

Executive Summary

On April 20, 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* (DWH) mobile drilling unit exploded, resulting in loss of life and discharge of millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf of America¹ (Gulf) from the BP Exploration and Production, Inc. (BP) Macondo. As an oil pollution incident, the DWH oil spill is subject to the provisions of the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA; 33 United States Code [U.S.C.] Section [§] 2701 et seq.). A primary goal of OPA is to make the environment and public whole for injuries to natural resources and services resulting from incidents involving an oil discharge or substantial threat of an oil discharge. Immediately following the DWH oil spill, the DWH Trustee Council² initiated an injury assessment pursuant to OPA and associated natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) regulations, which established the nature, degree, and extent of injuries from the DWH incident to both natural resources and the services they provide.

As part of the 2016 DWH legal settlement, BP agreed to pay \$8.1 billion in natural resource damages (inclusive of Early Restoration funding) over a 15-year period, and up to an additional \$700 million for adaptive management or to address natural resource injuries that may become apparent in the future, for a total of up to \$8.8 billion. Following this comprehensive settlement agreement, the *Deepwater Horizon* Natural Resources Trustee Council (DWH Trustees) released the *Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement* (Final PDARP/PEIS; DWH Trustees, 2016), outlining the programmatic plan to restore natural resources impacted by the DWH oil spill.

In the Final PDARP/PEIS, the DWH NRDA Trustees established 13 restoration types under five programmatic restoration goals. The Final PDARP/PEIS also established a distributed governance structure that assigned a Trustee Implementation Group (TIG) for eight designated Restoration Areas.

LA TIG Draft Phase 2 Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8.1

In 2022, the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group³ (LA TIG) finalized *Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8: Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats* (RP/EA #8), which screened project alternatives at the conceptual design stage based on geographic location, immediacy, and

¹ Formerly Gulf of Mexico, revised per Executive Order 14172 “Restoring Names That Honor American Greatness”.

² The DWH Trustees comprise four federal agencies and Trustees from all five Gulf states: the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), and the States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

³ The LA TIG comprises five Louisiana state trustee agencies and four federal trustee agencies: the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy (C&E), Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator’s Office (LOSCO), NOAA, DOI, USDA, and USEPA.

sustainability of project benefits provided for those that could best restore injured wetlands, coastal, and nearshore habitats (WCNH). Through that analysis, the LA TIG narrowed the range of alternatives to a suite of projects, including the East Orleans Landbridge Restoration Project and Raccoon Island Restoration Project. These two projects are proposed as “Phase 2” projects, as the engineering and design (E&D) phase (Phase 1) of the projects were funded through RP/EA #8.

The LA TIG prepared this *Draft Phase 2 Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8.1: East Orleans Landbridge Restoration Project and Raccoon Island Restoration Project* (RP/EA #8.1), which presents OPA NRDA and National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) evaluations for two sets of design alternatives: one set for the East Orleans Landbridge Restoration Project and one set for the Raccoon Island Restoration Project. The LA TIG proposes to allocate \$101.2 million to fully implement the East Orleans Landbridge Restoration Project Alternative 4 and approximately \$145.5 million to fully implement the Raccoon Island Restoration Project Alternative 3.

The East Orleans Landbridge is located in Orleans Parish, Louisiana, between Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. This narrow marsh corridor serves as an important protective and hydrologic feature and provides habitat for coastal fish, invertebrates, wildlife, and both resident and migratory birds. The landbridge also supports existing recreational and managed habitat uses and helps attenuate storm surge and waves; its restoration is intended to improve marsh sustainability and maintain its ecological and protective functions, particularly within the Pontchartrain Basin.

Raccoon Island is part of the Isles Dernières barrier island chain along the south-central Louisiana coast in Terrebonne Parish. The island provides important nesting, foraging, and refuge habitat for coastal bird species, supports a variety of estuarine fish and shellfish species at various life stages, and contributes to the region’s barrier shoreline system that helps attenuate wave energy and storm impacts. Raccoon Island is actively managed for wildlife habitat by the LDWF, and restoration efforts are intended to stabilize the island's footprint and sustain its ecological and protective functions over time.

This RP/EA #8.1 addresses one of the programmatic goals established in the Final PDARP/PEIS: *Restore and Conserve Habitat*. Under this programmatic goal, this RP/EA #8.1 addresses the restoration type of *Wetlands, Coastal, and Nearshore Habitats*.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is the lead federal Trustee for preparing this RP/EA #8.1 pursuant to NEPA (42 U.S.C. § 4336a(a)(1)(A)). The three other federal Trustees of the LA TIG (the U.S. Department of Interior [DOI], the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [USEPA]) are acting as cooperating agencies for the purposes of compliance with NEPA in the development of this RP/EA #8.1 (42 U.S.C. § 4336a(a)(3)). Each federal cooperating agency has reviewed the analysis for adequacy in meeting the standards set forth in its own NEPA implementing procedures and intends to adopt the NEPA analysis (42 U.S.C. § 4336a(b)). Adoption of the EA would be completed via signature on the relevant NEPA decision document.

To increase efficiency and reduce redundancy, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is participating in the preparation of this RP/EA #8.1 as a cooperating agency for the Raccoon Island Restoration Project. As a result, the dredging component of the Raccoon Island Restoration Project is fully addressed in this integrated plan. When final, BOEM may utilize this NEPA evaluation to inform its decision in authorization of an agreement for dredging of minerals from the Ship Shoal

Block 88 Borrow Area.

Public Participation in this RP/EA #8.1

The public is encouraged to review and comment on this draft RP/EA #8.1 during the 30-day comment period, as specified in the public notice published in the Federal and Louisiana registers. Comments may be submitted during the comment period by one of the following methods:

- Via the internet at the following URL: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/LATIGRP8-1>
- Via hard copy to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 341 N. Greeno RD, Suite A, Fairhope, AL 36532
- Via webinar: registration for, and details specific to, the webinar are provided in a web story posted at the following URL: <http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/restoration-areas/louisiana>.

Submissions must be postmarked no later than 30 days after the release date of the draft RP/EA #8.1. To facilitate public comment, a public review meeting is scheduled via webinar for June 8, 2026, at 12:00 pm central time. After the close of the comment period, the LA TIG will consider all comments received and revise this RP/EA #8.1, as appropriate. A summary of comments received and the TIG's responses, where applicable, will be included in the final RP/EA #8.1. All public comments will be included in their entirety in the administrative record.