

# **Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration: Using a Foundation of Ecological, Economic and Social Components**

**December 6, 2016**



# Important Role for Ecosystem Services

- **Understanding Impact:** Ecological, social, economic components are all important for understanding impact of large scale restoration
- **Monitoring:** Monitoring is more than “what is in the water” i.e., need to see the big picture
- **Communication:** An ES perspective can serve as lens to communicate results/context of successful restoration projects – helps answer the “So What?” question



# Opportunities for Ecosystem Services

Limited ecosystem service expertise translates to opportunities

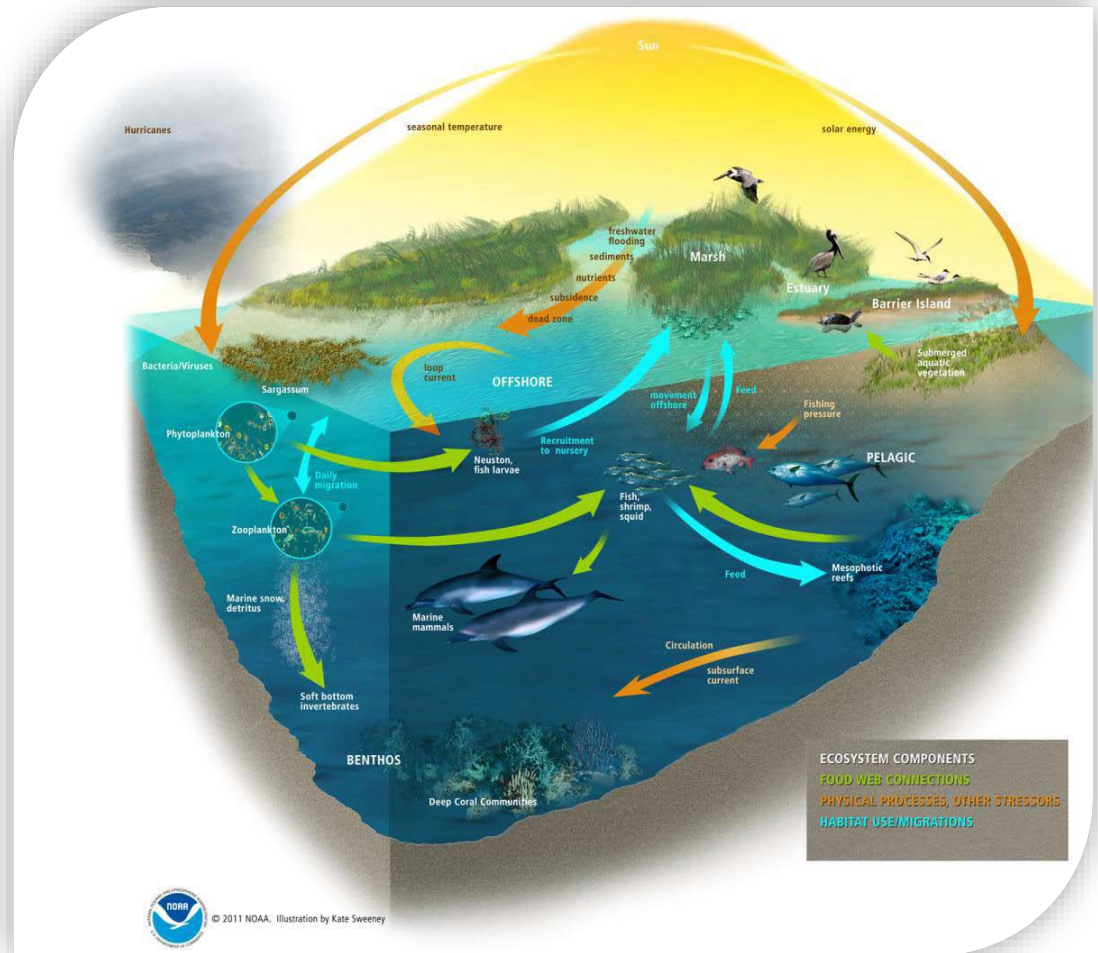
- RESTORE – 5 Gulf states and 6 federal Council members
- NRDA – through the Technical Implementation Groups
  - 5 state TIGS
  - Region-wide and Open Ocean TIGS
- NFWF – Funds allocated by state





# The Oil Spill Happened in a Vast Regional Ecosystem

- **Highly diverse & ecologically rich** array of resources and habitats
- **Highly interactive, interdependent network** of organisms and their environment.
- All these resources were threatened and many were injured, some severely, as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon* incident.





# 2012 RESTORE Act...

**Council to... “restore the **ecosystem** and **economy** of the Gulf Coast”**

## **4 Priority Criteria from the Act:**

- Greatest contribution to restoring & protecting natural resources
- Large-scale
- Build upon existing restoration plans or programs
- Long-term resilience to areas most impacted by the DWH oil spill

**...Without Regard to Geographic Location**





# Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council

- GCERC is a Federal Agency with unique governance consisting of:
  - Governors of 5 Gulf states
  - 6 federal agencies with USDA as chair
- As a federal agency, GCERC is must comply with the President's memorandum **Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Federal Decision Making**

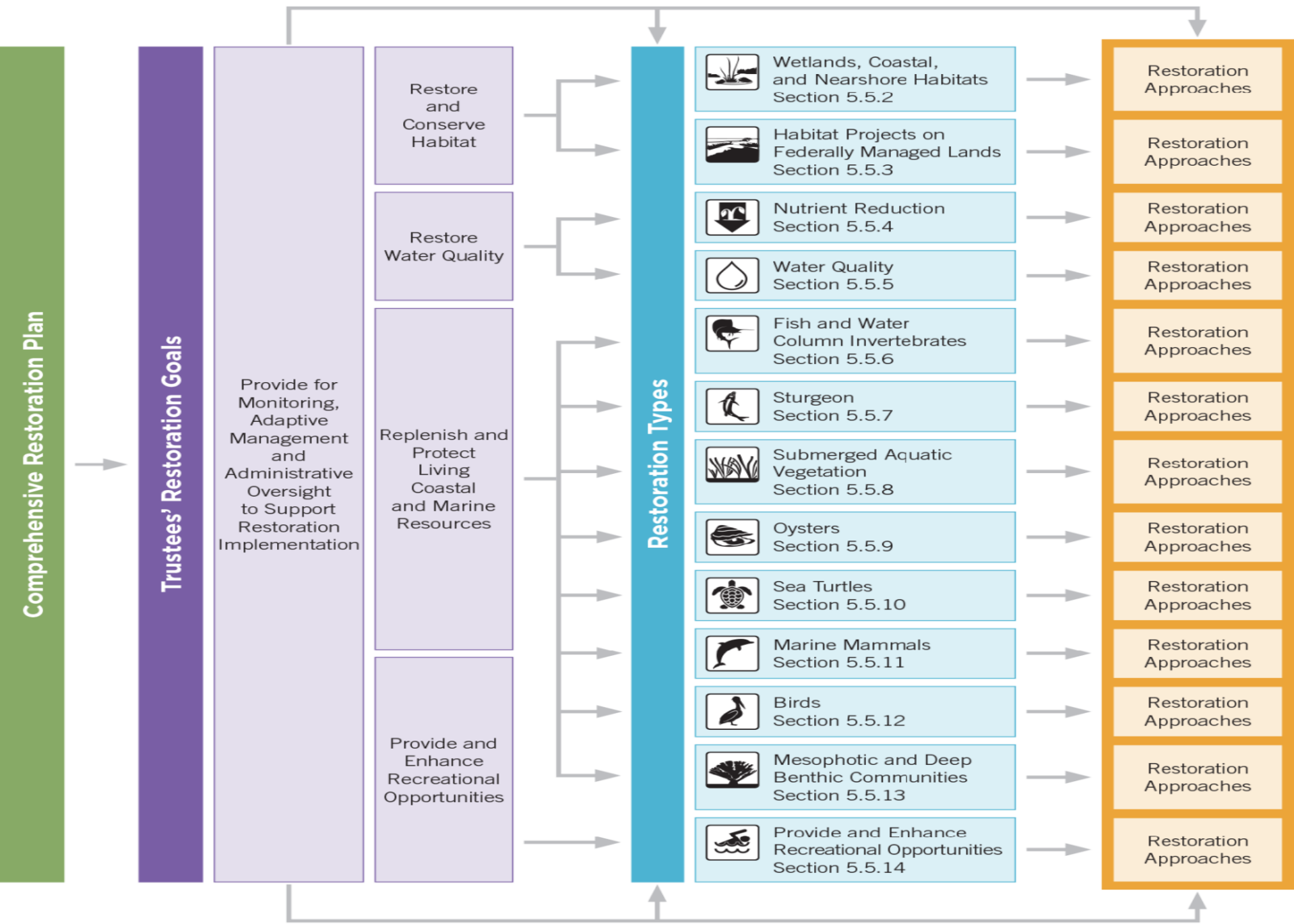


Catherine Hibbard, USFWS



# Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

- Oil Pollution Act; 15 CFR 990
- Who: Trustees
- Responsibilities:
  - Determine amount of injury to natural resources and lost services
  - Develop and oversee implementation of restoration plan(s) to compensate the public for injuries and lost services
  - Ensure the polluters pay for assessment and restoration







# Governance

- Trustee Council (4 federal, 5 state trustees)
  - Coordinates among TIGs, summarizes and communicates restoration progress to public
  - Develops Standard Operating Procedures
- Trustee Implementation Groups
  - Propose and finalize all decisions on restoration planning within the associated funding allocation by restoration type; public comment and environmental compliance
- Individual Trustee Agencies
  - Perform restoration planning, implementation, and monitoring

## Trustee Implementation Groups (TIGs)

### **Texas**

*Trustees for Texas  
Federal Trustees*

### **Louisiana**

*Trustees for Louisiana  
Federal Trustees*

### **Mississippi**

*Trustees for Mississippi  
Federal Trustees*

### **Alabama**

*Trustees for Alabama  
Federal Trustees*

### **Florida**

*Trustees for Florida  
Federal Trustees*

### **Regionwide**

*All Trustees*

### **Open Ocean**

*Federal Trustees*

### **Unknown Conditions and Adaptive Management**

*All Trustees*



# DWH Funding Streams for Restoration

**Civil Settlements:** ~\$6.7 billion

80% to RESTORE Act: ~\$5.3 billion

**Criminal Penalties:** ~\$2.5 billion

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

**Natural Resource Damages:** ~\$8.1 billion

Trustee Council

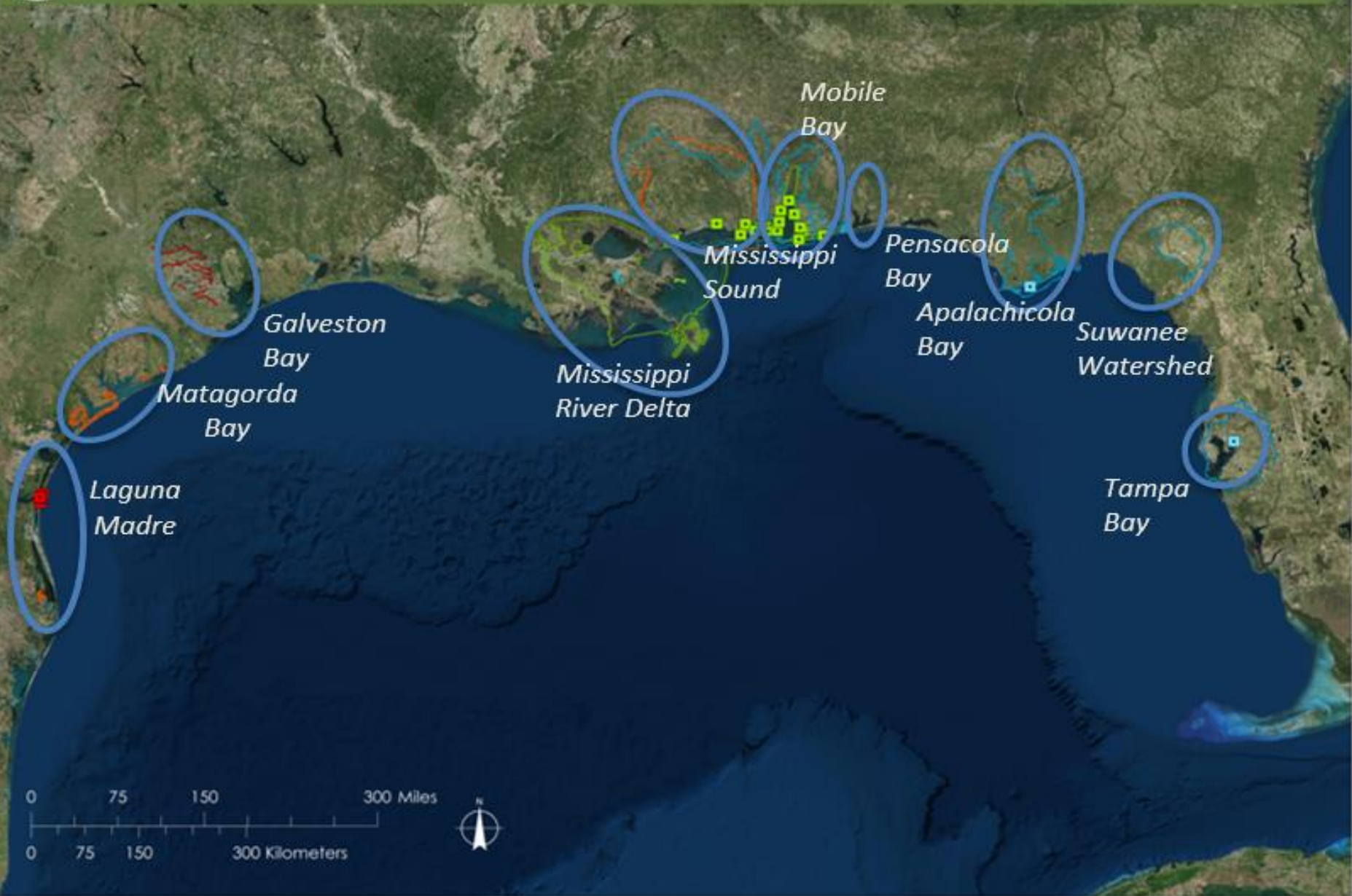
**Total: up to ~\$16 billion available for restoration**



Gulf Coast  
Ecosystem  
Restoration  
Council

## Projects on the FPL:

Restore, Protect, and Rebuild Projects in Key Watersheds across the Gulf Coast







# Setting the focus for next 10 years...

## 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update Foundational Concept:

“Healthy and sustainable ecosystems are essential for thriving and resilient coastal communities, cultures, economies, and societies which are built upon, and sustained by, natural **ecosystem services**”



# Challenges Ahead

- Strong collaboration/synergies with NFWF, NRDA, States, and other federal programs
- Measuring “success” ...
  - Scale of challenge – needs vs. available resources
  - Indicators and metrics to determine if we are making a difference
  - Outcome focus - what difference have we made
- Strong ecological, social and economic science underpinning are key



# Role of Ecosystem Services

- Monitoring is more than “what is in the water” i.e., need to see the big picture
- Can serve as lens to communicate results/context of successful restoration projects – helps answer the “So What?” question
- Limited **ecosystem service** expertise translates to opportunities



# Thank You

For More Information Visit:  
[www.RestoreTheGulf.gov](http://www.RestoreTheGulf.gov)

