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FINAL TAMPA BAY OIL SPILL RESTORATION PLAN AVAILABLE *14 locally-sponsored projects chosen to address public use injuries*

TALLAHASSEE -- Today, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released the final Restoration Plan for injuries to the public's use of natural resources from the 1993 Tampa Bay Oil Spill.

The Restoration Plan identifies 14 restoration projects chosen to compensate the public for the lost recreational use of the area shorelines, shellfish beds, and surface waters caused by the spill. The projects will be funded with \$2.5 million, which DEP and NOAA recovered in 1999 from parties responsible for the spill. Other restoration projects that address injuries to natural resources such as birds, sea turtles and mangroves have already been completed or are underway.

"This range of worthwhile projects, selected with the input of the impacted community, will improve the quality of life for local residents and visitors to the shorelines of Pinellas County," said DEP Deputy Secretary Kirby Green. "We're thrilled to see these improvements begin to take shape."

The projects identified in the plan include dune walkovers, boardwalks and walkways, habitat creation and restoration and new fishing piers. Local municipalities, including St. Pete Beach, Madeira Beach, Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, Treasure Island, Redington Beach and Pinellas County are the project sponsors.

"These restoration projects will create and protect shoreline habitats while at the same time increase public access to some of Florida's most exceptional beaches and shorelines for a variety of recreational and educational activities," said Bill Hogarth, Deputy Assistant Administrator for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service. "The plan also provides testament to the invaluable role of an involved public in shaping good restoration decisions. The communities affected by the spill were all very active in the development of this plan."

The selection of these restoration projects represents one of the final steps in the natural resource damage assessment process initiated after the August 1993 spill, when 32,000 gallons of jet, diesel fuel and gasoline, and 330,000 gallons of number 6 fuel oil were discharged into Boca Ciega Bay, lower Tampa Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico.

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The restoration projects, listed by sponsor, are:

"More Protection, Less Process"

Website: www.floridadep.com

City of St. Pete Beach:

- Rehabilitation of the fishing pier at 7th Ave. & Blind Pass Way
- Construction of a new fishing pier at Blind Pass Park (9300 Blind Pass Road)
- Construction of a pedestrian walkway at Gulf Way in Pass-a-Grille
- Construction of a new boardwalk at the existing beach access at Beach Plaza and 68th Ave. (Upham Beach)
- Rehabilitation and enlargement of the public boat ramp near the Don Cesar Hotel

City of Madeira Beach:

- Development of the new Madeira Beach Shoreline Park to include walkways and boardwalks connecting outdoor interpretative/educational displays, two new fishing piers, mangrove shoreline restoration and other native vegetation enhancements.

City of Indian Rocks Beach:

- Construction of a public walkway/dune walkover at an existing beach access site at Central Avenue
- Construction of a boardwalk with four circular platforms and four rectangular extensions through mangrove habitat at the Indian Rocks Beach Nature Preserve

Town of Indian Shores:

- Construction of new, higher and wider dune walkovers at four existing access sites: 197th Ave.; 196th Ave.; 193rd Ave.; and 190th Ave. The new walkover at 193rd Ave. will serve as an access ramp for emergency vehicles and rescue boats.

City of Treasure Island:

- Development of the Sunset Vista Trailhead Park at 97th Ave. and Gulf Blvd. to include planting native dune vegetation to restore dune communities and construction of limited walkways and an observation deck integrated into the dune restoration.
- Create a Treasure Island Boardwalk Trail (North Branch and South Branch) extending from the existing trail northward from 127th Ave. to 119th Ave. and southward from 104th Ave. to 97th Ave.

Town of Redington Beach:

- Construction of new, elevated dune walkovers at three existing access sites: 163rd Ave., 162nd Ave., and 158th Ave.

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Pinellas County:

- Construction of an elevated boardwalk and new fishing pier under the Park Street Bridge at the Park Street Boat Ramp
- Creation of a near-shore oyster reef in shallow waters of Boca Ciega Bay, adjacent to War Veterans Memorial Park

Copies of the RP/EA are available online at: www.dep.state.fl.us/law or www.darp.noaa.gov. Copies are also available by mail through the NOAA Restoration Center - Southeast Region Attn: John Iliff, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., Suite 114, St. Petersburg, FL 33702 or from the Department of Environmental Protection - Bureau of Emergency Response, Attn: Jane Urquhart-Donnelly; 8402 Laurel Fair Circle, Suite 110; Tampa, FL 33610. For printed copies, please fax request to: 727-570-5390 (NOAA) or 813-744-6464 (FDEP).

NOAA serves as a trustee on behalf of the public to restore natural resources injured from oil spills, hazardous substance releases, and physical impacts such as ship groundings. NOAA's trustee responsibilities are implemented by the Damage Assessment and Restoration Program, a multi-office NOAA program involving the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Ocean Service, and the Office of General Counsel.