

# MDEQ Mississippi Gulf Coast Restoration Plan Webinar

## March 1, 2016

### Webinar Overview:

The webinar provided an overview of the Plan, MCERT, and the DSS restoration tool.

### MDEQ Presenters:

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**Gulf Coast Restoration Plan:** <http://msrestoreteam.com/NFWFPlan2015/#p=1>

The comment period is still open. Version 2 of the Plan will be released this fall.

### Goal of the Plan:

Create a plan that would result in a coordinated, systematic, and transparent process for sustainable ecological restoration in Mississippi that will direct funds associated with the GEBF and be applicable to informing ecological restoration funding associated with the RESTORE Act.

1. To meaningfully engage individuals and organizational stakeholders (e.g. government, academia, non-government) in a transparent and inclusive Plan development process;
2. To develop the Mississippi Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration Tool (MCERT\*), a science-based tool for identifying and examining ecological resources and threats for improved restoration planning and project sustainability; and
3. To establish program objectives and a decision-making process for projects based on the above goals to promote the long-term vitality and sustainability of all of Mississippi's coastal habitats and resources.

### OVERALL RESTORATION VISION:

- Restore and enhance ecological function and connectivity of habitats
- Restore and stabilize the populations of important species at sustainable levels
- Restore and enhance the ecological and hydrological integrity of our water resources.

The overall restoration vision is a result of series of *community conversations* and *resource summits* and will dictate the activities that will take place.

**Community Conversations:** 200 participants; 125 organizations  
(<http://www.restore.ms/community-conversations-final-report-2/>)

Themes emerging from the community conversations included:

- Water Resources Restoration and Enhancement
- Gulf Environment Conservation and Restoration
- Sustainable Ecological Restoration

**Resource Summits:**

(<http://www.restore.ms/resource-summit-reports/>)

Themes emerging from the Resource Summits included:

- Restoration should not be limited to public lands
- Oyster reef habitat was ranked the most important marine resource, followed by shrimp, seagrass habitat, and recreational finfish
- Sewer/wastewater and nutrient loading from the urban environment was ranked as the top threat to water quality

**The Plan is made up of 2 components:**

**1. Mississippi Comprehensive Ecosystem Restoration Tool (MCERT):**

<http://msrestoreteam.com/MCERTExplorer/>

MCERT is a science-based product that is community driven. It is a geospatial tool with 4 primary components:

- Landscape Conservation
- Water Resources
- Watershed Characterization
- Marine Restoration Planning

**2. The Decision Support System (DSS):** Foundationally built on ensuring sound scientific and sustainable projects.

In lieu of project lists, Mississippi's approach will utilize the DSS. The State feels the DSS approach offers more flexibility to respond to needs. Utilizing the DSS ensures that all projects meet NFWF's Standards:

- Project lists set an unfair expectation that a project will be funded eventually.
- Project lists could be continuously expanded and increased as new projects materialize.
- It is difficult to justify why a project got selected over another.
- Projects are not built whereby they drive at the sustainability of the project.