



AN AGENDA TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

**A MEMO TO THE GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION COUNCIL**

**RESTORE NATURAL PROTECTION, CREATE ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY, PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND
ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

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The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council's Comprehensive Plan should be focused on restoring ecosystems in a way that builds more resilient communities and a stronger, more inclusive economy.

People and communities are an important part of our ecosystem, and they face historic challenges: the prospect of extreme weather events, loss of livelihoods and culture, rising poverty, threats to health and well-being, hindered economic mobility, and limited access to policy-makers. The 2010 oil spill amplified each one of these.

The Plan can begin to address these challenges by investing in ecosystem restoration projects which build stronger natural protection, create greater economic opportunity and security, preserve our cultural heritage, and promote greater community engagement and capacity building.

Together, we believe the Council and the Comprehensive Plan should:

ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

The Plan's goal to enhance community resilience should focus on addressing the resilience of those communities which are vulnerable on physical, economic, social and cultural levels. Our communities are only as resilient as our most vulnerable neighbors.

When the Gulf's natural resources are damaged, it has a disproportionate impact on the health and well-being of low-income, disadvantaged, and culturally important populations who have made their homes here for generations. It is imperative to set objectives for reducing risks and creating opportunity for vulnerable populations across the Plan, including:

- **Restore natural protection to reduce social vulnerability.** Socioeconomic factors (including poverty, race, gender and employment) affect a community's ability to recover from disaster. Since the most vulnerable communities are at the most risk from climate hazards, they would benefit the most from restoration of natural flood protection (such as barrier islands, wetlands and oyster reefs); these projects should take top priority.
- **Protect a way of life and cultural heritage.** Culture plays a significant role how communities cope with disaster. The Plan should identify and prioritize the restoration of habitats that have played a vital role in culturally important, natural resource-dependent coastal communities, especially tribes (federally recognized and non-federally recognized) for generations.
- **Promote community development, jobs, and training.** Targeting vulnerable families for jobs and skills training connected to restoration projects can promote greater financial security to deal with future hazard risks. It's vital to encourage projects that partner with and provide resources to community development organizations, and to connect vulnerable workers with economic opportunities.

FOLLOW CONGRESS'S REQUEST TO INCLUDE "RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION-RELATED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION" IN THE PLAN

The Council has a chance to address lost livelihoods and increasing poverty across the region by leveraging direct job creation within ecosystem restoration. The Plan has a chance to catalyze efforts to prepare unemployed, low-income and disadvantaged workers (especially those impacted by the oil spill) for new careers related to ecosystem restoration, and to foster economic mobility.

The Plan should set objectives for providing skills training, professional credentials, education, job placement and new career ladders in occupations designing, constructing, and monitoring ecosystem restoration. This could help workers access good paying jobs, and advance towards greater economic security, while helping local businesses become more competitive. Promoting such investments, particularly with the RESTORE Act's state and local investments, could bring economic and social benefits of restoration projects across the RESTORE Act as well as NRDA and NFWF investments. The Council should identify ways it can support these efforts with research and convening.

The Council should also find new ways for residents to obtain the necessary credentials, financing and bonding capacity to open small businesses working on restoration-related work.

CREATE AN ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROMOTING A "RACE TO THE TOP"

The Council should integrate a program in the Plan to provide incentives for state and local investments in ecosystem restoration-related worker training and education. This program should promote targets in each state for investments in workforce development in relation to the projected labor demands generated by planned ecosystem restoration investments.

The Council could provide matching funds as an incentive up to a set portion of its total spending, perhaps two percent. For instance, the Council could design the program to match every \$2 invested in

ecosystem related training by state or local entities with an additional \$1 from the Council, for training initiatives that meet criteria for best practices engaging local, unemployed, low-income and disadvantaged workers and businesses.

Such criteria include:

- **Build inclusive multi-stakeholder consortiums.** Programs should bring together all parties—employers and industry groups, community organizations, training providers, community colleges, project sponsors and other stakeholders—to align their resources and capacities to design and provide training and access to critical work-support services (such as translation, transportation, child care, and ultimately job placement).
- **Research in-demand restoration jobs.** Research should examine restoration projects’ scope and timing, and labor market trends, to identify high demand, decent wage occupations that are accessible with training and are part of a career pathway towards higher wage work.
- **Develop industry-supported, community-accessible curricula.** Training providers should work with industry to align curricula with needs for in-demand occupations and career pathways.
- **Support partnerships and funding for community-based organizations.** Community-based organizations can help identify workers, assess existing and needed skills critical to access jobs, connect them with training, and help them advance along career pathways.

INCLUDE TERMS FOR “LOCAL COMMUNITY TRAINING AND HIRING PLANS” WITHIN COMPETITIVELY BID CONTRACTS AND GRANTS

These terms, detailing goals, resources and partnerships for how contracts and grants will promote hiring and training of local, unemployed, low-income and disadvantaged workers, should be included for evaluating proposals. Efforts should be made to educate contractors on how to develop plans and what local resources are currently available. Accountability mechanisms should be developed to ensure plans are followed, and to enable the Council to measure these practices’ impact. Plans could include commitments to:

- **Encourage community hiring.** Establish standards for hiring targeted populations of local workers, including unemployed, low-income and disadvantaged workers.

- **Conduct outreach.** Work with workforce and community organizations, and information sources.
- **Partner with workforce development initiatives.** Train and place unemployed, low-income and disadvantaged trainees into new jobs and help incumbent workers obtain skills to advance.

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN EFFORTS TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

The Council should set objectives to increase the number of individuals and communities that recognize themselves as stakeholders in restoration and track overall participation in engagement opportunities.

Additionally, it should develop protocols to acknowledge receipt of recommendations coming from communities, explaining how recommendations have been addressed, and providing explanations when recommendations cannot be implemented.

Information should always be provided in alternate languages to include the multi-cultural communities living along the Gulf Coast, many of whom have limited English proficiency.

CREATE A CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) TO PROVIDE INDEPENDENT INPUT ON PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL

The CAC should report directly to the Chair of the Council, particularly on matters related to social vulnerability, culturally important natural resources, and community economic benefits. Its role should include identifying examples of tools and models that are making a positive impact in communities, especially among the most vulnerable, and fostering collaboration and community engagement.

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH TRUSTED COMMUNITY-BASED NONPROFITS, AND SCIENTISTS AND PLANNERS

The Council should provide resources to work with community groups to get the word out, and work with scientists and planners to provide traditional knowledge and input on planning and implementation, particularly around the restoration of culturally important resources.

Such efforts could apply vast local knowledge about the coastal habitat and estuaries, and build the capacity of communities to give more meaningful input in planning and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.



AN AGENDA TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCY was drafted with contributions by Jeffrey Buchanan, Oxfam America; Roberta Avila, STEPS Coalition; Patrick Barnes, Limitless Vistas, Inc.; Rev. Tyronne Edwards, Zion Travelers Cooperative Center; Sharon Gauthe, BISCO; Diane Huhn, Bayou Grace Community Services; Daniel Nguyen, Mary Queen of Viet Nam CDC; Kaitlin Truong, Asian Americans for Change; Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper; Michelle Erenberg and Raleigh Hoke, Gulf Restoration Network; Paul Nelson, South Bay Communities Alliance; Rev. Kris Peterson, First Presbyterian Church of Bayou Blue; Grace Scire, Boat People SOS; Ya-Sin Shabazz, Hijra House; Thao Vu, Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese American Fisherfolk and Families; and Darryl Malek-Wiley, New Orleans Group of the Sierra Club.

ENDORSEMENTS

1 Anchor Ministry, New Orleans, LA
232-Help/Louisiana 211, Lafayette, LA
28 Stones, Rayne, LA
A Community Voice, New Orleans, LA
Action Communication and Education Reform, Duck Hill, AL
Air Alliance Houston, Houston, TX
Alabama Coast United, Orange Beach, AL
Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust, Mobile, AL
Alabama Fisheries Cooperative, Coden, AL
Alabama River Alliance, Birmingham, AL
Alabama Water Watch, Auburn, AL
All Churches Together (ACTII), Fairhope, AL
Alliance for Affordable Energy, Baton Rouge, LA
Arc of Greater New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
Artist Boat, Galveston, TX
Asian Americans for Change, Ocean Springs, MS
Bay Area Women Coalition, Mobile, AL
Bayou Grace Community Services, Chauvin, LA
Bayou History Center, Thibodaux, LA
Bayou Land RCSD, Metairie, LA
Biloxi Branch NAACP, Biloxi, MS
Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing (BISCO), Thibodaux, LA
Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Birmingham, AL
Boat People SOS
Bread for the World New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
Cahaba Riverkeeper, Birmingham, AL
Calhoun County Resource Watch, Seadrift, TX
Carmelite NGO, New Orleans, LA
Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, Inc., Dothan, AL
Citizens Against Toxic Exposure, Pensacola, FL
Clean Water Network of Florida, Navarre, FL
Coastal Communities Consulting, Gretna, LA
Coastal Women for Change, Biloxi, MS
Community Development Task Force Inc., Moss Point, MS
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, New Orleans, LA
Dulac Community Center, Dulac, LA
Fe y Justicia Worker Center, Houston, TX
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, Epes, AL
First Presbyterian Church of Bayou Blue, Gray, LA
Florida State Conference of the NAACP, Orlando, FL
Galveston Baykeeper, Galveston, TX
Global Green
Great Plains Restoration Council, Fort Worth, TX
Greater Light Ministries, New Orleans, LA
Greater New Orleans Foundation, New Orleans, LA
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, Slidell, LA
Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health
Gulf Islands Conservancy, Gulfport, MS
Gulf Restoration Network, New Orleans, LA
Hands on Mississippi, Gulfport, MS
Hijra House, Biloxi, MS
HOPE Community Development Agency, Biloxi, MS
Hope Haven Children's Services, Bay St. Louis, MS
Immaculate Heart CDC, Lucedale, MS
Institute for Sustainability Education & Development, Inc., Mobile, AL
Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians, Isle de Jean Charles, LA
Jerusalem Economic Development Corporation, New Orleans, LA
Just Advocacy of Mississippi, Jackson, MS
Kallisto Research Consulting, New Orleans, LA
Louisiana Green Corps, New Orleans, LA
Land Trust for Southeast Louisiana, New Orleans, LA
Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN), Baton Rouge, LA
LIFE of Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS
Life Sowers Community Development, Moss Point, MS
Lighthouse Community Development Corporation, Grand Bay, AL
Limitless Vistas, Inc., New Orleans, LA
Louisiana Housing Alliance, Baton Rouge, LA
Louisiana Oystermen's Association, Pointe à la Hache, LA
Louisiana Shrimp Association, Grand Isle, LA
Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development (CSSED), New Orleans, LA
Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper, Baton Rouge, LA
Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese American Fisherfolk and Families, Biloxi, MS
Mississippi Coast Interfaith Disaster Task Force, Gulfport, MS
Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, Jackson, MS
Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative, Biloxi, MS
Mobile Baykeeper, Mobile, AL
Moore Community House, Biloxi, MS
Mary Queen of Viet Nam CDC, New Orleans, LA
New Bottom Line Coalition, Dothan, AL
New Orleans Group of the Sierra Club
On Wings Of Care, New Orleans, LA
One Voice Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA
One Voice Mississippi, Jackson, MS
Operation Homecare, Inc., York, AL
Ordinary People Society, Dothan, AL
Oxfam America
Prodigal Child Project, Dothan, AL
Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science, New Orleans, LA
Puentes New Orleans, New Orleans, LA
SEED Coalition, Austin, TX
Seedco/Southeast Louisiana Fisheries Assistance Center, Belle Chase, LA
Sierra Club Delta Chapter, Baton Rouge, LA
Sierra Club Mississippi Chapter, Jackson, MS
South Bay Communities Alliance, Coden, AL
Southern Poverty Law Center, Birmingham, AL
SouthWings, New Orleans, LA
Steps Coalition, Biloxi, MS
The Mother's Project - Gulf Coast Mothers for Sustainability, Rayne, LA
The New Orleans Imperative, New Orleans, LA
The Repair S.H.O.P., Hattiesburg, MS
The Trinity Outreach Corporation, Moss Point, MS
TRAC, Houma, LA
Tri-Coastal Community Outreach, Grand Bay, AL
Turkey Creek Community Initiatives, Gulfport, MS
Union of Commercial Oystermen of Texas, Port O'Connor, TX
United Houma Nation, Houma, LA
Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association, New Orleans, LA
Women in Construction, Biloxi, MS
Zion Travelers Cooperative Center, Phoenix, LA