



SARASOTA BAY
ESTUARY PROGRAM
Restoring Our Bays

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**REGION'S NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS TO HOST LISTENING SESSIONS
REGARDING GULF COAST ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION**

SARASOTA, FL – The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program, the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program will host three Listening Sessions in April to collect public input related to future Gulf Coast restoration projects. Senior staff from the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force are using the sessions to help develop a report due later this year. The report will help determine the resources and funding priorities for restoring the Gulf of Mexico ecosystems following the Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010.

The three Listening Sessions are focused on collecting information from the general public and non-government agencies (Sarasota), local governments and scientists (Fort Myers), and private industry (Pinellas Park).

The first Listening Session is scheduled for Monday, April 18 from 5-7pm at Selby Auditorium located at the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus. The address is 8350 North Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. **This is the only session open for the general public.**

The second session is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19 from 9-11am at the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council in Ft. Myers. The final session is set for the same day from 3-5pm at the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council located in Pinellas Park.

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force consists of the following organizations: State of Alabama, State of Florida, State of Louisiana, State of Mississippi, State of Texas, Council on Environmental Quality, Department of

Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, Domestic Policy Council, Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

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***The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program** is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset—Sarasota Bay. Its unique program strives to improve water quality, increase habitat and enhance the natural resources of the area for use and enjoyment by the public. Sarasota Bay is one of 28 estuaries in the United States that have been named by the U.S. Congress as an "estuary of national significance." Partners include Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Southwest Florida Water Management District, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*