

ALABAMA STATE EXPENDITURE PLAN (SEP)

Project #3: Expansion of the Orange Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center/Gulf Coast Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center (Phase I)

Project Description/Summary

a) This project proposal consists of two components:

1) the immediate expansion of the current Orange Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center to address critical capacity needs for rehabilitating a variety of injured wildlife species (construction of flight/pre-conditioning enclosures); and

2) the planning and design of a larger, permanent Gulf Coast Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center in the City of Orange Beach, Alabama. The vision for this permanent facility is to effectively support the needs of the Alabama Gulf Coast region and potentially provide assistance for areas to the east into the Florida panhandle and to the west into Mississippi. It is anticipated the permanent facility will provide on-site rehabilitation and serve as a multi-facility coordinator for wildlife rehabilitation services on a regional scale for a variety of species, while also offering tourism and stewardship opportunities. This component of the project proposes the initial planning and design groundwork for such a regionally-significant facility and associated program coordination. As part of the development of the plan, Orange Beach staff will seek to partner with other coastal municipalities, state and federal agencies, applicable non-profits and NGOs, and universities to conduct a variety of analyses and benchmarking. Once these efforts are completed, a conceptual framework for the facility and its programs will be developed to economically and effectively improve our Gulf Coast region's preparedness and capacity to respond to incidents impacting wildlife.

As the planning effort (Component 2) described above is underway, previously designed construction activities to enlarge and enhance flight/pre-conditioning enclosures for the current Orange Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center will be implemented (Component 1).

Activities also include the comprehensive administration of this grant, including, but not *limited to*, *project development and oversight, contracting, and sub-recipient monitoring*.

- a. **Need:** *Across the northern Gulf Coast, there are but a few small-scale wildlife rehabilitation facilities. Inter-facility coordination is sporadic. The DWH disaster highlighted a significant need for a permanent wildlife rehabilitation program and facility to not only support Alabama's coastal area, but to also serve as a resource for the Gulf Coast region. It should be noted that between Ft Walton Beach, FL and Orleans Parish, Louisiana, there are five wildlife rehabilitation services advertised online (<https://wildliferehabinfo.org>), three in coastal Alabama and two in coastal Mississippi. However, some are individuals that only transport injured wildlife, and some web links are no longer active. The US Fish and Wildlife Service provides reliable contact, but limited regular coordination between facilities, NGOs, and individual service providers. In 2012, the City of*

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Orange Beach took preliminary steps to develop a wildlife program and constructed a state and federally permitted interim rehabilitation facility suitable for the initial intake of all species. Due to its size (1,400 sq. ft. plus outside enclosure space), capacity is limited; however, it is strategically positioned on the Gulf Coast. Orange Beach is located on America's southern coastline, in the heart of the Mississippi Flyway. This area also catches spillover from the Atlantic Flyway migration routes as birds are preparing for or returning from a long, overwater journey. Coupled with extreme storm events, human development impacts, and catastrophic disasters such as the DWH oil spill, annual migrations of birds and sea turtles, combined with our coastline's significance to shorebirds, seabirds, and waterfowl make Orange Beach an ideal location for a rehabilitation and education program. Looking to the future, coastal populations are projected to continue growing with associated human-induced impacts to wildlife. Since the DWH spill, Alabama coastal tourism has seen more than six million visitors annually, offering an exceptional opportunity to combine needed wildlife rehabilitation services with public outreach & education.

Purpose: The overall project purpose is to plan and design a permanent wildlife rehabilitation facility with the ability and capacity to coordinate and respond to injured, ill, and orphaned wildlife incidents on a regional level and to increase program awareness, disseminate educational messaging, and improve passive prevention/mitigation efforts. In addition, this project will fund the immediate construction of flight/pre-conditioning enclosures and equipment for use in the existing Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center.

Objectives: The primary objectives of this project are:

- Complete the expansion of the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center to provide greater capacity for rehabilitation of a variety of species;
 - Determine the feasibility of building a Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center and its programs to serve the northern Gulf Coast region; and
 - Develop concepts for a regionally-scaled Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center facility and associated programs.
- b. This activity is located in the Gulf Coast Region and will be implemented within the City of Orange Beach, Alabama.
- c. This project is expected to begin 7/1/2019 and end 12/31/2020 (18 months).
- d. This project will be implemented by the City of Orange Beach.
- b) This project will assist in the economic recovery of Orange Beach, Alabama and the Gulf Coast region by promoting long-term resilience and recovery for wildlife impacted by natural disasters, such as floods and hurricanes. It will also provide some short-term job opportunities and promote regional education and tourism.

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Eligibility and Statutory Requirements

This activity is located in the Gulf Coast Region and is eligible for Spill Impact Component funding under Category #1 - Restoration and protection of the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region (primary). Secondary activities include Category #2 - Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, and natural resources; Category #3 - Implementation of a federally approved marine, coastal, or comprehensive conservation management plan, including fisheries monitoring; Category #4 - Workforce development and job creation; Category #6 – Infrastructure projects benefiting the economy or ecological resources, including port infrastructure; Category #8 - Planning Assistance; and Category #10 - Promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast region, including recreational fishing.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives

This project is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan goals:

- Goal 1: Restore and Conserve Habitat – Restore and conserve the health, diversity, and resilience of key coastal, estuarine, and marine habitats;
- Goal 3: Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources.
- Goal 4: Enhance Community Resilience – Build upon and sustain communities with capacity to adapt to short- and long-term changes; and
- Goal 5: Restore and Revitalize the Gulf Economy – Enhance the sustainability and resiliency of the Gulf economy.

This project supports the following Comprehensive Plan objectives:

- Objective 1: Restore, Enhance, and Protect Habitats - Restore, enhance, and protect the extent, functionality, resiliency, and sustainability of coastal, freshwater, estuarine, wildlife, and marine habitats;
- Objective 3: Protect and Restore Living Coastal and Marine Resources – Restore and protect healthy, diverse, and sustainable living coastal and marine resources including finfish, shellfish, birds, mammals, reptiles, coral, and deep benthic communities;
- Objective 5: Promote Community Resilience – Build and sustain Gulf Coast communities' capacity to adapt to short- and long-term natural and man-made hazards, particularly increased flood risks associated with sea-level rise and environmental stressors. Promote ecosystem restoration that enhances community resilience through the re-establishment of non-structural, natural buffers against storms and flooding; and
- Objective #6: Promote Natural Resource Stewardship and Environmental Education – Promote and enhance natural resource stewardship efforts that include formal and informal educational opportunities, professional development and training, communication, and actions for all ages.

Major Milestones

- a) Milestone 1: Identify and select implementation team

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- b) Milestone 2: Complete expansion of existing Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center.
- c) Milestone 3: Identify successful keystone programs/facilities in the United States and surrounding areas
- d) Milestone 4: Complete feasibility assessment for Gulf Coast Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center
- e) Milestone 5: Develop and implement necessary MOUs/agreements with partners.
- f) Milestone 6: Develop conceptual facility/program
- g) Milestone 7: Complete procurement for architectural, engineering, and economic needs
- h) Milestone 8: Produce a final product consisting of preliminary program/facility design, cost estimates, benefits analysis, and economic/environmental studies for a potential Phase II project

Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

The anticipated outcome of the Orange Beach Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center/Gulf Coast Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center (Phase I) will be:

- Expansion of the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center and the development of a needs assessment and plan to construct a regional Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center

Table 4. Proposed Projects Success Criteria/Metrics/Outcomes

Activity	Anticipated Project Success Criteria/Metrics	Short-term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Expansion of Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center and development of plan for a regional Gulf Coast Wildlife and Interpretive Center	Complete existing facility expansion Complete needs assessment Complete plans for engineering and design of permanent facility	Improved regional coordination of rehabilitation of wildlife Increased capacity for rehabilitation Updated facility with stewardship opportunities Enhanced tourism opportunities	Improve regional preparedness and resiliency Restoration of wildlife habitat Mitigation of damage to fish and wildlife

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Additional success criteria capturing the ecological benefits of this project will be selected at the grant application stage.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) For existing facility expansion, provide evidence to ADCNR that all required permits were obtained (including State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO))
- b) For proposed regionally-scaled facility planning, submit completed needs assessment and proposed facility design and programming to ADCNR
- c) Submit results of bid process to ADCNR prior to awarding contracts
- d) ADCNR will conduct periodic onsite reviews during construction
- e) Submission of quarterly and final reports
- f) Post construction monitoring as required

Best Available Science

This project entails the infrastructure expansion of an existing program currently regulated and permitted by the State of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The state and federal regulations operate according to the standards adopted by the National Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation, 4th edition, 2012).

This project is consistent with the values and recommendations set forth in the Comprehensive Conservation & Management Plan, available on the MBNEP [website](#).

Budget/Funding

- a) Estimated Cost of the Project and Amount to be Requested from Oil Spill Impact Component Funds: \$472,255 (65-75% - Planning, 35-25% - Implementation). While it is noted that funding available under a grant award cannot exceed the amount described in the SEP for this project, the percentages listed in this section are estimated and will be more clearly cultivated in the grant application.
- b) No other funding sources are anticipated at this time.

Partnerships/Collaboration (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

Leveraged Resources (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

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Funds Used As Non-Federal Match (if applicable)

Not applicable at this time.

Other

Not applicable at this time.



Figure 3. The Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center/Gulf Coast Wildlife Recovery and Interpretive Center will be located in Orange Beach, Alabama.