

Funded Priorities List Planning Framework

Priority Approach: Create, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands, islands, shorelines, and headlands



Planning Framework Overview

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) has released the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council Planning Framework draft for public review and comment as it continues to advance its 2016 *Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy*.

A Funded Priorities List (FPL) is a list of the final Gulf Coast restoration projects and programs that the RESTORE Council has approved for funding. Thus far, the Council has approved two FPLs. This Planning Framework describes the Council's current focus for development of the next Funded Priorities List (FPL 3). The complexities associated with Gulf ecosystem restoration necessitate some flexibility in decision-making. Therefore, the Council may choose to fund projects that do not align with this Planning Framework draft. The Planning Framework is intended to serve as a bridge, strategically linking the RESTORE Council's past and future funding decisions to its overarching goals and objectives. To that end, the Council will consider how future investments may build upon those in the Initial FPL as well as activities funded by other restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico region.

The Planning Framework draft is organized by priority restoration approaches and techniques, and the geographic areas where these approaches and techniques could be carried out. Approaches refine the options for how to achieve restoration goals and objectives. Techniques are methods used to carry out an approach. Together, they signal the resources, habitats, and locations that the RESTORE Council may consider when selecting projects and programs for FPL 3 funding.



Approach: Create, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands, islands, shorelines, and headlands

This priority approach supports the following **Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives:**

Primary goals

- Restore and conserve habitat
- Enhance community resilience

Primary objectives

- Restore, enhance, and protect habitats
- Restore and enhance natural processes and shorelines
- Promote community resilience

By supplementing sediment inputs, taking measures to reduce shoreline erosion, controlling invasive species, and restoring natural sedimentation processes, this approach can diminish degradation of important, tidally influenced habitats. These approaches may also improve the resilience of habitats, marine life, and the communities that rely on them in the face of future spills and other acute stressors.

Don't miss your chance to voice your opinion!

We want to hear from you!

Please contact us at:
RestoreCouncil@restorethegulf.gov

Or visit us on the web at:
www.restorethegulf.gov

Spring 2019 Public Meeting Schedule

Date	Cities *	Time
04/30/19	Spanish Fort, AL	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
05/06/19	New Orleans, LA	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
05/07/19	Tallahassee, FL	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
05/22/19	Long Beach, MS	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
05/30/19	Corpus Christi, TX	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

*meeting venues available at www.restorethegulf.gov

Potential Restoration Techniques

The RESTORE Council is considering the following habitat creation, restoration, and enhancement techniques in geographic areas where habitat loss and degradation represents a major threat to the ecosystem.

Sediment placement

This technique would restore wetlands, islands, and shorelines by placing dredged material into shallow water habitats. Dredged materials are soil, sand, or sediment material retrieved from the bottom of natural water bodies such as rivers, bays, the open Gulf, as well as harbors and waterways that have been excavated for navigation or other sediment management purposes. Placing these dredged materials along degraded areas can raise elevation to heights needed to sustain native vegetation or re-establish the appropriate shoreline or barrier island profile. In some instances, projects will need to incorporate activities such as planting native vegetation or removing invasive species. These additional efforts will be dependent upon the location and condition of the project area.

To enable habitat recovery, projects should aim to establish or reestablish the tidal hydrology, salinity gradients, native vegetation, and habitat-dependent animal communities that are characteristic of natural, undisturbed coastal habitats.



Priority Approach and Techniques

Create, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands, islands, shorelines, and headlands

- Sediment placement
- Protect natural shorelines
- Other



Protect and conserve coastal, estuarine, and riparian habitats



Restore hydrology and natural processes



Reduce excess nutrients and other pollutants to watersheds



Restore oyster habitat

Protect natural shorelines

The primary purpose of this technique is to reduce or prevent shoreline retreat and promote habitat sustainability and creation. Projects would reduce wave energy and currents acting on shorelines, induce sediment deposition, and provide shelter for wetland plants and shoreline habitats.

This technique protects coastal shoreline habitat through the construction of offshore and nearshore breakwaters, reefs, and living shorelines. These structures are typically freestanding and positioned parallel to, and near the shoreline. They may also protect against further shoreline retreat along the Gulf coast while still allowing for the movement of water and aquatic organisms into and out of the marsh or shoreline edge. To maximize the ecological benefits of such projects, designs should incorporate the use of materials that promote establishment of living resources, such as oysters and marsh plants, whenever possible.

Why is it important to create, restore, and enhance these habitats?

- Coastal and nearshore environments of the Gulf of Mexico include a vast, biologically diverse collection of interrelated habitats, many of which have been degraded in recent decades due to a variety of stressors, including impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.
- Sediment, nutrients, and food resources move between these ecosystems creating multiple, cascading benefits that enhance overall ecosystem productivity.
- Between 50 and 90 percent of the shorelines in Gulf Coast states are experiencing both long-term and short-term erosion, increasing the need to prevent or slow these effects through habitat restoration.