



Gulf of Mexico Alliance

REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE BLUEPRINT

February 2015

Who We Are

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a partnership of the five U.S. Gulf States, federal agencies, academic organizations, businesses, and other non-profits in the region. Our goal is to significantly increase regional collaboration to enhance the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The five Gulf States face similar challenges and concerns as they manage the Gulf Coast and its waters.

Within the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, a large network of partners works in teams to address priority issues in ways that a single entity cannot. *Leadership from the five Gulf States forms the foundation of the Alliance and each of the Gulf States has committed time and resources to its successful implementation.*

The success of the Alliance is also based on leadership from federal partners. Thirteen federal agencies, committed to supporting the Alliance, have come together as a Federal Workgroup under the leadership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI).

In addition, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance relies heavily on non-governmental partners, such as businesses, academic organizations and non-profits. Whether piloting new programs, or implementing full-scale projects, these partners provide the talent and resources needed to realize on-the-ground efforts.

Where We've Been and Where We're Going

In 2006, on the heels of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the five U.S. Gulf State Governors signed the *Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts*. Realizing the mission could only be achieved through diverse partnerships, the Alliance began recruiting members and still continues today. Ninety-nine percent of the *Action Plan* objectives were attained in just three short years.

In 2009, building on the tremendous success of the first plan, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance released its second plan, the *Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts II*. This five-year plan was more aggressive with objectives addressing the continuing issues affecting the Gulf region.

Today, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance is actively addressing the region's priorities. Ninety-five percent of the objectives of *Governors' Action Plan II* were accomplished and the Gulf of Mexico Alliance has started the development process for the third *Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts*. It will be a five-year plan combining new and ongoing regional objectives:

- provide forums for collaboration on priority issues,
- develop and modify tools to address objectives,
- track restoration efforts,
- identify opportunities for comprehensive monitoring,
- expand the Alliance network to enable strategic partnerships to fill needs, and
- administer a large oil-spill research program.





The mission of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance is to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico through increased regional collaboration.

What We Do

Our partners see value in tackling regional challenges and we believe collaboration brings exponential results. Through the network of diverse partners, we address issues tied directly to Gulf ecosystems and economies:

- improved water quality affects human health as well as the health of our natural resources;
- increased protection and restoration of critical habitat serves as a basis for sustainable seafood and tourism;
- resilient communities persevere when confronted with natural and man-made hazards; and
- healthy wildlife and fish populations ensure sustainable, commercial and recreational hunting and fishing opportunities.

To this end, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance addresses regional priority issues by bringing together varied talent, coordinating expertise, and maximizing the effect of funding. Our issues are identified through stakeholder engagement, and the U.S. Gulf States determine issues that are common priorities to all five states. After thoughtful consideration, the U.S. Gulf States determined a set of priority issues that the Gulf of Mexico Alliance is well-suited to address:

- Community Resilience,
- Data & Monitoring,
- Education & Engagement,
- Habitat Resources,
- Water Resources, and
- Wildlife & Fisheries.

How We Do It

Specific “Priority Issue Teams” are formed around the issues identified by the U.S. Gulf States. The teams address the issues through a collaborative approach with scientific, technical and resource management experts who have a broad knowledge base and considerable experience. Specific actions related to the priority issues are developed by the teams with approval from the Alliance Management Team. After 10 years of successful collaboration, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance’s Management Team re-evaluated our priorities and the resulting structure includes new teams to address issues associated with regional data and monitoring as well as wildlife and fisheries. The comprehensive list of priorities is reflected in the new team structure.

Priority Issue Teams

WATER RESOURCES - By combining focus areas of the Water Quality Team and the Nutrients Team, the new Water Resources Team will be able to address multiple focus areas related to water quantity and quality, including fresh water in-flows, human health issues (pathogens and mercury), and aquatic health issues (hypoxia, excess nutrients, harmful algal blooms, and impaired streams). This team is led by the State of Mississippi, Department of Environmental Quality.

HABITAT RESOURCES - The existing Habitat Conservation and Restoration Team will continue many of its successful actions and incorporate some issues previously addressed by the Ecosystems Team. Focus areas will include regional sediment management issues, continued sea-level rise modeling, living shorelines, and additional habitat status and trends. This team is led by the State of Louisiana, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE - The existing Resilience Team will continue many of its successful actions and explore others that have immediate effects on our ability to respond to natural and man-made hazards. Focus areas will include risk communication techniques and resilience assessments as well as coastal adaptation and planning. This team is led by the State of Mississippi, Department of Marine Resources.

DATA & MONITORING - The new Data & Monitoring Team will incorporate the water quality monitoring efforts and many of the data and data acquisition efforts of the Ecosystems Team. Comprehensive Gulf-wide monitoring will be a large focus of this team as well as data gathering and populating GOMAportal, and continuation of Gulf of Mexico mapping efforts. This team will be led by the State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection.

WILDLIFE & FISHERIES - The new Wildlife & Fisheries Team was developed out of a need to provide a venue for agencies and organizations working directly with wildlife and fisheries issues on a regional basis. Initial interest for this team includes regional biological objectives and monitoring for living marine resources. Team members will have an opportunity to develop additional focus areas. It will be led by the State of Texas, Commission on Environmental Quality, and coordinated by the Harte Research Institute.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT - The existing Education Team will shift its focus to providing education, outreach and engagement to the other team projects and programs. It will incorporate a wide variety of audiences including coastal trainers, outreach and extension specialists, and K-12 educators. It will be led by the State of Alabama, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and coordinated by Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

CROSS-TEAM INITIATIVES - Some issues are best addressed across multiple teams. Alliance teams will pull their resources to address three “cross-team” regional initiatives:

- Comprehensive Conservation, Restoration, and Resilience Planning
- Ecosystem Services Assessment
- Marine Debris

As always, involvement in the Gulf of Mexico Alliance’s priority issue teams is open and we welcome participation in the Alliance by Gulf stakeholders and other interested parties. We believe a robust set of stakeholders and participants in the Alliance improves the quality of our actions and leads to the most beneficial outcomes for a healthy and resilient Gulf of Mexico.

More information about the Gulf of Mexico Alliance
can be found at www.GulfofMexicoAlliance.org.



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