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Mabus Panel Recommends BP Funds for Gulf Restoration

An Obama-appointed group tasked with setting the direction for government efforts to restore the Gulf has announced its recommendation to create a Gulf Coast Recovery Fund to manage recovery efforts. Led by Navy Secretary and former Mississippi governor Ray Mabus, the panel revealed its plan on September 27th and quickly won approval from the President. The goal of the plan is to create a stable fund that will result in long-term restoration projects. President Obama took the first step of the Mabus plan on October 5th by signing an executive order establishing the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, to be led by EPA administrator Lisa Jackson. This group will begin planning for long-term restoration projects until Congress can establish a permanent restoration council.

Though Mabus did not provide an estimate of the overall costs of the project, it is expected to be in the billions of dollars. The money for the Recovery Fund is expected to come not from the \$20 billion BP has already vowed to set aside to compensate Gulf residents who lost property and livelihoods, but rather from anticipated civil and criminal liabilities levied against BP. Estimates for this sum range from \$5 to \$15 billion, depending on whether the BP is convicted of gross negligence – the conscious and voluntary disregard of the use of reasonable care – for causing the spill.¹

Endnotes

1. John M. Broder, *Panel Wants BP Fines to Pay for Gulf Restoration*, New York Times, Sept. 28, 2010, at A017.

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