



Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

On April 20, 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill set into motion the largest Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) in history. A NRDA is the process used by natural resource trustees to develop the public's claim for natural resource damages against the party or parties responsible for the spill and to seek compensation for the harm done to natural resources and services they provide. It also provides for the development of a restoration plan or series of plans to restore or replace those resources.

What is a PEIS?

A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or PEIS, will serve as the core document for planning restoration actions associated with the spill and for ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Its purpose is to provide an analysis of potential environmental effects associated with the implementation of the types of proposed restoration projects.

The PEIS allows the *Deepwater Horizon* NRDA trustees to maximize efficiency for restoration planning by providing a foundation for satisfying legal mandates and developing specific restoration activities.

A PEIS also helps focus complex restoration needs across the region to help generate more effective restoration projects. It also streamlines the implementation of future projects.

The trustees initiated this PEIS on February 17, 2011. It is regional in scope and will cover a variety of ecosystems and activities. Through the PEIS, the trustees will evaluate a range of restoration categories that could be used to compensate the public for the resources injured due to the spill or related response activities, as well as the services those resources provide.

Benefits of a PEIS

- Facilitates open, public dialogue to conceptualize reasonable restoration options before a restoration plan is developed.
- Encourages public participation in the identification of issues and concerns.
- Draws focus to complex restoration needs across the impacted region to help generate more effective restoration projects.
- Provides a foundation for subsequent project-specific NEPA analyses, which can expedite project implementation.
- Analyzes the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of implementing restoration.
- Ensures a more efficient and cost-effective process.

The final PEIS will serve as a comprehensive scientific planning and organizational tool for fulfilling legal mandates and developing and evaluating the impacts of specific restoration activities.

Opportunities for the public to participate in this process are being offered in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations at 40 C.F.R. 1502.19.

How is the Public Involved?

Public involvement is an important component of the PEIS process. By attending public meetings and/or submitting comments, the public assists in identifying restoration categories and/or types that could restore, rehabilitate, replace or acquire the equivalent of resources or services that may be determined to have been injured by the spill.

Comments, ideas, suggestions and recommendations from the public that help document the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts of restoration implementation will be incorporated into a draft PEIS. Following this, a second comment period will provide an opportunity for the public to review and provide additional input concerning the draft PEIS document. Comments on the draft PEIS will then be considered and incorporated, as applicable, into the final PEIS. The PEIS is currently scheduled for completion in 2012.

The comments received from the public for the *Deepwater Horizon* PEIS will be made a part of the administrative record. You may review the comments that meet the website publication guidelines for the PEIS at www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/see-what-others-are-saying.

PEIS Public Scoping Process

The public restoration scoping process included meetings held in March and April 2011 across the Gulf of Mexico region and in Washington, DC. The purpose of the scoping meetings was two-fold:

1. To receive public input on the identification of broad restoration types that can address natural resources potentially injured by the spill, and
2. To receive public input on the potential environmental and socio-economic impacts that the federal government must consider before restoration is implemented.



NOAA began the formal scoping process by publishing a Notice of Intent to Begin Restoration Scoping and Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register* on Friday, February 17, 2011. The public comment period ended on May 18, 2011.

The Nine-Step PEIS Process

