

The Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health: Timeline of Activities 2005-2006

September 2005:

- September 15: The Fund is created during a call organized by the Health and Environmental Funders Network. Penny Fujiko Willgerodt is on the call and offers to house the Fund at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.
- September 27: A late-breaking plenary session is held at the Environmental Grantmakers Association Annual Retreat in New Paltz, NY. The session is attended by over 100 funders. Monique Harden, a human rights attorney and environmental justice activist who had already been scheduled for a workshop session as a result of the efforts of Michelle DePass, Ford Foundation Program Officer, was available to speak from her perspective about the short-term and long-term needs. The Fund was formally announced and a few funders made initial commitments.

October 2005:

- The Fund's materials are developed and distribution among potential donors begins.
- The Fund is introduced widely throughout the philanthropic community, through individual meetings, announcements sent to funder affinity group listservs, and the communications of the "Hurricane Information Coordinator," an emergency position created to serve funders in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

November 2005:

- Penny Fujiko Willgerodt from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and Marni Rosen from the Jenifer Altman Foundation make a five-day fact finding trip to the region. They visit Mississippi (Jackson and Gulfport) and Louisiana (New Orleans and Houma) and meet with candidates for the Fund's Advisory Group.
- **The Fund makes its first emergency grant to Physicians for Social Responsibility Los Angeles to support a staff person in New Orleans to work with the People's Hurricane Relief Fund on environmental health and contamination issues.**

December 2005:

- **A second emergency grant is made to the Louisiana Environmental Action Network for the purchase of 3,500 sets of protective gear, including full body suits, masks, boots and gloves for residents returning over the holidays; gear was distributed to individuals through a network of community organizations in south Louisiana, including ACORN, Common Ground Relief, People's Hurricane Relief Fund, the Houma Nation and others.**

January 2006:

- Another trip to Louisiana (New Orleans and Baton Rouge) and Mississippi (Waveland, North Gulfport, Turkey Creek and Jackson) is made to meet and interview additional candidates for the Advisory Group. Approximately 40 people are interviewed.
- Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and the Environmental Grantmakers Association reach an agreement and the Fund retains Annie Ducmanis, who had

filled the emergency position of “Hurricane Information Coordinator,” as the Fund’s first staff member, to work with Penny Fujiko Willgerodt at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

February 2006:

- The 23-member Advisory Group of community organizers and grassroots leaders is finalized.
- **The Fund’s grantmaking is formally launched with \$10,000 grants awarded to the organizations represented or designated by Advisory Group members, in recognition of their outstanding leadership pre and post Katrina and Rita.**

March 2006:

- March 18: The Advisory Group and the Fund’s staff and advisors meet at Ashé Cultural Center in New Orleans. The meeting is facilitated by MaryKay Penn, a well-known African American organizational development professional that both Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and Ford Foundation have retained.
- The meeting participants finalize the Fund’s strategies, values, purpose, grantmaking priorities, and specifically the language of the RFP and the application form and process. An initial philanthropy training is also provided. The Conflict of Interest policy is thoroughly reviewed and signed by Advisory Group members.
- The final draft of the RFP and application materials are circulated and approved by the Advisory Group.

April 2006:

- The RFP is circulated widely, announcing the first two grant cycles with a May 1 application deadline and a June 12 application deadline.
- A website and easy on-line application are created and linked to the main page of the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors website.

May 2006:

- May 1: The Fund receives 63 grant applications with requests totaling nearly \$1.5 million. Applications are reviewed by the Fund staff and advisors, and sorted into four panels for review based on issue area and geography.
- Week of May 8: Applications are vetted by the Fund’s staff and advisors. Dockets are prepared and sent to all Advisory Group members.
- Week of May 15: Advisory Group panels meet via conference call to review applications and make grant decisions. Each call consists of four to six panelists. All calls are facilitated by Mary Kay Penn and attended by Fund staff and advisors.
- The panels select sixteen organizations to receive grants, distributing a total of \$200,000 to grassroots groups in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.
- May 22: All applicants are informed of grant decisions. Grant payments are processed and sent by May 26.

June 2006:

- Week of June 5: Fund staff (Penny Fujiko Willgerodt) and advisor (Michelle Depass, Program Officer Ford Foundation) travel to the region to meet with philanthropic leadership at the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps, and the Greater

New Orleans Foundation to share information and initiate potential partnership opportunities in order to leverage the Fund's resources.

- June 12: The Fund receives 60 grant applications with requests totaling nearly \$1.8 million. Applications are reviewed by the Fund staff and advisors, and sorted into five panels for review based on issue area and geography.
- Week of June 18: Applications are vetted by the Fund's staff and advisors. Dockets are prepared and sent to all Advisory Group members.
- June 27: the Fund is featured in a workshop at the annual meeting of the Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders as a model philanthropic response to disasters.

July 2006:

- Week of July 10: Advisory Group panels meet via conference call to review applications and make grant decisions. Each call consists of three to six panelists. All calls are attended by Fund staff and advisors.
- The panels select seventeen organizations to receive grants, distributing a total of \$250,000.
- July 17: All applicants are informed of grant decisions. Grant payments to be processed and sent by week of July 24.

August 2006:

- Fund staff and advisors will participate in commemorative events being organized by grantees and Advisory Group members in Mississippi, and will invite other funders to join as part of a funder delegation and site visit.

September 2006:

- Fund staff and advisors will participate in commemorative events being organized in New Orleans. Again other funders will be invited to join as part of a funder delegation and site visit.
- The Advisory Group will convene for a second in-person meeting to discuss the Fund's policies and funding priorities and conduct philanthropic trainings and briefings for the Advisory Group members.

October 2006:

- October 10: The Fund will hold a workshop panel at the annual meeting of the Environmental Grantmakers Association in California.
- October 26-28: The Fund will hold sessions and a reception during the annual meeting of the Association of Small Foundations in New Orleans.
- The Fund will conduct its third funding cycle for 2006 with the goal of distributing \$300,000 in grants.

November 2006:

- The Fund plans to convene a showcase meeting and donor briefing with members of the Advisory Group, to be held in New York City.