LAKE HERMITAGE MARSH CREATION – NRDA EARLY RESTORATION PROJECT

GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation – NRDA Early Restoration Project involves the creation of marsh within a project footprint known as the “Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation Project” developed for and funded through the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Program. This proposal substitutes approximately 104 acres of created brackish marsh for approximately 5-6 acres of earthen terraces that would otherwise have been constructed within the CWPPRA project boundary.

The Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation Project is located within the Barataria Hydrologic Basin in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, to the west of the community of Pointe a la Hache, and northwest of the community of Magnolia. This basin was identified as a priority area for coastal restoration, and has been the focus of extensive study and project design and implementation.

The primary goals of the Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation base CWPPRA Project are (1) to restore the eastern Lake Hermitage shoreline to reduce erosion and prevent breaching into the interior marsh and (2) to re-create marsh in the open water areas south and southeast of Lake Hermitage.

Marsh areas would be constructed entirely within the base project’s terrace boundary. Sediment would be hydraulically dredged from a borrow area in the Mississippi River, and pumped via pipeline to create new marsh in the project area. Over time, natural dewatering and compaction of dredged sediments should result in elevations within the intertidal range which would be conducive to the establishment of emergent marsh. The 104-acre fill area would be planted with native marsh vegetation to accelerate benefits to be realized from this project.

RESOURCE BENEFITS AND RELATIONSHIP TO INJURY

The Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation – NRDA Early Restoration Project would create new brackish marsh. The ecological services gained by this project are anticipated to help compensate for brackish marsh injuries or losses due to the spill. The created marsh would be constructed in the Barataria Hydrologic Basin, which was heavily impacted by the spill.

METHODS AND RESULTS OF OFFSETS ESTIMATION

For the purposes of negotiations of Offsets with BP in accordance with the Framework Agreement, the Trustees used Habitat Equivalency Analysis to estimate Offsets provided by the Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation – NRDA Early Restoration Project. Offsets reflect units of discounted service acre years (DSAYs) of emergent brackish salt marsh, and would be applied against emergent brackish salt marsh habitat injured by the Oil Spill in the Barataria Hydrologic Basin as determined by the Trustees’ total assessment of injury. In estimating DSAYs, the Trustees considered a number of factors, including, but not limited to, the time period that it would take for created marsh to provide different levels of ecological benefits, the time period over which the project would continue to provide benefits, and the ecological benefits of created marsh relative to existing marsh habitats that were not affected by the oil spill.

Total estimated Offsets for the Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation – NRDA Early Restoration Project are 518 DSAYs. In addition, the Trustees determined that approximately 25% of the Offsets (134 DSAYs) would be associated with highly productive marsh edge habitat, which is habitat along the land/water interface.

ESTIMATED COST

The estimated cost to implement the Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation – NRDA Early Restoration Project is $13,200,000.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Lake Hermitage Marsh Creation
NRDA Early Restoration Increment.

Project Background

General Project Description

The cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, State of Alabama (Gulf State Park), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge) and the Bureau of Land Management (Fort Morgan Beach) form the largest group of coastal land owners along the Alabama Gulf Coast. These owners collectively own and/or manage approximately 18 to 20 miles of dune habitat.

This restoration project would result in the formation of a partnership, the Coastal Alabama Dune Restoration Cooperative (CADRC), to restore natural resources that were injured by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response efforts.

The Trustees propose to restore 55 acres of dune habitats in Alabama that were affected by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, including response efforts, by planting native dune vegetation and installing sand fencing.

The proposed project will help prevent erosion by restoring a “living shoreline,” a coastline protected by plants and natural resources rather than hard structures.

Project Details

Planting:

• All plants will be grown from seeds or cuttings derived from the Alabama coast or North Florida to ensure appropriate genetic stocks are used in the project.

• Slow release fertilizer (osmocote 18-6-12 e.g.) will be used to ensure proper establishment of the plants.

• The plants will be installed 6” deep to ensure that sufficient moisture is available to roots, and properly covered with sand to stabilize and protect the plants.

Sand Fencing:

• Protective sand fencing that lines the dune feature and contributes to sand accumulation along the toe of the dunes will be installed for the cities of Orange Beach and Gulf Shores and on Bureau of Land Management lands.

Signage:

• Informative dune restoration signage will be placed on the project area at a rate of 10 to 25 signs per mile.

For best sand stabilization and to limit wind erosion plants will be mixed in the following proportions: 70% Sea oats grasses; 20% Panic grasses and smooth cord grasses, and 10% Ground covers (Sea purslane, Beach Elder, White morning glories and railroad vine), and planted on 18-inch centers.

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