Interim Needs Assessment for Escambia County RESTORE Planning

Introduction:

Coastal communities throughout the Gulf region continue the costly and arduous task of repairing the damages inflicted on their ecological, environmental, economic, and social assets and supporting systems as a result of long standing decline and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010. In response to the unfolding requirements for RESTORE Act Escambia County took the initiative to construct and administer a community inclusive collaborative planning structure. As part of that process the Escambia County RESTORE Advisory Committee was convened in May 2013. Made up of community leaders with experience that spans the breadth of the major RESTORE components in Environment, Infrastructure and Economy this group was tasked with amassing knowledge on the existing condition of Escambia County and understanding how that condition may be advanced on a positive trajectory by RESTORE based projects. In June 2014 Escambia County hired Dewberry to secure the integrated professional services needed to successfully guide the development of the County's multi-year implementation planning (MYIP) framework.

The following tables summarize issues and ideas presented to: the Escambia RESTORE Advisory Committee at their monthly public meetings[1]; to the County through information and reference document submissions; and to Dewberry during initial meetings with stakeholders at the launch of this project and subsequent follow-up.

The goal of this exercise is to provide a comprehensive list of issues/challenges facing the County which should be considered for holistic planning purposes. The first three topic categories are based groupings of the eligible criteria under the Direct Component of the RESTORE Act of 2012 (see first table). The final category (social issues) represents issues that may not be eligible for RESTORE funding, but eligible for other sources of federal and state funding. This document considered the specific needs of minority groups and persons with disabilities.

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Environment

Environmental Needs			
Improve surface water quality • Reduce point sources (industry, septic tanks, WWTPs[1]) • Reduce nonpoint sources (303d impaired waters, TMDL's, stormwater runoff) • Utilize watershed approach	Monitor and restore habitats • Terrestrial and aquatic habitats • Promote healthy populations of fish and shellfish • Promote adequate and healthy populations of impacted species – marine mammals, birds, and sea turtles • Manage invasive species • Continue clean-up efforts • Local post-disaster DWH[2] spill monitoring	Improve ambient air quality • Reduce water quality effects (mercury and nitrogen) • Reduce ground level ozone	Conserve and preserve ecologically sensitive areas • Threatened and endangered species • Land acquisition • Wildlife corridors • Preserve biodiversity
Expand environmental education • Best management practices for agricultural industries • Watershed education • Promote expansion of recycling programs	Remediate contaminated sites • Superfund sites • Cleanup and removal of improperly operated landfills and pits • Legacy contaminants (PCB's, PAHs)	Natural systems resiliency (see also Infrastructure Needs – Improve manmade infrastructure resiliency) • Address sea level rise • Address loss of habitat • Address erosion/ sedimentation	Improve drinking water quality

1. Wastewater Treatment Plants
2. Deepwater Horizon

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Economy

Economic Needs			
Expand and diversify target Industries that pay above the average median wage • High tech manufacturing • Aviation/aerospace • IT/cyber security • Telecommunications/ call centers • Renewable energy and sustainability • Young professionals	Develop/create jobs • Arts and entertainment • Cottage industries • Green industries	Redevelop existing sites • Promote infill development • Limit urban sprawl • Community Redevelopment Areas • Brownfields sites • Port of Pensacola	Attract and grow small businesses • Improve business opportunities for minorities • increase minority business development
Strengthen tourism industry • Expand heritage and cultural tourism • Expand ecotourism • Incorporate universal design to accommodate people with disabilities • Expand focus on overnight stays to include daytime visitors • Expand year-round tourism (arts, sports, heritage, convention sectors)	Increase tourism marketing • Promote local seafood • Publicize beneficial effects of RESTORE activities	Build upon existing assets • Military bases • Multi-modal transportation network • Business parks • Port of Pensacola	Develop skilled workforce • Improve adult basic education/GED • Increase youth employment opportunities and job training • Develop workforce readiness programs • Expand STEM programs • Build employable skills into existing curriculums • Increase technology/media training • Programs for minorities and persons with disabilities • Recruit talent to the area

Infrastructure

Infrastructure Needs			
Improve transportation systems • Incorporate complete streets – sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-modal paths, tree cover/ vegetation, and streetlights • Add more walkable areas • Increase and improve mass transit and carpooling opportunities	Improve manmade infrastructure resiliency • Address critical infrastructure • Stabilize/protect coastal access areas • Ensure adequate hurricane/ disaster evacuation routes	Incorporate low impact development and sustainable design • Retrofit county and city facilities with green infrastructure • Utilize renewable energies such as solar panels on public schools and buildings	Prepare community for new technologies • Electric/ solar/CNG charging station networks • Connected vehicles • ITS (intelligent transportation systems)
Enhance infrastructure maintenance • Improve roads, highways, and bridges • Improve utility lines- gas, sanitary sewer, water distribution • Improve WWTPs • Upgrade/improve port facilities	Develop and expand stormwater management systems • Prevent flooding	Improve coastal facilities • Improve/update coastal parks • Improve parking and public access to waterfront	

Social Issues

Social Needs[*]			
Improve community health • Affordable health care • Develop anti-tobacco programs • Develop obesity reduction and physical activity programs • Mental health programs • Drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs • Address food deserts • Improve access to nutritious food	Target traditionally underserved areas and populations • Meet needs of disabled citizens • Improve literacy efforts • Improve African-American infant mortality rates • Meet needs of minority community	Reduce crime and improve public safety, especially in traditionally underserved areas • Utilize CPTED techniques (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design)	Support environmental justice • Ensure adequate and equal environmental quality for low-income, traditionally underserved, and minority areas
Improve education system • Facilitate early childhood education • Improve schools	Address poverty • Address homelessness	Conduct health impact studies for incident and clean-up activities	Reduce/eliminate litter and nuisance species/pests
Provide more affordable housing options	Build family support services	Preserve cultural heritage	Support ex-offender re-entry programs

*Social Needs are non-RESTORE eligible activities, but are needs represented as community preferences.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVIES UNDER RESTORE CRITERIA

RESTORE Act Citation	RESTORE Language	Equivalent Needs Assessment Topic
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(I)	Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region.	Environment
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(II)	Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife and natural resources.	Environment
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(III)	Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management, including fisheries monitoring.	Environment
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(IV)	Workforce development and job creation.	Economy, Social Issues
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(V)	Improvements to or on State parks located in coastal areas affected by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill	Environment, Economy, Infrastructure
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(VI)	Infrastructure projects benefitting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure	Environment, Economy, Infrastructure
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(i)(VII)	Coastal flood protection and related infrastructure	Environment, Economy, Infrastructure
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(ii)(I)	Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast Region, including recreational fishing	Environment, Economy
§1603(3)(t)(1)(B)(ii)(II)	Promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region.	Environment, Economy

[1] http://myescambia.com/restore/docs

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Note: All presentations can be found at http://www.myescambia.com/restore/docs under the corresponded dates.