

The background of the slide is a photograph of a vast, calm ocean under a clear sky. A bright, glowing horizon line separates the deep blue water from the lighter blue sky, creating a serene and expansive atmosphere. The text is centered over this image.

BP Research Funding-Gulf of Mexico

Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative

www.gomri.org

Managed by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance

<http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org/>

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a partnership of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, with the goal of significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico.

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Research Themes

The objectives of the research will be to address the following five themes:

- Physical distribution and ultimate fate of contaminants associated with the Deepwater Horizon incident;
- Chemical evolution and biological degradation of the contaminants;
- 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; and
- Integration of the previous four themes in the context of human health.

Provisions

- The independent scientific research will be conducted at academic institutions primarily in the U.S. Gulf Coast states. However, appropriate partnerships with institutions based outside the U.S. Gulf region will be welcome.
- Funding will be for sampling, modeling and studies, not for acquisition of infrastructure.
- Funds will be distributed using the practice of merit review by peer evaluation as described in the 2005 Report of the National Science Board (NSB-05-119).
- Individual researchers will comply with professional standards as laid out in the National Academy of Sciences Publication – On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research (2009). The research will involve sampling, modeling and studies – not acquisition or construction of infrastructure such as ships or laboratories.
- All GRI-funded research will be independent of BP, and the results will be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals with no requirement for BP approval.

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“Last week, however, Colwell said that an initial RFP, aimed at consortia addressing any of the five key themes, might be released as soon as next week. She expects that Gulf research institutions will be involved in these consortia, although there will be no requirement for such participation. A second RFP targeted at individual scientists and smaller groups will be released later this year. The proposal review process will be modeled on a well-established system used by the National Science Foundation.

But the council still needs to finalize protocols for data management, and how time on research vessels will be allocated, before the first RFP can be released. Colwell says that buying a dedicated ship is not an option, but that a long-term lease is possible. She declined to give specific details about the challenges of developing the RFP, but says that the delays were largely due to expanding the council's membership and gathering everyone for a first meeting, which happened in December. Despite the slow progress, “I think that the outcome will be received with satisfaction by the scientists”, she says.”