

July 31, 2014, 2014 Federal Working group conference call

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GOMA Update – Laura Bowie

On the Federal Working Group call in May, all of you who were on participated in a survey to discover what you think the future GOMA Priorities should be. You still have opportunity to participate, on the GOMA website on line and I have a fillable form so please be sure to get your input to us. We are compiling a report for AMT meeting in November so we are trying to get final input by October. In addition to future priorities, we are working on a report summarizing “Ten Years of GOMA”. It will contain every project, product and tool that has been done since inception. Lastly, in late Fall we hope to release a Gulf Star sponsored list of projects that will move forward and be funded with a public, private partnership. If your agency is interested in participating in the Gulf Star program, please give me a call.

USGS Beyond just sea level rise: incorporating climate into coastal wetland vulnerability assessment

Mike Osland

The National Wetlands Research Center is trying to answer a common question: How will climate change affect coastal wetlands?

- The Gulf of Mexico is particularly interesting due to the diversity of the coastal wetlands found here.
- Climate greatly influences coastal wetland ecosystem structure and function in the Gulf and the impacts climate may have on the wetland types can be studied.
- A picture tour of the Gulf shows the diversity of wetlands:
- In Mississippi we find primarily rushes, grasses and sedges.
- Heading south down the coast of Florida we find mangroves becoming more dominant and taller the further we move south.
- In Louisiana, there are grasses and mangroves.
- In Texas there are very short mangroves and succulents as the climate gets dryer, and in southern Texas, very dry, high salinity and salt flats.

- Rainfall and temperature fluctuation affect the tidal wetland ecosystem.
- We are conducting two studies to look at winter climate change, salt marshes versus mangrove forests and ecological transitions across a rainfall gradient.
- The first study predicts future mangrove forest presence and abundance and the ecological implications to fisheries, avian habitat, biogeochemistry, stability and resilience and coastal protection.
- The second study looks at how freshwater affects tidal wetland ecosystems and predicts plant cover transitions along the rainfall gradient by temperature.

Take home messages:

- Along the Gulf of Mexico coast, climate greatly influences coastal wetland ecosystem structure and function.
- Long-term planning and management efforts for coastal wetlands in the region should account for and incorporate the effects of climatic drivers (e.g., rainfall, winter temperatures).

Q&A

Q: are you studying the potential effects of SLR on these habitats

A: Yes, on the ground in estuaries. Position and elevation of wetlands to help model SLR

Habitat Restoration Technology Training Center in Galveston, TX

Quenton Dokken

- Prepare workforce for restoration.
- Holistic, principled approach
- The Mexican and US Gulf contiguous so we need to work together
- Visible as you enter Galveston, 23000 square foot facility
- 25 acres of wetlands adjacent to center
- Communication center as well as restoration training
- Real time studio to broadcast productions sea wave expedition vessel for students teachers and restoration workers
- GoM community based restoration partnership
- 63 gulf projects, 13 Caribbean projects, 15,000 acres restored and 10+ habitats
- Coordinated GOMA HCRT team
- Funded SLAMM models around the Gulf
- Questions about what should be restored if SLR will cause the restoration to fail within 30 years
- Partnering with Government and industry to link multicultural education
- Partnered with American Youthworks, a national Job creation program
- 17-25 year olds who are entering program to change careers
- Supported by Galveston college, Shelmark Engineering, Alabama DCNR and TexasA&M
- Scaling back the building to fit budget
- Training program in all 11 gulf states
- Need more engagement from the private sector, especially the tourism industry

Q&A

Q: Is there any indication that you may get DWH support?

A: TX groups are interested by haven't committed any money, we are trying to get NFWF engaged and trying to keep wheels on road until Money flows

Q: How has your curriculum incorporated communication about the uncertainty of restoration given climate change?

A: There are unlimited opportunities, we are small and collaborative, which is why we are talking to industry to start the conversation. Many still have the mindset that SLR is decades or centuries away, so we need to force people to talk about these issues.

Todd Davison

Thank you all for joining, there will be information about the August meeting in your email soon.