

# April 2021 Open Ocean TIG Webinar Script

## **Slide 1: Opening Slide**

Welcome to the Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group's webinar. We will begin shortly.

## **Slide 2: Today's Webinar**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

Thank you everyone for joining today's Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group webinar. I'm Laurie Rounds with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

We're happy to have over 60 people joining us today. During today's webinar we'll provide information about restoration for the Deepwater Horizon Open Ocean Restoration Area. We'll share upcoming activities, such as our next restoration plan for birds and sturgeon. And we also want to ask for your participation throughout the webinar by using webinar polls to get your input about future outreach and engagement. Before we get started, Stephen Heverly with NOAA will provide some logistics to help you participate during the webinar.

## **Slide 3: Webinar Participation**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

Thank you Laurie. Hi, everyone. I'm Stephen Heverly, a contractor with the NOAA Restoration Center, I'd like to quickly run through some webinar logistics with you. Hopefully everyone's logged in to the webinar by now. You should be able to see the control panel on the right hand side of your screen – which is shown on this slide.

If you're using a phone for audio, you should all be dialing in using the phone number provided by GoToWebinar—that's the number and access code listed under "Audio" in the control panel. Please note that only presenters will be heard over the phone during the webinar; attendees will be muted.

## **Slide 4: How to Provide Feedback**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

During today's webinar, we're going to pause in between sections of the presentation to ask for some feedback from you on a few topics.

That feedback will come in the form of a few poll questions, with multiple choice answers. The image on the left side of the screen is what you'll see.

We'll give you a heads up that a poll question is coming up, and when one does, we'll ask that you choose from a series of answers. Some questions will allow you to choose more than one answer, and some will include an option to provide other feedback that might not be in the list.

When one of those poll questions comes up, we'll ask that if you do have another answer you'd like to share with us, that you enter those into the questions box – that's where the orange arrow is pointing on the image on the right side of the screen.

As we mentioned in the web story and emails promoting this webinar, these polls are a way you can provide your insights on topics for future public engagement. Now we'll hear from Gale Bonanno with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Slide 5: Welcome to the Open Ocean TIG**

Speaker: Gale Bonanno

Thank you, Stephen.

Before we provide an overview of the BP settlement, I'd like to introduce the members of the Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group (which we'll refer to as the "TIG"). The Open Ocean TIG, is one of seven Gulf of Mexico Restoration Areas established to conduct restoration for the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment. The four federal natural resource trustees are the members of this TIG, and we work together to plan and implement restoration for fish, sturgeon, sea turtles, marine mammals, birds, and deep-sea communities injured by the 2010 BP oil spill. All of our work is consistent with the programmatic restoration plan finalized by the Trustee Council in April 2016, which we'll talk about later in the presentation. The Open Ocean TIG also coordinates with the five Gulf state trustees, especially when restoration overlaps state jurisdiction.

### **Slide 6: Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment and BP Settlement**

Speaker: Gale Bonanno

Next, I'll provide an overview of the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment and BP Settlement.

### **Slide 7: BP NRDA Settlement**

Speaker: Gale Bonanno

In 2016, the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Trustees reached a settlement resulting from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process (abbreviated NRDA) to resolve BP Exploration and Production's liability for natural resource injuries caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Part of the settlement requires BP to pay up to \$8.8 billion dollars to federal and state trustees for the purposes of restoring natural resources and the services they provide that were injured by the spill.

The settlement will be paid out incrementally over the course of 15 years – the first payment was made in 2017. Based on the kind and extent of injuries caused by the spill, the up to \$8.8 billion has been allocated among the Trustees’ five broad restoration goals to restore and conserve habitat, replenish and protect coastal and marine resources, restore water quality, provide and enhance recreational opportunities, and support monitoring, adaptive management, and administrative oversight across the TIGs. There is also up to \$700 million for future unknown conditions.

### **Slide 8: Programmatic Restoration Plan**

Speaker: Gale Bonanno

In advance of the final settlement, the federal and state trustees developed the programmatic restoration plan. The plan provides a detailed description of the injury assessment and the Trustees’ integrated ecosystem planning approach to address this injury. The Trustees’ plan is called a “programmatic plan” because, rather than identifying individual restoration projects, it identifies the goals, types and approaches for restoration that set the course for more detailed, future project-level planning. The plan also establishes a governance structure – basically, how the Trustees will work together and with the public to develop and implement projects over time.

We’re going to enter the link to the programmatic restoration plan in the chat for your reference.

### **Slide 9: Programmatic Restoration Plan Overview**

Speaker: Gale Bonanno

This diagram shows the programmatic plan’s broad restoration goals, in purple in the middle section of the slide and two foundational goals for monitoring and adaptive management and administrative oversight. The plan breaks these goal areas down into 13 restoration types, shown in blue on the right side of the slide.

The 2016 settlement allocated funding for each of the 13 restoration types and for monitoring and administrative oversight. TIGs use the funding allocations to develop project-specific restoration plans for their respective restoration area.

The Open Ocean TIG was allocated approximately \$868 million to restore the restoration types highlighted in orange on the slide. We’ll conduct restoration of these wide-ranging and migratory species throughout their life stages and geographic ranges, including inland, coastal, and offshore areas. Because some of these species are highly migratory, we may conduct some restoration outside of the Gulf of Mexico region. An additional \$200 million was allocated to meet our Monitoring and Adaptive Management Goals for the Open Ocean Restoration Area. We will talk more about the TIG’s restoration work later in the webinar.

Next, we’d like to hear from you. I’ll turn it over to Stephen now.

### **Slide 10: Provide Your Feedback**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

Thanks, Gail.

As we mentioned earlier, we're going to take a quick break in the presentation to get some feedback from you. But first we have to note the statement shown on the slide. The polls you're about to participate in are voluntary, and we've gotten them approved by the Office of Management and Budget – the control number for the approval is here in bold.

### **Slide 11: Questions One and Two**

***For this set of questions, we would like to learn more about your familiarity with Deepwater Horizon programs and the topics you would like to hear more about. The first question is:***

1. How familiar are you with the *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) restoration in the Gulf of Mexico?

Very familiar

Good understanding

Not very familiar

Not at all familiar

2. How familiar are you with the other *Deepwater Horizon* restoration work, (ie RESTORE Act and Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund)? *These are the other non-NRDA restoration programs in the Gulf.*

Very familiar

Good understanding

Not very familiar

Not at all familiar

### **Slide 12: Question Number Three**

***Our last question in this section is to learn about the topics that may be of more interest to you about Deepwater Horizon NRDA and Open Ocean restoration. You can select one or more of the options provided.***

3. What *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA and Open Ocean restoration topics are of most interest to you? (check all that apply)

*Deepwater Horizon* NRDA restoration basics or "101?"

Open Ocean resources injured by the oil spill

Open Ocean *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA restoration funding

How Open Ocean restoration plans are developed

How to provide input on plans or projects

Thanks everyone for your participation here! Now I'll pass it back to Laurie Rounds with NOAA.

### **Slide 13: Open Ocean Restoration**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

Thank you Stephen and thank you everyone for providing feedback. Next, I'll provide an overview of current Open Ocean restoration projects and activities.

### **Slide 14: Open Ocean Projects**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

The Open Ocean TIG has approved a total of 29 projects- 26 restoration projects and 3 monitoring and adaptive management activities. Two of those projects to restore Recreational Uses on federal lands in Florida and Alabama were completed in 2019. Later this spring, the Trustee Council will share our 2020 annual progress reports; however, I'd like to highlight some project activities from those reports as well as work underway in 2021.

The Oceanic Fish Restoration Project held a successful 2020 season, partnering with 12 pelagic fishing vessels that voluntarily refrained from pelagic longline fishing in the Gulf of Mexico during an annual six-month repose period that coincides with the bluefin tuna spawning season. All 12 vessels also elected to fish with alternative gear that reduces bycatch during the repose period. Eleven vessels are currently participating in the 2021 repose season that ends in June. The project will provide a new monitoring report of its results to date with the upcoming annual report, so please look for that if you are interested in learning more about this project.

Several additional Open Ocean projects are also working collaboratively with fishermen to implement restoration. For example, our project working with the Menhaden fishery to better understand potential interactions with sea turtles and other protected species developed proof-of-concept observer methods for pilot testing that is planned for this Fall, however, the timing may need to be delayed due to COVID 19.

Another highlight I'd like to mention is for our project to restore reef fish by reducing mortality from barotrauma. The project team is partnering with Florida Sea Grant for upcoming outreach to recreational fishermen. The project team is also partnering with the Gulf States Fisheries Management Commission to evaluate the effectiveness of descender devices, including understanding angler use and perception of fish descender devices and other tools to reduce barotrauma. As conditions allow, the project will begin Phase 1 this Fall by conducting outreach and providing devices to federally-permitted charter boats in the eastern Gulf.

Next, I'll highlight some activities by our Bird restoration projects led by the Department of the Interior. Working with project partners, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat and Population

Evaluation Team, the Restoration of Black Tern project team identified 13 wetland areas and one grassland area critical to restore Black Tern nesting and foraging habitat. In 2020, with the help of interested land owners, the Trustees were able to establish five wetland easements at these priority sites that protect 985 acres of Black Tern nesting and foraging habitat.

We also analyzed baseline data for our project to restore Common Loons. In coordination with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, one of our project partners, this information is being used to guide identification of priority lakes, locations to place artificial nest platforms, lake association stewardship activities, and to design surveys to examine loon productivity, which are anticipated to begin in 2021. There will also be educational activities to reduce the use of lead fishing tackle which can be deadly to Loons. Another partner, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, held a successful summer sweepstakes in 2020 for Get the Lead Out products to increase awareness of alternate fishing tackle and they are planning to do a second one this summer.

### **Slide 15: Open Ocean Projects**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

I'd also like to highlight work for our project to reduce the impact of noise on marine mammals. Through a partnership with Scripps, we maintained existing acoustic monitoring sites, retrieved data and deployed new passive acoustic monitoring equipment across the Gulf of Mexico. Information from this network of monitoring sites will be analyzed to better understand human-sources of ocean noise and develop activities to reduce impacts to whales and dolphins in the Gulf of Mexico. Next steps will include analyzing data from other ongoing studies to characterize noise and document the distribution of whales and dolphins. These studies will be used to design activities to address information gaps about sources of sound and its effects on whale and dolphin populations that were injured by the oil spill.

Progress in establishing critical baseline information for restoration was also made in 2020 for the Open Ocean Monitoring and Adaptive Management activity, Informing Gulf Sturgeon Population Status and Trends. With the help of many researchers across the Gulf of Mexico region, a database was developed using Sturgeon monitoring information going back to 1990; computer tablets were also developed to help standardize future data collection across the region. This work is now being used to develop a population assessment that will help us evaluate restoration of Sturgeon populations. This monitoring and adaptive management activity will continue through 2022.

Next, I'll turn it back to Stephen so we can hear about what most interests you about Open Ocean restoration projects and monitoring activities.

### **Slide 16: Provide Your Feedback**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

Thanks, Laurie. ***Now we would like to hear from you about the types of restoration topics you're most interested in. Please check one or more of the choices provided or suggest additional topics in the Slide 17: Question Four***

***“Questions box”. Please type Q4 in front of your suggestion to help us organize everyone’s suggestions following the webinar.***

4. What Open Ocean restoration project topics are of most interest to you? (check all that apply)

What project activities are underway now

How we work with partners on projects

How we monitor projects

How projects use restoration science

Other topics: Enter in “Questions” box & include “Q4”

Next, we’ll go to Ashley Mills with the Department of the Interior.

**Slide 18: Restoration Planning**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

Thank you Stephen and Good Afternoon everyone. I’ll talk about our efforts for our third restoration plan.

**Slide 19: Restoration Planning Process**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

We recently started the restoration planning process for our third restoration plan.

The restoration planning process generally follows a cycle of plan, implement, monitor, and adjust, with public involvement at specific steps in the process. The yellow star at the top center of this slide indicates where we are currently, at the Project Identification step. We released a call for project ideas on March 25th, asking everyone, the public and agency staff, to enter new project ideas or update previously submitted ideas in the Trustee restoration database portal.

**Slide 20: Call for Project Ideas for Restoration Plan 3**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

The call for project ideas window is open through May 10<sup>th</sup>. We are targeting restoration project ideas that would benefit Birds and Sturgeon. We’re going to enter the link to the call for project ideas webstory in the chat, for your reference.

For birds, we're looking to address the injury to bird species that are unlikely to be addressed by other TIGs. Some seabird species were heavily impacted in the open water, but these species rarely spend time in the Gulf states. Northern gannets and Audubon's shearwaters are just two examples.

For sturgeon, this is an open call for project ideas. Although we are familiar with sturgeon project ideas currently in the portal and we have projects and monitoring and adaptive management activities currently in progress, we are interested to see if there are any new ideas out there and if any of the previously submitted ideas need updating.

### **Slide 21: Update or Submit New Project Ideas**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

The Trustees website looks like this on the left side of the screen. Gulfspill restoration dot NOAA dot gov

Scroll down to the bottom of the home page and you'll find three green boxes. The middle box, where the orange arrow is pointing, says "Suggest a restoration project for consideration". Click this box and it will take you to the project idea submission form, shown here on the right side of the screen.

We are asking that you either submit a new project idea or update a project idea you previously submitted on or before the May 10<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Please note this is a different process than submitting a project idea under the RESTORE Act or other grant programs. It is not a grant proposal process or a request for proposal (RFP) process. The project ideas that are submitted into the Trustee portal are ideas the Trustees will consider for possible further development in the planning process.

We're going to enter the link to the idea suggestion form in the chat for your reference.

### **Slide 22: For more information**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

Another useful source of information on how to submit project ideas, and general engagement in Deepwater Horizon restoration is the Environmental Law Institute. In particular, they have a guide to participating in the restoration process.

The Environmental Law Institute is an independent research and education organization that serves as a non-partisan source of information about environmental law, policy, and management.

We're going to enter the link to the Environmental Law Institute's website in the chat for your reference.

### **Slide 23: Restoration Plan 3 Next Steps**

Speaker: Ashley Mills

After the May 10<sup>th</sup> deadline, the trustees will download the entries that came in to the Trustee portal during the open window from March 25<sup>th</sup> through May 10<sup>th</sup>. We'll then begin organizing and reviewing those project ideas. We will apply a series of screening criteria to evaluate each idea for its benefits to injured bird or sturgeon resources, technical feasibility, and several other factors. We will look for project ideas or combinations of ideas that can be further developed into restoration project alternatives to be included in a draft restoration plan that will be released for public review and comment. We'll hold a public meeting during the comment period to present the range of projects in the draft plan and take formal public comments.

After considering all public comments we receive, we'll finalize the plan and then project implementation can begin.

During and after implementation, the outcomes and progress of the restoration projects will be monitored and reported publicly.

We look forward to seeing project ideas submitted for this next restoration plan.

And now I'd like to turn it back over to Laurie Rounds.

### **Slide 24: Restoration Funding**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

Thank you Ashley. In addition to planning for our third restoration plan and implementing our current set of restoration projects, the Open Ocean Trustees are also thinking long-term. The Open Ocean Trustees continuously assess our long-term progress towards all restoration type goals across our multiple projects to inform the best use of the remaining restoration funds. We are also evaluating how to optimize restoration outcomes, benefits to ecological services, and innovative approaches to restore injured resources.

As you see in this slide, the remaining Open Ocean allocation represents substantial, additional restoration investments as settlement payments are received over the remaining 10 years of the program. For example, 80% of the allocation to restore the injury to fish and water column invertebrates remains and 65% of the allocation for sea turtle restoration remains.

We are also implementing our Monitoring and Adaptive Management strategy to assess our progress in meeting these goals and ensure we effectively use the remaining 96% of allocated funds, or approximately \$192 million. These funds are allocated for monitoring needed to evaluate restoration outcomes and benefits to injured resources. I'll talk a little more about these efforts next.

### **Slide 25: Restoration Planning, Monitoring, & Evaluation**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

The Open Ocean Trustees began a long-term planning and evaluation process, in part, with the Open Ocean Monitoring and Adaptive Management Strategy released in 2019 and by setting monitoring priorities in 2020. We are continuing this process by developing restoration objectives that will guide Open Ocean planning and developing indicators that will help us evaluate progress toward our goals and objectives over time.

In March this year, we announced that strategic planning was underway for the Fish and Water Column Invertebrates restoration type. A team of fisheries experts is leading planning, including stakeholder engagement, to identify restoration objectives and indicators for these resources. We appreciate the input received to date and there will be additional opportunities to participate and provide input, including an upcoming public meeting on May 13. We'll mention this meeting again later and provide a link where you can register to attend.

Work to develop objectives and indicators for the other Open Ocean restoration types has also begun this year using a process tailored to the needs of each resource type. For example, Birds, Sea Turtles, and Marine Mammals will build on their Strategic Frameworks developed in 2017. We also plan to coordinate with other Trustee Implementation Groups doing similar work, such as the Louisiana Restoration Area programmatic MAM strategy, which was initiated in 2020.

Next we would like to hear more about your interests in resources we're restoring, and our monitoring and evaluation work, Stephen.

#### **Slide 26: Provide Your Feedback**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

Thanks, Laurie!

***This next question will come in two parts to identify what Open Ocean resources are of most interest to you. This first set includes Birds, Gulf Sturgeon, and Fish and Water Column Invertebrates. You can select more than one answer here.***

#### **Slide 27: Questions Five and Six**

5. What specific Open Ocean resources are of most interest to you? (check all that apply)

Bird restoration

Gulf Sturgeon restoration

Fish and Water Column Invertebrate restoration

***The next set includes Sea Turtles, Marine Mammals, and Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities, which our deep sea habitats. Please select one of more of these resources that are of interest to you.***

6. What specific Open Ocean resources are of most interest to you? (check all that apply)

Sea Turtle restoration

Marine Mammal restoration

Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Community restoration

***The last question for this section is: What monitoring and adaptive management topics are of most interest to you? You can check more than one option or you can suggest additional topics in the “Questions box”. Please type Q6 in front of your suggestion to help us organize everyone’s input following the webinar.***

### **Slide 28: Question Seven**

7. What monitoring and adaptive management topics are of most interest to you? (check all that apply)

Open Ocean monitoring priorities

Activities to address data gaps

Restoration project monitoring plans

Reporting monitoring results

Other topics: Enter in “Questions” box & include “Q6”

Thank you for your responses. I’ll turn it over to Benjamin Battle with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### **Slide 29: Outreach and Engagement**

Speaker: Ben Battle

Thank you Stephen and thank you everyone for your participation today. Your feedback is very helpful in shaping our outreach and engagement priorities and identifying effective ways that we can share information about Open Ocean restoration.

### **Slide 30: Where to Find More Information**

Speaker: Ben Battle

Our primary tools for sharing information, in addition to the outreach we conduct during public review of draft restoration plans, are the stories and announcements distributed through the Trustees’ Gulf Spill restoration website and mailing lists. Through this website, you can also access project records and annual reports on our restoration and monitoring activities through the Projects Portal and interactive project storymap. We also use the website to announce upcoming public meetings and other opportunities to participate.

### **Slide 31: Upcoming Public Meetings**

Speaker: Ben Battle

Our Open Ocean public meetings throughout the year are another way we share information and provide opportunities to participate. We held today's webinar to update you about our upcoming activities and to get your feedback about how we can continue to improve our outreach. So, thank you again for your participation.

We are also planning several more public meetings this year and early in 2022. As mentioned earlier, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, we'll hold a public webinar in cooperation with the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council to ask for input on our Fish and Water Column Invertebrates strategic planning efforts. You can get more information about this event on the Gulfspill restoration website. Stephen has provided a link to this information in the chat.

We are planning our summer presentation during the Trustee Council's annual meeting and will hold the annual Open Ocean TIG meeting this Fall. We also plan to hold one or more public meetings once a draft restoration plan 3 is ready for public review and input. We hope you'll be able to join us during these upcoming public meetings.

Next we would like to hear your ideas about how we can share information with you.

**Slide 32: Provide Your Feedback**

Speaker: Stephen Heverly

***Thank you Ben. These next questions will help us learn about how you currently receive information and participate in Open Ocean activities.***

**Slide 33: Question Eight**

8. How do you currently receive information about Open Ocean restoration activities through outreach and communications? (check all that apply)

*Deepwater Horizon* Gulf Restoration website

*Deepwater Horizon* Gulf Spill Restoration e-mails

Open Ocean fact sheets

Other ways: Enter in "Questions" box & include "Q7"

**Slide 34: Question 9**

9. How do you currently receive information about Open Ocean restoration activities in-person? (check all that apply)

Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group's Annual Meeting

Trustee Council Annual Meeting or other NRDA webinars

Conferences or non-*Deepwater Horizon* meetings

Other ways: Enter in "Questions" box & include "Q8"

Thanks again to all of you who participated in the polls today. Now we'll go back to Laurie Rounds to wrap us up for today.

**Slide 35: Thank You**

Speaker: Laurie Rounds

Thank you for participating in today's webinar and providing your input. We will compile and review the responses and comments provided during today's webinar. Your input will help us plan topics for our regular meetings and webinars. It will also help us identify additional outreach materials and webinars to share more information about topics that are of the greatest interest.

Following this webinar, we'll post the presentation materials to the Open Ocean Restoration Area page. You can also contact us at the Open Ocean TIG's email address included on this slide and in the chat.

Thank you again to everyone. Have a great rest of your day.