

GOMA Federal Working Group Call Notes
8.27.15

Participants

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Agenda

GOMA Updates

- Active season of writing APIII

- Reached out to Texas and Florida Governor's staff and discussed what the draft outline looks like; staff is good with the process so far
- Intend to be finished with writing APIII by Thanksgiving
- Encourage any federal insight, review, or support that anyone would be interested in providing

RESTORE Funding Priorities List – Federal Project Overviews

<https://www.restorethegulf.gov/our-work/draft-initial-funded-priorities-list-draft-fpl>

Plug Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells – Darryl Echols (NPS)

- Plugging 11 abandoned oil and gas wells in Padre Island National Seashore
- Working with the support of the Texas Railroad Commission
- Will take a year to complete

Jean Lafitte Canal Backfilling – Darryl Echols (NPS)

- Removing wellheads in Barataria Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve
- Six months to complete

Questions:

- Who is the point of contact for the project?
 - Darryl Echols with the NPS
- This is a project with a large scale, collaborative view of restoration efforts in the Gulf, with USFWS, BOEM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, etc.
- What kind of equipment needs and access will be required to complete the Padre Island project? Will there be dredging needed to access wells?
 - No need for access from the water - all 11 wells can be accessed from existing roads that can handle necessary equipment, and all work can be done in existing well pads.

Gulf of Mexico Habitat Restoration via Conservation Corps Partnerships – Laurie Rounds (NOAA)

- Established regional workforce training program to support local communities and long-term gulf restoration programs
- Have this program developed on a regional scale to recruit and train local workers (youth, displaced workers, and tribal youth)
- Paid, hands on work experience
- Restoration projects would be developed to utilize conservation corps labor, identifying key skill sets needed to implement projects

- Corps program would be competitively selected
- Develop partnerships with local

Questions:

- On the back end, have you thought about how to get to this workforce when restoration comes online?
 - We've had some experience running corps programs, so this is to provide paid, hands on work experience. Recruitment would involve working with programs to reach out to people who would be interested in this type of work and hire them to work on a specific project over a time period. Their participation in the program as part of the work crews is paid experience.
- Does part of the training include becoming federal contractors so we can find them again once the \$8 million is spent?
 - That's a great idea, and we want to make sure that we can become a training program that provides a long-term benefit.
- Question from Matt Chasse over Chat: How have the discussions gone about the structure of the funding for the Corps, given that the funding was greatly reduced from the original proposal? Secondly, how will partners be engaged as the project moves forward?

Deer Island Beneficial Use – Susan Rees (USACE)

- 5 beneficial use projects were developed by USACE, and 1 involving Seminole tribe in FL.
- 2 selected – Deer Island and Upper Mobile Bay

Deer Island

- Part of large restoration plan that's been occurring since 2000
- Create outside containment berm as well as a chenier-type ridge adjacent to the island itself
- Mississippi DMR will manage the future placement of dredge material within that site, and that material could come from federal navigation channel (3 channels around Deer Island) or from some locally dredged entity

Upper Mobile Bay

- Final engineering and design for Upper Mobile Bay site so there will be modeling to look at shape of the area that was built
- Additional geotechnical work to look at foundation and suitability of material to build semi-confined dike system to put fine grain material in
- Look at bringing material from BWT waterway in the case of no local suitable material – put this into permit application and USACE will serve as agent for AL Port Authority who will be ultimate owner and manager

- Additional plan for implementation was not selected; it would have built containment feature and 100 acres of wetland

Questions:

- POC for these projects – Susan Rees
- For Deer Island, USACE is hopeful that FY17 budget will get planning, engineering and design for remaining restoration of eastern end (MissSip program)

Strategic Conservation Assessment Framework - Chris Pease (USFWS)

- Knit together and integrate work around the Gulf as far as establishing conservation lands and areas to be protected
- Integrate the work that folks have done and provide a means to direct future funding resources to conduct large scale measures on the landscape that actually have a long term sustainability to preserve our Gulf region for fish and wildlife habitats, and local communities and economies.
- Try to have a core working group established and made of RESTORE Council members and reps, as well as reps from LCCs, NGOs, to help provide access to resources, data layers, and planning documents
- First objective is to develop shared priorities and objectives; pull together work in states and feds around Gulf; develop tools to prioritize existing land conservation projects; evaluate projects and their impacts in a broader context, including impacts from climate change, SLR, and socioeconomic concerns
- Development of geospatial data layers to assess how to identify priority areas and look at these through different software packages that will allow us to look at patterns of connectivity and scale that fit in local areas and local landscapes
- Series of facilitated charrettes where we can validate the data we're pulling together and match them to local concerns
- POCs – Chris Pease and John Tirpak
- Tailor made for GOMA Wildlife and Fisheries Team

Council Monitoring and Assessment Program Development – Greg Steyer (NOAA/USGS)

- POCs – DoC: Steve Giordano and Mark Manaco; USGS: Mike Lee and Greg Steyer
- Develop common standards and protocols in terms of how data are collected and utilized for different monitoring variables
- Minimum QA/QC standards and reporting requirements
- Evaluate the effects of projects that are funded under RESTORE, but also report on holistic ecosystem restoration
- Need to establish some baseline conditions prior to projects being implemented on landscape

- Amount of monitoring that is needed is more than any one entity could support, so Phase I is to do an inventory and gap analysis building on existing efforts to get our arms around existing habitat and water quality data that exist. Recommendations can then be made on how to address gaps and identify future needs.
- Development of a monitoring community of practice
- Monitoring coordination committee to include reps across NRDA restoration, NFWF, NAS, Centers of Excellence, RESTORE; trying to get the funders talking on a more frequent basis to jointly look at monitoring priorities
- There's been a lot of great work already done with the GOMA teams and they'll be part of the process

GOMA Coordination – Laura Bowie (GOMA)

- GOMA is going to make use of existing structures that we have in place
- Water Quality team had monitoring activities and efforts online, and those folks have gathered together on data and monitoring team; HCRT has been also working on monitoring
- Create a restoration monitoring community of practice that will focus on water quality and habitat monitoring
- Support Greg's efforts by bringing this group together to provide input and review of the standard minimum protocols pulled together
- State of AL proposed idea, which was a portion of a larger proposal
- Utilize the great work by PITs, and grow their activities

Questions:

- When do you see the public engagement part of this starting?
 - We anticipate hosting 5 CoP workshops (multi-day) over three years.
 - USGS and NOAA have to do their project before we bring first workshop together – dependent upon when projects are finalized and awards start flowing – mid-year in 2016

Mobile Bay NEP – John Bowie (EPA)

- More work in support of CCMP
- Particularly to help them with doing work in the watershed surrounding 3 Mile and 8 Mile Creek
- The project includes doing the design and engineering for restoration of 12 Mile Creek
- Invasive species removal
- Year 1 is design, environmental compliance, regulatory requirements, monitoring

Tampa Bay NEP – John Bowie (EPA)

- Drive additional work for CCMP
- Category 1 and 2 component
- Cat 1 is planning and documentation of regulations and environmental compliance activities
- Lot of leveraging

Conservation Grants Program – John Bowie (EPA)

- Competitive grants competition to enhance private public partnerships in support of private land conservation
- Land trusts, NGOs, state land preservation agencies
- Improving habitat and quality
- Will require 1 to 1 match

Gulf of Mexico Estuary Program – John Bowie (EPA)

- Provide funding to stand up a place based estuary program encompassing FL bays
- Not a formal National Estuary Program, funding to develop CCMP and committees