



MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

January 9, 2014

Florida Association of Counties
100 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

ATTN: Doug Darling

Manatee County has received a request from the Gulf Consortium Executive Committee to provide a letter which summarizes our greatest needs for expenditure for RESTORE Act funds as may be released to the Consortium as provided for in the Act. Manatee County supports the following general categories as priority for Manatee County and the southwest coastal region of Florida where regionalization benefits of similar projects in close proximity can be achieved:

- (1) Environmental Restoration
- (2) Infrastructure Projects focusing on Port infrastructure
- (3) Promotion of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast region

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (NEP) are assisting with coordination of a Southwest Florida Regional Ecosystem Restoration Plan. As a member of all three estuary programs, Manatee County is positioned to be a central partner in this effort. The Regional Plan has developed a prioritized list of environmental projects that would restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, water quality and coastal wetlands of Southwest Florida, consistent with the federally approved actions in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs) of each NEP and Gulf Ecosystem Restoration Plan goals. Manatee County's environmental projects are included in this strategic plan and constitute a priority need.

The RESTORE Act directs and authorizes the use of funds stemming from the flow of civil penalties assessed to the BP Oil Spill for a number of uses, including "Infrastructure projects benefiting the economy of ecological resources, including port infrastructure. The identification of port infrastructure as an authorized use in the RESTORE Act is virtually unique in that no other specific activity program or commercial sector was singled out in the more general statements of authorized uses of funding.

The Consortium has previously stated its preference for projects of regional significance, including those which would combine similar activities of individual projects under a joint proposal which would bring benefit to the Gulf Coast economy as a whole. As a coastal county with a major port on the Gulf of Mexico, Manatee County is in a unique position to offer up projects to improve port infrastructure in conjunction with the five other major ports of Florida located along the Gulf Coast.

Board of County Commissioners

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The staff at Port Manatee is working to develop an application for funds to provide infrastructure improvements at Port Manatee which provide much needed maintenance related improvements to existing docks and wharfs. It is generally recognized that similar maintenance needs exist among all of the gulf coast ports and Manatee's application could be readily expanded with the consent of the other ports into a project proposal that would request funding for the maintenance needs of all gulf coast ports in Florida. Because these maintenance requirements provide upgrades to existing facilities and would not substantially increase or provide additional capacity, funding for such a regional based application would not necessarily provide a competitive advantage of one port over another and would normally be considered as "leveling the playing field" by providing needed maintenance funding to each port in accordance with its needs.

The RESTORE Act authorizes funding for the "Promotion of consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region" and funding for "Workforce development and job creation". The Cortez fishing community located within Manatee County is unique along the gulf coast as a working waterfront, listed on the National Register of Historic Places and supports a vital component of gulf coast fish and shell fish seafood products. Manatee County wishes to convey its priority for RESTORE Act funding to support the viability of commercial seafood harvesting, processing and marketing, either singularly or in concert with other working waterfronts along the gulf coast of Florida.

If there are any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Charlie Hunsicker, alternate on the Consortium committee for Manatee County at 941-745-3727 and/or charlie.hunsicker@mymanatee.org.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Larry Bustle,
Chairman