

Federal Support for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance

In response to the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, representatives from thirteen federal agencies convened to form the Gulf of Mexico Regional Partnership Federal Workgroup to provide support to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in addressing priority coastal and ocean issues facing the Gulf of Mexico region. The Federal Workgroup provides the venue for collaboration and integration of federal effort to effectively act on regional issues identified by the five Gulf States.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a partnership, initiated in 2004, by the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, with the goal of significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The Alliance currently coordinates closely with the Gulf of Mexico States Accord, to facilitate eventual collaboration with the six Mexican Gulf of Mexico states.

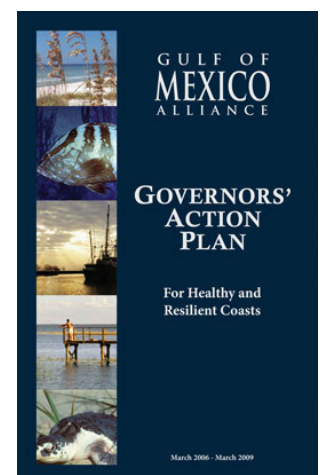
The Gulf States identified five priority issues that are regionally significant and can be effectively addressed through increased collaboration at state, local, and federal levels. These priorities represent a focus for initial action through the Alliance:

- Water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds;
- Wetland and coastal conservation and restoration;
- Environmental education;
- Identification and characterization of Gulf habitats; and
- Reducing nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems.

In the wake of the devastating 2005 hurricane season, the Alliance strongly emphasizes actions within these five priorities that support Gulf Coast recovery and rebuilding efforts, and that work to mitigate environmental impacts and economic disruptions from future hurricanes and other coastal hazards.

The Governors' Action Plan

The Alliance released the *Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts* on March 28, 2006, at the State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit, hosted by the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies and Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi. The *Governors' Action Plan* challenged the new Alliance partnership to make tangible progress over the next 36 months, setting the stage for a long-term partnership that can address an expanded suite of issues, culminating in a healthier Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and economy.



The Federal Workgroup

The Bush Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan (USOAP) recognizes the leadership that the five Gulf States have demonstrated in forming the Alliance and identifying regional priorities, and calls for increased integration of resources, knowledge, and expertise to address these priorities. Thirteen federal agencies committed to supporting the Gulf Alliance have been brought together under the coordination of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Federal Workgroup has the following objectives:

- Support Gulf of Mexico state leadership;
- Coordinate an integrated federal response to priority regional issues identified by the Alliance;
- Support Gulf Coast recovery and rebuilding and work to mitigate effects from future hurricanes and other coastal hazards;
- Maximize the impact of the federal response by identifying federal program integrations and delivering innovative solutions; and
- Build upon existing regional partnership frameworks in the Gulf, including the federal-state partnership frameworks operated through the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, the state Sea Grant programs, the National Estuarine Research Reserves, and the Northern Gulf Institute.

A "Regional Approach" Laboratory

The federal agencies represented on the Federal Workgroup bring diverse expertise and established experience – coordinating and integrating these capabilities will maximize the impact of federal resources. The Federal Workgroup will advance federal collaboration – in direct response to priority coastal and ocean issues identified by the Alliance – using the Gulf of Mexico as a "laboratory" for exploring better mechanisms for regional management, applying an ecosystem approach to management, applying integrated coastal and ocean observations for management purposes, and strengthening state-local-federal collaboration.



The Gulf of Mexico Alliance:

- ◆ Alabama
- ◆ Florida
- ◆ Louisiana
- ◆ Mississippi
- ◆ Texas
- ◆ Gulf of Mexico States Accord

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Partnership Federal Workgroup:

- ◆ Council on Environmental Quality
- ◆ National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- ◆ National Science Foundation
- ◆ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ◆ U.S. Department of Agriculture:
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - Forest Service
- ◆ U.S. Department of Commerce:
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- ◆ U.S. Department of Defense:
 - U.S. Navy
- ◆ U.S. Department of Energy
- ◆ U.S. Department of Interior:
 - Minerals Management Service
 - National Park Service
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Geological Survey
- ◆ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
 - Food and Drug Administration
- ◆ U.S. Department of State
- ◆ U.S. Department of Transportation
- ◆ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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