

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

1000 words

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James Madison said, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance" (https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/james_madison_135446). In Orange Beach we need to seek knowledge from our elected officials.

Searching the Internet I found \$192,416,759 in oil spill funds was approved by the US Treasury (USDT) and the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (AGCRC) for the State of Alabama's multiyear implementation plan for Gulf Coast Recovery (RESTORE).

The bad news is Orange Beach's projects did not receive one award for funding. This fact was never shared with the constituents of Orange Beach in a council meeting or in a press release.

Should we follow James Madison's lead, seeking knowledge over ignorance, asking who was responsible for administering grant applications, quizzing them, perhaps we were just outplayed or out-coached, and unable to get across the finish line. Our taxpayers should know why we were excluded from these monies, knowing our coast was directly affected by the oil spill.

2010 BP Oil Spill Cleanup on the Gulf Coast

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach



Image Courtesy of Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council

(<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/FINAL%20Alabama%20MIP.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-104533-013>)

- Fifteen projects were approved in their respective jurisdictions:
- Gulf Coast Center for Ecotourism and Sustainability, City of Gulf Shores, Baldwin County, Ala.
 - Aloe Bay Harbour Town Phases I, II and III, Town of Dauphin Island, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Redevelop Bayou La Batre City Docks Phases I, II and III, City of Bayou La Batre, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Water Distribution System Upgrades, City of Bayou La Batre, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Northwest Satsuma Water and Sewer Project, City of Satsuma, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Mount Vernon Water Treatment Plant (WTP), Town of Mount Vernon, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Mobile County Blueway Trail Development, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Baldwin Beach Express I-10 to I-65 Extension, Baldwin County, Ala.
 - Baldwin County ALDOT Capacity Improvements, Baldwin County, Ala.
 - Alabama State Port Authority Automotive Logistics/RO-RO Terminal, City of Mobile, Mobile County, Ala.
 - Historic Africatown Welcome Center, City of Mobile, Mobile County, Ala.

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

- Innovating St. Louis Street, Mobile's Technology Corridor, City of Mobile, Mobile County, Ala.
- Mobile Greenway Initiative, City of Mobile, Mobile County, Ala.
- Working Waterfront and Green-space Restoration Project, City of Fairhope, Baldwin County, Ala.
- Planning Grant to Amend Multiyear Implementation Plan, Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Ala.,

according to a report by Elizabeth Patton in Alabama Today

(<http://altdaily.com/archives/27619-u-s-treasury-approves-alabamas-multiyear-implementation-plan-for-gulf-coast-recovery>),

The map in Attachment 1 of the Alabama Gulf Coast's Final Report shows the finalists (<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/MIP%20Appendix.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-094829-497>).

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

Attachment 1

Direct Component Projects Included in Draft Multiyear Implementation Plan



ID	PROJECT	ID	PROJECT
1	Alice Bay Harbour Town Phases I, II, and III	9	Alabama State Port Authority Automotive Logistics/RO-RO Terminal
2	Redevelop Bayou La Batre City Docks	10	Gulf Coast Center for Ecotourism and Sustainability
3	Water Distribution System Upgrades	11	Historic Africatown Welcome Center
4	Northwest Satsuma Water and Sewer Project	12	Innovating St. Louis Street: Mobile's Technology Corridor
5	Mount Vernon Water Treatment Plant	13	Mobile Greenway Initiative
6	Mobile County Blueway Trail	14	Working Waterfront and Greenspace Restoration Project
7	Baldwin Beach Express I-10 to I-65 Extension	15	Planning Assistance - MP Amendment Development (not depicted on map)
8	Baldwin County ALDOT Capacity Improvements		

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

Image Courtesy of Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council

(<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/FINAL%20Alabama%20MIP.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-104533-013>)

The decision makers planned the process and evaluated the selections. The judging panel consisted of elected officials at the city, county and state level:

- The mayor of Orange Beach
- The mayor of Gulf Shores
- The mayor of Fairhope
- The mayor of Mobile
- The mayor of Bayou La Batre
- The mayor of Dauphin Island
- The chairman of the Baldwin County Commission
- The president of the Mobile County Commission
- The governor, who served as chair, with former Congressman Jo Bonner serving as Governor Ivey's representative in her absence
- The director of the Alabama State Port Authority, who serves as vice-chair,

according to a report by Elizabeth Patton in Alabama Today

(<http://altdaily.com/archives/27619-u-s-treasury-approves-alabamas-multiyear-implementation-plan-for-gulf-coast-recovery>).

Every decision maker secured funding for a project in his or her jurisdiction except Orange Beach. Are we so rich we can let \$192,416,759 in RESTORE funding slide through our fingers like grains of sand?

The diagram in Attachment 2 is a flow-chart view of the Project Selection Process

(<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/MIP%20Appendix.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-094829-497>)

Attachment 2

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

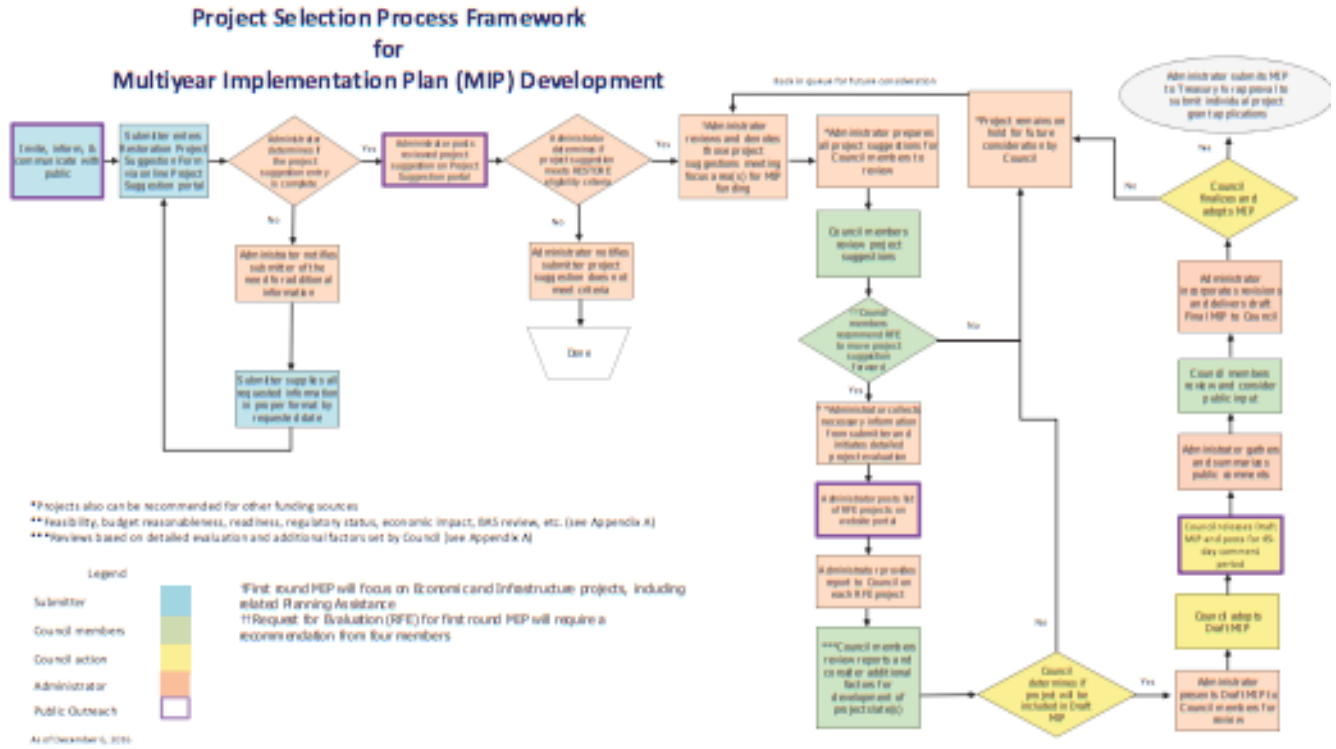


Image Courtesy of Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/FINAL%20Alabama%20MIP.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-104533-013>)

The final multiyear implementation plan (<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/FINAL%20Alabama%20MIP.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-104533-013>) details the parameters the decision makers faced, dividing up \$192,416,759 in RESTORE funds, according to the Federal Office of Budget Management (OMB Approval No. 1505-0250).

The key issue for constituents is why we were not kept in the loop at every step of the way, meaning notification at the beginning, middle, and end of each project submittal? Council is very good at promoting positive information about school progress, or bridges, but the silence was deafening, regarding project applications, and evaluations for RESTORE monies.

This diagram is a block view of the Project Selection Process (<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/MIP%20Appendix.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-094829-497>)

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

Process for Multiyear Implementation Plan Development (As of December 6, 2016)

Administrator confirms projects submitted meet RESTORE eligibility* and focus area(s) as determined by the Council.

Projects move forward via Council members' Requests for Evaluation (RFE).
A project requires an RFE from 4 Council members to move forward.

In-depth reviews conducted on RFE projects by applicable subject-matter experts.
Reviews will include project-specific factors, as applicable, such as how the proposal:

- Demonstrates benefit in relation to cost
- Addresses short-term vs. long-term economic benefit
- Demonstrates a need (impact of no action)
- Demonstrates does not create adverse impacts elsewhere
- Expands/promotes an existing industry or offers diversification
- Demonstrates short- or long-term job creation (direct and indirect)
- Demonstrates feasibility of success with measurable outcomes
- Demonstrates budget reasonableness
- Demonstrates post-implementation sustainability
- Addresses potential risks and uncertainties
- Addresses penalties, requirements and status of environmental compliance
- Addresses use of cutting-edge technology for construction/implementation
- Addresses readiness/length of time for completion
- Demonstrates it is based on best available science
- Addresses the evaluation and identification of outside funding sources

Project evaluations and analyses provided to Council for review and to provide context for project selection.

Additional Factors for Council Review:

- Availability and timing of RESTORE funding
- Potential for leveraging (funds and/or prior activities)
- Geographic location
- Disproportionately affected areas
- Included in a strategic/comprehensive plan
- Potential for funding from another source
- Annual recurring costs
- Scope of overall benefit to the community/region
- Appropriate implementing entity
- Ability to implement in phases
- Other factors

Based on Council review and guidance, Administrator prepares sample slate(s) of projects for the development of the draft Multiyear Implementation Plan.

Council approves slate of projects to be included in draft Multiyear Implementation Plan.

Image Courtesy of Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council
(<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/FINAL%20Alabama%20MIP.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-104533-013>)

Oil Spill Monies Lost in Orange Beach

Taxpayers should know what went wrong. I understand the process was very competitive, having counted 37 submissions (<https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/MIP%20Appendix.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-094829-497>) and 15 winners.

Perhaps Orange Beach's projects like: Restoration of Cotton Bayou and Terry Cove Canals (ID #84); and a Storm Water Quality Rehabilitation Project (ID #98) were too small or they lacked innovation, as suggested by the voting tabulation sheet (pgs. 43-44, <https://restorealabama.org/Portals/0/Documents/MIP%20Appendix.pdf?ver=2018-11-21-094829-497>)?

Losing out on \$192,416,759 in grants is more than just a little hiccup. It is a political disaster.

We had a seat at the table, and Orange Beach was the only board member to come away empty handed, having nothing to show from this round of oil spill reparations (\$192,416,759) that damaged the ecology of our coast.

Orange Beach has realistic project needs like a boat launch on the south side of the island, or a high-capacity drainage system when it floods in Bear Point. Orange Beach could have submitted for eco-trail improvements, extending from Hwy 161 to the canoe launch on Mississippi Avenue, or possibly building a state-of-the-art wildlife rescue facility on Power Line Road, or a five-bed trauma center with helicopter pad, essentially any single project paid for with RESTORE monies would have been welcome.

This was an opportunity lost, and taxpayers do not know why.

ENDS.

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