

Annotated Agenda

MAFAC meeting – May 24-May 26, 2011

Key West, FL

1. Title of Discussion: Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

2. Presenter: John H. Hankinson Jr., Executive Director (About [Hankinson](#))
Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

3. Objective/Purpose: [**Informational & Action**] The goal of this session is to inform MAFAC about the status of the Task Force's efforts and its need for advice from federal advisory groups such as MAFAC.

4. Background/Synopsis: At the MAFAC meetings in June and October 2010, the Committee was briefed on the status of the pre-assessment and restoration planning phases of the response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Recall that an important statute guiding the government's response to oil spills is the [Oil Pollution Act](#) (OPA) (see the [NRDA annotated agenda](#) from June 2010). A major goal of OPA is to compensate the public for injury to, destruction of, loss of, or loss of use of, natural resources, including the reasonable costs of assessing the harm done as a result of a discharge or substantial threat of a discharge of oil, and responsibility for assessing injuries is shared by federal and state "trustees" and coordinated through a Trustee Council. The Trustees use a Natural Resource Damage Assessment, or [NRDA](#), to: define the impact, restore the natural resource to the pre-spill state, compensate for losses, and involve public input. The process results in a Final Restoration Plan which is presented to parties responsible for the spill to implement or fund the trustees' costs of implementing the plan. Funds recovered from responsible parties under OPA must be used for restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of **equivalent** natural resources or services.

While this NRDA process and the work of the Trustee Council, which focuses on the near-term restoration, are underway, President Obama established the **Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Task Force** to oversee a long-term ecosystem restoration process. This [Task Force](#) was formed by [Executive Order](#) of the President in October, 2010 to effectively address the damage caused by the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and the **longstanding ecological decline**, and begin moving toward a more resilient Gulf Coast ecosystem. The Task Force is a cross-scale, cross-agency body made up of local, regional, and national representatives tasked with coordinating intergovernmental responsibilities, planning, and exchange of information so as to better implement Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration and to facilitate appropriate accountability and support throughout the restoration process.

The decision to set up the new Task Force came from a recommendation made in the report "America's Gulf Coast: A Long Term Recovery Plan after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill", also known as the [Mabus report](#). The long - term Gulf of Mexico ecosystem restoration effort described in the report is being closely coordinated with the NRDA Trustee Council and its management of the NRDA process for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The two efforts are sharing information, and the long - term ecosystem restoration effort will seek to build off and complement the progress made through the NRDA process under OPA, but will not interfere with the Trustee Council's exercise of its statutory responsibilities.

The Task Force is chaired by Lisa Jackson, Administrator of the EPA, and consists of senior officials from a wide range of executive departments, agencies, and offices, selected by the head of the respective department, agency, or office. Dr. Larry [Robinson](#), Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere at NOAA, represents the Department of Commerce.

By October 5, 2011, the Task Force is charged with development of a restoration strategy that proposes a Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration agenda.

Public Meetings

The Task Force has held three public meetings to date and will hold two more in the coming months. The purpose of these meeting is to solicit input from local and regional stakeholders. Information about the meetings is available on the Task Force [website](#).

At these meetings, the Task Force has been soliciting comments about the following topics:

1. The priority issue facing the Gulf regarding ecosystem restoration.
2. The impediments to addressing the key issues.
3. The key outcome/action to come out of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Strategy and explain why you think this outcome/action is important.

Other Resources for information

- The official EPA [website](#) for the Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Task Force provides information about the Task Force, upcoming meetings, and general resources. The most recent [meeting](#) was on May 6th, 2011 in Mobile, Alabama.
- Press release regarding BP's [agreement](#) to provide \$1 billion toward early restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico to address injuries to natural resources caused by the spill.

5. Options:

Keith Rizzarda has prepared some recommendations, highlighted below, for MAFAC consideration and further discussion at the meeting regarding the Task Force's emphasis:

- Focus on supporting estuarine improvement and restoration projects already in the pipeline that prioritize and meet selection criteria such as: (1) benefit to commercial and recreational fisheries; (2) enhance biodiversity and water quality; and (3) are geographically diverse.
- Increase spending on research that focuses on lessons learned from the DWH oil spill such as: (1) the ecological and biological effects of dispersants; (2) understanding deepwater environments and oil interactions; and (3) improving oil spill technologies.
- Invest more heavily in data collection efforts to gain better knowledge of: (1) Essential Fish Habitat; (2) water quality and sediment management as it relations to the dead zone; and (3) seafood safety.

6. Preferred Recommendation (Include action/product/decision needed; responsible/accountable party; date/timeline/schedule for action): TBD

Record of Decision:

Decision, Next Step(s) and/or Action:

Assigned to:

Due Date: