

Alabama Economic Development Partnership gets oil spill-related study grant

Published: Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 5:30 AM



George Talbot
By



View full size

Jeff Cain with Pleasure Island Properties in Orange Beach, Alabama, speaks to Gulf Coast Claims Facility chief Ken Feinberg during a town meeting Jan. 18, 2011 at the Orange Beach Recreation Center in Orange Beach, Alabama. The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama has gotten a federal grant to study economic impacts on 8 south Alabama counties as a result of the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. (Press-Register/Bill Starling)

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama said Monday it will use more than \$1 million in federal and private money to create economic development strategies for 8 southwest Alabama counties affected by the **BP oil spill**.

Under terms of the one-year federal grant, EDPA will partner with state universities and 2-year schools to identify industrial targets for each of the 8 counties and assess their transportation, workforce and health care needs.

"The oil spill affected countless Alabamians and business owners. And although the Gulf Coast counties were ground zero for

the spill, the impact is felt statewide, which is of even more importance during already challenging economic times," said Gov. Robert Bentley.

"The collaboration of the business community, government and universities represents the best of Alabama, and this strategic approach to economic development is why Alabama will emerge from this crisis a stronger, more competitive state."

EDPA said it was awarded a \$593,500 grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration "to assess economic development challenges and opportunities" in south Alabama counties, including Baldwin, Mobile, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe and Washington counties.

Oil spill study grant to be augmented with other money

The Birmingham-based agency said it would leverage the grant with \$400,000 from the Alabama Industry Competitiveness Foundation and the EDPA Foundation, along with \$78,000 in in-kind services from Aegis Technologies of Huntsville for a total of more than \$1 million.

As part of the effort, the University of South Alabama will conduct research to help the counties prioritize economic development projects and assist the University of Alabama at Birmingham in creating strategies to lessen the economic impact of health care issues.

EDPA president Bill Taylor said the grant fits with the agency's mission "to identify the intellectual capital in Alabama that can be applied to economic development planning and build a framework for future collaboration."

EDPA said in a news release that the project "connects with and builds upon" economic development efforts already underway in the region, including those by the Coastal Recovery Commission of Alabama.

"This opportunity couldn't come at a better time," said Ricky Mathews, publisher of the Press-Register and chairman of the recovery commission. "We are creating a Coastal Alabama Leadership Council to convene a broad range of business, nonprofit and government entities to convert the best ideas from our post oil-spill efforts into reality.

"This project will build on our momentum and accelerate our timetables. Supporting the EDPA and the grant's goals will be a top priority for our new council."