

# About the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

## Comprehensive Plan Update

The Gulf Coast region is a national treasure and a driver of our nation's economy. The region provides valuable energy resources, abundant fisheries, extraordinary beaches and recreational activities, a vibrant shipping industry and a rich cultural heritage. It is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world.

In recognition of the region's environmental challenges, as well as the vital importance of recovery of the Gulf's natural resources and economy after the oil spill, Congress passed the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) in July 2012.

The RESTORE Act established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council). The Council is responsible for developing a Comprehensive Plan to guide a coordinated, region-wide effort to restore, protect and revitalize the Gulf Coast.

The Council approved an Initial Comprehensive Plan in August 2013, which set forth goals and objectives for advancing comprehensive Gulf restoration. In August 2016, the Council released a draft update and solicited public feedback. The Council is now releasing the finalized update, which can be found at [www.RestoreTheGulf.gov](http://www.RestoreTheGulf.gov).

### Path Forward/Next Steps

The Council has revised the Comprehensive Plan based on public and Tribal input on the proposed update.

In the coming months and years, the Council will focus on collaboration—among its members and with other partners—to fully leverage available funds and further advance comprehensive Gulf restoration.



# The Comprehensive Plan Update

## What's New?

There have been important developments that warrant an update of the Council's Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the resolution of civil claims against BP has provided clarity regarding the amount and timing of funds available to the Council. This placed the Council in a position to include a Ten-Year Funding Strategy in the Comprehensive Plan Update, as required by the RESTORE Act.

In addition, the Council has gained valuable knowledge during the process of developing and approving the first set of foundational restoration activities in its Initial Funded Priorities List. Much of this knowledge came from listening to the public and a wide range of stakeholders.

The Comprehensive Plan Update is intended to improve future Council funding decisions by:

- Reinforcing the Council's goals and objectives,
- Enhancing the proposal development process,
- Setting forth a Ten-Year Funding Strategy, including a Council vision,
- Building on Council commitments:
  - Advance regional ecosystem based restoration,
  - Leverage resources and partner restoration programs,
  - Increase engagement and collaboration among Council members,
  - Enhance public inclusion and Council transparency,
  - Enhance application of best available science,
  - Improve efficiency and effectiveness of Council actions by delivering results and measuring impacts.

## Public Comments

Public input on the Council's previous activities and the draft document have helped shape this finalized version of the Comprehensive Plan Update. In response to public comments, the Council has made two key edits to the Comprehensive Plan. The first edit addresses a call from the public for transparency, inclusiveness and tangible results in the collaboration process. The second edit enhances the science review process. The Council is committed to continuously improving and adapting in response to new information and feedback. The Council thanks the public for providing robust public comments.

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## Goals of the Comprehensive Plan

The Council recommits to the goals and objectives set forth in the Initial Comprehensive Plan, with one clarifying amendment. Specifically, the Council proposes to add "water quantity" in the existing "water quality" goal.

- **Restore and Conserve Habitat** – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine and marine habitats.
- **Restore Water Quality and Quantity** – Restore and protect water quality and quantity of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine and marine waters.
- **Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources** – Restore and protect healthy, diverse and sustainable living coastal and marine resources.
- **Enhance Community Resilience** – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes.
- **Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy** – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

