# Louisiana Restoration Area

## Draft Phase II Restoration Plan #3.2
## Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion

The Draft Phase II Restoration Plan #3.2 proposes a Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion to restore wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats in Louisiana impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

The Draft Plan is available for public comment for 60 days through May 4, 2021. More information on how to provide public comment, and future virtual public meetings to present the plan, are all at the Gulf Spill Restoration website: www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov

Large-scale sediment diversions like the proposed project can create significant additional marsh area; enhance degraded marshes; enhance the food web, and provide necessary sediment, fresh water, and nutrients to maintain both existing and created marshes and estuaries.

### ESTIMATED COSTS

The current cost estimate of the preferred alternative—$1,982,910,000—includes construction, planning and design, services during construction, permitting, land acquisitions and related costs and services, project monitoring, and other project and design management costs. $90 million is dedicated for stewardship projects to help address potential collateral injuries from the project, including the identified potential for disproportionate impacts to low-income and minority communities.

### WHAT WE DO

Restoration work in the Louisiana Restoration Area restores wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats, including habitats on federally managed lands; restores water quality and habitat; replenishes and protects wildlife and marine resources, such as sea turtles, dolphins, birds, and oysters; and provides and enhances recreational opportunities.

# Louisiana Restoration Area

## PROPOSED MID-BARATARIA SEDIMENT DIVERSION RESTORATION PROJECT

The *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group prepared the Draft Phase II RP #3.2 to restore the natural resource injuries and losses caused by the April 2010 oil spill and associated oil spill response efforts.

By mimicking a deltaic process—harnessing nature through engineering to re-establish the natural process that originally built Louisiana's coastal wetlands—the Mid-Barataria sediment diversion is expected to enhance the ecological productivity of the estuary and improve food web dynamics. These benefits would be sustained over decades even in the face of rising sea levels and coastal erosion. For example, after 50 years of operation of a 75,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) capacity diversion, over 20 percent of the remaining marsh in the Barataria Basin is projected to have been created or sustained by the diversion. The Trustees believe that a sediment diversion is a necessary tool to achieve a self-sustaining marsh ecosystem in the Barataria Basin. This sustained marsh is expected to provide benefits to:

- Many fish and wildlife species in the basin, including red drum, largemouth bass, blue crab, white shrimp, Gulf menhaden, and migratory waterfowl;
- Recreational users who watch, fish, or hunt the above species; and
- Offshore ecosystems of the northern Gulf of Mexico, through the transport of productivity to those areas

The Trustees also recognize that any of the large-scale sediment diversion alternatives considered in the Draft Plan would result in collateral injuries to some natural resources. Reconnecting the river to the basin to restore an estuary that has been degrading and becoming more saline for almost a century would produce significant changes to current conditions in the Barataria Basin, which would negatively affect species that rely on higher salinity waters, including dolphins, brown shrimp, and oysters. The large-scale sediment diversion alternatives considered would also affect storm hazards and tidal flooding in the vicinity of the diversion. However, within 50 years, sea level rise and subsidence would overtake the effects of the diversion and return as the primary forces driving tidal flooding in these communities.

The Trustees evaluated a lower-capacity diversion (i.e., 50,000 cfs) as well as a larger capacity diversion (i.e., 150,000 cfs). However, lower-capacity diversion would provide substantially less benefits with only a small reduction in adverse impacts and costs, while the larger-capacity would increase collateral injuries and costs to levels unacceptable to the Trustees.

The Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group's 2018 Strategic Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #3 identified a large-scale sediment diversion project in the Barataria Basin as one that should move forward for detailed planning and analysis. In the Strategic Restoration Plan, the Trustees also selected a Mid-Barataria sediment diversion as the specific sediment diversion project to move forward for further analysis.

A Mid-Barataria sediment diversion is included in the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan and has been the subject of numerous discussions over many years among experts as one of the most promising potential diversions in terms of its potential to create and help sustain marsh/wetlands complexes on an ecosystem scale. The Coastal Master Plan is the State of Louisiana's publicly vetted and scientifically founded approach to coastal restoration, which includes the goal of promoting sustainable ecosystems—a goal compatible with the Trustee Council's 2016 Programmatic Restoration Plan.