

GULF RESTORATION NETWORK

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# GULF CURRENTS

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## 5 YEARS LATER – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

This year marks the fifth year since BP’s Deepwater Horizon rig exploded off the coast of Louisiana and gushed oil into our Gulf waters for 87 days. From leading monitoring trips to observe the damage and restoration efforts, to helping pass the RESTORE Act in 2012, Gulf Restoration Network has worked tirelessly since 2010 to ensure that both our coastal communities and environment are prioritized as decision-makers work to restore the Gulf of Mexico.

Over the last year, many important developments have occurred – including the legal settlement covering BP’s Clean Water Act fines, Natural Resources Damage Assessment and other fines announced in July 2015 between the Gulf States, Department of Justice and BP for \$18.7 billion. For people and communities across the Gulf, the settlement marks the beginning of significant restoration dollars flowing towards the Coast. And while \$18.7 billion is a substantial sum, it is important to hold our leaders accountable and ensure those dollars are allocated towards restoring the Gulf’s environment and impacted communities.

In the coming weeks, the Department of Justice will release the proposed Consent Decree outlining the terms of the settlement with BP. Until the Consent Decree is announced, the complete details of the agreement are unknown to the public.

This is what we know the agreement includes:

- \$8.1 billion for natural resource damages (including \$1 billion previously allocated in early restoration projects);
- \$232 million to address any unknown natural resource damages;
- \$5.5 billion for Clean Water Act civil penalties (subject to the RESTORE Act); and
- \$4.9 billion for state economic losses.

*(Continues on Page 3)*



A reddish egret in Ft. Desoto, Florida. Photo Credit: NOAA.

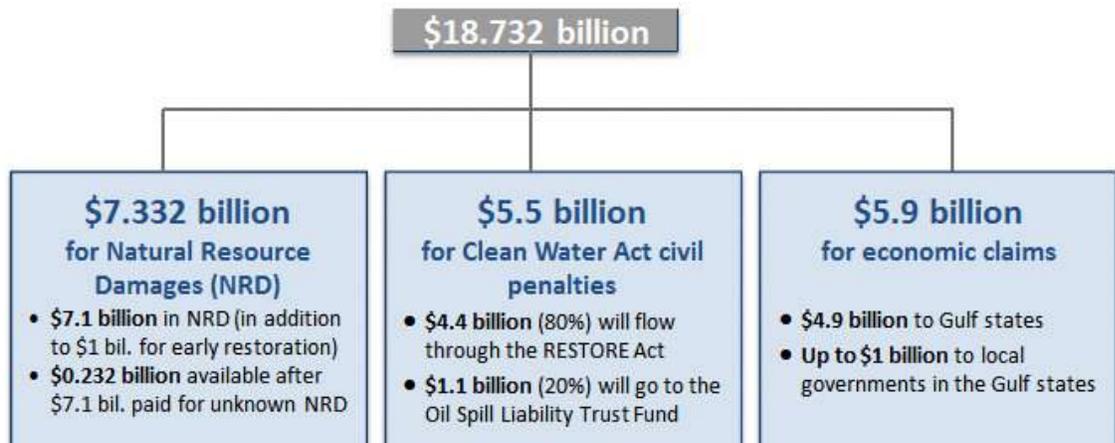


Photo Credit: eli-ocean.org.

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## REFLECTING ON KATRINA



Cynthia Ramseur,  
Board Member

I turned 50 years old five days before Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast.

There is not a person who lived on the Mississippi coast that was not greatly affected by Katrina’s fury: lives lost, homes washed away, family memorabilia destroyed, jobs lost and financial stability wiped out. Life as we knew it was forever changed; we lived into the “new normal.” For us, Hurricane Katrina was personal: the acrid smell, the feel of the dry hot air for weeks after, and the sound of salty leaves rustling in an occasional sea breeze.

Yet in the midst of the devastation, the State of Mississippi tried to open our near shores to oil & gas drilling and BP brought us the drilling disaster with its oil slicks, anxiety and economic ruin to a populace still dazed. Throughout all these affronts and more, Gulf Restoration Network was steadfast in its work on behalf of the Gulf of Mexico.

What do I want to say to each and every GRN supporter on the 10th memorial of Hurricane Katrina? THANK YOU! Thank you for your membership and financial support. Thank you to the foundations that so generously uphold GRN’s mission in the Gulf of Mexico. And thank you to GRN staff – you also lived through the Katrina aftermath just like I did – you persevered and worked diligently on behalf of GRN’s mission.

Now I am 60 and quite happy that the Katrina decade has passed. Thank you GRN; I am grateful for all you are doing, and all you have done, to protect and restore this region.

Cynthia Ramseur



A fishing boat sailing along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Photo Credit: GRN.

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## 5 YEARS LATER – WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Announced on the heels of the settlement with BP, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council released their Draft “Funded Priority List” (FPL) which allocates \$139.6 million towards restoration projects across the Gulf. The Council has chosen 45 projects and activities that will help restore the natural environment damaged by BP. These restoration projects show the significant strides decision-makers and citizens have made to meaningfully restore the Gulf ecosystem.

In this initial round of projects, the Council demonstrates a commitment to implementing quality restoration projects focused on the Gulf’s ecosystems, setting the precedent for RESTORE dollars spent. In terms of the \$18.7 billion draft settlement, \$5.2 billion will be funneled through the RESTORE Act, with \$1.56 billion going to the Council to carry out a restoration plan to protect and restore our natural resources. The FPL process determines how the Council’s portion of the funds is spent and reflects the vision of the Comprehensive Plan for gulf-wide recovery.

### **FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE GULF, THE SETTLEMENT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF SIGNIFICANT RESTORATION DOLLARS FLOWING TOWARDS THE COAST.**

This is where the restoration begins. We cannot lose this momentum in building a resilient and sustainable environment and economy. As all the funds are dispersed, it is important for Gulf residents to hold Council-members accountable to ensure meaningful restoration for our communities and environment.



*Sea oats growing along the Gulf Coast. Photo Credit: NOAA.*



"From top left, clockwise - Staff field trip to the Atchafalaya Basin, 5 year commemoration rally of BP Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster, champagne & watermelon at the Summer Solstice Party, Luther Gray and the Congo Square Preservation Society at the Summer Solstice Party, Mississippi Boat Party and 7th Annual Easter Keg Hunt." Photo Credit: GRN.

## PARTNERING WITH AVEDA

In partnership with GRN since 2006, Aveda embraces our mission to restore the Gulf by protecting wetlands and keeping our waters clean. Aveda is a company that walks the walk - prioritizing clean water and sharing our mission with thousands of their clients. Over the last 5 years, Aveda support has enabled GRN to save over 190,000 acres of wetlands!

Thank you Aveda staff, students and clients, for an incredible Earth Month. You are protecting our rivers, streams, lakes and Gulf waters!



Face painting at the Tangerine Salon in Dallas, TX. Photo Credit: GRN.



Salon Couvie and GRN; Painting with a Purpose. Photo Credit: GRN.

## FOND FAREWELLS AND NEW FACES

On top of all the events in 2015, this year has also been a time of change for our staff, with several folks moving on to fresh challenges and new folks joining our team. Over the course of the year, we've been sad to say goodbye to Jayeesha Dutta (who is continuing her work as the Gulf Future Coalition Coordinator but is no longer housed at GRN), Steve Murchie (Campaign Director), Grace Morris (Senior Organizer), and Helen Rose Patterson (Mississippi Organizer). We're happy to announce that Raleigh Hoke, our former Communications Director, has taken over as Campaign Director. We've also hired three new folks: Howard Page, a long-time organizer and advocate in the Mississippi Gulf Coast, is our new Mississippi Organizer; Shona Clarkson is our new Development and Communications Coordinator; and James Hartwell, who has volunteered with GRN for years, is our new Coastal Wetland Analyst. We're looking to hire additional staff in the coming weeks, so check out [HealthyGulf.org/jobs](http://HealthyGulf.org/jobs) if you or someone you know would like to apply.



From left: Howard Page, Shona Clarkson, and James Hartwell.  
Photo Credit: GRN.

## GRN OPENS A TEXAS OFFICE!

Jordan Macha, Senior Policy Analyst, recently moved to Austin to launch GRN's new Texas office. Jordan will continue to oversee gulf-wide restoration work related to the BP oil disaster and to work closely with partners across the Gulf. This is an exciting opportunity for GRN and we are happy to be in Texas.

### STAY IN TOUCH

Join GRN on social media for more timely updates and breaking news.



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## CHANGING ATTITUDES ABOUT FRESH WATER FLOWS TO THE COAST

As we change seasons in Mississippi, two recent announcements provide hope that maybe we are also seeing attitudes change about the importance of the fresh water provided by our coastal rivers to the Mississippi Sound.

In June, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) announced the release of the Governor's Oyster Council final report of recommendations for improving the oyster industry. A few months later, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Restore Council) published its Draft Funded Priorities List (FPL), which will guide how a portion of BP Disaster Clean Water Act fines are spent. Both documents list projects to restore or improve coastal habitats, including research on adequate river flow to coastal estuaries. The Oyster Council report calls for more information and research on "inland, the harmful effects that dams have on our coastal rivers. Simply put, the report recognizes that oyster health requires adequate fresh water from rivers.

The Restore Council's Draft FPL includes a Gulf-wide project to measure, map and research trends in base-line fresh water flows from rivers draining to the Gulf, from Florida to Texas. The list includes a pilot project using one of Mississippi's large coastal rivers. Because the Pearl River has more threats to its flow than any other coastal river in the state, GRN hopes that the Pearl River will be chosen for this project.



*Pearl River landing at LeFleur's Bluff. Photo Credit: GRN.*



*Pearl River at Highway 90 Bridge in Pearlington. Photo Credit: GRN.*

## VICTORIES FOR A HEALTHY GULF

With your help, we've been able to achieve some important victories over the last few months, including:

- Coast Over Coal:** On December 23, 2014, a state judge responded to a lawsuit filed by GRN and our partners by revoking RAM Terminal's coastal use permit for a proposed coal export facility in Plaquemines Parish, LA. Weeks later, the Plaquemines Parish Council voted to deny RAM a key construction permit. These decisions dealt a major blow to RAM's plan to build a dirty coal export terminal adjacent to a coastal restoration site. However, RAM is still trying to build its coal export terminal - we'll keep you abreast of opportunities to get involved.
- Restoration Dollars to Help Bluefin:** A win-win for bluefin tuna and fishermen! The Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustees tasked with disbursing early restoration dollars from the BP disaster announced a proposal in April to help Gulf longline fishermen transition to more sustainable fishing gear that reduces the accidental catch of non-target species like bluefin tuna.
- Protecting Wetlands in Washington Parish, LA:** After hearing from hundreds of GRN supporters and Florida Parish residents, the Army Corps of Engineers denied a permit on June 24th for a plan to dam the Boga Lusa Creek - guarding 1,000 acres of wetlands, the creek itself and historic cemeteries from destruction.
- BP Settlement and Restoration Priority List:** In July, BP and the other parties involved announced a universal settlement in principle for damages from the 2010 drilling disaster of \$18.7 billion. To read more about big news related to BP, check out the cover page.



*Andrea DeClouet and Pat Bertucci celebrating the ruling over the RAM Terminal. Photo Credit: GRN.*

## PIPELINE THREATENS VULNERABLE HABITAT

Sabal Trail Transmission, LLC (“Sabal”) intends to build an approximately 500 mile underground gas pipeline stretching from Alabama, through Georgia, to a hub south of Orlando, Florida.

Construction of the pipeline will impact many community drinking water sources and critical habitats, including the sensitive karst limestone of north Florida and South Georgia where drinking water aquifers are vulnerable to contamination.

The company’s preferred route will cut a large swath through significant stands of mature wetland hardwoods that are critical habitat for endangered and protected species like wood stork, bald eagle and cockaded woodpecker. This project will also require drilling which may negatively impact ecologically significant waterways.



*Two manatees in a Florida spring. Photo credit: Ben Berauer.*

### "CONSTRUCTION OF THE PIPELINE WILL IMPACT MANY COMMUNITY DRINKING WATER SOURCES AND CRITICAL HABITATS..."



*Weeki Wachee Headspring. Photo Credit: Cathy Harrelson.*

In November 2014, Sabal Trail filed an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for authorization to construct and operate the pipeline. The Kiokee-Flint Group, Flint Riverkeeper, Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club and Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, represented by Greenlaw, have taken the lead in efforts to raise environmental concerns about this destructive pipeline. GRN is supporting their efforts and is monitoring the process.

Last year, over 1,500 supporters like you took action to ask FERC and other leaders to deny the pipeline’s permit. Yet, the permit process is moving forward.

FERC recently issued its draft environmental impact statement on the project. GRN will continue working to stop the pipeline and we will alert you to opportunities to stand up against this destructive project.

## CREATURE FEATURE: SHORT-FINNED PILOT WHALE

Rarely spotted at sea, the short-finned pilot whale lives in warm, tropical waters across the world. The short-finned pilot whale is part of the dolphin family and is the second largest species of dolphin after killer whales. This mammal has a bulbous “melon” head, no beak and can grow to lengths of 12-18 feet. Seldom found alone, short-finned pilot whales are social and generally found in pods of 10-30 animals. The short-finned pilot whales have earned a nickname as “cheetahs of the deep” for their high speed pursuits of a meal. The species tends to stay offshore, unless their main prey of squid is spawning, and the worldwide population is unknown. The short-finned pilot whale is not considered a threatened species on a global scale, but hunting, entanglement in fishing nets, noise pollution and capture for captivity are threats to this whale.



*The short-finned pilot whale. Photo Credit: NOAA.*

# GULF RESTORATION NETWORK



[healthygulf.org](http://healthygulf.org)

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# UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

## DON'T FORGET TO RENEW

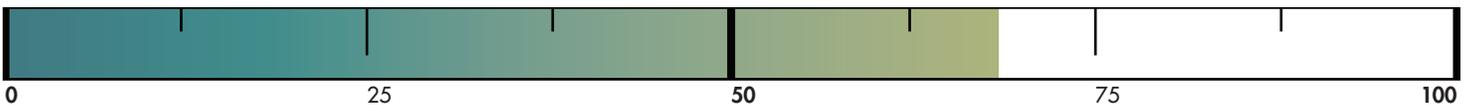
During past summers, you've spotted GRN canvassers pounding the pavement in and around New Orleans neighborhoods. You may have even signed up with one! This year, we're taking a break from the scorching heat to focus on renewing our existing membership. Our entire staff is phone-banking members we signed up last year and asking them to give again. Our goal is to renew 100 members before the end of October. Can you renew your GRN membership this fall?

Your ongoing support holds big oil & gas accountable, watchdogs restoration dollars and protects our most vulnerable Gulf communities. With 100 renewed members, we can amplify our work to reach more people and protect more waters and wetlands. Thank you so much for your past support and consider renewing your membership this fall.



*Don't forget to renew your membership! Photo Credit: GRN.*

## SUMMER RENEWAL DRIVE



P.S.  
After 3 staff call nights, we're over halfway to our goal with 69 renewed members! Will you renew to help us reach our goal?



Gulf Restoration Network, founded in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico region.