

Executive Summary

EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), a Federal Advisory Committee (FACA), chartered a Gulf Coast Restoration Workgroup in November 2010. The purpose of the LGAC Gulf Coast Restoration Workgroup is to give local government officials the opportunity to provide input and recommendations on outreach to, and assistance for, Gulf Coast communities in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of restoration efforts as well as planning and restoration needs, including opportunities for local government partnerships and identifying silos in federal program. The workgroup consistently engages local governments, stakeholders, and communities throughout the Gulf Coast region and provides these groups an opportunity to share their needs and viewpoints on the issues the workgroup considers.

Chaired by Mayor Randy Roach of Lake Charles, Louisiana and Co-Chaired by Mayor Ron Davis of Prichard, Alabama, the workgroup consists of 18 local government officials representing cities and parishes/counties throughout the Gulf Coast region. The workgroup held its inaugural meeting on February 17, 2011 in New Orleans. The public meeting included a one hour public comment period in which the members heard from NGOs, local officials, and other stakeholders; the members also had the opportunity to have a discussion with the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force (GCERTF). Following that meeting, a series of public conference calls, and after receiving input from other local officials and associations in the Gulf Coast Region, the workgroup finalized its initial recommendations and comments to Administrator Jackson regarding Gulf Coast restoration. Many different viewpoints were sought and included in the workgroup's deliberations, in addition to the diverse communities represented on the workgroup. These recommendations are a broad reflection of the needs and priorities of local governments throughout the Gulf Coast in the restoration process.

The key point of importance for local government officials is to be involved from the beginning of the process. The workgroup recommends a bottom-up approach that utilizes local knowledge and expertise.

Additionally, the workgroup named a number of barriers to Gulf Coast restoration; mainly, rules and regulations are often too confusing, conflicting, overlapping, inconsistent, and overly burdensome, costing local governments undue time and expense. The workgroup recommends that existing programs, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), be revised to form a workable set of rules and regulations for the restoration effort.

Finally, the workgroup emphasizes the need for the GCERTF and federal government to identify a source of restoration funding. The workgroup recommends establishing a Gulf Coast Restoration Fund (GRF) made up of proceeds from BP, fees and fines, as well as other sources. Most importantly, the GRF must support the long-term restoration needs of the Gulf Coast.