Draft 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, social assets and supporting systems caused by the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. 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 again chose to step off of the sidelines and take a strategic leadership position on behalf of its citizens by contracting Dewberry, a consulting firm, and securing the integrated professional services needed to successfully guide the development of the County's multi-year implementation planning (MYIP) and recovery 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 Escambia 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 (Table 5). 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. <u>These categories do not reflect future project criteria categories</u>. It is for the initial needs assessment process.

Environment (Table 1)

Environmental Needs			
Improve ambient water quality • Point sources (industry, septic tanks, WWTPs) • Nonpoint sources (stormwater, agriculture) • Watershed approach	Restore habitats • Suitable habitats • Loss of biodiversity (threatened and endangered species) • Terrestrial habitats • Aquatic habitats • Beach erosion • Lack of maintenance • Climate change • Sea level rise	Develop and expand stormwater management/flooding systems	Improve air quality • Health effects to humans, animals and plants • Water quality effects (mercury and nitrogen) • Ground level ozone
Expand environmental education	Cleanup and removal of landfills and pits	Corrective action of recycling programs and industry	Remediate legacy contaminants (e.g. PCBs, PAHs) in sediment and water
Address climate change and sea level rise • Projected loss of 650 acres of land in Escambia County (shoreline inundation of 20 feet) • Impacts water quality, habitat • Increases flooding	Redevelop Brownfields sites	Improve fish and shellfish health	Improve drinking water quality
Remediate Superfund sites and other contaminated property	Best management practices for agricultural businesses		

Economy (Table 2)

Economic Needs			
Business & Economic Development			
Expand and diversify target industries • Advanced manufacturing • Aviation/aerospace • IT/cyber security • Call centers	Create jobs	Utilize existing areas • Community Redevelopment Areas • Brownfields sites	Enhance business opportunities for minorities and increase minority business development
Strengthen tourism industry • Focus on heritage and cultural tourism, including African American and other minority tourism • Authenticate visitor experiences through understanding of community impact of tourists • Universal design to accommodate people with disabilities • Focus on overnight vs. day visitors • Shift to year-round tourism (arts, sports, heritage, convention sectors)	Improve gross household earnings	Build upon: • Military assets • Transportation network • Business park development • Available sites/buildings	
Education & Workforce Development			
Develop skilled workforce and workforce readiness programs to support high skill/high wage occupations in growing economy sectors • STEM-focused programming • Arts training • Build employability into existing curriculums	Develop jobs in arts, entertainment, leisure/hospitality	Facilitate early childhood education	Increase youth employment and job training
Recruit talent to the area	Increase technology and media training	Improve schools, public safety, quality of local assets to attract workforce	Build employability skills into existing curriculums
Target economic and workforce development programs towards persons with disabilities and minorities	Improve adult/basic education/GED programs		

Infrastructure (Table 3)

Infrastructure Needs			
Develop and expand stormwater management systems	Improve and update roads, highways and bridges	Water quantity and quality – groundwater withdrawal, drinking water distribution (i.e. smaller systems – consolidation?), improved sanitary systems (expand distribution collection systems)	

Social Issues (Table 4)

Social Needs			
Improve education system	Address poverty/homelessness	Meet needs of minority community	Improve mental health programs
Address income inequality	Meet needs of disabled citizens	Drugs and alcohol	Reduce crime and improve public safety
Affordable housing	Affordable health care	Reduce/eliminate litter	Improve nutrition and access to nutritious foods
Improved transportation system	Develop more 'walkable' neighborhoods	Preserve cultural heritage	Build non-profit capacity
Address food deserts	Improve African American infant mortality rates	Support ex-offender re-entry programs	Build family support services
Improve literacy efforts	Build obesity-reduction and physical activity programs	Develop anti-tobacco programs	

ELIGIBLE ACTIVIES UNDER RESTORE CRITERIA (Table 5)

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

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

References

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