

Embrace the Gulf 2020 – by Laura Bowie, Executive Director for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance

What does the Gulf of Mexico mean to you? For those of us that live along her sandy shores, it means a sense of place - it is a bit of who we are, it's hard to move away. For me, it means I always know which way is south. For others, it may be a fond childhood memory of family vacations; and still others it's an important place to come to conduct business. All of these things are accurate.

In 2004, the governors of the five U.S. Gulf States recognized that, by working together, they could achieve more for the Gulf of Mexico: more protection, more investment, more productivity, more sustainability. Little did they know at the time how important it would be to work together in coming years. As a result, they formed the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, whose mission is to enhance the ecological and economic value of the Gulf of Mexico through increased regional collaboration. Today, there are over a thousand people from across the region that work together on a daily basis to address issues that the five Gulf states agree can use a regional approach. Those issues include conserving and restoring habitats, improving the health of wildlife and fisheries, enhancing coastal resilience, improving data access and baseline monitoring, increasing stewardship, and improving water quality.

This year, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance is proud to embark on a campaign called “Embrace the Gulf 2020.” The goal of the campaign is to promote the vitality, sustainability, beauty, and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico in the year that represents an anniversary for a variety of natural and man-made hazards. These are hazards that we know are a reality of living where we do. And we are a people who care deeply; deeply enough to form collaborative groups to address those hazards. We are restoring our coastlines, rehabilitating our wildlife, and strengthening our communities. We are improving our water quality, investigating our deep oceans, and increasing public access to public resources. To put it simply, we are investing our time and our resources to “do good things for the Gulf.” We know that our Gulf has the ability to bounce back, and we know we must help it because healthy ecosystems are the foundation for healthy economies.

Our campaign puts a focus on the basics: resilient coastal communities, prosperous industries, superior educational opportunities, thriving tourism, and healthy ecosystems. You can support the Gulf of Mexico by insisting on Gulf seafood, supporting local nature-based activities, and finding substitutes for single-use plastics, among other things. Join our campaign and let us know what you are doing to “Embrace the Gulf 2020” by engaging with us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter!

[www.EmbracetheGulf.org](http://www.EmbracetheGulf.org)

@GoMAlliance (FB, Insta, Twitter)

#EmbracetheGulf

#BuildingGOMPPartnerships