



September 10, 2012

Dear Southwest Florida NEP Partners:

The newly established Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund is anticipated to provide funds to the five Gulf Coast States to restore and offset the environmental and economic impacts associated with the Deep Water Horizon oil spill.

Your entity is an active participant in one or more of the National Estuary Programs (NEPs) in Southwest Florida and participates in implementation of the NEPs' Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs). Actions and programs included in the Estuary Program's CCMP may offer a streamlined avenue for local governments, agencies and the Gulf Coast Restoration Council to invest in Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration and conservation.

The Charlotte Harbor, Sarasota Bay, and Tampa Bay Estuary Programs are uniquely positioned to assist the Counties and other entities in southwest Florida in the development of a regional ecosystem restoration plan to maximize the region's opportunity to secure funding under the Act. Funds will be governed by the Gulf Coast Restoration Council, and its plan needs to be prepared in coordination with the President's Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force. The Task Force has recognized the value of the CCMPs of the Gulf's seven Estuary Programs.

As a partner in the Southwest Florida NEPs, we are requesting your input into a Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan, specifically to develop a prioritized list of environmental projects which would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality and coastal wetlands of Southwest Florida, and which are consistent with the actions in the NEPs' CCMPs. The draft priority list will be reviewed, revised and approved by the Management and Policy Boards of the three NEPs, and can be utilized by local governments and the Gulf Coast Restoration Council for consideration in the development of each of their funding priorities under the RESTORE Act. The regional plan will address a three- and 10- year prioritization of projects and costs, discuss ranking criteria, cover a geographic area that encompasses all of Florida's coastal counties from Levy to Collier, and describe how secured funds can be administered and monitored fairly, effectively and efficiently.

To submit priority projects from your entity for inclusion in the SW Florida Ecosystem Restoration plan, please use the attached entry form. Please refer to the attached Guidelines to assist with completion of your entries. Projects should be consistent with the NEP CCMPs and with the Gulf Coast Restoration Council's criteria for inclusion in the Council's Comprehensive Plan, specifically for habitat restoration; habitat protection/acquisition; water quality improvement; or other projects consistent with the CCMPs.

Please submit your completed list of priority environmental restoration and protection projects to one of the NEP contacts no later than November 1, 2012, to ensure that your projects are included in the collated list for consideration. NEP contacts are identified in the attached Guidelines.

It is important to stress that the NEPs wish to work in concert with our partners to develop a regional approach that can be utilized by, and not be in conflict with, each entity's individual efforts in seeking RESTORE Act funding. We believe that a regional approach for environmental projects, based on existing federally-approved comprehensive plans, will be favorably viewed by the Council for inclusion in the Council's Gulf-wide Comprehensive Plan due in January 2013. We look forward to your participation and involvement in the development of the Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan.

Please don't hesitate to contact one or all of us with any questions. We look forward to receiving your priority project descriptions, and to working with you to develop a successful regional ecosystem restoration and protection plan for Southwest Florida.

Sincerely,



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