

LA Gov: \$340M More From BP For Gulf Restoration

Janet McConnaughey, Associated Press

LAFITTE, La. (AP) — BP PLC has agreed to pay \$340 million to restore four of the barrier islands that act as hurricane buffers for Louisiana's mainland and create two fish research hatcheries in the state, Gov. Bobby Jindal said Tuesday.

The money is part of \$1 billion the oil giant agreed two years ago to pay for early restoration work after the [2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill](#) [1].

"We have been very frustrated by the slow pace of progress in committing these funds to restoration needs in the Gulf," Jindal told a news conference in Lafitte.

The \$1 billion is a down payment on restoration to be paid for through the Natural Resources Damage Assessment — an amount that will be set by the federal judge who also will set fines under the Clean Water Act. The first phase of that trial ended earlier this month; the second phase is scheduled to begin in September.

"I've been concerned that BP is dragging its feet on NRDA, possibly so that Clean Water Act fines pursuant to the settlement can be utilized for crucial projects that NRDA dollars should cover separately," said U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La. "This payment being announced today is certainly a good step to ensure that the NRDA money for which Louisiana should be the greatest benefactor is spent appropriately."

Trustees will decide how NRDA assessments are spent but 80 percent of the Clean Water Act fines will go to the states.

BP said in a news release that it had agreed months ago to projects described Tuesday and others, but federal and state trustees held off the announcement.

"The Trustees have identified several additional early restoration projects in other Gulf States that BP supports, but the Trustees, not BP, determine when to present these to the public for review and comment," BP spokesman Scott Dean said in a separate email. "Meanwhile, we continue to work with the Trustees to identify and evaluate projects and look forward to seeing more projects approved this year."

Under the April 2011 agreement, \$100 million will go to the five Gulf states, \$200 million to the federal government and the remaining \$300 million to projects deemed the most urgent.

Louisiana, worst hit by the oil, got about \$30 million of the \$70 million allocated last year.

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BP said \$318.4 million will restore Whiskey Island, Chenier Ronquille and two lobes of Shell Island in Barataria Bay and North Breton Island, which is part of the nation's second-oldest national wildlife refuge.

"This will nearly complete restoration of the entire Barataria Bay barrier islands," Jindal said.

About \$22 million will establish two fish hatcheries and research centers: one in Lake Charles; the other, in Pointe-a-la-Hache. Jindal said the Lake Charles center will monitor and study redfish, speckled trout and flounder and the one in Plaquemines Parish will do the same for baitfish, such as shrimp, croaker and cocahoe minnows.

U.S. Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La., said, "These important projects are long overdue. But to truly achieve justice for the Gulf after the Deepwater Horizon disaster, we need a resolution to the civil case against BP so the projected billions in fines can begin flowing."

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