



Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Performance Plan



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Table of Contents

Preface	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
Strategic Goals	11
Strategic Objectives	12
Performance Metrics for Individual Council-Funded Programs and Projects	15
Performance Goals and Indicators for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017	16

Preface

Established by the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012, or the RESTORE Act, codified at 33 U.S.C. § 1321 (t), the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) is comprised of five Governors from the Gulf Coast States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas (States), the Secretaries from the U.S. Departments of the Interior, Army, Commerce, Agriculture, and Homeland Security, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Secretary of Agriculture currently serves as the Council's Chairperson. In cooperation with our restoration partners, the Council is striving to establish a benchmark for collaborative work while facilitating efficient and responsible implementation of large-scale restoration projects across the Gulf. The Council recognizes the unique and unprecedented opportunity we have to implement a restoration effort in a way that restores and protects the Gulf Coast environment, reinvigorates local economies and creates jobs in the region. We are committed to working with Gulf communities and partners to invest in actions, projects, and programs that will ensure the long-term environmental health and economic prosperity of the Gulf Coast region

The Council has oversight over the expenditure of 60% of the funds made available from the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund established by the RESTORE Act (Trust Fund). Under the Council-Selected Restoration Component of the RESTORE Act, 30% of available funding will be administered for Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration and protection according to a Comprehensive Plan developed by the Council. Another 30% will be allocated to the States under the Spill Impact Component according to a formula established by the Council through a regulation, and spent according to individual State Expenditure Plans (SEPs) to contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf. The SEPs must adhere to four basic criteria and are subject to approval by the Council. By the end of fiscal year 2015, the Council published a draft Initial Funded Priorities List (FPL) of foundational projects and programs to be funded and prioritized by the Council, as well as the proposed regulation establishing the formula for allocation of Spill Impact Component funds under the RESTORE Act. The Council anticipates final approval of both documents during early fiscal year 2016, as well as initial implementation of FPL projects and SEPs.

In fiscal year 2015, the Council recruited and trained additional staff, and developed, documented and implemented internal control procedures. Additionally, the Council developed and implemented an Administrative Action Plan to contract for an organizational risk assessment in order to complete the Council's finance and administrative documentation requirements. Finally, the Council implemented an automated grants management system, and developed comprehensive guidance for grant recipients and internal staff. As a result of these efforts, the fiscal year 2015 audit has downgraded the material weakness to a significant deficiency. The Council will continue to recruit talented professionals to assist with the execution of our critical restoration mission.

This report is available on the internet at <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>

Introduction

The Gulf Coast region is vital to our Nation and our economy, providing valuable energy resources, abundant seafood, extraordinary beaches and recreational activities, and a rich cultural heritage. Its waters and coasts are home to one of the most diverse environments in the world—including over 15,000 species of sea life. More than 22 million Americans live in Gulf coastal counties and parishes, working in crucial U.S. industries like commercial seafood, recreational fishing, tourism, and oil and gas production. The region also boasts of a significant shipping industry with 10 of America's 15 largest ports accounting for nearly a trillion dollars in trade each year.

Despite the tremendous economic, social and ecological importance of the Gulf Coast region, the health of the region's ecosystem has been significantly impacted, most recently by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Over the past several decades, the Gulf Coast region has experienced loss of critical wetlands, erosion of barrier islands, imperiled fisheries, water quality degradation leading to, among many other impacts, one of the world's largest hypoxic zones every year, alteration of hydrology, and other cumulative environmental impacts (e.g., an area the size of a football field are lost every hour in coastal Louisiana). While hurricanes (such as Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike), subsidence and other natural forces are also key factors in land loss, this may be exacerbated by human actions which have greatly reduced ecosystem resilience and thus made coastal wetlands more vulnerable to these natural stressors.

In addition, the Gulf of Mexico experienced extensive and severe water quality and habitat impacts resulting from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill including excess nutrients, altered sediment resources, pathogens, mercury, remaining *Deepwater Horizon* oil and other pollutants. Five years after the spill, living coastal and marine systems still show signs of stress, such as depleted species populations and degraded habitats.

The cumulative impacts of chronic (e.g., water quality, sea level rise) and acute (e.g., hurricanes and floods) stressors to the Gulf ecosystems have resulted in increased storm risk, land and habitat loss, depletion of natural resources, altered hydrology and compromised water quality and quantity, which are imperiling coastal communities' natural defenses and ability to respond to natural and man-made disruptions. These problems not only endanger the natural systems but also the economic vitality of the

The Council will play a key role in helping to ensure that the Gulf's natural resources are sustainable and available for future generations. Currently available Gulf restoration funds and those that may become available in the future represent a great responsibility. The ongoing involvement of the people who live, work and play in the Gulf region is critical to ensuring that these monies are used wisely and effectively.

Background

The Council was formally established in 2015 as a new, independent Federal Agency with a clear mission to implement a long-term, comprehensive plan for the ecological and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast region. This document represents the Council's first submission of an Annual Performance Plan (APP). In light of this, the Fiscal Year 2016 APP includes a formal "Background" section to provide fundamental information on the Council and its responsibilities. Unlike most federal agencies, the Council does not receive funds through the annual federal appropriations process (all funds are received through the Trust Fund (Trust Fund)); however the Council does appear in the Appendix to the President's Budget.

The RESTORE Act

Spurred by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, the RESTORE Act was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. The RESTORE Act envisions a regional approach to restoring the long-term health of the valuable natural ecosystems and economy of the Gulf Coast region. The RESTORE Act dedicates 80 percent of civil and administrative penalties paid under the Clean Water Act, after the date of enactment, by responsible parties in connection with the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill to the Trust Fund for ecosystem restoration, economic recovery, and tourism promotion in the Gulf Coast region. This effort is in addition to the restoration of natural resources injured by the spill that is being accomplished through a separate Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) under the Oil Pollution Act. A third and related Gulf restoration effort is being administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation using funds from the settlement of criminal charges against BP and Transocean.

In addition to creating the Trust Fund, the RESTORE Act established the Council. The Council is currently chaired by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and includes the Governors of the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas and the Secretaries of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Army, Homeland Security and the Interior, and the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

One of the Council's primary responsibilities is to develop a Comprehensive Plan to restore the ecosystem and the economy of the Gulf Coast region, and to update the Plan at least every five years. State Expenditure Plans, developed under the Spill Impact Component, are also submitted to the Council for approval in accordance with the RESTORE Act. Pursuant to the RESTORE Act, the Council approved the initial Comprehensive Plan in August 2013, which outlines an overarching framework for an integrated and coordinated approach for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration.

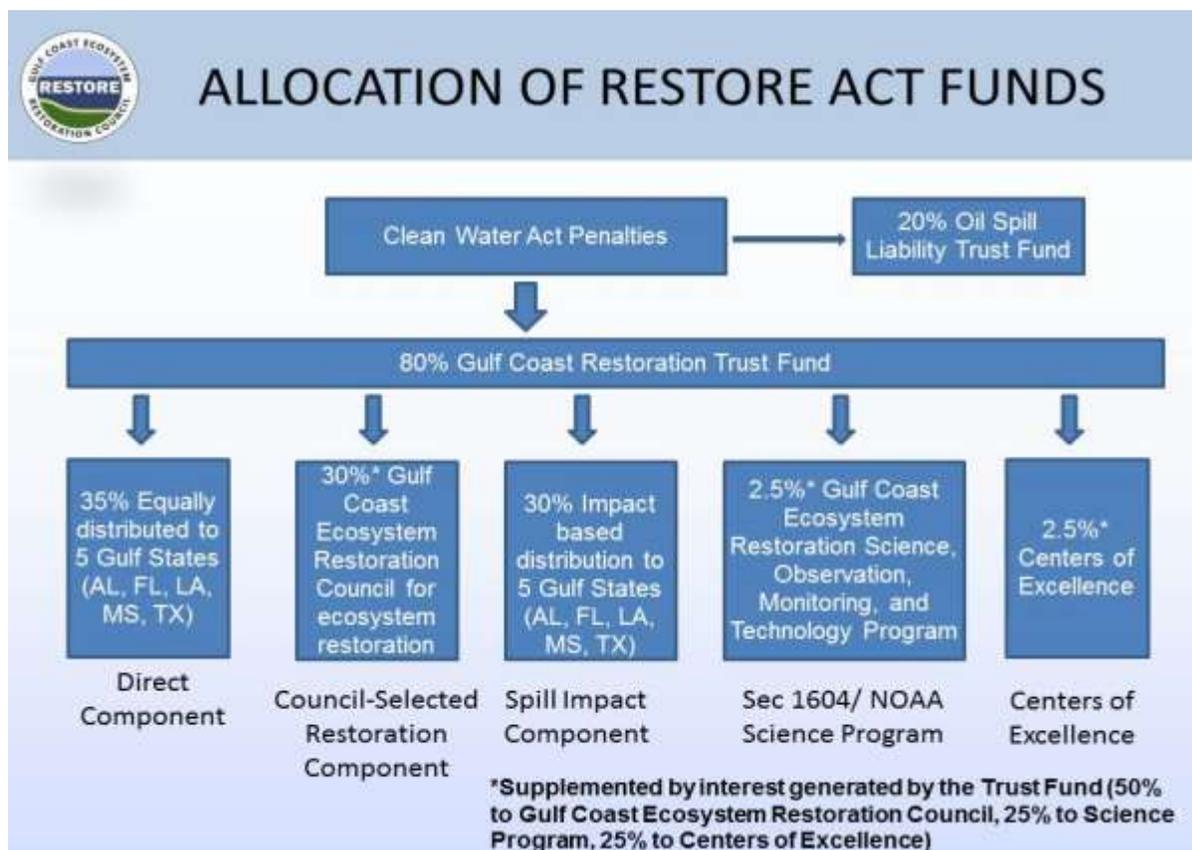
The Trust Fund

The RESTORE Act directs the Council to use the best available science and give highest priority to ecosystem projects and programs that meet one or more of the following four Priority Criteria. The Council will use these criteria to evaluate proposals and select the best projects and programs to achieve comprehensive ecosystem restoration.

- Projects that are projected to make the greatest contribution to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, without regard to geographic location within the Gulf Coast region.
- Large-scale projects and programs that are projected to substantially contribute to restoring and protecting the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast ecosystem.
- Projects contained in existing Gulf Coast State comprehensive plans for the restoration and protection of natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
- Projects that restore long-term resiliency of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands most impacted by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

The funds supporting the Council’s efforts are defined by the RESTORE Act, which divides funds made available from the Trust Fund into five components, colloquially referred to as “buckets,” and sets parameters for how these funds will be spent.

Figure 1. Allocation of the Trust Fund



The Council is directly responsible for two of the five components, as follows:

- *Council-Selected Restoration Component*: 30 percent of the funds (plus 50 percent of interest earned) will be administered for ecosystem restoration and protection according to the Comprehensive Plan developed by the Council. The Council approved and published an Initial Comprehensive Plan in August 2013.
- *Spill Impact Component*: 30 percent of the funds are dedicated to the States based on a formula set forth in the RESTORE Act and established by the Council through a regulation. This allocation formula is based on a weighted allocation of the number of miles of shoreline of each State that experienced oiling as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill; the inverse proportion of distance from *Deepwater Horizon* drilling rig to the middle of oiled shoreline in each State; and the average coastal county population in each State as of the 2010 Census. Each State will be required to have a State Expenditure Plan (SEP) in place for the use of these funds. The SEPs must be consistent with the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and are subject to Council approval in accordance with criteria set forth in the RESTORE Act. More information regarding SEP guidelines can be found on the RESTORE Council website (<https://www.restorethegulf.gov/our-work/spill-impact-component>).

On January 3, 2013, the United States announced that Transocean Deepwater Inc. and related entities had agreed to pay \$1 billion (plus interest) in civil penalties for violating the Clean Water Act in relation to their conduct in the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. In accordance with the consent decree, Transocean has paid all three of its installments of civil penalties plus interest to the U.S. Department of Justice. The U.S. Department of Justice has transferred 80 percent of these funds to Treasury for deposit into the Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund, totaling \$816 million. On November 20, 2015 the federal court for the Eastern District Court of Louisiana ordered Anadarko Petroleum Corp. to pay a \$159.5 million civil fine; of this amount, \$128 million, including interest, has been deposited in the Trust Fund. Anadarko was the last defendant in the *Deepwater Horizon* spill Clean Water Act litigation.

In July 2015, BP announced that it had reached Agreements in Principle (AIPs) with the United States and the five Gulf States for settlement of civil claims arising from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill. Thereafter, on October 5, 2015, the United States announced that it had lodged a consent decree among the United States, the States and BP in Federal court in New Orleans, LA (Consent Decree), providing for settlement of those claims. If made final, the proposed Consent Decree would require BP to pay to the United States a civil penalty under the Clean Water Act of \$5.5 billion, plus interest, payable in installments over fifteen years. The RESTORE Act provides that 80 percent of civil penalties paid under the Clean Water Act arising out of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill will be dedicated to the Trust Fund and allocated to the Direct Component, the Council-Selected Restoration Component, the Spill Impact Component and the other components as defined by the RESTORE Act.

There are, however, additional steps that must be completed before those funds may become available. The Consent Decree will not become final until the Consent Decree has been approved and entered by the court.

Council-Selected Restoration Component

The RESTORE Act requires creation of a Funded Priorities List (FPL) that includes the projects and programs the Council intends to fund through the Council-Selected Restoration Component. Since the fiscal year 2014 Report to Congress, the Council members collaborated to develop a [draft Initial FPL](#) using a process that emphasized public input, transparency, coordination with other restoration programs, and rigorous science review. The process for developing the draft Initial FPL was initiated with an invitation to each Council member to submit up to five proposals. In addition to their five proposals, Council members could also submit proposals on behalf of Federally-recognized Tribes. In total, the Council received 50 submissions (including five proposed on behalf of Tribes). Within the 50 submissions, which totaled nearly \$785M, approximately 380 discrete components, referred to as “activities,” were proposed for potential funding and inclusion in the draft Initial FPL. The submissions built upon experience from past ecosystem restoration plans and projects, and reflected public input provided to the Council during development of the Initial Comprehensive Plan and as part of the FPL development process.

The Council determined that a watershed/estuary approach would be an effective tool for guiding the selection of projects and programs in a way that advances comprehensive restoration. By identifying and focusing on watersheds, the Council was able to make difficult funding decisions in a way that leverages limited restoration resources for maximum effectiveness, while also supporting planning, science and other activities that can set the stage for future success. All activities in the draft FPL came from the original member submissions. In some cases the activities are a component or smaller increment of an original submission. Many stakeholders cautioned the Council against distributing the available funds in a way that supports disconnected (although beneficial) restoration projects; the Council was asked not to engage in “random acts of restoration.” The Council shares that perspective and believes that focusing on key watersheds and other foundational activities will ensure that the funds are spent in a way that contributes to comprehensive Gulf restoration.

Given the size and breadth of the Gulf Coast region, it would be impossible to address all the ecosystem needs with the funds currently in hand. However, it is possible to begin making substantial gains in important areas by focusing resources on watersheds and estuaries that have been identified as priorities by the public, Council members, and independent scientists. To that end, the Initial FPL focuses on key watersheds and estuaries across the Gulf, using conservation and restoration techniques that are tailored to the needs of the specific area.

Further, the Council sought to identify activities for the draft FPL that would either complement each other or have synergistic effects with other restoration projects. Some of the conservation activities complement other ongoing or existing conservation actions.

Spill Impact Component

While the Council will select and fund projects and programs to restore the ecosystem with Council-Selected Restoration Component funds, the Spill Impact Component funds will be invested in projects, programs, and activities identified in approved SEPs. The RESTORE Act allocates 30% of the Trust Fund to the Gulf Coast States under a formula established by the Council, through a regulation, and spent

according to individual SEPs. Each Gulf Coast State will develop an SEP describing how it will disburse the amounts allocated under the Spill Impact Component. These projects, programs and activities will be implemented through grants to the States in a manner that is consistent with the requirements of the RESTORE Act as well as the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

The RESTORE Act provides the scope of activities eligible for funding under the Spill Impact Component, including:

- Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.
- Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources.
- Implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring.
- Workforce development and job creation.
- Improvements to or on State parks located in coastal areas affected by the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.
- Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecosystem resources, including port infrastructure.
- Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure.
- Planning assistance.
- Administrative costs of complying with the Act.
- Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region, including recreational fishing.
- Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast region

The SEP must describe the process used to verify and certify that the projects, programs, and activities meet the following requirements and a certification included stating that issues crossing Gulf State boundaries have been evaluated to ensure that a comprehensive, collaborative ecological and economic recovery is furthered by the State Expenditure Plan. See 31 CFR § 34.503(b)(5).

- All projects, programs, and activities included in the SEP meet the requirements of §34.204 regarding eligible activities and use of funds.
- The SEP demonstrates how the activities in the plan will contribute to the overall economic and ecological recovery of the Gulf Coast.
- The SEP takes into consideration the Comprehensive Plan and is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.
- The SEP provides that no more than 25 percent of the funding is available to pay for infrastructure as defined in the Treasury Regulation, unless a certification is received from the Governor or his representatives, as described below.

The Council will review each SEP to ensure that it is consistent with Goals and Objectives set forth in the Initial Comprehensive Plan and that all statutory and Council-published requirements are met. The States will make SEPs available to the public and Tribes for a period of 45 days. Once submitted by the States, the Council will approve or disapprove an SEP within 60 days. If an SEP does not meet the applicable requirements, the Council will work with the State to address any outstanding issues.

Strategic Goals

One of the Council's primary responsibilities was to develop an Initial Comprehensive Plan to restore the ecosystem and economy of the Gulf Coast region. The Council approved and published an Initial Comprehensive Plan (Plan) in August 2013 that outlines overarching goals for restoring and protecting the natural resources of the Gulf

(<https://www.restorethegulf.gov/sites/default/files/Final%20Initial%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>).

To develop the Plan, the Council carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations of the *Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Strategy (Strategy)*. The Council also reviewed numerous existing local, regional, state and federal plans to inform the development of the Plan. The Council initiated a robust public engagement process to receive input from diverse voices from across the region. The Council hosted fourteen public meetings with over 2,300 attendees; over 41,000 public comments on the Draft Initial Comprehensive Plan and accompanying Programmatic Environmental Assessment were received. These comments were considered and incorporated, as appropriate, into the Initial Comprehensive Plan.

Building on the strong foundation established in the *Strategy* and other local, regional, state and federal plans, the Council is moving forward with an integrated and coordinated approach to Gulf Coast restoration. This approach strives to both restore the Gulf Coast region's environment and, at the same time, revitalize the region's economy because the Council recognizes that ecosystem restoration investments may also improve economic prosperity and quality of life. In addition, this approach acknowledges that coordinated action with other partners is important to successfully restore and sustain the health of the Gulf Coast region. This coordination is particularly important because diverse funding sources and decision-making bodies are simultaneously investing in Gulf Coast restoration.

To provide the overarching framework for an integrated and coordinated approach for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration and help guide the collective actions at the local, state, tribal and federal levels, the Council has adopted five Strategic Goals as follows:

- **Strategic Goal 1:** Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats;
- **Strategic Goal 2:** Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality of the Gulf Coast region's fresh, estuarine, and marine waters;
- **Strategic Goal 3:** Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources;
- **Strategic Goal 4:** Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes;

- **Strategic Goal 5:** Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy. The fifth goal focuses on reviving and supporting a sustainable Gulf economy to ensure that those expenditures by the Gulf Coast States authorized in the RESTORE Act under the Direct Component (administered by the Department of the Treasury) and the Spill Impact Component can be considered in the context of comprehensive restoration.

To achieve all five goals, the Council will support ecosystem restoration that can enhance local communities by giving people desirable places to live, work, and play, while creating opportunities for new and existing businesses of all sizes, especially those dependent on natural resources. In addition, the Council will support ecosystem restoration that builds local workforce capacity.

Strategic Objectives

The Council will select and fund projects and programs that restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region. Projects and programs not within the scope of these Strategic Objectives for ecosystem restoration will not be funded under the Council-Selected Restoration Component. The Strategic Objectives are not listed in any particular order, and the Council does not anticipate that restoration efforts funded under the Council-Selected Restoration Component will be equally distributed among these objectives. Further, restoration projects and programs are likely to achieve multiple objectives simultaneously.

- **Strategic Objective 1:** Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats – Restore, enhance, and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats. These include barrier islands, beaches, dunes, coastal wetlands, coastal forests, pine savannahs, coastal prairies, submerged aquatic vegetation, oyster reefs, and shallow and deep water corals.

Activities to achieve this objective could include the restoration, enhancement, creation, and protection of important coastal, freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats, and removal of invasive species. Protection and conservation projects would be implemented through active management, acquisition, voluntary management agreements, protected area management, perpetual management, conservation easements, and other conservation activities.

- **Strategic Objective 2:** Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources – Restore, improve, and protect the Gulf Coast region’s fresh, estuarine, and marine water resources by reducing or treating nutrient and pollutant loading; and improving the management of freshwater flows, discharges to and withdrawals from critical systems.

The types of water resource management activities that could be implemented include implementation of watershed best management practices; improved agricultural and silvicultural management practices; enhanced stormwater and/or wastewater

management; improved quality and quantity of freshwater flows, discharges, and withdrawals; sediment runoff management; and other foundational water quality activities.

- **Strategic Objective 3:** Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources including finfish, shellfish, birds, mammals, reptiles, coral, and deep benthic communities.

Activities could include the recovery of threatened and endangered species, overfishing and by catch, improved fisheries assessments, sustainable resource management of commercially and recreationally important activities (such as fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching), increased resource stocks, invasive and nuisance species management and removal, enforcement, and other protective measures.

- **Strategic Objective 4:** Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines – Restore and enhance ecosystem resilience, sustainability, and natural defenses through the restoration of natural coastal, estuarine, and riverine processes, and/or the restoration of natural shorelines.

Under this Objective the Council could address the removal of barriers to improve freshwater inflow and fish passage; employ improved sediment management (e.g., through increased beneficial use, dedicated dredging, and sediment capture structures); restore coastal wetlands, restore eroded shorelines; implement river diversions (also known as river re- introduction projects) and other types of hydrologic restoration; perform natural ridge restoration; implement living shoreline techniques; and engage in other restoration techniques that address natural processes and shorelines.

- **Strategic Objective 5:** Promote Community Resilience – Build and sustain Gulf Coast communities' capacity to adapt to short- and long-term natural and man-made hazards, particularly increased flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors. Promote ecosystem restoration that enhances community resilience through the re-establishment of non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding.

To promote community resilience the Council may approve activities to increase the capacity of local governments, businesses, and community-based organizations to adopt adaptation strategies; undertake risk assessments; advance natural resource planning and natural resource recovery planning with locally-driven solutions; advance long-term land use planning as it relates to the management and sustainability of coastal resources; acquisition and/or preservation of undeveloped lands in coastal high-hazard areas (e.g., as buffers against storm surge and sea level rise); promote non-structural storm and surge protection; encourage the design of incentive-based mitigation programs; and engage with local communities to build community resiliency through ecosystem restoration. However, activities that promote community resilience should also be tied to ecosystem restoration or protection.

- **Strategic Objective 6:** Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities, professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.

The types of activities that could be implemented under this Objective include environmental stewardship and education programs tied to Gulf Coast resources that encourage and coordinate the use of existing environmental education and outreach networks and institutions; establishing a more effective relationship between research and education communities; and providing meaningful hands-on ecosystem education that includes local, cultural, environmental and economic values with the belief that education will encourage action toward a healthier Gulf Coast. However, activities which promote natural resource stewardship and environmental education should also be tied to ecosystem restoration or protection.

- **Strategic Objective 7:** Objective Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes – Improve science-based decision-making processes used by the Council.

To achieve this goal, the Council may implement or improve science-based adaptive management and project-level and regional ecosystem monitoring, including the coordination and interoperability of ecosystem monitoring programs; develop regional database and expert systems used to warehouse ecosystem data; improve ecosystem restoration outcome and impact measurement and reporting; and develop local and regional ecosystem models to apply the monitoring information gained and address the critical uncertainties related to restoration to adaptively manage and inform Council decision-making processes related to ecosystem investment.

- **Management Focused Strategic Objective:** Organizational Excellence – Council staff will provide exceptional service to Council members, partner state and federal agencies, and public, private, and other stakeholders to support the Council’s efforts to achieve integrated and coordinated efforts for region-wide Gulf Coast restoration.

Since the Council was a nascent entity at the time the Comprehensive Plan was drafted, the Plan documented the Council’s Next Steps to guide the outcomes it needed to achieve while it simultaneously developed its operational and administrative framework. During this start-up period, the Council also drafted Standard Operating Procedures, built its organizational and staffing structure, defined its program policies and procedures, and developed its administrative infrastructure. The Next Steps in the Comprehensive Plan are listed below.

- *Update the Council’s website, www.restorethegulf.gov to enhance public and tribal engagement in the Council’s decision-making processes.*
- *Continue and enhance coordination, as appropriate, with partners in Gulf Coast restoration, including NRDA and NFWF.*
- *Consider the most effective means of ensuring that the Council’s decision are based on the best available science, including formation of a scientific advisory committee or*

some other vehicle to inform its decisions and facilitate coordination across various Gulf restoration efforts.

- *Commit to active and meaningful public engagement, and, to that end, create a public engagement structure that reflects the richness and diversity of the Gulf Coast communities.*
- *Release a schedule for the submittal of proposals from Council Members and develop a proposal solicitation and evaluation process to effectively evaluate projects and programs based on the Priority Criteria set forth in the Act.*
- *Publish for public review and comment a Draft Funded Priorities List which will identify the projects and programs the Council intends to prioritize for funding.*
- *Develop regulations establishing the Oil Spill Restoration Impact Allocation formula.*
- *Develop a 10-Year Funding Strategy which will provide a description of the manner in which amounts from the Trust Fund projected to be made available to the Council to implement the Comprehensive Plan for the next ten years will be allocated.*

Performance Metrics for Individual Council-Funded Programs and Projects

The Council has currently identified 53 performance-level metrics for grants to states and Interagency Agreements (IAA) with the federal members funded through the Council-Funded Component (“Bucket 2”), and for grants funded under the Spill Impact Component (“Bucket 3”) of the RESTORE Act. These metrics will be used to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of projects and programs in meeting mission goals and objectives of the Council and track annual performance. For each of the performance metrics, the associated Strategic Objective supported by that metric is provided, along with the supporting activity/outcomes, metric description, and the overarching concomitant approach to support ecosystem restoration.

- **Habitat Conservation:** Activities, projects and/or programs that protect critical freshwater, estuarine and near-shore coastal habitats that are fully functional (i.e., remain unaffected by storms, oil spill, or other man-made or natural disruptions)(e.g., land acquisition; conservation easements);
- **Habitat Restoration:** Activities, projects, and/or programs that rebuild the critical habitats that have been lost through either man-made or natural impacts (e.g., living shorelines, beneficial use);
- **Habitat Management:** Activities, projects and/or programs which focus on long-term sustainability using a variety of techniques intended to increase tidal exchange, freshwater availability, and water quality all needed to improve habitat function and longevity (e.g., restoration of freshwater flow by removal of blockages);

- **Capacity, Outreach, Incentives:** Activities, projects and/or programs which provide educational and engagement opportunities for stakeholders that live, work or recreate in the Gulf of Mexico region to enable a better understanding of the Council member’s ecosystem restoration efforts;
- **Planning, Research, Monitoring:** Activities, projects and/ or programs which are forward-looking to investigate the feasibility and best practices for an ecosystem restoration effort (e.g., planning and/or research to determine the efficacy for a sediment diversion), or setting up monitoring protocols to ensure accuracy to support data sharing and adaptive management;
- **Economic Benefits:** Activities, projects and/or programs which are designed to determine the financial or other economic indicators of the value of ecosystem restoration efforts to local, city, county, state and national stakeholders.

Performance Goals and Indicators for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017

1. Promote a Gulf-Wide Comprehensive Approach to Restoration.

Performance Indicators:

- Finalize the Initial FPL / Council selected projects by the end of the calendar year 2016 while ensuring that the projects selected comprise a holistic approach to ecosystem-wide restoration by recognizing the interconnected nature of coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Promote leveraging in proposals submitted for submission in the FPL to maximize the Council’s “return on investment.” The Council will consider the extent to which projects build upon earlier, related or associated efforts in its evaluation of projects.
- Promote gulf-wide restoration efforts rather than random acts of restoration. The Council will consider the extent to which projects will substantially improve the restoration or conservation of key watersheds without regard to political boundaries, or that provide foundational support for future efforts towards gulf-wide restoration.
- Develop a 10-Year Funding Strategy that will provide a description of the manner in which amounts from the Trust Fund will be made available to implement the Update to the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Council-Selected Restoration Performance Excellence: Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Council-Selected Restoration Program to achieve the goals of the Act.

Performance Indicators:

- Conduct a ‘360’ review of Lessons Learned from Initial Comprehensive Plan and Initial FPL. Conduct a review of the process the Council adopted to solicit, review and select projects for inclusion in the FPL to evaluate the process to yield important insights

regarding what should be replicated moving forward and what could be improved or replaced. It will also be useful in identifying key updates to the Comprehensive Plan that the Council can undertake prior to the next proposal submission window.

- b. Advance efficiency of the Environmental Compliance processes for evaluating the efficacy of moving Category 2 projects under the Initial FPL to Category 1. Evaluate and propose effective processes for the determination of environmental compliance of Category 2 projects for funding consideration by the Council.
- c. Develop Data Observational and Management Interim Guidance. Develop guidance that addresses the data-related plans required for each project and/or program funded under the Council-Selected Restoration and Spill Impact Components, to include an Observational Data Plan for all data collected or compiled as part of the project; and a Data Management Plan (DMP).
- d. Programmatic Review of Grant and Interagency Agreements. The programmatic component of the Council staff will review all grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under the Initial FPL meeting timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability. This will include review of submissions for best available science and environmental compliance with NEPA and other environmental federal regulations.
- e. Compliance Review of Grant and Interagency Agreements. The grants and compliance component of the Council staff will review all grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under the Initial FPL meeting timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability. The review will ensure compliance with all administrative and regulatory requirements under the RESTORE Act, Part 200, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and other federal regulatory requirements.

3. Spill Impact Performance Excellence: Effective and efficient implementation and administration of the Spill Impact Program to achieve the goals of the Act.

Performance Indicators:

- a. Timely review (e.g., 60-day review for SEPs) of State Expenditure Plans while ensuring public comment was duly considered and other Council Member input is addressed.
- b. Programmatic Staff Review of Grant and Interagency Agreements. The programmatic component of the Council staff will review all grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under the SEP processes, meeting timelines established by Council Standard Operating Procedures. This will include review of submissions for best available science and environmental compliance with NEPA and other environmental federal regulations.

- c. Compliance Staff Review of Grant and Interagency Agreements. The grants and compliance component of the Council staff will review all grant and Interagency Agreement applications for funding under each state's SEP, meeting timelines established by the RESTORE Act, Council Guidelines and the Notice of Funds Availability. The review will ensure compliance with all administrative and regulatory requirements under the RESTORE Act, 2 C.F.R. Part 200 *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*, and other federal regulatory requirements.
4. **Operational Excellence:** Maintain an administrative infrastructure that supports team work, collaboration, synergy between functional areas and overall operational excellence to provide excellent services, programs and outcomes to the Gulf Coast region.

Performance Indicators:

- a. Effective Oversight of Grant and Interagency Agreement Post-Award Cash Disbursement Processes. Grant and IAA drawdowns will be reviewed for compliance with award terms and conditions, and assessed for consistency with the progress achieved and milestones met.
 - b. Development, Inclusion and Monitoring Of Objective and Quantifiable Metrics in Each Grant and IAA. These metrics will gauge the success of the project or program and a description of the methodology for quantifying results for each metric and monitoring the achievement of the metrics. The application will be reviewed to confirm the justification of why the metrics were selected and to assess the proposed scientific monitoring for adequacy, and relevancy to the proposed project or program.
 - c. Publication of Applicant/Recipient Guidance Materials. The Council will publish comprehensive guidance to inform potential applicants of the statutory and administrative requirements for proposals, SEPs, grant applications and IAA applications.
 - d. Publication of RAAMS System Guidance and Technical Resources. The Council will publish a RAAMS User Guide and other supporting technical resources.
 - e. Implementation of a Comprehensive Grants Management Program. The Council will develop and complete an internal grant and IAA compliance guide, which will include policies, processes and procedures and ensure adequate internal controls within the grant program.
5. **Management Excellence:** Council staff will provide exceptional service to the Council members and their accompanying state and federal agencies, as well to the many stakeholders associated with restoration of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem by meeting programmatic, administrative and customer service objectives.

Performance Indicators:

- a. Requisite Reports Submitted in Timely Manner.
 - i. Timely submission of Annual Performance Plan;
 - ii. Timely completion of the Council's Annual Financial Report (AFR) by November 16, 2016 and 2017.
 - iii. Timely completion of the 2016 Draft Annual Performance Report (APR) by February 2017.
 - iv. Timely submission of the Council's Annual Report to Congress as required by the RESTORE Act by December 31, 2016 and 2017.

- b. OIG Audit Findings and Recommendations Addressed in a Timely Manner
 - i. All Council operations required by the RESTORE Act are monitored and audited by the Department of Treasure OIG and audit recommendations promptly implemented.

- c. Organizational Risk Assessed and Risk Mitigation Factors Employed.
 - i. Fully implement the organizational risk assessment recommendations by the end of calendar year 2016.
 - ii. Finalize and publish all administrative and financial policies and procedures.