

**Gulf County RESTORE Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting  
and Multi-Year Implementation Plan (MYIP) Project Submission  
Public Workshop Minutes  
Gulf County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Port St. Joe, Florida  
October 13, 2015, 4:00 p.m.**

**Attendees:**

Don Butler – Gulf County Administrator

Joanna Bryan – Gulf County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) – District 3

Jeremy Novak – Gulf County BOCC Attorney

Sherry Herring - Gulf County Clerk of the Court Office

Christie McCleroy – Gulf County Economic Development Council member

Warren Yeager – Gulf County RESTORE Coordinator

Guerry Magidson – Gulf County Chamber of Commerce\*

Tim Croff – The Star (Port St. Joe Newspaper)

Tony Justice – City of Wewahitchka\*

Frank Seifert – Citizen

David Warriner - Citizen

Patrick Farrell – Gulf Coast Property Services

Penny Weining - Friends of St Joseph Bay Preserves

Clarence Monette – Knights of Pythias, Chancellor Commander of R.A. Driesbach, Lodge #77

John Ehrman – Florida Coastal Conservancy and Friends of St Joseph Bay Preserves

Pat Hardman – Coastal Community Association (CCA), President\*

Penny Easton – CCA member

Walter Counts – CCA member

Kothesa Murphy – CCA member

Gene Behage – CCA member

Nancy Stuart – CCA member and Supporters of St. Vincent NWR

Lisa Johnston – Supporters of St. Vincent NWR

Natalie Shoaf – Historic Port Theater

Towan Kopinsky– Gulf County Tourist Development Center (GCTDC)

Jenifer Jenkins – GCTDC

Melanie Taylor – UF/IFAS Extension

Mark Knapke – Florida State Parks

Bill Carr – Gulf County Schools

Loretta Costin – Gulf Coast State College

Vince Bishop – South Gulf Fire and Rescue

Jon Hooper – Joebay Aerials

Dan Van Tresse – Friends St. Joseph Bay Golf Club  
Barb Van Treese – St. Joseph Bay Humane Society  
Stella Wilson – Dewberry  
Connie Lasher – Dewberry  
Rick Harter – Ecology & Environment, Inc.  
Jade Marks – Ecology & Environment, Inc.  
\* Denotes official RAC Member

**Minutes:**

- W. Yeager opened the meeting by voicing his appreciation for those in attendance, stating that public involvement in the MYIP process is critical and that there will continue to be opportunities for public involvement through the duration of the process.
- W. Yeager explained that the regular RAC meeting would be held from 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. and that after 4:30 p.m., Dewberry would review the application portal and explain how to submit a project.
- S. Wilson (Dewberry) provided a PowerPoint presentation (see [www.gulfcountyrestore.com](http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com) website) covering the following items:
  - Today's agenda.
  - A summary of the MYIP process and schedule, as well as where Gulf County is in the overall process.
  - A review of eligible entities, eligible activities, and County priorities
  - A summary of the Application Submission Portal
  - Tips for project submission
- Following brief introductions, S. Wilson announced that she would be doing a live walk-through of the submission portal.
- S. Wilson gave a brief overview of the Direct Component ("Pot 1") funds and described where Gulf County is in the MYIP development process:
  - Approximately \$2.846 million is available to Gulf County from the Transocean Settlement for MYIP Year 1
  - A total of \$18.406 (including the \$2.846 Year 1 Transocean settlement) million will be allocated directly to Gulf County over a period of 15 years, estimated to begin in 2017
  - Year 1 funds will be accessible to the County once the MYIP is submitted and approved by Treasury (estimated to be August 2016)
  - At the September 22, 2015, BOCC meeting, the BOCC approved the:
    - 1) County Needs Assessment document to outline the specific needs Gulf County would like to address with MYIP projects; and
    - 2) Project Selection Criteria to prioritize projects based on those needs.
  - Both documents can be accessed on the Gulf County RESTORE website ([www.gulfcountyrestore.com](http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com)).
  - Based on the Project Selection Criteria, each submitted project will be reviewed and will receive a numerical score. The RAC will deliberate and recommend projects to be

included in the MYIP, which will ultimately be decided by the BOCC before submission to the Treasury.

- Following this overview, S. Wilson summarized the particulars of the selection process:
  - There is a paper form for submitting projects, but the preferred method is online.
  - The Project Application Portal will open on October 19, 2015, and will close on November 30, 2015 (giving applicants six weeks to enter their projects into the portal).
  - The system will not allow an applicant to submit their project until all questions are answered.
  - If more information is required to rank a project, someone from the Dewberry team will contact the submitter.
  - Projects will go through an initial review by the Dewberry team before going to the RAC for consideration.
  - Projects submitted in 2015 will be for the first year of funding only. Projects can be phased, but the total timeline for requested funding may not exceed five years.
  - After the portal closes, public meetings will be held to keep interested parties informed about the review process.
- S. Wilson announced that a second public workshop would be held on Wednesday, November 4, 2015, at 4:30 p.m., at which time the Dewberry team will answer technical questions that project submitters may have about the portal.
- S. Wilson then reviewed the list of eligible entities and activities for the MYIP. This list comes directly from the RESTORE Act and is a Treasury requirement.
- S. Wilson explained that the process of receiving funds from federal grants is complex and that the Treasury has stringent requirements that must be followed.
- In the application portal, there is a drop-down menu with three categories:
  - Local government/utilities
  - Higher education
  - Non-profit (must have tax exempt status from the IRS)
- Applicants must self-identify as one of these three eligible entities to submit a project.
- P. Hardman asked if a federal entity could apply.
- S. Wilson explained that technically, a federal entity could apply, and the logic for leaving that possibility open is to account for situations in which the federal government is pursuing a project in the Gulf region, but needs a small amount of additional funding to complete it. In a scenario like this, the County would ultimately benefit by including the project in the MYIP and tapping into federal funding.
- W. Yeager reminded the attendees, that although a federal entity could apply, the BOCC will ultimately decide which projects are included in the MYIP.
- P. Hardman reminded attendees that no one is expected to get 100 points. The Project Selection Criteria is set up to promote comprehensive projects, so it is wise for the applicant to cover as many of the County's needs as possible and thus, score as many points as possible.
- After confirming that there were no further questions, S. Wilson began the live walk-through of the Application Submission Portal:

- Applicants are encouraged to follow the guidance document, which outlines the steps of the process.
- It is recommended that applicants fill out the blank application provided as a Microsoft Word document on the Gulf County RESTORE website ([www.gulfcountyrestore.com](http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com)), and copy and paste their answers in to the portal.
- Through the “Submit Project” link on [www.gulfcountyrestore.com](http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com), applicants can click on “Click Here to Submit a Project,” which will re-direct them to a new website where the portal is located.
- Six program links are located on the left-hand side of the screen: “Register,” “Log-in,” “Project Submission Guidance Document,” “Gulf County,” “U.S. Department of Treasury,” and “Downloads.”
- “Downloads” link includes a blank application in Microsoft Word format, a blank budget worksheet in Microsoft Excel format, and examples of a completed application and completed budget. These documents can also be accessed on <http://www.gulfcountyrestore.com>.
- The first step in submitting a project is registering an account.
  - The applicant will be asked to provide username and password. Passwords must contain one capital letter, one lowercase letter, one number, and one special character.
  - Dewberry can reset passwords, but cannot recover them.
  - When registering an account, applicants will be asked for a secondary point of contact. This person will only be contacted in the event that the primary contact cannot be reached.
- After registering an account, the applicant will be taken directly to the log-in screen.
- After logging in, the applicant will use four tabs across the top of the page to navigate through the application.
- To begin the application, select “Add a Project.”
  - First, applicants must name their project (limit of 30 characters).
  - Applicants must then provide a verifiable/validated street address for their project.
  - For projects lacking a street address (for example, projects that include an expanse of shoreline), an office address may be used.
  - There are two ways to provide an address:
    - ✓ Type in the address.
    - ✓ Type in a zip code or city name and edit the location by dragging the yellow dot on the interactive map to the project area. After the dot has been dropped near the project site, press enter. The nearest verified address will be filled in automatically.
  - The applicant must then explain how the project will be completed in the Gulf region. This fulfills the Treasury requirement that the project must be completed within 25 miles of the Gulf. Any project within Gulf County meets this requirement.

- Next, the applicant must identify the primary and secondary eligible activities of the project. Applicants can choose whatever activity best fits their project from the drop-down menu.
- The project title, address, statement of completion within the Gulf region, and eligible activity selection are Treasury requirements. The remaining questions are specific to Gulf County and are based on the County Needs Assessment that has been approved by the RAC and the BOCC.
- First, the applicant will answer a series of Programmatic Criteria. For example, applicants must explain how the project is in the public's interest. Projects must be on public property or must benefit the public through an easement. Applicants must also provide a schedule outlining the timing for project completion, with all funds being spent within five years.
- Next, the applicant will answer the Topical Criteria questions that fall within four categories: Economic, Environmental, Infrastructure, and Community.
- There is also a Bonus Category, which includes leveraging of funds. Essentially, more funding matched will result in more points.
- Finally, applicants must answer several questions about the logistics of project completion: Will permits be required? Will land acquisition be a part of the project? How will the applicant acquire that land? Will persons be displaced?
- Applicants may write N/A if a certain question does not pertain to the project at all; N/A must be entered or the application cannot be submitted.
- Applicants will have the opportunity to submit up to three attachments, which are an optional part of the application. Attachments are limited to 2 megabytes each and must be in portable document format (PDF).
- When applicants are ready to submit, they may click "Status" and "Submit Application."
- To save the application without submitting, applicants can navigate to the bottom of Tab 2 and select "Save Details." A green message will appear at the bottom of the screen when the application has been saved successfully.
- Following this summary, an attendee asked if it is possible to edit information that has already been submitted.
- S. Wilson explained that applicants must revoke their application from "submitted" status to edit it, and then can resubmit it. Revoking your application is also how an application can be deleted.
- S. Wilson then provided a brief overview of the scoring process:
  - Submitted projects will undergo the scoring process. Applications that are saved but not submitted will be disregarded.
  - Every project will be evaluated by a subject matter expert for each criterion. (S. Wilson gave the example of R. Harter scoring Environmental criteria.)
  - The subject matter experts will provide whole-number scores for their criteria.
  - Scores for each criterion will be compiled into a total score, and projects will be ranked according to those scores.

- Dewberry will then provide those scores and a slate of projects to the RAC, along with a dollar amount of funds available to put towards those projects.
  - The RAC will chose which projects they would like to include in the MYIP, which will then go to the BOCC for final approval.
- An attendee then asked about the timeline component of project submission; specifically, how will applicants know what dates to put on their timeline if they do not know when Treasury will release the money?
- S. Wilson explained that it would be wise to speak in general terms, rather than citing specific dates. It may be some time before the Treasury can review and approve the MYIP.
- W. Yeager followed up by reminding the attendees that getting the MYIP approved is a very detailed initial step, but the County is entering into a 15-year process. Therefore, applicants should not be discouraged if their projects are not selected for funding in the first year.
- S. Wilson remarked that a project that has been through the process once will have its score known and the applicant will be able to tweak the project and improve it before resubmission.
- M. Knapke inquired if the project submission would be an annual process and if applicants would be required to resubmit each year.
- S. Wilson and W. Yeager confirmed that applicants must resubmit each year.
- M. Knapke then asked if there is a limit on how many projects an applicant may submit.
- W. Yeager stated that there is no limit on the number of projects an applicant may submit.
- P. Hardman then asked if there is any place an applicant can go to find a list of ineligible activities.
- Although S. Wilson confirmed that there is not an official list of ineligible activities, the requirement of public interest should guide the applicants.
- There was a brief discussion about what activities are ineligible. W. Counts suggested that tax reductions would most likely not be feasible.
- P. Hardman inquired if there is a list of County-submitted projects.
- S. Wilson explained that one can go to the Application Submission Portal website and see all of the submitted projects on the interactive map. Each project will be plotted based on the provided address and will be accompanied by a brief project summary.
- P. Hardman confirmed that all of Gulf County is within the Treasury-appointed 25 miles from the coast.
- M. Knapke then asked about developing a budget, stating that applicants should aim for budgets that are fair and equitable.
- W. Yeager agreed that it is important to take the overall budget into consideration and to remember that the County will want to fund as many good projects as possible. Obviously, asking for half the available MYIP budget would not be a wise decision. Yeager stated that \$2.5 million is currently in the Pot, with an additional \$1.5 million anticipated in year one. In year 2, the budget is slightly lower, but in years 3 to 15 an additional \$1.5 million will be added each year.
- W. Yeager used this opportunity to remind the attendees that a project could be structured in phases if it is likely to extend beyond five years. He gave the example of a bike trail connecting

the boat launches, stating that this type of project would be ideal for the phase model. Applicants could request first-year MYIP funds for the initial phases.

- D. Warriner then asked about the distinction between private and public property.
- S. Wilson explained that there must be a deed or easement in place on private property to make it of public interest. She offered to e-mail the rules to those who have specific questions.
- P. Hardman brought up the fact that there are several Pots of money, and that this is just one of the opportunities for funding.
- A question then arose about whether or not other Pots have the same rules.
- W. Yeager explained that, in general, the rules are similar, but each Pot will have specific guidelines. The "Consortium Pot," for example will be divided in half. Fifty percent will go to the eight disproportionately affected counties (including Gulf County) and 50 percent will be divided among the other 15 counties. W. Yeager reassured attendees that more meetings will be held to guide the County through the process of accessing Consortium Pot funds.
- R. Harter brought up the importance of forming partnerships between different entities so that numerous versions of the same proposal are not submitted.
- S. Wilson added that any work that can be done by the staff of an eligible entity can count as funds provided by another source (other than RESTORE funds).
- D. Warriner commented, "Right now, it is set up as competitive...We are all competing for the same Pot." He inquired whether there would be an opportunity to get together with other potential applicants and discuss where partnerships may be formed.
- W. Yeager responded by stating, "We haven't thought about that, but we can facilitate it...possibly at the next RAC meeting on the fourth of November."
- S. Wilson said that Escambia County had done something similar. She agreed that the next RAC meeting and workshop could involve dividing into groups, with subject matter experts to mediate the discussions.
- S. Wilson and W. Yeager then stressed the point that all of the projects are being submitted for Gulf County, and in that regard, the process is not competitive. It is actually all for the good of the community.
- W. Yeager stated that an announcement would be published in *The Star* to help ensure that all potential applicants are made aware of the upcoming workshop.
- At 5:09 p.m., S. Wilson concluded the session, stating that she would go through the application portal again for those who came in late if they chose to stay.
- There were no further questions or requests to review the portal, so the meeting was adjourned.
- Points of general consensus:
  - The Application Submission Portal will open on October 19, 2015.
  - The next RAC meeting and workshop will be held on November 4, 2015, at 4:30 p.m.
  - At the November 4 meeting, applicants will be given the opportunity to break off into groups and discuss potential partnerships.