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To: Interested Parties

From: Celinda Lake, Daniel Gotoff, and Matt Price, *Lake Research Partners*
Christine Matthews, *Bellwether Research and Consulting*

Re: Nationwide Survey Findings on Restoring the Mississippi River Delta and
Gulf Coast

Date: April 19, 2011

Executive Summary

A recent nationwide survey reveals an electorate which overwhelmingly supports a proposal to designate the BP oil spill fines and penalties collected from BP and others responsible toward restoration of the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast. Support for this proposal is both broad and intense, and traverses all the usual demographic and partisan schisms.¹

Underpinning public support is voters' perception that the environmental condition of the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast is not good, their belief in the economic importance of this region, and their conviction that it should be a top priority for the federal government to ensure those responsible – including BP – contribute to the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast's restoration. Moreover, this is a voting issue; voters are much more likely to vote for those in Congress who support this proposal, and conversely are much less likely to vote against those in Congress who oppose this proposal.

Celinda Lake, President of Lake Research Partners, says in regards to this data, "This issue is strong and intense for voters of all partisan stripes, and really taps into their emotions about how things are going in the country these days. Not only do they strongly believe in restoring the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast and holding BP and others responsible for the oil spill accountable for their actions, but they also understand the key economic role that this region plays across the country. This translates into overwhelming support for a proposal that designates the BP oil spill fines toward restoration of the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast."

¹ Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research and Consulting designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,006 likely General Election voters nationwide. The survey was conducted April 12-17, 2011. The margin of error for this poll is +/- 3.1%.

Christine Matthews, President of Bellwether Research and Consulting, points out, "Voters are united in their belief that the economy and the environment in the Gulf region were dealt a severe blow with the BP disaster and that fines collected from BP should be directed back to this region to foster its recovery. The data is very clear that Republicans stand with Democrats and independents in wanting the BP fines to go back to Gulf restoration, even when presented with the option to direct these funds toward reducing the deficit or other pressing issues."

Key findings from the poll are detailed, below.

Key Findings

- Voters overwhelmingly support a proposal to take the BP oil spill penalties collected from BP and others responsible and designate those fines for restoration of the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast.
 - Fully 83% of voters support this, including 69% who support it strongly. Just 7% oppose the proposal, and 10% are undecided.
 - Support is robust among all partisan demographic groups, with 90% (76% strongly) of Democrats, 84% (69% strongly) of independents, 76% (60% strongly) of Republicans, and 78% (62% strongly) of those who say they agree with the Tea Party movement in favor of such a proposal.
- Voters stand ready to reward those who support this policy, and punish those who do not.
 - This proposal is a voting issue. Fully 61% of voters would be more likely to support their Representative in Congress if he or she supported this proposal, while just 6% would be less likely. Similarly, 48% of voters would be less likely to support their Representative in Congress if he or she opposed this proposal.
- Voters believe the Mississippi River Delta is not in good condition, and they consider it a top priority that the federal government ensure those responsible invest in restoration.
 - Nearly three-quarters of voters (74%) say they believe that the environmental condition of the Mississippi River Delta is either just fair (42%) or poor (32%). Just 15% believe it is in good (13%) or excellent (2%) condition.
 - The degradation matters to voters. More than four-in-five (81%) say it is either an extremely important priority or a very important priority for the federal government to ensure that those responsible for the damage take steps to restore the Mississippi River Delta.
 - Even when presented with the option of using the money from these penalties on other problems such as paying down the deficit, voters still strongly believe the money should be spent on restoration. Fully 77% (including 63% strongly) choose the statement, "Some say that we should require that the oil spill funds go toward restoring the region most affected by the oil spill, which is the Mississippi River Delta, because it is the fair thing to do," while only 19% choose the statement,

“Some say that we shouldn’t set requirements on how this revenue is spent because we have a lot of problems that need to be addressed, like paying down the deficit.”

- Again, this is not a partisan issue: 79% of Democrats, 83% of independents, and 71% of Republicans choose the first statement.
- The Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast’s economic importance is recognized as critical by voters.
 - The vast majority of voters (84%) believe the Mississippi River Delta and Gulf Coast impacts the country’s economy very much (35%) or somewhat (48%). Just 13% believe it affects the country’s economy only a little (10%) or not at all (2%).
 - Not only are voters aware of the effect of the region on the country’s economy overall, nearly two-thirds of them (63%) believe this region impacts the economy in their part of the country very much (22%) or somewhat (42%).
- While voters are favorable toward environmental groups, they highly distrust oil companies generally and BP specifically.
 - Fully 58% of voters say they have a favorable opinion of “environmental groups,” and 63% say the same about the alternately phrased “conservation groups.” These positive numbers are in stark contrast to perceptions of “oil companies” (26% favorable, 62% unfavorable) and “British Petroleum, or BP” (24% favorable, 57% unfavorable.)