

Title Slide:

This presentation was developed and presented on behalf of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment trustees for the Deepwater BP oil spill. The trustees are the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (or NOAA) on behalf of the Department of Commerce, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Defense, represented by the Navy, which owns properties that were oiled, and the five Gulf states: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

NOAA staff presented these slides at 11 public scoping meetings in March and April 2011 for the BP oil spill Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or PEIS.

Slide 2: Objectives

The meetings, 10 across the Gulf states and one in Washington, DC, gathered public comment on the types of projects that could be used to restore the Gulf region's natural resources following the BP oil spill. Those project types ... and any consequences to the natural and human environment ... are being considered in the PEIS document.

Slide 3: Presentation Outline

These are the main topics covered in this presentation.

Slide 4: NRDA Trustees

Trustees are the agencies with the legal responsibility to represent the public's interest in natural resources under the Oil Pollution Act. A Natural Resource Damage Assessment – or NRDA – is a legal process that uses science to measure losses from pollution incidents and compensate the public with restoration. The cost of the entire process, not just the restoration, is borne by the responsible parties.

Slide 5: What NRDA is not

To better understand what NRDA is, it's helpful to touch on what NRDA is not.

Slide 6: Spill Response

There is overlap among the agencies involved with spill response ... which, like the NRDA, is governed by the Oil Pollution Act. Spill response agencies are on the front lines from the beginning of the spill and will remain as long as oil keeps coming ashore. While the spill response's overarching objective is to prevent oil from getting to sensitive areas, response and clean-up create their own impacts. The NRDA trustees are responsible for developing restoration for those impacts as well.

Slide 7: Task Force

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force's responsibilities are shown here. NRDA is separate and independent from the Task Force. While NRDA addresses spill impacts, the Presidentially appointed Task Force is charged with developing a strategy to deal with Gulf stressors that existed prior to the spill. Their resulting strategy will help the NRDA trustees with their decision making.

Slide 8: NRDA Process w/ Injury Assessment highlighted

The Oil Pollution Act originated out of the Exxon Valdez spill. We are in the Restoration Planning Phase of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment. This phase is composed of two parts. The next phase is restoration implementation, but we're not there yet. First, let's discuss injury assessment, which is about measuring loss in terms of resources and services.

Slide 9: Why is measuring loss important?

In order to determine losses across the complex and vast Gulf ecosystem, the trustees are conducting carefully planned scientific studies, including field data collection. Until the amount of injury is determined, the amount or scale of restoration cannot be determined.

Slide 10: Determining Injury

These are the steps that must be proven in a court of law to measure injury. Release is obvious; we saw that all during the summer of 2010. Pathway is how the oil and dispersants get to the natural resources. Exposure means how the oil and dispersants can touch our natural resources directly or indirectly. Injury means the measurable loss. Right now, the trustees are looking at ways exposure may have led to injury.

Slide 11: Oil Exposure to Resources

This illustration shows some of the resources trustees are studying for injury. It also illustrates some of the pathways. Trustees must not only consider the resources, but also the connections between them. A direct impact may be getting covered with oil, but the indirect impacts, such as the impacts to the food web connections, will take time to understand. Collectively ... all these studies give us a picture of ecosystem exposure.

Slide 12: Injury Assessment

These are some of the study areas being pursued by the NRDA scientists. Details of the studies being conducted by the trustees, including the kind of data being collected, is available at our website. As study plans are finalized the trustees will continue to post them.

Slide 13: NRDA Process w/ Preliminary Restoration Planning highlighted

Now let's turn to preliminary restoration planning. Trustees are not yet looking for project-specific ideas because we don't yet know how much has been lost. We are at a preliminary stage, between exposure and injury, and even at this stage trustees need public input on restoration types for the ecosystem exposure.

Slide 14: Objectives

A reminder of the meetings' objectives: to collect public ideas for restoration types.

Slide 15: Preliminary Planning & PEIS

Trustees don't want to put off restoration planning until all injury studies are complete because some studies will take years. We want to identify the public's preference for how to restore losses due to the unprecedented nature of the spill.

The National Environmental Policy Act applies because we expect to implement big important projects to address big impacts – when you move a lot of dirt it requires careful consideration. Even though the actions are restoration, restoration decisions can ... and do ... have impacts on the environment that must be evaluated.

Slide 16: Preliminary Planning & PEIS

Trustees are asking the public to help us identify the possibilities and the impacts that we need to consider. Importantly, the PEIS will expedite the process of implementing projects once we get to that phase of the process.

Slide 17: Preliminary Planning & PEIS

For example, a beach re-nourishment project to add new sand would need to consider how it would impact the living resources at the sand source and restoration sites. If the sand were to be trucked through residential or business areas, those socio-economic impacts would need to be considered as well.

Slide 18: Restoration Scoping

Restoration means a lot of things. These are the terms used in the Oil Pollution Act.

Slide 19: Restoration Scoping

Trustees are looking for ideas related to specific resources, impacts or more overarching concepts.

Slide 20: The circle graphic

Here is a graphic way to look at what the trustees are seeking. We are starting broad and will narrow down. We will solicit for specific projects at a later time, but you are welcome to provide specific projects through www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov.

Slide 21: Examples of Restoration Types

This is a partial list of restoration type examples.

Slide 22: Other considerations

Because of the unprecedented nature of the spill, it presents an unprecedented opportunity to look at restoration. This complex spill will require complex solutions.

Slide 23: Next Steps

This diagram is in the newsletter. Public scoping is open until May 18. There will be additional opportunities for public involvement as the PEIS process and restoration planning continue.

Slide 24: To Submit Your Ideas

Ready to make your comment? If it's before May 18, 2011, visit www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/give-us-your-ideas. Electronic comments are made available on the site after they are reviewed. Please read the guidelines carefully before submitting your comment.

Thank you for reviewing this presentation and for your consideration and comments. The trustees look forward to hearing from you.