# Priority & Commitment To Plan Evaluation

## Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

**PROPOSAL TITLE**

Adaptive Management and Technical Assistance in Support of Gulf Ecosystem and Economic Restoration

**PROPORAL NUMBER**

DOI-5

**LOCATION**

Defined Gulf Coast Region

**SPONSOR(S)**

Department of Interior

**TYPE OF FUNDING REQUESTED (Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation)**

Technical Assistance

**REVIEWED BY:**

Ebonye T. Allen

**DATE:**

13 February 2015

## A. Comprehensive Plan Goals

Of the goals addressed by the proposal, which is the single primary goal?
Proposals should discuss how the proposed activity is designed to address the primary goal.
**Check one:**

- (●) Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity and resilience of key coastal, estuarine and marine habitats.
- ( ) Restore Water Quality – Restore and protect water quality 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.

Notes:

If funded, the proposal would establish a multidisciplinary program to provide science-based technical assistance to restoration projects funded by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council). The sponsor is proposing a structured decision-making process to ensure that such restoration projects are based on the best available science. The approach would be an overarching, adaptive management-based program that would be implemented over three phases in 10 years, and would integrate four critical layers of information in support of Gulf ecologic and economic restoration – adaptive management, monitoring, restoration project sustainability, and valuation of ecosystem services and economic impacts.

## B. Comprehensive Plan Objectives

Proposals must clearly identify which objectives the proposal will address

1. Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats

- [x] YES
- [ ] NO
- [ ] Not articulated
- [ ] N/A

2. Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources

- [x] YES
- [ ] NO
- [ ] Not articulated
- [ ] N/A

3. Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO
- [ ] Not articulated
- [x] N/A

4. Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines

- [ ] YES
- [ ] NO
- [ ] Not articulated
- [x] N/A

Notes:

8. Of these objectives which is the single primary objective the proposal addresses?

**Check one:**

- ○ Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats
- ○ Restore, Improve, and Protect Water Resources
- ○ Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources
- ○ Restore and Enhance Natural Processes and Shorelines
- ○ Promote Community Resilience
- ○ Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education
- ◉ Improve Science-Based Decision-Making Processes

## C. RESTORE Act and Comprehensive Plan Priority Criteria

All proposals must explain if the proposal addresses one or more of the priority criteria as established by the RESTORE Act and Initial Comprehensive Plan and, if so, how.

1. This project is 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.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

2. This is a large-scale project/program that is 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.

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

3. This project is 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.

(●) YES ( ) NO

4. This project will 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.

(●) YES ( ) NO

5. Promote Community Resilience

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

6. Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated ( ) N/A

Notes:

The proposed Gulf Restoration Adaptive Management and Technical Assistance Program (GRAMTAP) is intended to help ensure the success of Gulf restoration and protection projects. GRAMTAP would provide local- to regional-scale assistance to Council-funded restoration projects, regardless of their geographic location. GRAMTAP is intended to help restoration project managers design and implement projects that have long-term sustainability and resiliency through design optimization and adaptive management.

## D. Comprehensive Plan Commitments

All proposals must demonstrate how the proposal will achieve any or all of the commitments in the Comprehensive Plan. The commitments in the Comprehensive Plan are as follows:

Does the proposal articulate how it will achieve the following commitments in the comprehensive plan?

### 1. Science-based Decision-Making

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

The proposed GRAMTAP would aid individual restoration projects by providing technical assistance on adaptive management, decision support, monitoring, restoration project sustainability, ecosystem service valuation and economic impact analysis. If funded, GRAMTAP would establish data management, monitoring, modeling, adaptive management, and science delivery policies as part of an overarching support strategy. GRAMTAP would establish a framework to provide access to existing data relevant to project design and performance, along with a structure and context for maintaining and interpreting updated observations as restoration takes place.

### 2. Regional Ecosystem-based Approach to Restoration

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

The proposed GRAMTAP could be applied at all scales, from local to regional, with the scales dependent on the individual restoration projects to which assistance is provided.

### 3. Engagement, Inclusion, and Transparency

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

The GRAMTAP would involve engagement with scientific partners in other agencies and entities. The USGS would partner with monitoring practitioners that have the scientific expertise for individual restoration projects. GRAMTAP would be conducted in coordination with the Council, coastal communities, and scientists. The USGS would work with a proposed Sea Grant restoration specialist liaison to: identify target audiences to engage in the adaptive management framework; develop outreach materials; identify science and/or monitoring results that may interest specific audiences; facilitate networking within the monitoring community of practice; and evaluate outreach effectiveness.

### 4. Leveraging Resources and Partnerships

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

GRAMTAP would leverage scientific expertise and data both within USGS, federal and state agencies, and other entities. The proposed engagement of the larger monitoring community of practice would help ensure that GRAMTAP is utilizing the best available expertise. The submission lists individuals who have agreed to participate in GRAMTAP, depending on the needs of specific restoration projects.

### 5. Delivering Results and Measuring Impacts

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO

Notes:

Technical assistance delivered via GRAMTAP could be integrated into Council restoration project proposals and implementation of selected projects. GRAMTAP could improve standardization in monitoring protocols.

## E. Meeting Commitments and Tracking and Measuring Progress

### 1. Does the proposal articulate how it will meet and achieve its commitments?

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated

### 2. Does the proposal have a plan for tracking and measuring progress?

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO

Notes:

The principal measure of success for this submission would be the integration of science-based resources provided by GRAMTAP into Council restoration project proposals and selected projects. The capabilities for assistance and resources provided by GRAMTAP would be developed over time, as measured by increased access to restoration practitioners and in expanded inventories and libraries of information on monitoring, modeling, and adaptive management. The Gulf restoration monitoring community of practice could expand and be better interconnected via GRAMTAP.

## F. Proposal Emphasis Areas

Does the submission describe how the proposed project or program addresses the following four considerations:

1. Is the proposed activity **foundational** in the sense that the project or program forms an initial core step (or steps) in addressing a significant ecosystem issue, and can future activities be tiered to substantially increase the benefits?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

GRAMTAP is intended to be utilized early on, beginning with the development of restoration project proposals for submission to the Council, through the actual implementation of the projects including evaluation of their success and sustainability.

2. Will the proposed activity be **sustainable** over time?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

Phase I of this proposal (3 years) would provide the development of resources needed for GRAMTAP (libraries, inventories, literature reviews, data delivery, etc.). This activity would build upon existing USGS expertise and partner programs. It would also build on multiple sources of monitoring and other data, as well as existing inventories of monitoring programs in the Gulf. GRAMTAP would increase leveraging of other USGS programs to support common research and applied objectives. GRAMTAP could begin providing assistance during restoration project development following year one of the three-year project. Phase II (5 years) would resolve information gaps identified in Phase I, expand and refine tool kits, and continue

3. Is the proposed activity **likely to succeed**?

(●) YES ( ) NO ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

The sponsor has access to USGS staff and resources across the country, and operates multiple science centers in the Gulf states. This proposal can be implemented largely with existing USGS staff. The USGS works with a wide range of partners to provide adaptive management-based technical assistance in implementing Gulf ecosystem restoration. The sponsor has expertise in decision science and adaptive management, including work with large-scale restoration programs in the California Bay/Delta and the Everglades. The sponsor's monitoring experts have optimized regional sampling designs in the Gulf to develop Louisiana's Coast-wide Reference Monitoring System. The sponsor proposes to leverage additional partnerships, USGS resources, and the monitoring community of practice to help ensure the success of this activity over all of its phases.

4. Does the proposed activity **benefit** the human **community**?
(examples of benefits may include, but are not limited to: how a project will utilize local workers, how a project will benefit geographically or socially vulnerable communities, how a project will benefit the natural resources critical to natural-resource dependent industries such as fisheries, tourism, etc.)

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) Not articulated

Notes:

The proposed activity would provide opportunities to train local and regional scientists via internships, apprentice roles, and co-lead roles. The proposal would provide opportunities for local student interns to work under the guidance of experienced monitoring practitioners, providing historical context and real-world experience to the next generation of scientists. Outreach and educational opportunities would be expanded through the monitoring community of practice. Surveys of the general public conducted under the ecosystem valuation component would provide an outreach tool about restoration activities and benefits they provide. Structured decision-making workshops conducted as part of the adaptive management component would include public participation and input. Surveys would provide an opportunity to connect with the public and obtain feedback