

Gulf of Mexico Foundation

REGIONAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT/BENEFICIAL USE AND SMALL-SCALE HABITAT RESTORATION THROUGH THE GULF OF MEXICO COMMUNITY-BASED RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

BACKGROUND: Over the past ten years, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA), through the actions of the Habitat Conservation and Restoration Team (HCRT), has effectively engaged the five Gulf States and their federal, NGO and other partners in advancing Regional Sediment Management (RSM) and the beneficial use (BU) of dredged materials to inform and improve habitat restoration actions across the Gulf. To date these efforts have resulted in the publication of the West Galveston Bay RSM Study, an updated coastal Mississippi Beneficial Use Project Plan, an RSM Case Studies Report and the publication of the Technical Framework of the Gulf-Wide Regional Sediment Master Plan as a special edition of the Journal of Coastal Research.

Additionally, a grant from the EPA-Gulf of Mexico Program in support of GOMA's priority actions related to habitat restoration provided support to the Gulf of Mexico Foundation's Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP). The GCRP is a proven partnership of the five Gulf States, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation (GMF), EPA Gulf of Mexico Program (GOMP), the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program, and many private partners committed to habitat stewardship in the communities they serve. Over the years, the GCRP has funded 71 small-scale habitat restoration projects across all five U.S. Gulf States.

PROJECT SUMMARY: To build on the strengths of these successful programs, the HCRT is proposing to implement an RSM/BU program that generates more beneficial use projects in all the Gulf States while facilitating the continuation of the community-based, small-scale restoration program. The GCRP has a long history of galvanizing communities behind restoration and stewardship. GOMA efforts in RSM have increased beneficial use of sediment resources, developed peer-reviewed technical resources, and laid the groundwork for managing sediment resources more productively. Leveraging these particular assets of two long-standing partners and doing so by investing in them as a joint venture will result in more sustainable restoration outcomes and continued community-level engagement.

Details of the project are as follows:

RSM/BU Implementation Support - GOMA will support the collection of sediment data and the development of local sediment budgets in support of state-specific and regional sediment management plans across the five Gulf States. Funds will also be provided to sub-grantees in order to facilitate the implementation of habitat restoration through BU associated with existing dredging projects.

RSM/BU Data Management - During the course of its RSM/BU efforts, sediment source data management has repeatedly been identified as a Gulf-wide issue. Therefore, GOMA has identified a long-term goal of establishing a geospatial decision support tool (DST) that can inform local and regional

BU and habitat restoration projects. The relevant GOMA priority issue teams, in coordination with the many regional stakeholders that form the larger GOMA network, will establish such a tool. The GOMA teams will partner to capitalize on GOMA data management expertise and assets, such as the established GOMAportal.

Small-Scale Habitat Restoration - Through the existing GCRP Partnership, GOMA will support small scale estuarine restoration projects around the Gulf, using RSM/BU sites and principles identified through the GOMA products as much as possible.

IMPLEMENTATION: The GMF has served as the facilitator for both the HCRT and the GCRP since their inception. The GMF has provided excellent services to both programs and has proven to be a diligent steward of the funds allocated to these programs. Therefore, GOMA proposes that funding go directly to the GMF to coordinate the specific actions outlined in this proposal under the oversight of a steering committee led by GOMA state leads. The GOMA state leads will be responsible for all decision making, including the selection of projects and contractors and the allocation of program funds. The GMF will provide a program administrator and will utilize its existing frameworks to implement the state-directed grant activities.

NEED: Through its partnerships, GOMA has identified RSM/BU data management, a DST, and small-scale habitat restoration as priority issues across the five U.S. Gulf of Mexico States. The need for smaller-scale project support has continued to be a great concern at the local estuary level, with a fear that smaller-scale, albeit important, projects may be likely to be left out of Gulf restoration efforts as larger projects are preferentially funded. Individual smaller scale beneficial use projects undertaken in partnership with local communities and industries can cumulatively play a very important niche role in restoration and re-nourishment of coastal habitats across the Gulf region when they are implemented consistently to utilize sediment as a resource alternative to upland or open bay disposal. Through support for this program, the Council can further the implementation of small-scale projects that address critical community and habitat needs at the local level through a connected regional program.

HOW IS THE PROJECT FOUNDATIONAL? The development of the RSM/BU sediment data management program will facilitate the implementation of a geospatially-based DST that can inform local and regional BU and habitat restoration projects across the Gulf for years to come. As this project builds on the existing relationships developed by GOMA and the GCRP for the past ten years, it will utilize existing programs and partnerships. As a result, small-scale community-based restoration will be advanced and efforts to implement beneficial use of dredged materials for habitat restoration will be furthered.

DELIVERABLES: Deliverables associated with this project include:

- RSM/BU studies, plans, project design and engineering documents and similar documents produced by selected sub-grantees in all five Gulf States during the five-year period proposed.
- An RSM/BU Project Data Management geospatially-based decision support tool (DST) that can inform local and regional BU and habitat restoration projects.
- GCRP habitat restoration projects implemented in all five Gulf States, pending the submission of high quality project proposals. GOMA will work with proposers to ensure the quality of submitted project ideas.

BENEFITS TO THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMUNITY: This project will benefit the RESTORE Council by benefitting the trust resources managed by state and federal Council members. Further, the program will direct funding to local communities to fund smaller scale RSM/BU and habitat restoration programs.

PROGRAM BUDGET: The GMF proposes to carry out this program over a five-year time frame. Below is the annual budget and total program request.

Program Component	Annual Budget
RSM/BU Project Implementation Support Program	\$500,000.00
Regional Sediment Management/Beneficial Use Project Data Management Program:	\$135,000.00
Small-Scale Habitat Restoration through the Existing GMF/GEMS-CRP Partnership	\$400,000.00
Program Management and Coordination	\$150,000.00
Total 1 Year Budget:	1,185,000.00
Total 5 Year Budget Request:	\$5,925,000.00