

Identification and Characterization of Gulf Habitats

Priority Habitat Information System (PHINS) Development Continues

Implementing Governors' Action ID-1

Working closely with the five U.S. Gulf States, USGS, USACE, and NOAA are collaboratively building a digital library and pilot spatial data viewer for Gulf region seagrass data and information. This Web-based product will allow state, local, and federal managers to improve decision-making through significantly increased access to spatial data. A beta version of PHINS is scheduled for release in the summer of 2007, in conjunction with the second Gulf of Mexico Summit. The PHINS development team met in August and developed a work plan outlining action items and commitments through the beta version release.



GIS and Metadata Training Provided to Gulf States

Implementing Governors' Action ID-1

Since the release of the *Governors' Action Plan* in March 2006, NOAA has provided coastal resource managers and technical staff in Florida and Alabama with four introductory courses in the basic use of GIS and two courses in applications of GIS to coastal management issues, including metadata training.

Habitat Characterization in Apalachicola Bay

Implementing Governors' Action ID-1

The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve, USGS, and NOAA are mapping oyster reefs, geology, and bathymetry within Apalachicola Bay, integrating side-scan sonar, interferometric swath bathymetry, and seismic reflection acoustic techniques with video imagery and traditional sampling. These habitat characterization data sets, to be delivered by spring 2007, will meet the local resource management community's need for comprehensive and up-to-date oyster, sediment, and bathymetric maps, which will support improved decision-making.

Reducing Nutrient Inputs to Coastal Ecosystems

Nutrient Criteria Conference Planning Underway

Implementing Governor's Actions N-1

The five Gulf States are planning the first Nutrient Criteria Conference to be held in mid-winter. This conference will focus on state, regional and national nutrient strategies, and address chlorophyll *a* and nutrient measurement methodologies.

Targeted Nutrient Reduction in Rebuilding Efforts

Implementing Governors' Action N-2

Through the actions of the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) and other state and local agencies, Louisiana has identified communities that need infrastructure rebuilding for wastewater treatment and targeted nutrient reduction through improved infrastructure planning and design.

Wetland Wastewater Assimilation Program Implementation

Implementing Governors' Action N-2

After evaluating the effectiveness of nutrient reduction options for rebuilding communities in key coastal watersheds impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the LRA and LDEQ partnered with local parishes, other state agencies, Louisiana State University, citizen groups, EPA and FEMA to support the implementation of an innovative wetland wastewater assimilation program that particularly targets the reduction of nutrient discharges into state waters and the Gulf. Wetland assimilation is also being evaluated for use by the New Orleans Sewage and Water Board and neighboring Jefferson and St. Bernard Parishes for addressing discharge needs and wetland restoration in the wetland buffers that surround all three parishes.

GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE

Governors' Action Plan

Implementation Update #2

Sep. 27, 2006

Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop Held in New Orleans, LA

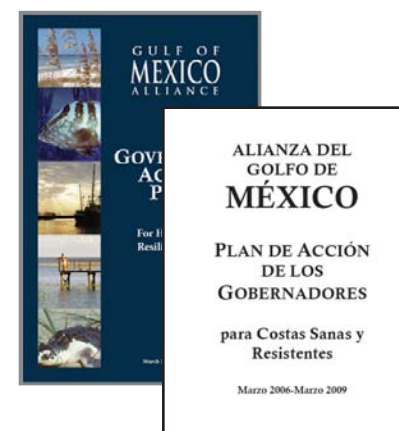
On July 17-19, 2006, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance convened over 100 regional resource managers for an Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop in New Orleans, Louisiana. Workshop participants met in groups to focus on the Alliance's five Priority Issues: water quality; wetland and coastal conservation and restoration; environmental education; identification and characterization of Gulf habitats; and reducing nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems. Each group worked to coordinate implementation activities supporting the 11 actions in the *Governors' Action Plan*. There were specific opportunities for new implementation partners, including business and industry and NGOs, to participate, as well as for state and federal agency partners to refine and expand their existing implementation commitments.

The five U.S. Gulf States hosted this workshop to advance the Alliance goals of generating significant "on the ground" success by March 2009, and bringing national attention to the Gulf region and its priority environmental and economic issues. It is anticipated that the Alliance will host similar Action Plan Implementa-



Solid response to EPA's Alliance Regional Partnership Request for Proposals

In response to a request for proposals to implement the *Governors' Action Plan*, the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program received a total of 41 proposals totaling \$14.4 million. The number of proposals received by Priority Issue were: 6 water quality; 8 coastal restoration; 11 environmental education; 9 habitat identification; and 7 nutrient reduction. Multi-stakeholder teams are currently reviewing the proposals to decide which ones will be awarded a portion of the \$3 million currently available.



Please contact Terry Teague (teague.terry@epa.gov, 228-688-1172) at the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program to request color copies of the *Governors' Action Plan*.

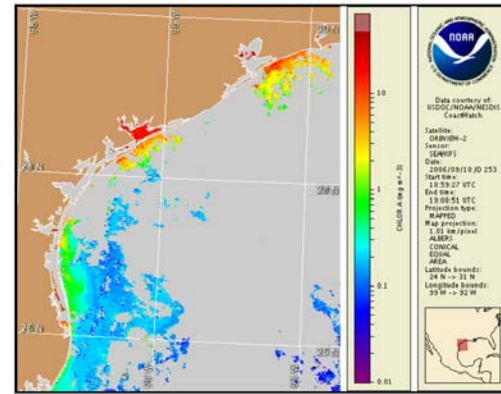
For the Spanish translation of the *Governors' Action Plan* and for more information on the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, please visit: www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org

Water Quality for Healthy Beaches and Shellfish Beds

Harmful Algal Bloom Forecasts Available for South Texas Coast

Implementing Governors' Action WQ-1

On September 12, 2006, NOAA issued the first Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Bulletin for the south Texas coast, kicking off a new operational capability for the western Gulf of Mexico. Both NOAA and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) staff received training over the past four months to build analytical competencies that will produce a "confident" bulletin. In addition, NOAA and TPWD held three meetings in July 2006 to meet with local chambers of commerce, tourism agencies, and health departments about plans to provide HAB bulletins and public advisories for the coast of Texas.



State of Research on Red Tide in the Gulf of Mexico Workshop and Public Forum

Implementing Governors' Action WQ-1

NOAA, Mote Marine Lab, and Florida's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute hosted a workshop and public forum in Sarasota, Florida, on July 17-20, 2006, to discuss current red tide research efforts and address areas that need further exploration. Fifty-five scientists and managers participated, including two red tide researchers from Mexico. By sharing opinions and concerns via an online survey and in three simultaneous public meetings along the SW Florida coast on July 20, the public played an integral role in the direction of future red tide research efforts.

U.S. and Mexico Work to Expand Harmful Algal Bloom Detection Capabilities in Veracruz

Implementing Governors' Action WQ-1

On August 15 and 16, 2006, representatives from the State Department, EPA, and NOAA met in Xalapa, Mexico, with officials from the Institute of Ecology and the Veracruz Department of Health to coordinate the deployment of two C-MAN and three integrated Brevebuster sensor stations along the Veracruz coastline. Current plans specify the deployment of sensors by early 2007, followed up by technical training on sensor maintenance, in-situ sampling, analysis, data reporting, and the bulletin system for the Veracruz project team through the spring and summer of 2007.

Alliance Encouraging a Gulf of Mexico Regional Pilot Project of the National Water Quality Monitoring Network

Implementing Governors' Action WQ-3

The five U.S. Gulf States are actively encouraging the National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC) to designate a pilot project in a bay-watershed region of the Gulf of Mexico as a proof of concept of the National Water Quality Monitoring Network Design. This pilot project could greatly advance Gulf-region monitoring coordination and standardization. EPA, USGS, and NOAA are working with several other agencies on a strategy and schedule for the next phase of the National Water Quality Monitoring Network, including the designation of pilot projects.

Wetland and Coastal Conservation and Restoration

Habitat Restoration Partnership to Award Funds

Implementing Governors' Action R-1

A partnership between NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, currently in its sixth consecutive year, will award funding from the \$380,000 grant to habitat restoration projects throughout the Gulf region. The partnership steering committee, comprised of resource managers from each of the five U.S. Gulf States, the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, USFWS, EPA, and NOAA, reviewed pre-proposals requesting over \$1 million. Those projects invited to submit full proposals are currently in review, and final award decisions will be made by the end of October.

First Meeting of the Regional Restoration Coordination Team

Implementing Governor's Actions R-1

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation used NOAA funding to host a Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Restoration Coordination Team (RRCT) Workshop in Biloxi, Mississippi, from June 13-15, 2006. Participants included representatives from both U.S. and Mexican Gulf states, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The RRCT agreed to host a series of workshops over the next year to discuss restoration efforts and policy issues for each U.S. Gulf State and Mexico.

Regional Restoration Coordination Team Meeting Planned

Implementing Governor's Actions R-1 and R-2

The State of Louisiana will host a Gulf Alliance Regional Restoration Workshop in New Orleans on November 2-3, 2006. This will be the first of several Gulf State-focused workshops aimed at identifying restoration and conservation best practices and lessons learned in the host state. Representatives from each Gulf State, several NGOs, business and industry, academia, and federal agencies are expected to attend. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation will provide funding for the workshop.

Regional Sediment Management Master Plan Underway

Implementing Governors' Action R-1

The USACE and USGS are working with the five U.S. Gulf States and other federal agencies to develop a Gulf of Mexico Regional Sediment Management Master Plan that will help to match sediment availability with sediment needs. The plan will increase interagency collaboration on regional management practices related to sediment resources. Partners are currently outlining the plan and identifying key stakeholders to participate in its development. A workshop is being planned for early 2007.

Environmental Education

Environmental Education Network Developing Web Site and Clearinghouse

Implementing Governors' Action ED-1

Working through the Environmental Education Network (EEN), the five U.S. Gulf States are developing a strategy for an Alliance environmental education Web site, including a regional clearinghouse of Gulf coast education and outreach materials. Working with the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII), the USGS is currently locating, vetting, and writing metadata for materials to be included in the clearinghouse; for more information, contact Gaye Farris (gaye_farris@usgs.gov) or Linda Broussard (linda_broussard@usgs.gov).

Expanding the Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center Network to Mexico

Implementing Governors' Action ED-1

On August 16 and 17, 2006, representatives from EPA, NOAA, the State Department, and the Shedd Aquarium conducted the onsite evaluation of the Aquarium of Veracruz as a candidate Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center (CELC). The evaluation team unanimously agreed that the Aquarium meets and/or exceeds all evaluation criteria. The EPA Gulf of Mexico Program's Policy Review Board (PRB), which serves as the Coastal America Regional Principal's Group for the Gulf of Mexico Region, will meet on October 5, 2006, to review the evaluation team's recommendation to designate the Veracruz Aquarium as the first international CELC.



Environmental Education Network Launches Listserv

Implementing Governors' Action ED-1

The Environmental Education Network (EEN) initiated a listserv, hosted by the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, to facilitate communication among environmental educators and managers in the Gulf region. Any and all interested individuals are invited to join the listserv. Subscribe at www.disl.org/mailman/listinfo/gomaen. For more information, contact Lee Yokel, EEN Coordinator (lyokel@disl.org).