

Comments on the GCERTF Discussion Document

- **4 goals**
 - **Community Resilience**
 - **Habitat**
 - **Water Quality**
 - **Living Marine Resources**
- **5 questions**
 - **Are these the right goals?**
 - Yes, provided that each goal includes, as part of its focus, the socioeconomic impact of the policies and programs that are necessary to accomplish those goals. The success of any restoration effort is best understood and measured in terms of people and economics. That does not mean that restoration and preservation of habitat and ecosystems are not important, it means that they are. The challenge is to make sure that everyone understands how we achieve a balance that serves the long term interest of the people in the communities/regions we are trying to help.
 - Economic restoration and resiliency needs to be incorporated into the Community Resiliency goal area, as does human health, both physical and mental.
 - **What are the critical actions or major outcomes that need to be accomplished as part of this strategy in order to achieve the overarching goals?**
 - Programs, policies, rules and regulations must be developed and designed for the specific purpose of accomplishing the objectives of each individual goal listed above.
 - The experience of events over the past 6 years suggests that restoration/recovery from natural and ecological disasters will not work very well (if at all) if we try to accomplish those goals through existing federal program that were never designed or intended to accomplish the very purposes that we have identified in the context of the scope of the problems we are trying to address.
 - To the extent possible the application/permitting process associated with programs developed needs to be reviewed in the context of the goals and objectives we are trying to accomplish. That may mean that new rules could be developed to fit within existing programs.
 - ***For additional comment on the following questions, please see the discussion points listed below.***
 - **What new programs and actions (state, federal and private) are needed?**
 - Local governments are missing from the question – only lists state, federal, and private.
 - Don't reinvent the wheel. Local governments may already have plans and projects they have been working on that they think should be included or utilized as part of the restoration strategy.
 - Use mechanisms that are already in place, but tweak them so the processes are manageable for the goals of restoration. For example, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has had success in getting money down to local governments, but local governments often run into challenges in

the funding process that cause delays of the projects funded by CDBG. Establish a CDBG-like program, or reform CDBG, so that the program can effectively fund restoration efforts.

- Attach a timeline to the issuance of a permit. Allow for mitigation during or after the project, rather than before, to allow local governments to start projects more quickly.
- **What key policy changes will improve the processes necessary to support restoration?**
 - Regulations often get in the way. Streamline the permitting and grant processes.
 - Vet all projects through local governments.
- **What would “success” look like, and how should it be measured and reported?**
 - Success would mean we have made policies and procedures more workable, and we have streamlined the processes involved in restoration activities.

Discussion Points

Resilient Communities

- Restoration strategy must be driven by a goal to meet the long-term and short-term socioeconomic needs of Gulf Coast residents. The strategy should make a positive impact on the region’s environmental conditions, public health, and economic diversification.
- Local governments know their own strengths and weaknesses; utilize local knowledge. Use a bottom-up approach. Address all issues as locally as possible.
- Establish a peer to peer network of communities to assist each other in developing and implementing restoration strategies. Encourage regionalism and coordination among local governments.
- Provide local communities with best practice solutions and guidelines for rules and regulations. Find a way to merge and partner local, state, and federal programs and compliance requirements to create a more conducive, sustainable approach.
- Develop sustainable development strategies that are effective and economical approaches to environmental, ecological, housing, infrastructure, and economic requirements.
- This is about the people. Focus on the socioeconomic environment – the needs of the people on the coast and the businesses who employ them.
- All across the Gulf coast are communities both large and small which have been home to generations of various ethnic groups and indigenous populations. The devastation suffered by those communities cannot be overstated or overlooked. Therefore, the restoration strategy must include as part of its purpose and effect the preservation of the coastal region for the benefit of the people and their cultural heritage.
- Invest in economic development in the region through locally administered grants, such as CDBG or revolving loan funds.
- Focus on local workforce development. It is important to create and preserve local jobs. Provide trainings and re-trainings for the local workforce to support restoring the economy of the Gulf region.
- Support energy production in the Gulf. The Gulf is a working coast. The restoration process should recognize the value to the nation of the energy produced by and through the Gulf Coast.
- Tourism is an important component for small businesses throughout the Gulf region, and those small businesses are essential to the economic viability of the Gulf Coast. Restoration needs to

maintain a balance with regions that depend on tourism for both the jobs and the economic creation vital to those communities.

- Economic recovery includes affordable insurability. Develop a comprehensive plan for property and casualty insurance for the Gulf Coast. Reevaluate and adapt the National Flood Insurance program to meet the unique requirements and characteristics of the Gulf Coast region.
- Target trainings for health professionals and academics to address public health concerns; they can spread the message to their communities most effectively.
- Utilize local research institutions for research and monitoring activities related to Gulf restoration. In addition to the local expertise, extended research opportunities can provide for economic diversification and restoration in Gulf communities.
- No one-size-fits-all solutions are appropriate or effective. Areas within the Gulf Coast Region are in some cases vastly different jurisdictionally, environmentally, ecologically, culturally, and socioeconomically.
- Reassess building codes for coastal areas – hard surfaces that cause increased stormwater, building too close to a wetland/water body

Restore and Conserve Habitat

- Encourage beneficial use of dredge materials for wetland development. Create incentives for coastal restoration by utilizing valuable land that is portable from federal dredging projects.
- Beach re-nourishment needs to be an integral part of Gulf Coast restoration.
- Restoration of coastal wetland areas must be a focus of restoration.
- Consider the restoration of deteriorating coastal wetlands a national emergency. Provide a streamlined process and consideration for public and private restoration solutions.
- Redo the Mitigation of wetlands – look at the overall watershed issues before something can get a permit to fill.
- Local governments need to be able to assess dollars to buy coastal sensitive areas, especially wetlands that have the potential to be mitigated in the future and thus lose their stormwater holding capacity.

Assess and Improve Water Quality


- Sediment control upstream is important. Waterways get clogged and have no way for water to move away from homes/farms/etc.

Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources

- Seafood is a vital industry in the Gulf region, and the seafood industry depends upon the marine resources in the Gulf for economic survival.
- Restore oyster reefs.
- Restore coastal estuaries to increase seafood production.



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