

**Summary of US EPA Office of Research Development/National Center for  
Environmental Research Grants Process Workshop  
Dillard University, New Orleans, LA and via Webcast  
October 28, 2010**

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**Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative**

British Petroleum (BP) has dedicated \$500,000,000 over a 10-year period to address independent science research on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. These funds comprise the endowment of the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GRI). BP is in the process of handing off the administration of the GRI to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (Alliance), comprised of representatives of the five states of the Gulf Coast (FL, AL, MS, LA, TX) as well as Mexico. When the handoff process is complete, BP will no longer be involved in the GRI so that independent research can be conducted free of BP's influence.

To date, \$40M in fast-track monies have been administered from the \$500M fund in the form of block grants during June – August 2010 to the following entities:

Louisiana State University, the Florida Institute of Oceanography, the Northern Gulf Institute, the National Institutes of Health, and the Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium.

Because the BP fund of \$500M is intended to be level-loaded, these funds account for most of the Year 1 endowment.

The key provisions of the remainder of the GRI are that the research is to be conducted primarily by academic institutions of the Gulf Coast states and that the research awards will be made by means of a National Science Foundation-type peer-review process.

At present an Executive Committee is being assembled who will be in charge of awarding the GRI funds. This committee will be comprised of 20 members, 10 of whom will be chosen by BP and ten of whom will be recruited by the Alliance with emphasis on scientific experts from the Gulf Coast states. The committee members will not be permitted to submit proposals to the GRI. To date only six members have been seated.

**Projected Timeline of GRI Funding**

The Executive Committee once seated will draft the RFP for projects to be funded in years 2-4 (annually renewable based on performance). Target date for release of the RFP is December 2010.

- Electronic-submission proposal deadline target date February 1, 2011.
- Funding decision announcement target date April 1, 2011.
- Project start date June 1, 2011.

Receipt of proposals and solicitation/coordination of peer reviewers and reviews will be conducted by the Alliance. The Executive Committee will make the funding decisions based on the reviewers' comments.

**Emphasis will be on collaborative and/or multidisciplinary proposals.**

The GRI is for "science research" as opposed to "education/outreach." The NIH funding includes funding for the latter.

**Priority themes to be funded are:**

- The physical distribution and ultimate fate of contaminants associated with the Deepwater Horizon incident.
- The chemical evolution and biological degradation of the contaminants.
- The environmental effects of the contaminants on Gulf of Mexico ecosystems, and the science of ecosystem recovery.
- Technology developments for improved detection, characterization, mitigation, and remediation of offshore oil spills.
- Integration of the previous four themes in the context of human health.

After Year 4, these themes may be "tweaked."

Web site of 09/29/10 press release on the establishment of the GRI:

<http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2012968&contentId=7065262>

(Strangely, no source was identified during this workshop as to *where* the GRI RFP will be released.)

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## **US EPA Oil Spill Research RFA**

EPA received \$2,000,000 to fund research on the effects of the oil spill. EPA will be looking to fund both research/technical projects as well as community-outreach projects.

The RFA was set to be posted by now; then EPA received word that the National Science Foundation intends to partner with EPA on this initiative. Now the target date for the RFA is December 2010, with a tentative proposal due date of May 2011.

Although the scale of funding has not been completely determined, there is the possibility of a set-aside for smaller-scale projects (approx. \$50,000 – 100,000).

The web site where the RFA will be posted is:

<http://www.epa.gov/ncer/rfa/>

That page also describes other open funding competitions and research fellowships.