

**GOMA FWG Call
8-29-13**

Attendees:

HRI Carlota Santos

BOEM Melanie Demour

NPS Cherry Green

FWS Chris Pease, Patrick Harper, James Burnett

USGS Larry Handley, Kate Spear, Chris Well, Scott Wilson

EPA John Bowie, Lael Butler, Doug Jacobson

NASA Ted Mason

USACE David Bauman

USDA Delmer Stamps

NAVY Camille Destafney

GOMA Laura Bowie

NOAA Kristen Laursen, Heather Young, Heidi Stiller, Julien Lartigue, Chris Sinigalliano, Amy Clark, Bill O'Beirn, Christa Rabenold, Ann Weaver, Becky Allee, Todd Davison

Chris Pease, USFWS

Chris provided a brief introduction, speaking to Gulf-wide efforts. The USFWS recently put out *Vision for a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed* (<http://www.fws.gov/gulfrestoration/pdf/VisionDocument.pdf>) This document lays out conservation strategies around the Gulf. They will be following up with a more refined action document – a “blueprint” document. Hoping to incorporate all of our partners working on restoration. Want to match up actions with measurable results. Looking to identify opportunities over the coming decade given all the interest in the Gulf right now

James Burnett, Project Leader for North Florida National Wildlife Refuge: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge

We have a refuge complex here that includes St. Vincent NWR and easements in GA and FL as well as St. Marks NWS. Today will focus on St. Marks.

NWR System includes 565 refuges. First established by Roosevelt – Pelican Island refuge in Florida. Roosevelt established an additional 54. 1913 to 1918 Congress began to establish laws to protect migratory birds, and predecessor to USFWS became stewards to these refuges. Accelerated through the 30s. Migratory Bird Act in 1929. In 1931, St. Marks NWR was established. Migratory Bird Stamp Act enacted and lowlands began to be purchased; this allowed St. Marks to be greatly expanded. Map shows that concentrations of refuges occur around the major flyways.

When St. Marks was established in 1931 there were between 10 and 20 thousand Canada Geese that wintered at St. Marks, and that was the initial reason St. Marks was established. By 1983 there were fewer than 100 geese; the St. James population of geese only range as far south as Alabama now. Still have a mission to protect and manage for waterfowl, and get between 8 and 10 thousand migratory ducks each year, with a wide variety of species. Expanded endangered species management – red cockaded woodpecker and flatwoods salamander. Try to provide transit for black bears. Also have human uses: environmental education and interpretation, hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing. We spent a lot of time on environmental education. Built school use from about 4 thousand students a year to over 12 thousand a year. Recently built a new environmental education center.

Cooperate with USFS on establishing and maintaining the FL Scenic Trail. Have put forward proposal with USFS and BLM for acquiring more land. These parcels are also on the list if RESTORE money should become available. There are lands available to the refuge when have funding to acquire them (e.g. lands owned by TNC right now that can be transferred.)

24 communities identified in conservation plan, but can consolidate into principle types most interested in managing. First of those is tidal marsh, and that's the most of what we have. Photo shows tidal marsh that is also designated national wilderness. Have 13 thousand acres of impounded wetlands that used to be tidal marsh. Another is longleaf pine. Areas are burned every three years on average. Hardwood hammock and swamp. Maritime and Live Oak forest. Only have water source through the East River. Relatively small drainage. Drive all the fresh water use to manage the impoundments. Adequate water hasn't been a problem this year but has been in the past.

Area map shows other conservation areas in Big Bend / Panhandle region. Three areas within sites on the map (in the Okefenokee NWR, Osceola NF, and St. Marks NWR) show a recent request to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We are hopeful but not confident about that request. Another map shows a couple of large easements where the landowners would like to sell to the refuge. The refuge is acutely interested in opportunities to expand their boundary north because of SLR projections.

Q: What kinds of tools are you using for SLR projections?

A: They're coarse right now. We've had SLAMM applied here with a 2 foot rise applied. Have talked to folks at the National Wetlands Center who feel as if the marsh would accrete and keep up with SLR. That wouldn't help the uplands. But not necessarily the subsidence problems have elsewhere in the Gulf. We've had SET stations installed recently. Still a lot of guesswork right now.

Carlota Santos, Socio-Economics Group, Harte Research Institute: GecoServ--The Gulf of Mexico ecosystem services valuation database

Ecosystem services are commonly organized into four categories: supportive, provisioning, regulating, and cultural. We focus on these four categories in our database, but have recently added non-use values (bequest, existence, and option values.)

GecoServ is an inventory of ecosystem services valuation studies relevant to the Gulf of Mexico region. There are only a few studies from the Gulf region, so decided to include studies from all around the world that have been done on habitats relevant to the Gulf. Criteria for inclusion are that studies have to include monetary values, and focus on a relevant ecosystem for the Gulf.

If users are looking for information specific to ecosystem services and their monetary value, the database can be useful. It also highlights the gaps in knowledge/research. We have also put all values into 2008 dollars to allow comparison and to facilitate value transfer.

GecoServ is a first stop with further reading required. A full citation is provided so readers can track down the full text. Ecosystem types included are wetlands (freshwater and salt marsh), seagrass, mangroves, beaches, dunes, coral reefs, marine, and open water. Focus on 26 ecosystem services. 1181 ecosystem service estimates are currently included.

GecoServ.org works best on Chrome or Firefox. One can search by selecting combinations of ecosystem types and/or services. One can also see if any studies exist for a particular combination, and then link to

those studies. Advanced search can be used to compare results/values across studies. Values are standardized to 2008 US dollars wherever possible.

Users are encouraged to look at the study of interest. Users can export results to Excel, and can also see definitions for methods used in studies and for the ecosystem services included.

GecoServ statistics provide some summary of the studies included in the database. For example, one can see that recreation is a service that is frequently valued.

“Ecosystem services visualized” is an additional resource that includes visuals of what each ecosystem service represents. Users can put these in their own outreach materials. Authors are encouraged to send us their studies if not already included, and to send any feedback.

Future work will be to fill in any gaps. We have grown the database since it started because more studies have been done. Mangroves were added as a separate habitat. Also plan to add additional outreach materials. Hope the database will be useful!

Q: Any plan to update the values since about 5 years old?

A: Yes. Working on that now.

Q: Are these values normalized over entire Gulf?

A: These are studies from all over the world but apply to ecosystems of interest in the Gulf.

Q: Storm protection might be more valuable in some areas such as Louisiana, and wondered if there's a way to localize the values for that?

A: There are studies specific to Louisiana and you could start by looking at those.

Q: This is part of the GOMA EIA team right? So if folks wanted to participate more actively they could do that through that team?

A: Yes, or come directly to us since the database is managed at HRI.

Todd

Thank you to our speakers. Please submit additional ideas for presentations.

Laura – GOMA Updates

For next years All Hands meeting GOMA is joining with the Gulf Summit happening at the end of March in Houston. Please save the date!