approved 21
18 restoration projects for birds, Gulf sturgeon,
19 fish and water column invertebrates, sea
20 turtles, marine mammals, and mesophotic and deep
21 benthic communities totaling almost \$242
22 million.

1 We began implementation of three Monitoring
2 and Adaptive Management Activities, two for Gulf
3 sturgeon and one for marine mammal, and we also
4 updated the Open Ocean Monitoring and Adaptive
5 Management Strategy to highlight the TIG's
6 initial priorities. The strategy lays out our

7 processes to identify and prioritize information
8 gaps and data needed to plan, implement,
9 evaluate, and adaptively management Open Ocean
10 restoration. We will hold a public webinar on
11 July 22nd to describe the updates to the
12 strategy and outline our initial priorities.

13 Next, I would like to highlight the Beach
14 Enhancement Project at Gulf Islands National
15 Seashore in Florida. This is an Early
16 Restoration Project led by the Department of the
17 Interior. The Trustee Council authorized \$10.8
18 million for this project.

19 The project enhances recreational use and
20 visitor satisfaction by removing asphalt debris,
21 primarily asphalt fragments and road-base rock
22 form the beach sand at Gulf Islands National

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1 Seashore. This debris has been scattered widely
2 over some or all of Fort Pickens, Santa Rosa,
3 and Perdido Key areas of the National Seashore.
4 The asphalt debris ranges in shape and size from
5 large slabs down to brick and pea-size debris,
6 and these materials originated from roads being
7 damaged by storms and hurricanes.

8 Thus far, over four seasons, we have

9 enhanced 574 acres of beach and 5 acres of
10 nearshore tidal wetland. Nearly 20,000 tons of
11 asphalt and road-base material have been removed
12 from these areas, these beaches and nearshore
13 tidal wetland areas.

14 Now in the final season, we anticipate
15 finishing the clean-up activities and then
16 planting vegetation in a small portion of the
17 cleaned areas where vegetation was destroyed in
18 the process of removing the asphalt and road
19 debris.

20 Moving forward, the Open Ocean TIG will
21 continue to implement our Early Restoration
22 projects, including restoring Blue Fin Tuna

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1 through the Oceanic Fish Restoration Project and
2 completing recreational use enhancement on the
3 Gulf Islands National Seashore in Mississippi
4 and Florida.

5 We will continue to implement the three
6 newer restoration projects approved in our first
7 restoration plan. These projects will identify
8 and characterize potential Gulf sturgeon
9 spawning habitat in the Pearl and Pascagoula
10 River systems and enhance breeding success for

11 common loons and black terns in the northern
12 U.S. areas where these birds nest. Many of the
13 18 projects approved in our second Restoration
14 Plan for fish, sea turtles, marine mammals, and
15 deep sea corals are also beginning
16 implementation of the restoration activities
17 approved in that plan.

18 Future activities will include supporting
19 and building strong adaptive management
20 frameworks. This includes continued
21 implementation of activities to address key
22 information needs for the restoration of

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1 sturgeon and marine mammals. It will also
2 include developing additional activities to
3 address the TIG's initial priorities for
4 monitoring and adaptive management.

5 We also anticipate starting efforts to
6 develop our third Restoration Plan, and we will
7 continue stakeholder outreach, including our
8 annual TIG meeting later this year, and again,
9 on July 22nd, we're holding a webinar to share
10 our initial Monitoring and Adaptive Management
11 priorities. You can register for this webinar
12 at the Gulf Shore Restoration website.

13 So thank you very much for your attention.

14 Next, Jamie Schubert will provide the
15 update for the Regionwide Trustee Implementation
16 Group.

17 MR. SCHUBERT: Thank you, Laurie.

18 My name is Jamie Schubert, and I am with
19 the NOAA Restoration Center, and this year, I
20 have the pleasure of chairing the Regionwide TIG
21 and providing you all with updates of our
22 activities.

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1 Thus far, we have committed approximately
2 \$47 million for projects and planning activities
3 as of May 2020. This is roughly 13 percent of
4 our total allocation, which is \$350 million.

5 This year, we began our planning process
6 for our Restoration Plan 1 in which we will
7 develop and publish projects for restoring all
8 four restoration types that the Regionwide TIG
9 is charged with restoring. These are birds,
10 oysters, marine mammals, and sea turtles.

11 In September of 2019, we requested project
12 ideas from the public, and we published our
13 Notice of Initiation of Restoration Planning
14 early this month on July 1st. We will also have

15 continued implementation and monitoring of our
16 Early Restoration projects.

17 Our feature project this year is the Sea
18 Turtle Early Restoration Project. This project
19 was funded in Phase IV Early Restoration Project
20 to the tune of about \$25 million. The
21 Regionwide portion of this 10-year project,
22 which will wrap up in 2026, consists of two

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1 complementary components that will aid in the
2 recovery of sea turtles.

3 The first is enhancement of the sea turtle
4 stranding and salvage network and development of
5 an emergency response program across the Gulf.
6 This enhances the existing sea turtle and
7 stranding network Gulf-wide and develops a
8 formal emergency response program within the
9 Gulf of Mexico, with the goal of increasing
10 survival of sea turtles during cold stuns and
11 other emergency stranding events. Roughly 9,000
12 strandings occurred over the past 2 years.

13 The second component is the Gulf of Mexico
14 shrimp trawl bycatch reduction project. This
15 enhances two existing NOAA programs--the Gear
16 Monitoring Team and the Southeast Shrimp Trawl

17 Fisheries Observer program. This work will help
18 to reduce the bycatch of sea turtles in the Gulf
19 of Mexico.

20 For our future activities, next year we
21 intend to publish our Draft Regionwide TIG
22 Restoration Plan 1 for public review and comment

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1 We will also continue implementation and
2 monitoring of our Early Restoration projects.

3 With that, that is, I believe, the
4 conclusion of our TIG summaries, and I will pass
5 it back to Perry.

6 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you, Jamie, and thank
7 you to all of tonight's speakers for giving all
8 of this wonderful information.

9 Now I am pleased to announce that we are
10 going to start the public comment portion of the
11 meeting.

12 I'd like to remind each of you that when
13 you registered for the webinar, we asked if you
14 wanted to make comment during tonight's meeting.
15 We have several people signed up to give
16 comments so far.

17 At this time, I would like to remind you
18 that the Trustee Council Representatives shown

19 on this slide are here on the webinar to listen
20 to your public comments, and as with previous
21 Trustee Council public meetings, the Trustees
22 will be listening only but will not be answering

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1 questions tonight.

2 If you signed up to provide comments, then
3 you should have received an email earlier this
4 week with your number and the speaking order.
5 If you did not sign up to speak but would like
6 to do so, please type your name in the Questions
7 box at this time. Again, if you would like to
8 make a comment but did not register and state
9 that you wanted to make a comment, please go to
10 the Questions box at this time and simply type
11 in your name.

12 As a reminder, all attendees are muted
13 automatically. We will unmute you when it is
14 your turn to speak.

15 Also, if you have called in using a phone
16 and are planning to speak, you must enter your
17 individual audio PIN. Please note that this PIN
18 is different than the access code. As shown on
19 the slide, if you are using a phone, please make
20 sure computer audio is not selected.

21 We will call the first person's name and at
22 the same time the name of the next person in

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1 line so that you will have a little bit more
2 time to prepare. When we call your name, we
3 will unmute your line, and you will have 3
4 minutes to speak. I thank you in advance for
5 respecting the 3-minute rule.

6 Again, please state your name when you
7 begin to speak, and if you are representing an
8 organization, please state the name of the
9 organization prior to making your public
10 comments.

11 At this time to get started, our first
12 speaker is David Muth followed by Kent Wimmer.

13 Mr. Muth, please proceed with your comment.

14 [No audible response.]

15 MR. FRANKLIN: I think Mr. Muth is getting
16 his phone in order at this time.

17 MR. MUTH: Hello. Can you hear me now?

18 MR. FRANKLIN: Yes, yes.

19 MR. MUTH: Okay, thanks.

20 Good evening, everybody, and listen, I want
21 to thank everyone on the Trustee Implementation
22 Group for this presentation and for all of your

1 hard work. I only have 3 minutes, so I'm going
2 to move quickly.

3 Given that when you add together all of the
4 funding sources that came out of Deepwater
5 Horizon, the lion's share of the money, as you
6 all have indicated tonight, both for the NRDA
7 money and for the RESTORE Council money and
8 still a substantial portion of the Gulf and
9 Environmental Benefit Fund is still available,
10 we are in the midst of a really historic
11 restoration opportunity. We are now coming up
12 on the 5-year mark for the settlement, which
13 will be in 2021, and you the Trustees will be
14 undertaking a 5-year program review.

15 We'd like to strongly encourage the
16 Trustees to use this moment not only to update
17 the public on their progress but, perhaps more
18 importantly, would take stock of how all aspects
19 of the Restoration Program going and really the
20 course correct is needed. We hope the Trustees
21 will carve out the space to ask the larger
22 strategic questions, which go back to questions

1 we've all been asking from the beginning, which
2 is how do we leverage this Deepwater Horizon
3 money to accomplish the most that we can. We
4 need to maximize the remaining dollars.

5 We note that the RESTORE Council is also
6 soon due to update its comprehensive plan and
7 suggest that there may be a timely opportunity for
8 collaboration between the funding streams on
9 strategic priorities as they look toward the
10 future.

11 We do appreciate the emphasis in this
12 presentation on projects that are being
13 coordinated and leveraged across funding
14 streams, as Bren talked about it in the opening
15 and as several of you mentioned as you went
16 along. This is the key to success. We have to
17 leverage all of the funding sources, even though
18 it's beyond Deepwater Horizon.

19 Another opportunity for collaboration
20 across funding streams is reporting results of
21 projects. As you have just done, the public
22 needs to know what you have accomplished.

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1 In closing, this is a restoration of

2 national significance. Without peer in the
3 whole world, NWF and our partners are committed
4 to ensuring that the rest of the nation remains
5 engaged, long-term restoration and resilience
6 with outreach. We stand ready to assist you,
7 and thank you all very much for all the hard
8 work.

9 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you very much, Mr.
10 Muth.

11 The next individual to come forward and to
12 give public comment is Kent Wimmer followed by
13 Leslie Weinstein. And I'd like to remind you,
14 before you begin your comment, if you will state
15 your name for the record, as we do have a court
16 reporter online, and if you're representing an
17 organization, please state the name of the
18 organization. And then we'll start the 30
19 minute timer.

20 At this time, we'd like to ask Kent Wimmer
21 to give his public comment, followed by Leslie
22 Weinstein.

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1 [No audible response.]

2 MR. FRANKLIN: If you can hear me, Mr.
3 Wimmer, go ahead and please begin. You are

4 unmuted. You can proceed, Mr. Wimmer.

5 [No audible response.]

6 MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. We'll keep you on
7 deck, Mr. Wimmer.

8 At this time, we would like to proceed to
9 Ms. Leslie Weinstein.

10 [No audible response.]

11 MR. FRANKLIN: Leslie, if you can hear my
12 voice, you can go ahead and begin.

13 MR. WEINSTEIN: Hi. Can you hear me?

14 MR. FRANKLIN: Yes. Is that Mr. Wimmer?

15 MR. WEINSTEIN: No. This is Leslie
16 Weinstein.

17 MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. Please proceed, Mr.
18 Weinstein.

19 MR. WEINSTEIN: Yes, sir. Thank you.

20 My name is Leslie Weinstein. I am the
21 president of Turtles Fly Too.

22 Turtles Fly too is the emergency air rescue

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1 operation for endangered sea turtles and sea
2 mammals, providing emergency air response to
3 Cape Cod sea turtle cold-stunned events since
4 2014.

5 The predominant species rescued is the

6 Kemp's ridley. These are juveniles from 3 to 5
7 years that may originate from the Gulf Coast
8 region. NOAA and Fish and Wildlife Service
9 partnered with our organization as our missions
10 have been recognized as critical to the recovery
11 efforts for reentry to the wild. Turtles Fly
12 Too covers both coasts, including Alaska,
13 providing rescue efforts for everything from
14 seals to whales due to warming seas and changing
15 currents that have moved endangered species to
16 the northern extremes.

17 Our pilots locate whales in distress in the
18 Gulf, Pacific, and Atlantic, and transport
19 detanglement teams, as requested.

20 Our partnership with NOAA allows us to
21 provide sea turtle specimens from Cape Cod cold
22 stuns for our necropsy program in partnership

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1 with universities' continuing education courses
2 for veterinarians and technicians.

3 We suspect these turtles originated from
4 the Gulf Coast region. We have not performed
5 DNA nor tissue sampling, yet we have detected
6 particles of oil residue.

7 Turtles Fly Too's focus is the emergency

8 air rescue of endangered species. We are not
9 supported by any government agency. To date, we
10 have rescued over 1,500 Kemp's ridley sand other
11 sea turtles.

12 As much of our work originates from the
13 Gulf Coast, we would like to be considered for
14 available resources so that we can continue to
15 do our part to rebuild populations.

16 Our necropsy program needs funding so that
17 we can provide tissue and DNA sampling on the
18 Cape Cod cold stuns that have succumbed and
19 provide this missing piece of data as to
20 long-term effects of the Horizon oil disaster.

21 Again, I ask that Turtles Fly Too be
22 considered to facilitate this important data.

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1 For more information, feel free to visit
2 our website. Thank you for your time.

3 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you very much, Mr.
4 Weinstein.

5 At this moment, we would like to go back to
6 Kent Wimmer, followed Robert Bendick.

7 Mr. Wimmer, can you hear us?

8 [No audible response.]

9 MR. FRANKLIN: Kent Wimmer.

10 MR. WIMMER: Hello?

11 MR. FRANKLIN: Hi. Mr. Wimmer?

12 MR. WIMMER: Yes. Hello. Thank you very
13 much. I appreciate this meeting.

14 My name is Kent Wimmer. I'm senior
15 representative with Defenders of Wildlife based
16 here in Tallahassee.

17 We appreciate the excellent work you folks
18 are doing in restoring wildlife habitat and for
19 shorebirds and for turtles.

20 We just wanted to comment on we're spending
21 these millions of dollars, tens of millions of
22 dollars. We'd like to see some--you explained

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1 the inputs, and you gave us a couple examples.
2 We'd like to see the demonstrated benefits, some
3 of the science behind what you've been able to
4 achieve through using these dollars for habitat
5 improvement.

6 It was wonderful that the project in
7 Louisiana protected, established, what, 8,000
8 nests for brown pelicans. That's wonderful.
9 Being able to make that type of data available
10 to the public to show some of the environmental
11 impacts that successful projects that you're

12 able to achieve, I think, would be very helpful,
13 as organizations like ours are trying to help
14 advocate for good projects and help you get the
15 word out on the excellent work you folks are
16 doing.

17 So, anyway, my comments are very brief. I
18 just wanted to keep up the good work, focusing
19 on conserving and restoring environmental
20 habitats. In Florida, there's still an awful
21 lot of opportunities to conserve habitat that's
22 not currently protected. We encourage the

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1 Florida Department of Environmental Protection
2 in Florida and the other departments along the
3 Gulf Coast to look for opportunities to protect
4 habitat that's not currently protected, that
5 could be lost to growth and development.

6 So, with that, I will conclude my remarks,
7 and thank you very much for this opportunity to
8 participate this evening.

9 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you so very much, Mr.
10 Wimmer.

11 The next individual to give public comment
12 will be Robert Bendick, followed BY Allison
13 Fast.

14 Again, if you'll state your name for the
15 record, and if you're representing an
16 organization, please state the name of the
17 organization.

18 At this time, Robert Bendick.

19 MR. BENDICK: Good evening. I'm Bob
20 Bendick, director of The Nature Conservancy's
21 Gulf of Mexico program. Thanks for the
22 opportunity to speak and for your great work on

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1 Gulf restoration. The progress described to
2 night is really impressive.

3 I'm going to focus my comments on
4 restoration of oysters and oyster reefs in the
5 Gulf. As you know, oysters were heavily damaged
6 by the Deepwater Horizon spill, and as a result,
7 about \$100 million in NRD funds have been
8 allocated to the State toward restoration, and
9 \$64 million has been provided for oysters in the
10 Regionwide TIG.

11 Several important oyster restoration
12 projects have been described tonight and are
13 already under way. It's the strategic framework
14 for oyster restoration activities published by
15 the Trustees in June 2017 explains every

16 effectively, oysters are a keystone species in
17 the Gulf ecosystem, and in addition to provide
18 seafood for market, healthy oyster reefs serve
19 as habitat for a diversity of recreationally and
20 commercially important marine organizations,
21 provide structural integrity that reduces
22 shoreline erosion, and improve water quality.

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1 We believe that the goal, strategy, and
2 approaches to restoration set out in the
3 framework document were right no target, and so
4 we support the commitment of both State and
5 regionwide funds to the restoration actions
6 described by the Trustees in that document and
7 particularly to the restoration and long-term
8 management of oyster reef habitat for its
9 multiple benefits.

10 Unfortunately, for a number of reasons,
11 oyster reefs across the Gulf have been in steep
12 decline since then oil spill. The effective
13 expenditure of the Natural Resource Damage funds
14 set aside for oysters is likely the last best
15 chance to restore the critical, economic, and
16 ecological role of oysters in the Gulf of
17 Mexico. Your framework document is a sound

18 blueprint for accomplishing this, and The Nature
19 Conservancy urges that State and Federal
20 agencies work quickly and together with
21 stakeholders, to plan for and execute oyster
22 restoration in estuaries suitable for oyster

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1 growth all across the Gulf region.

2 The Nature Conservancy thanks you again for
3 your leadership in Gulf restoration. We
4 appreciate the opportunity to speak here
5 tonight.

6 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you so much, Mr.
7 Bendick.

8 Before we proceed with the balance of the
9 speakers, I just want to remind everyone that if
10 you did not initially sign up to speak but would
11 like to do so, simply type your name into the
12 Questions box, and we will call on you to make
13 your public comment.

14 At this time, the next individual to make
15 public comment is Allison Fast, followed by
16 George Howard.

17 Allison, the floor is yours.

18 MS. FAST: Okay. Can you hear me okay?

19 MR. FRANKLIN: We can hear you loud and

20 clear. Thank you. Please proceed.

21 MS. FAST: I am Blue Magnolia Films, which
22 is a film company that was founded out of a

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1 response to the oil spill to give voice to
2 citizens of the Gulf Coast and help to mobilize
3 citizen-led solutions and repair that
4 relationship with the environment.

5 And I think it's important to consider how
6 people aren't separate from habitat and
7 environment, and that that relationship of
8 reparations and renewal could be part of this
9 broader effort.

10 So we're really standing for the rest to
11 really support the people all along the Gulf
12 Coast to restore their relationship with the
13 environment through storytelling and the arts.

14 I did go online and actually articulate and
15 submit a proposal under the NOAA site. It was
16 called "Watershed Moments: Gulf Coast
17 Reparations and Community Action Through the
18 Arts," and so I think what's important is that
19 Gulf Coast residents, including their parents,
20 grandparents, historically, fishers,
21 crawfishers, fishermen, and the important aspect

22 of this, really thinking about those rich oral

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1 histories, the heritage, the spirit of place,
2 this whole rich ecosystem as needing to
3 regenerate together and to reclaim some of those
4 roots and the redefining of relationship with
5 the land, that that needs to be taken into
6 account, because the people are the ones who
7 steward the environment.

8 Part of this should be the engagement of
9 the people who have always been the caretakers
10 and guardians of those resources.

11 So the kind of workshops that we host are
12 essentially to support communities to come into
13 one-week workshops where they do that work
14 together in groups and restore their own--you
15 know, get their leadership going, so that's
16 something.

17 And something else that I just want to say
18 is we're in a moment where we can recognize that
19 the reparations between human beings that is
20 happening with Black Lives Matters and we're
21 having another sort of awakening here is not
22 separate from reparations with our waters or the

1 diverse species and interdependence of life on
2 the Gulf Coast with our habitat and ecosystems.

3 So that storytelling and these ways of
4 bringing people together helps us to find common
5 ground and recognize issues of justice that
6 apply both to communities, people, but also that
7 brings greater equity to all of our systems.

8 So we would really like to see the
9 stakeholders who have been the Gulf Coast
10 residents really engaged in this, their voices
11 and their leadership to be able to reframe and
12 really author their own story now of what's
13 happening going forward and become a part of
14 that.

15 We use a restorative narrative in our work.
16 It's a different approach to storytelling.

17 So thank you for allowing me to make these
18 comments, and again, we just would love to
19 advise in this area and be part of this solution
20 as creative folks who see the use of arts and
21 building those relationships and restoring it.

22 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you very much, Ms.

1 Fast.

2 At this time, we would like to call up the
3 next individual to make public comment, and
4 again, if you'll state your name for the record,
5 and if you're representing an organization,
6 please state the name of the organization for
7 the record.

8 The next individual is George Howard,
9 followed by Brian Moore. George Howard, if you
10 hear us, you are ready to make public comment.

11 MR. HOWARD: Hello. Can you hear me?

12 MR. FRANKLIN: Yes, we can. Please
13 proceed.

14 MR. HOWARD: Thank you, sir.

15 Thank you, Trustees, for holding this
16 public meeting. My name is George Howard, and I
17 am the CEO of Restoration Systems in Raleigh,
18 North Carolina. RS is one of the leading
19 restoration providers in the U.S. and has 70
20 projects totaling 140,000 acres in nine States.
21 My remarks are directed to the Louisiana TIG.

22 In Louisiana, RS has the distinction of

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1 financing and building a marsh restoration
2 project in Barataria Bay using renewable

3 sediment from the Mississippi River on a State
4 scale.

5 In 2015, with our partner, Great Lakes
6 Dredge and Dock, we dredged 1.3 million yards of
7 river sand from 90 feet down in the river,
8 pumped it 5 miles down river, booster pumped it
9 up and over the Federal Mississippi River levee,
10 dug a tunnel and transported the material under
11 Highway 23 of the New Orleans Railroad, sent it
12 through a neighborhood, across a parish pump
13 station, back onto the flood levee on the
14 outside, and carefully placed the sediment
15 within a series of containment berms.

16 In a March 2017 public comment, the Gulf
17 Restoration Network said that the ecological
18 restoration at Jesuit Bend was, quote, "above
19 and beyond most coastal restoration performed by
20 CPRA's current procedures." Indeed, it was.
21 Our firm and our partner, Great Lakes Dredge and
22 Dock, identified, acquires, and financed the

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1 finest example of marsh restoration in Barataria
2 Bay. This resulted in a thriving, restore
3 300-acre marsh platform, which I recommend to
4 you to study to inform your own projects.

5 While the project was performed as a,
6 quote, "mitigation bank," the end result of the
7 operation was identical to the marsh building
8 you are charged with performing and could easily
9 be replicated time and time and time again,
10 given an enlightened procurement policy.

11 Recognizing the eagerness of the private
12 sector to perform turnkey marsh restoration
13 work, in 2018 and 2019, RS and five other firms
14 were allowed a unique and special opportunity to
15 directly and effectively assist your marsh
16 building mandate. CPRA with TIG oversight
17 issued an RFP for outcome-based performance
18 contract, where each component of a project is
19 performed for a flat per-acre price, with no
20 exceedance on a schedule.

21 Between qualifications and final bid
22 documents, RS and Great Lakes Dredge and Dock

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1 submitted nearly 1,000 pages in support of our
2 ability to immediately restore 720 acres of open
3 water at Point-a-la-Hache, precisely where the
4 levee was breached in Hurricane Barry. The bid
5 preparation cost our firm nearly \$500,000. That
6 is fine. Win or lose, we expected the risk of

7 losing the bid.

8 What we did not expect was that CPRA would
9 reject all bids, apparently in coordination with
10 the TIG. Over 4,000 acres of shovel-ready,
11 permit-ready, preplanned marsh restoration
12 projects on real estate in Barataria Bay
13 specifically secured by our firms for the
14 purpose were turned down. The justification for
15 the rejection was made in an unsigned, undated
16 draft, money-for-value study, which, quote,
17 "modeled the cost to the NRDA Trustees" and our
18 Magnolia Project specifically as being 20
19 percent above the theoretical model cost of your
20 current piecemeal procurement process.

21 MR. FRANKLIN: Mr. Howard, if you can go
22 ahead and being to conclude your comment, I'd

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1 appreciate it.

2 MR. HOWARD: Excuse me?

3 MR. FRANKLIN: If you can go ahead, you've
4 exceeded your 3 minutes.

5 MR. HOWARD: Thank you.

6 The conclusion to the value-for-money
7 study, that our low bid was too expensive,
8 withered under scrutiny. The Environmental

9 Policy Innovation Center performed and critiqued
10 the VFM, determined it had no merit as a
11 legitimate comparison of cost.

12 A central--[audio break].

13 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you very much, Mr.
14 Howard.

15 The next individual to give public comment
16 is Brian Moore. Mr. Moore, if you can give the
17 name of the organization that you're
18 representing, and you will have 3 minutes.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. MOORE: Hi. Good evening. I'm Brian
21 Moore. I'm a vice president of the National
22 Audubon Society.

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1 Audubon owns land or manages land in every
2 State in the Gulf of Mexico, and of our nearly 2
3 million members, we have hundreds of thousands
4 in the Gulf of Mexico, which is why I wanted to
5 get on for a minute and thank all the trustees
6 for this meeting and the other meetings that you
7 have.

8 We always try to communicate with the
9 public, at least the public as we see it, our
10 membership, on what's happening, and to do that,

11 we need to have frequent and thorough updates
12 with an from you all. So I wanted to thank you
13 for having this webinar tonight and all the ones
14 in the past as well and encourage you to have
15 more in the future.

16 So that's really all I have to say, and I
17 wanted to thank you again for hosting this and
18 staying after work and doing this kind of public
19 event. It's important to us, and it's important
20 to our membership.

21 MR. FRANKLIN: Thank you so much, Mr.
22 Moore.

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1 Are there any others who would like to make
2 verbal comment at this time? If so, please use
3 the Questions box to contact a staff member.

4 We'll pause briefly here to see if there
5 are any others who would like to register to
6 make public comment.

7 [Pause.]

8 MR. FRANKLIN: Again, if there are any
9 individuals listening and you would like to make
10 a public comment, simply go to the Questions box
11 and type in your name, and we will call on you
12 to make public comment.

13 We'll give this about 20 seconds.

14 [Pause.]

15 MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. Seeing that we have
16 no more comments, I want to thank all of the
17 individuals who participated and gave public
18 comment tonight, and at this time, I'd like to
19 turn the meeting back over to Mr. Haase, who
20 will officially close out tonight's annual
21 meeting.

22 Mr. Haase?

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1 MR. HAASE: All right. Well, thank you,
2 Perry, and thanks again to all the participants
3 in the webinar this evening. We appreciate
4 hearing your comments and hope you understand
5 and know that we certainly take those to heart.

6 I hope you all know that we're committed to
7 restoring the natural resources of the Gulf of
8 Mexico for years to come and will strive to
9 maintain a rapid rate of progress, even as we
10 focus additional attention on safe practices in
11 light of the current public health situation
12 that we're undergoing and would force this
13 meeting to be conducted virtually as we've done
14 this evening.

17 financially or otherwise interested in the
18 outcome of this action.

19

20 CHERYL L. NICHOLSON
21 Electronic Notary Public
22 Registration Number 270604

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