



One Gulf, resilient Gulf:

A plan for coastal community recovery



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Cover: For decades, Loyde Duncan of Venice, Louisiana, has earned a living by fishing the waters off coastal Louisiana—weathering both Hurricane Katrina and the more recent BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster. “We don’t know the effect of this, nobody don’t know how long the effect is going to be,” he said of the recent oil spill. “[But] whatever we got to do, we got to do.” *Audra Melton / Oxfam America*

Endorsements

Gulf Coast and National

Oxfam America
Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health
Gulf Restoration Network
Center for American Progress
PolicyLink
Equity and Inclusion Campaign
Gulf Coast Fellowship for Community Transformation
African American Environmentalist Association
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
Boat People SOS
Center for Constitutional Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Christian Disaster Response
Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Disciples Justice Action Network
Food and Water Watch
For the Bayou
Franciscan Action Network
Gamaliel Foundation
Global Green
Government Accountability Project
Gulf Coast Civic Works Project
Jewish Funds for Justice
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
National Economic & Social Rights Initiative
NETWORK
New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good
Pax Christi USA
Praxis Project
Revenue Watch Institute
Support Our Country's Commercial Fishermen
Twenty-First Century Foundation
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
Verde

Alabama

Action Communication and Education Reform
Alabama Arise
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Bay Area Women Coalition

LEADERSHIP Counts!
Mobile Baykeeper
Quest for Social Justice
Sierra Club Alabama Chapter
Smart Coast
South Bay Communities Alliance
Tri-Coastal Community Outreach

Florida

Community Enterprise Investments
Emerald Coastkeeper

Louisiana

232-HELP/Louisiana 211
A Community Voice – Louisiana
Alliance Institute
Bayou Grace Community Services
Bayou History Center
Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing
Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal
Citizens United for Economic Equity
Coastal Warriors
Concerned Citizens of Agriculture Street Landfill
Dean Blanchard Seafood
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
Dirty Cajuns
Episcopal Community Services of Louisiana
First Presbyterian Church of Bayou Blue
Good Work Network
Gulf Change
Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies
Kallisto Research Consulting
Katrina Rebirth
Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation
Louisiana Environmental Action Network
Louisiana Green Corps
Louisiana Oystermen's Association
Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development
Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper
Market Umbrella
Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation
Moving Forward Gulf Coast
Oma Community Action Committee

Rebuilding Lives Coalition
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New Orleans
Rural Strength and Strategies
Save Wesley United
Sierra Club Delta Chapter
Sierra Club New Orleans Group
Smith Ridge Community Development Organization
Southern Louisiana Shrimp Alliance
Southern Mutual Help Association
Terrebonne Readiness and Assistance Coalition
The Urban Conservancy
Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans
YOUTHanasia Foundation
Zion Travelers Cooperative Center

Mississippi

Asian Americans for Change
Center for Environmental & Economic Justice
Coastal Women for Change
Hope Haven Children's Services
Immaculate Heart Community Development Corporation
Lutheran Episcopal Services in Mississippi
Mercy Housing and Human Development
Mississippi Center for Justice
Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese American Fisherfolk and Families
Mississippi Interfaith Disaster Task Force
Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative
Mississippi State Conference NAACP
Moore Community House
Natural Capital Development
North Gulfport Community Land Trust
Prince Garrett Ministries
The Repair S.H.O.P.
Retired Senior Volunteer Program
Sierra Club Mississippi Chapter
Steps Coalition
Turkey Creek Community Initiatives
Waveland Citizens Fund

Texas

Citizens League for Environmental Action Now
Community In-Power Development Association
Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services

Executive summary

The BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster has become the largest oil spill in the history of our country and already has resulted in the deaths of 11 men. In addition to better protecting coastal communities by improving the safety and oversight of the use of the Outer Continental Shelf and offshore drilling, the administration of President Barack Obama and Congress should move quickly to support a robust long-term recovery plan. With the well site now capped, it is critical to address the disaster's short- and long-term challenges, as well as the historical problems it has intensified, with a plan that offers opportunity for the many people suffering economically, ensures that those affected have a voice, and recognizes the teachable moment from this disaster to catalyze a transition towards promoting investments and industries across the Gulf that build coastal community resiliency. Resilience—the capacity of human, natural, and physical systems to adapt to and recover from change—should be a defining factor in such a plan. To continue the way of life along the Gulf Coast and to receive the benefits this region has to offer, there is a critical need for investments to make the natural, man-made, and social environments more resilient. Today's federal programs touch only a small portion of these needs, and many are a ways off from implementation. The status quo of degradation, inaction, and vulnerability will no longer be accepted.

There has never been a greater need or better opportunity to develop a national plan to put the Gulf Coast on a roadmap to resilience. President Obama and his appointee to lead the development of a plan for recovery, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, have reiterated that it is now the nation's responsibility to make the Gulf Coast whole. This will require additional investments to safeguard the region's rich cultural, environmental, and economic resources. To aid in this effort, the organizations listed on page two are presenting recommendations for a comprehensive approach to resiliency. Properly conceived, this plan could create tens of thousands of new livelihood opportunities through investments in protecting Gulf residents from future natural and man-made hazards and by restoring productive ecosystems. Such a commitment could help transition workers and businesses, including those affected by the Deepwater Horizon disaster, to industries that promote restoration, adaptation, and clean, renewable energy. Over time, this effort could spur much needed diversification in the region's economy and begin to reduce its historic dependence on extractive industries.

In summary, the resiliency plan should include these steps:

- Create livelihood opportunities through investments in multiple resiliency strategies, including ecosystem restoration, adaptive technologies, renewable energy, and energy efficiency.
- Ensure jobs are good jobs and reach target populations, using inclusive contracting practices and multiple employment mechanisms.
- Help current workers and employers transition into resilient workers and employers.
- Ensure a governance structure that incorporates community participation, federal-state and interagency cooperation, accountability, and transparency.
- Create adequate immediate and long-term federal funding.

The Gulf's great assets

The BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster has highlighted the Gulf of Mexico's role as a productive, but vulnerable, ecosystem of national and global importance. Many of our nation's most productive and important estuaries line the Gulf of Mexico, serving as habitat to a bounty of commercially and recreationally important species of fin fish, shellfish, and birds. Tens of thousands of families rely on its healthy wetlands, marshes, and fisheries, either directly or indirectly, for their livelihoods. In 2003, the Gulf of Mexico's ocean economy employed more than 562,000 people, paid wages in excess of \$13.2 billion, and contributed over \$32 billion to the region's gross state product. Annually, commercial fishing in the Gulf of Mexico produces over 1.29 billion pounds of fish and shellfish, with a dockside value of over \$659 million, contributing more than \$6 billion to seafood industry revenue. Millions of visitors travel to the Gulf Coast each year, spending more than \$100 billion across the region.

Beyond this immediate value, across the Gulf region businesses providing services to maritime and tourism industries are inextricably tied to these industries. The Gulf ecosystem contributes billions of dollars of ecosystem services annually as a source of flood protection, storm damage reduction, carbon capture, water filtration, fish and bird nurseries, and much more. Home to over 30 percent of our nation's domestic oil and gas reserves and production capacity, the Gulf region also receives a substantial portion of our nation's oil imports.

One of the Gulf's greatest assets, of course, is the innovation and resourcefulness of its people. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by far the most encouraging initiatives that arose were driven by citizens and nonprofits across the Gulf Coast and aimed at promoting community renewal and recovery. Projects helping communities reimagine their future, create jobs, start new social enterprises, and rebuild homes, led by community and faith-based nonprofits, gave a glimpse of the promise of what communities could do with proper resources.

The Gulf's great challenges

Although the oil and gas industry has created an economic base for many workers and their families throughout the Gulf Coast, it has come at high environmental and social costs for local communities. Louisiana is experiencing land loss at a rate of a football field of land every 45 minutes. Dredging the approximately 10,000 miles of canals for oil and gas infrastructure has allowed salt water to flow into brackish and fresh water marshes, devastating the hydrology of local ecosystems and compromising fragile fisheries, estuaries, and marshlands. Over 2,300 square miles of land and marsh have disappeared from the Louisiana coastline since the 1930s; 80 percent of America's annual coastal land loss occurs along the Gulf. While various factors—including leveeing off of the Mississippi River, rapid coastal development, and climate-induced sea level rise—also contribute to this problem, reports place oil- and gas-related dredging as the driver of 40 to 60 percent of that erosion.

The healthy barrier islands across the Gulf Coast that once helped break up storms, as well as vast systems of marsh in Louisiana that worked to absorb storm surges before they reached residents, are at a critical stage. As a result, the hurricanes of 2005 and 2008, although natural occurrences, created unnatural effects on communities—over \$150 billion in capital damages by some estimates—causing much greater damage than they would have if natural lines of defense had been in place. Economists estimate that coastal wetlands alone provide the United States with the equivalent of \$23.2 billion in storm-protection services annually.

Coastal communities across the region also are home to a higher than national average incidence of poverty. Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi regularly rank among the top five states in extreme poverty and childhood poverty. While social factors do not determine who will be hit by a disaster, they do determine a population's ability to prepare, respond, and recover when disaster does strike. The Social Vulnerability Index (SOVI), highlighted in the Oxfam America report "Exposed" (adapt.oxfamamerica.org), shows poverty to be the number one factor in determining a community's vulnerability to a disaster. Additional factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and special needs populations, also contribute to a community's ability to deal with natural and man-made hazards. At the same time, past environmental restoration efforts have not sufficiently prioritized economic opportunities for Gulf Coast communities to address the roots of this vulnerability.

The interaction of these factors has left tens of thousands of people along the coastline facing greater risks of industrial disasters, more-powerful hurricanes, sea-level rise, and damaged ecosystems. Indigenous tribes that have lived on the land for centuries and historic African-American and French-Cajun communities, as well as newer Asian-American and Latino residents, who have contributed to the unique culture of the region, face the possibility of displacement without significant action. Along America's Gulf Coast, a way of life remains under assault.

The coastal community balancing act

Perhaps nowhere in the United States is a healthy environment so inextricably linked to the strength of communities and the economy. Coastal community resiliency, or the ability of an area to maintain stability despite the impacts of man-made and natural hazards, can be envisioned as a three-legged stool. To maintain balance and protect the overall well-being of a community, each of the interdependent values represented by the three legs—people, environment, and economy—must be equally promoted, a triple bottom line. For the last century across the Gulf, the stool has been out of balance, and the result is the loss of stability of one of the nation's greatest assets. Historically, commerce has been given greater weight and value over both the environment and the people, and subsequently laws, regulations, policies, and systems have allowed commerce to become the most influential driver in the region's development. Thanks to some inroads by national and local environmental groups, in recent years the environment has gained some voice to help balance the stool.

Sadly, however, the people of the Gulf, whose value cannot be measured in dollars and cents, often have had the smallest voice, making them less influential. As a result, degradation of coastal ecosystems and the services they provide to communities has had direct and indirect impacts on the economy, communities, and environment of a region. The threat to the Gulf not only has consequences to our nation's commerce and fisheries, but also to many of our nation's cultural treasures: the foods, music, and ways of life interwoven throughout the Gulf's coastal communities.

Environmental impacts create additional challenges for socially vulnerable populations, like low-income residents and communities of color. Unfortunately, socially vulnerable communities have lacked the political voice to move their elected officials to adequately invest in protecting their neighborhoods, a situation that, combined with their risks from coastal land loss, oil- and gas-related hazards, and climate change, has created an entire region deeply entrenched in environmental injustice. Persistent issues of toxic exposures from the oil and gas industries continue in the path of the BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster, with most of the clean-up waste being dumped in and near communities of color. In a region like the Gulf Coast, where residents are exposed to an increasing number of hazards, yet rely on utilizing natural resources for their livelihood or subsistence—be it fishing, tourism, or oil and gas industries—maintaining the interrelated people-environment-commerce triple bottom line has become a matter of survival. To build a resilient Gulf Coast, the long-term plan must bring a new balance to these values and put the region on a roadmap to resiliency and recovery.

Solution: Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Fund and Task Force—A sustained and coordinated federal partnership

To help the people of the Gulf Coast harmed by both the BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster and years of degradation from extractive industries, to create political voice for vulnerable Gulf communities, and to address the long-term environmental challenges of the Gulf Coast, the federal government should develop a Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Fund and a Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Task Force to fund and execute a plan for long-term investments in coastal community resiliency projects. The plan should include the creation of new livelihood opportunities through policies that include community participation and targeting investments towards vulnerable communities to help rebalance the triple bottom line of people, the environment, and commerce. Such a commitment by the federal government to partner with coastal communities could help diversify and grow the local economy, strengthen communities, and build a more resilient coastline.

Create new livelihood opportunities in ecosystem restoration, adaptive technologies, clean energy, and energy efficiency

A Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Task Force could help execute plans to fund a full range of vital projects across the Gulf Coast to build more-resilient coastal communities. These new livelihood opportunities could include a wide range of trades and professions, from blue collar to white collar. Prioritizing, streamlining, and funding long-needed projects to restore barrier islands, coastal marshes, and wetlands could help rebuild vital natural flood protection, particularly in Louisiana, where funds are desperately needed to combat years of coastal erosion. Combined with projects to restore oyster reefs, fisheries, natural marine and estuarine habitats, and species impacted by recent and historic activities of the oil and gas industry, such an investment could provide jobs for thousands of people, while helping bring back the Gulf's seafood industry and related jobs, putting fisherfolk back to work, and building a more resilient coastal ecosystem.

To create multiple lines of defense from flooding, land loss, and the impacts of climate change, adaptive technologies will need to be implemented across the coast to help residents—especially those in socially vulnerable populations—mitigate the impacts of future disasters. Reports indicate that investments in proven adaptive techniques can save as much as \$4 for every \$1 invested by the federal government. Making grants to socially vulnerable homeowners and low-income rental housing owners for retrofits to elevate their homes and/or strengthen roofs, siding, and windows would not only help defend against increased likelihood of wind and flood damage but also would create thousands of new jobs, while spurring an industry locally that is growing due to the expected global impact of climate change in years to come. Additionally, funding could be provided for helping vulnerable families through innovative projects, such as building resilient housing using green construction techniques like the TRAC Lift House (a top-quality, strengthened, and elevated home with reduced utility bills, available at a cost lower than the price of elevating some existing homes). Existing adaptive technology programs in Florida have already begun to bring down rising homeowners insurance premiums, an issue of increasing concern for many low-income coastal residents. Although

non-structural solutions and natural infrastructure should be the first priority for flood management, traditional engineered approaches should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Parts of the Gulf Coast have relied on fossil fuels extraction and refining to drive their economies for decades. As the nation moves towards renewable forms of energy, there is no better time to transition and utilize the region's core strengths to become a leader in new power-generation technologies, such as wind, solar, and water. The Gulf has tremendous wind resources, which could be harnessed with the potential of building wind farms on the existing coastal energy infrastructure. Already existing nonprofits, such as the Mary Queen of Viet Nam Community Development Corporation in New Orleans, have developed projects to train workers from the seafood industry to install solar panels, projects that could easily be expanded. Pilot projects utilizing the hydrokinetic energy of the Mississippi River to generate power hold promise for new scalable technologies. Additionally, significant opportunity exists to build on the early success of energy retrofitting projects in the Gulf states to both promote energy conservation and help lower residents' utility bills, while employing residents to do this labor-intensive work.

Ensure jobs are good jobs and reach target populations

The importance of breaking the pattern of “low-road” jobs and livelihood opportunities cannot be overstated. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a flood of low-road contractors on public works projects were allowed to take hold, creating initial strains between unemployed local workers and new immigrant laborers. Projects subsidized with public funds that pay poverty wages put a double strain on resources: Not only is the public helping to fund the projects, but the poorly paid workers will eventually need additional resources just to make ends meet. Incorporating high labor standards and a first-source local hiring requirement into these investments could help break this pattern. Protecting worker health and creating healthy working environments requires sustainable working conditions; occupational health and safety training, certification, and oversight; language access; and access to the safest workplace materials and products available.

The historical exclusion of socially vulnerable communities must also be overturned. Promoting community-led development practices—like community-based business development assistance centers, nonprofit social enterprises that sell environmental goods and services in support of a tax-exempt mission to employ and train disadvantaged individuals, assistance in forming business cooperatives, workforce intermediary partnerships with grassroots nonprofits, and new opportunities to enter the workforce, like workforce diversity standards and mandates that contractors hire a significant percentage of their workers from training programs serving disadvantaged individuals—can begin to strike down barriers to good livelihood opportunities and will make the new economy inclusive and provide resources to socially vulnerable areas. Also, contractors should be mandated to report new job openings with local workforce agencies and workforce intermediaries. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster, a special effort should be made to connect unemployed fisherfolk and others who lost livelihoods to new jobs in cleanup and restoration projects. Additionally, efforts should be made to help low-English-proficiency workers and business owners access opportunities.

Contracting practices should mimic the structure of small enterprises and interrelated businesses that constitute the coastal economy—not the massive contracts that only huge outside firms could qualify for that have marked past disaster recovery contracts. Breaking large contracting jobs into smaller pieces that local and minority firms can handle can help drive local economic development. Federal contracting

can further support these career pathways by mandating and enforcing requirements that a significant percentage of work be directed to local and small disadvantaged businesses. Successful business development nonprofits—like Good Work Network, NewCorp Business Assistance Center’s Contractors College, and Community Development Financial Institutions—which extend business lines of credits to small firms, can be tapped to bring their post-Katrina-developed ingenuity to the support of coastal resiliency enterprises.

We must empower all Gulf Coast residents, especially those affected by the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster, to take part in the effort to build a more-resilient Gulf Coast and to develop long-term career pathways that bring people out of poverty by providing good wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities. Collectively, these progressive development and contracting practices will help get jobs to residents and ensure dollars are reinvested in coastal communities.

Help current workers and employers transition into resilient workers and employers

Not all workers would need complete retraining. Some may be able to build on existing skill sets that simply need to be expanded to incorporate new technologies. Fishermen or workers with maritime experience, for instance, have years of knowledge of local waters, marshes, and wetlands that would help them transition to new ecosystem-service-related jobs and industries. Training tomorrow’s workforce and transitioning affected workers to new occupations can be done by incorporating training opportunities focused on resilient technologies into the existing workforce-development infrastructure—including using one-stop job centers; creating new programs with area community colleges, local universities, and community partnerships; and developing apprenticeship programs. Upgrading skills will help transition the Gulf workforce into the new economy. The alignment of other local institutions, like community and technical colleges, should be directed toward supporting ongoing development of restorative sciences and training upcoming workers and firms in their craft and implementation. Their resources should be developed in partnership with the community-support entities that best know how to serve these vulnerable populations.

Given the entrepreneurial culture of many impacted coastal communities, a program should be developed for the Department of Commerce, including the Economic Development Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Department of Labor, to build a partnership that helps foster a regional network of existing nonprofit community development corporations to incubate new businesses in industries focused on resilient technologies and to provide training opportunities to socially vulnerable communities. Already a number of institutions, many established in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, have grown to develop successful training and business development programs specializing in making new livelihood opportunities accessible to vulnerable populations, including those with low English proficiency, building on trusted relationship established with their local communities. These model programs should be resourced and expanded to help bring them to greater scale to reach more communities along the coast.

Another opportunity for helping workers access these new job opportunities would be the creation of a Gulf Coast Conservation Corps, which could provide on-the-job training for young workers from at-risk populations in restoration and energy efficiency and in adaptive technology retrofitting. Building on the successes of programs like the Louisiana Green Corps, a Gulf Coast Conservation Corps could provide work and training for young workers to prepare for eventual work in ecosystem services, renewable energy, and construction, while providing vital services to their communities.

Ensure a governance structure that builds upon past planning and prioritizes community participation, accountability, transparency, and streamlining of project implementation

In the past, federal environmental restoration programs along the Gulf Coast have dealt with conflicting mandates, mutually opposed selection criteria, a lack of community participation, and entirely too lengthy bureaucratic processes that were unable to meet the pressing needs of the region. The inadequacies of relying on the Army Corps of Engineers for leading the region's restoration are well documented—including its utilization of a narrow cost-benefits-analysis decision-making process that ignores critical social and environmental perspectives, its politically tenuous funding process, its failure to implement sustainable wetlands building techniques (like beneficial use of sediment), and its conflict with the Corps' restoration mission.

The many rounds of planning have alienated coastal communities, as different federal and state administrative divisions have tried to address restoration and resiliency from a wide range of deviating mandates and processes. The lack of coordination within and among federal agencies has stifled the progress towards implementing projects, undermining local support and trust.

Restoration that achieves a socially, economically, and environmentally sound coast will require a new governance model, one that creates a partnership of community, state, and federal stakeholders committed to a new long-term vision for the region. This effort will need to define interagency and intergovernmental collaboration and citizen participation on coastal resiliency projects. A Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Task Force should be created, with members including each Gulf state governor and senior political appointees of relevant federal agencies with restoration or regulatory mandates, such as the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Office of Management and Budget, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior (DOI), and NOAA, as well as the Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, a Citizen Stakeholders Committee—including people from socially vulnerable communities, commercial fisherfolk, for-hire boat operators, members of the tourism industry, and conservationists—representing groups from each state disproportionately impacted by the health of the Gulf Coast and chosen by their peers, should be a part of the task force. The committee could elect a chair and vice chair to represent them on the task force and ensure a strong citizen voice in governance decision-making.

The task force must have a clearly defined goal, like “restoring the resiliency of the Gulf Coast region by stopping the deterioration of coastal ecosystems, implementing comprehensive plans for multiples lines of defense to reduce flood risk to vulnerable coastal communities, and creating new livelihood opportunities by connecting resiliency projects to new economic and workforce development investments.” The management team should be given latitude to consider policies and regulations and even propose statute changes on topics like sediment management and mitigation banking.

Additionally, regional stakeholder bodies, aligning with impacted watersheds and based on the pioneering work of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), should be formed to bring together representatives from fisheries, workforce and economic development agencies, and civic and faith-based organizations representing socially vulnerable communities, as well as the business community, sportsmen, scientists, engineers, environmentalists, economists, and urban planners—all with differing points of view—to work together to define actions to protect and preserve the fragile resources of their local watersheds and build more-resilient coastal communities. The BTNEP management conference process

yielded action plans supported by the community through the hard work of bringing everyone to the table to find local solutions to tough questions. The result was a widely heralded plan with buy-in from across community, industry, and environmental interests. Such regional stakeholder bodies could help provide vital input into the development and implementation of plans and projects to restore ecosystems. Also, these groups could help put together regional plans for identifying local resources and challenges to implementing adaptive technologies for disaster mitigation, creating clean energy projects, and improving and linking workforce and economic development systems with new federal investments to create new livelihood opportunities—including developing and enforcing inclusive contracting and hiring practices.

An immediate effort should be made to reconcile inconsistencies of priorities and planning with a common criteria. While the creation of a sustainable coastal system must be the priority, these criteria should strongly value the protection of the way of life of socially vulnerable communities and cultures alongside the protection of major commercial interests, like shipping, oil and gas production, and property value.

An inventory of all ongoing federal flood protection and ecosystem restoration projects, studies, and reports should be developed immediately, including comprehensive management plans from National Estuary Program sites, and the management team should develop a process to coordinate on reviewing and expediting these projects through efficient planning, permitting, and implementation. As necessary, these plans should utilize adaptive management to account for impacts of the BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster, as well as findings from reports like “Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States” by the US Global Change Research Program on sea level rise and subsidence.

The implementation of projects should be prioritized on the basis of the best science available and the critical need for multiple lines of defense against storms, floods, and land loss to help coastal communities continue their way of life. In addition to data on altered salinities, habitat destruction, and depleted oxygen, the science should include qualitative social data from community participatory processes and quantitative social vulnerability indicators measuring exposure to risk and the potential for disproportionate impact based on analytical measures utilizing population characteristics, such as the SOVI. The management team should determine any gaps in the science and work to address these needs quickly, taking special care not to duplicate efforts. The process should develop a methodology for defining an emergency status of certain projects, primarily based on the impact of a project on the feasibility of future resiliency projects, the impact on flood attenuation and disaster risk reduction for vulnerable coastal communities, and its potential to provide immediate job and contracting opportunities to socially vulnerable populations and disadvantaged businesses. The prioritization should encourage the use of a socially sensitive mix of technologies that take into consideration the impacts of projects on communities and give adequate consideration to the use of technologies like pipeline sedimentation and adaptive technologies.

Importantly, when technologies for coastal restoration are chosen, groups that will be negatively impacted should be compensated. Communities on the coast understand that sacrifices will have to be made, nevertheless, these communities did not create this problem and should not have to bear the brunt of the cost to solve it. The governance structure should form a committee to develop guidelines for responsible and inclusive decision-making processes that are sensitive to the challenges of vulnerable populations regarding the removal of assets and people in at-risk areas, as well as transitional assistance to communities negatively impacted by restoration plans.

Ensure adequate long-term federal and state funding

In the past, funding mechanisms for ecosystem restoration have either required politically burdensome yearly appropriations or have been funded at annual levels too small to make adequate progress towards this historic national challenge. A new plan will require administration and congressional action to ensure the resilience of coastal communities along the Gulf of Mexico.

As a first step for finding this plan, the Obama Administration and Congress should start by enacting reforms to the Oil Pollution Act to create a separate Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Fund within the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (OSLTF). The resiliency fund should include any monies generated from DOI Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program fines and from Federal Water Pollution Control Act violations related to the Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster. It is crucial for the Obama Administration to pursue a full investigation of whether BP and its business partners exhibited gross negligence in the drilling operation to ensure proper compensation for the full scale of damages and violations. Also, a substantial portion of the proposed tax increase on oil to be directed to the OSLTF (now being debated before the Congress), perhaps 10 cents per a barrel, should go directly into the proposed resiliency fund.

Additionally, Congress should move to eliminate tax loopholes that continue to unfairly benefit the oil and gas industry and redirect new revenues towards the Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Fund. Retroactively eliminating tax deductions for oil spillers on federal fines and liabilities could generate more than \$10 billion towards the fund. Congress also should move to eliminate additional tax subsidies for intangible drilling costs that allow deductions upfront (other businesses need to document these costs and make deductions over time), as well as to eliminate the percentage depletion allowance, which generates a fixed deduction over the life of a well without regard to how much, or even whether, the well is still declining in value. Together these two reforms could generate almost \$3 billion a year in additional funding.

Funds should be distributed to Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas based on the exposure of communities to risks and environmental impacts of current and past offshore oil and gas production, transportation, and other activities.

While certainly a portion of these funds would go towards federal direct spending or state grants, a portion of the funds should be made available for competitive grants to community-based nongovernmental organizations, municipalities, coastal parishes/counties, or consortiums offering community-based solutions developed by regional stakeholder bodies. Additionally the Obama Administration should ensure that funds from the resiliency fund, the DOI Coastal Impact Assistance Program, and the DOI Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act are flexible and eligible for covering local cost share of existing federal funds. When funds are granted to states, robust reporting and accountability mechanisms for ensuring transparency and federal oversight should be upheld to ensure that funds meet the needs of vulnerable communities and promote environmental sustainability.

Congress should move to expedite offshore royalty revenue sharing to Gulf Coast states, set to begin in 2017, on the condition that such funds are dedicated to coastal community resiliency projects. Additionally efforts should also be made to identify and leverage federal resources related to the numerous brownfield sites across the coast to support the development of new livelihoods related to resiliency technologies.

Community participation in Gulf Coast Community Resiliency Task Force



Conclusion

The degradation of the Gulf of Mexico and its ecosystems is a national problem that requires a long-term and robust national partnership of Gulf Coast states, industries focused on resilient technologies, and local communities to build a more resilient Coast. In the aftermath of the world's largest oil drilling disaster, now is the time for action to restore the balance between the Gulf Coast's people, environment, and economy through a new vision committed to investments in the creation of new livelihoods in industries that will make America's Gulf Coast resilient and strong now and into the future.

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Assistance Coalition

Rev. Tyrone Edwards

Zion Travelers Cooperative Center

Derrick Evans

Gulf Coast Fund for Community
Renewal and Ecological Health/
Turkey Creek Community Initiatives

Sharon Gauthe and Patty Whitney

Bayou Interfaith Shared
Community Organizing

Alan Hipólito

Verde

**Courtney Howell, Rebecca Templeton,
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Bayou Grace Community Services

Darryl Malek-Wiley

Sierra Club Delta Chapter

Louie Miller

Sierra Club Mississippi Chapter

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