

## **DEEPWATER HORIZON OPEN OCEAN TRUSTEE IMPLEMENTATION GROUP**

### **ANNUAL MEETING WEBINAR SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**December 12, 2019**

**Question:** What are the paths for research and technology experts to participate (I'm assuming participate in a restoration efforts)? Will it be an open call for competitive proposals? Was it already decided who will lead any particular project? This question is particularly focused on marine mammals projects, but I'm sure a lot of folks out there would like to know similar information for all the others.

**Response (Laurie Rounds, NOAA):** Thank you for the question. It's a great question. The Open Ocean Trustees agree that participation by research and technical experts as well as other experts is very important as our projects move towards implementation. Each project does have a lead implementing trustee that has been identified. That lead implementing trustee is responsible for project management, identifying the various ways to implement each project in the most efficient and effective way. That can include various mechanisms, including contracts and cooperative agreements, or really whatever is the best way to accomplish the goals of the project. So, there will be multiple opportunities for each project for stakeholder participation. So, scientists and other experts and stakeholders will have various opportunities for participation through the projects. You mentioned in the question a particular interest in the marine mammal projects and there are some really good examples there. For example the project to reduce and mitigate vessel strike mortality for cetaceans has built into it the opportunity to meet with stakeholders, subject matter experts, and industry representatives as part of that project and identifying the best way to work with stakeholders for implementation. So there are various mechanisms that each project will develop. We will provide more information about those opportunities in the coming months as the Trustees move towards implementation. We'll provide those through project specific outreach and engagement and also through the Trustees Gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov website. We'll keep everyone up to date on how these projects are moving forward and how folks can participate. So thank you again for your question

**Question:** What type of information will be collected by the Sea Turtle Atlas and who will have access to that information?

**Response (Sara Wissmann, NOAA):** Thank you for that question. The one thing I wanted to note before jumping into the answer is that this project does involve the formation of a steering committee. A lot of the details on exactly what data sets will be pulled into the Atlas is something the steering committee would be working on once project implementation begins. However, in advance of that, what we do know is that we want to make sure that we include information on sea turtle distribution, habitat, threats, and potentially any data sets that relate to sea turtles that are currently available that we might be able to get into the centralize platform. The goal is for the Sea Turtle Atlas to be available to the public as well as available to restoration planners, conservation managers and agency staff that are

working on the conservation and recovery of sea turtles. Thank you for that question. I hope that answers it.

**Question:** Combining several follow-up questions. One is about funding mechanisms again- What funding mechanisms and the listener included a couple of different examples, RFPs, direct solicitations, state grants, etc. will there be for distribution of funds? I'm assuming that is in particular for the Open Ocean Restoration Plan that just came out and probably for other future plans. Piggy-backing on that, what is the timeline for when the projects will be kicking off and when those partnerships might be developed?

**Response (Laurie Rounds, NOAA):** Thank you again for the question. As I mentioned each of the projects does have a designated implementing trustee for the selected projects. That is the project manager so to speak, the lead for the project that will determine how the activities that have been approved for each of the project will move forward. The examples provided in the question are really good examples of some of the different types of mechanism that may be used depending again on the needs of the project. There are multiple different ways in which we can partner and we can work with all of the different groups and experts and really take advantage of all the local knowledge and expertise that exists in the Gulf when we are moving towards implementation. So unfortunately, there's not one simple answer for every project. Each project is going to be tailored to make sure we are implementing it in the most effective way and providing multiple ways for people to participate in implementation and to partner as needed. In addition to those kinds of activities where we might have contracts or we might have grant opportunities, cooperative agreements, requests for proposals, again there are also multiple ways that people can participate and provide input. As was mentioned earlier, stakeholder groups that might be formed through the projects. There are going to be multiple ways for folks to participate and we'll be providing more information about those as the projects do move towards implementation. As we mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, this restoration plan 2, which is our new set of projects moving forward, was just recently released on Tuesday. So we're in the process of taking those projects and moving them into implementation, getting all the mechanisms in place to begin implementation. For each project, it might be a little bit different. We're expecting to be moving those into implementation over the next couple months. So you just want to look in early 2020 for more updates on those projects and where they are in implementation. Each of them have a slightly different duration and also slightly different set of activities for when they are going to be moving into implementation. As Mark covered in his slides, we'll be posting all that information and updates on the projects on the Gulfspill restoration website and each project will have its own record where you can go and get more information. Thank you very much for your question.

**Question:** When might we expect another call for bird restoration projects?

**Response (Ashley Mills, Department of the Interior):** Hi. Right now we are focused on implementing the 21 projects and 3 MAM activities that were approved this year in 2019. We haven't set the schedule for the next restoration plan yet. Over the next year the TIG will start to talk about that to consider the most appropriate time to begin a new restoration planning cycle. When we are ready to work on the next restoration plan, we will post notice online on the Gulfspill website and a call for project ideas for

whatever restoration types that we'd be looking at. So we don't know yet, but thanks for the question though. Good question.

**Question:** Are there any plans for protecting manatees from Crystal River to Tarpon Springs for manatee protection?

**Response (Laura Engleby, NOAA):** Thank you so much. Certainly, manatee protection is extremely important. However, there was no injury identified for manatees associated with the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill so there is no associated restoration that goes with that. So, that isn't something that is being considered as part of this plan. Thanks so much for the question.

**Question:** Are there opportunities for members of the public or other stakeholders to reach out to the Sea Turtle Atlas stakeholder steering committee with questions or other information as they develop the Atlas platform?

**Response (Sara Wissmann, NOAA):** Thank you for this follow up question. Once this project begins implementation we will have more information about who the project contacts are and specifically who the contact will be for getting to the stakeholder steering committee and we'll make sure that information is made available to the public once the project is underway. So at this point I don't have a short answer, but we'll make sure that we make this information available at a later time once the project begins. Thank you.