Section 40.302 of the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Act (OSPRA) requires the GLO enter interagency contracts with state institutions of higher learning for the purposes of research and development of oil discharge prevention and response technology, oil spill response training, wildlife and natural resources rescue and rehabilitation, computer models to predict the movements and impacts of unauthorized discharges of oil, and other purposes consistent with OSPRA. The Oil Spill Research & Development (R&D) Program is appropriated $2,400,000 each biennium ($1,200,000 annually) for those purposes.

Every two years, the Oil Spill Division R&D Program requests applications from state institutions of higher learning for projects that comply with OSPRA Section 40.302 and which would advance the development of oil spill prevention technologies and effective spill response tools that reduce industry, agency, and taxpayer costs while enhancing agency public perception and minimizing environmental impacts of oil spills. R&D applications submitted for FY26 and FY27 were reviewed and scored through a peer review process to determine which projects would best support the Division’s mission. Following that review process, the Oil Spill Division is recommending that the five (5) projects listed below be selected for funding and the GLO enter into contracts with these institutions.

**Texas A&M University - Fleet improvements to the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS) $677,005** The TABS network is the longest running operational ocean observing system in the Gulf of America. The buoys provide hourly observations of surface current speed and direction, surface ocean temperature and salinity, wind speed and direction, air temperature, humidity, and atmospheric pressure. While the primary function of the TABS network is to provide oceanographic data to support oil spill modeling efforts and response operations along the Texas coast, the buoys are also used for monitoring severe storm incidents and for search and rescue efforts. This project aims to improve the efficiency and dependability of TABS buoys through upgrades to buoy solar panels for improved longevity, standardization of communication hardware & software, installation of redundant location tracking units for positioning, improvements to sensor tower ruggedness, hardened infrastructure, and through replacement of meteorological and current velocity sensors. The result will be an improved fleet of coastal observing buoys designed for real-time 24/7 operation.

**Texas A&M University - Improving oil-spill forecast assimilating TABS observation into TXLA model $246,399** - Project will improve the precision and reliability of the GLO-funded hydrodynamic Texas-Louisiana shelf (TXLA) model and oil spill forecasts in state waters. Enabling assimilation of real world observations of wind, currents, temperature, and salinity from the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS) into the model will result in reduced uncertainties and therefore more accurate forecasts.

**Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi - Oil Spill Response Tools $556,727** - This project will create two Geographic Information System (GIS) applications to provide guidance on shoreline response activities, including what cleanup methods are practical in terms of effort, environmental concerns, operations, and waste generation for specific locations based on shore type, oil type, and time of year. One application will focus on the Gulf of America, one application will focus on Texas bay shores.

**Texas A&M University - Oil skimmer to improve collection efficiency of weathered oil at sea $365,336** The project aims to improve existing skimmer technology by building a skimmer system that produces shear-thinning high frequency waves to reduce the viscosity of emulsified oil, thereby increasing oil flow and recovery.

**Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi - ESI Updates: Priority Protection Areas and Human-Use Resources Maps $455,339** - Project will enhance the GLO's oil spill planning and response capabilities through updates to the GLO - Oil Spill Toolkit (toolkit). Information on biological resources such as marine mammals and herpetofauna and human-use resources such as boat ramps, ports, marinas, wildlife refuges, and water intakes will be compiled and updated. Priority Protection Areas (PPAs) are defined as priority coastal habitat areas to be protected during oil spills on the Texas coast. An analytical approach to update toolkit PPA datasets through workshops and data review with resource experts will be undertaken.