

August 13, 2012

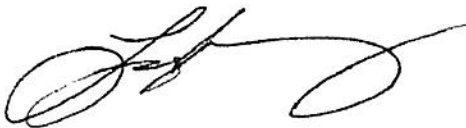
Dr. Stephen Bortone
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2203 North Lois Ave.
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL, 33607



Dear Dr. Bortone,

Please find enclosed a recent opinion-editorial that I prepared and which recently appeared in the Houston Chronicle, as well as, a summary report of the 2011 December Summit in which you participated. I want you to know that what began at the Summit continues to bear fruit. The passage of the RESTORE legislation is a singular moment in the history of the Gulf of Mexico. We have a real and rare opportunity to “reboot” the Gulf as I stated in the opinion piece. Your contribution to and work at the Summit is making a tangible impact to that process.

I sincerely appreciated your taking the time out of your busy schedule to have participated in our Summit 2011 State of the Gulf of Mexico program. There is much work to be done to keep us on a path to that future Gulf we all envisioned while at the Summit. I encourage your continued active efforts to that end and will keep you informed of all future progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "L. McKinney".

Larry D. McKinney, Ph.D.
Executive Director

A chance to reboot the Gulf

By Larry McKinney

Houston Chronicle

Updated 9:15 p.m., Friday, August 10, 2012

Congress has taken unprecedented action to assure the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. As part of the omnibus transportation bill that was recently signed into law, an amendment called the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourism Opportunities and Revived Economy of the Gulf Coast (RESTORE) Act was also adopted. With overwhelming support from both parties, this historic act guarantees that 80 percent of the penalties recovered from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill will return to the five Gulf Coast states to fund environmental and economic restoration activities.

We will not know how much is available until the case against BP is resolved, but it will be in the billions of dollars, possibly between \$10 billion and \$30 billion. This resets everything for the Gulf of Mexico, the long ignored third coast. The federal government has shamefully ignored the Gulf for years while it expended significant dollars to address problems on the East and West coasts and the Great Lakes. This is despite the fact that the Gulf of Mexico is the single most valuable body of water touching the U.S. and vital to the energy security, economic vitality and environmental health of the country. RESTORE is a chance to reboot the Gulf.

The Gulf of Mexico can be a laboratory for the rest of the world, showing how a healthy environment and a vibrant economy can coexist. The Gulf annually produces 1.4 billion pounds of seafood and accounts for 44 percent of all recreational fishing in the U.S. At the same time, the Gulf is home to 47 percent of U.S. refining capacity and accounts for more than 50 per cent of domestic oil and gas production. Fifteen of the top 50 shipping ports are located in Gulf states.

We have come to take for granted the bounty we receive from the Gulf and few realize that it has come at great cost. We have lost half of our productive wetlands, seen annually occurring dead zones the size of some New England states, and increasing areas of coastal waters closed to full use because of pollution. RESTORE can turn this deteriorating situation around and assure a healthy and productive future.

We must take advantage of this opportunity. At the State of the Gulf Summit last December, the [Harte Research Institute](#) (HRI) gathered state and federal leaders from government, conservation organizations and business to find a common vision for the future of the Gulf. Thanks to leadership from The Nature Conservancy and Shell Oil and many other partners at the summit, we created a strategic framework that can make that vision a reality.

We also have the best available science anywhere to help guide restoration here in Texas and around the Gulf. HRI is a leading partner in the Gulf of [Mexico University Research Collaborative](#) (GOMURC), an

organization of the 78 leading marine universities and institutions surrounding the Gulf. GOMURC was formed during the oil spill for this very reason and is ready to help make RESTORE a success.

This is the time for all of us who love and depend upon the Gulf of Mexico to support actions to assure its future. We will not have such a chance again. All of the pieces are coming into place. RESTORE will provide the funding. We have the framework to guide restoration and the science to help assure success. We look to our political leadership to take advantage of the opportunity and to the citizens of the Gulf to get behind this unprecedented chance to assure the economic and environmental health and productivity for generations to come.

McKinney is director of the Harte Research Institute.