

**Gulf of Mexico Program
 Joint Policy Review Board/Management Committee
 Meeting Summary
 New Orleans, LA**



August 9-10, 2005

Organization:	Policy Review Board Member:	Present:	Absent:
EPA	Jimmy Palmer(Federal Chair)	X	
Louisiana	Karen Gautreaux (State Chair) Dugan Sabins.(Alternate)	X X	
Alabama	Phil Hinesley (Alternate)	X	
Florida	Jerry Brooks (Alternate)	X	
Mississippi	Phil Bass (Alternate)	X	
Texas	Bruce Moulton (Alternate)	X	
HHS	George Hoskin	X	
DOC	Jack Hayes	X	
USDA	Charles Whitmore		X
DOI	Columbus Brown (Alternate)	X	
DOT	Vacant		
DOD	Greg Breerwood, COE (Alternate)	X	
NASA	Terry McPherson (Alternate)	X	
CAC	Robert Crowe		X
CAC	Paul MacLean	X	
BAC	Flinda Hill (Alternate)	X	
GRN	Cynthia Sarthou (Alternate)	X	
CSCA	Joel Yelverton (Alternate)	X	
AFBF-GC	Ned Meisterl (Alternate)	X	

Organization:	Management Committee Member:	Present:	Absent:
EPA	Myron Knudson, Federal Co-Chair	X	
	Bryon Griffith	X	
Texas	Bruce Moulton (State Co-Chair)	X	
Alabama			
Alabama	David Yeager (Alternate)	X	
Florida	Lynn Griffin		X
Louisiana	Dugan Sabins (Alternate)	X	
Mississippi	Phil Bass	X	
Mississippi	Don Underwood	X	
Texas	Larry McKinney (TX Parks & Wildlife Dept)		X
HHS (FDA)			
HHS (FDA)	Tom Herrington (Alternate)		X
DOC (NMFS)	Laurie Rounds	X	
USDA (NRCS)	Delmer Stamps	X	
DOI (USGS)	Dawn Lavoie (Alternate)	X	
DOI (FWS)	Columbus Brown	X	
DOD (USN)	Robert Stender (Alternate)		X
DOD (COE)	Bob Bosenberg (Alternate)	X	
DOD (USAF)	Vic Verma		X
CAC			
CAC	Casi Callaway	X	
CAC	Jim Kachtick	X	
BAC	Flinda Hill	X	
GRN	Cynthia Sarthou, alternate for Deborah Dawkins	X	
CSCA	Joel Yelverton	X	
AFBF-GC	Ned Meister	X	
Fisheries	Ron Lukens		X
TNC	Nancy Delamar (Alternate)	X	
GSCZ	Mike Walker		X
NEPs	Ray Allen	X	
NASA	Terry McPherson	X	

1. **Roll Call - Welcome and Introductions of the Board**

Jimmy Palmer, Federal Co-Chair, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 4, welcomed the Board and introduced Mayor Richard Greene, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 6, Bharat Mathur, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 5; Jim Gulliford, and EPA Regional Administrator, Region 7. Karen Gautreaux, Deputy Secretary of Louisiana DEQ welcomed the Board on behalf of the State Co-Chair, Dr. Mike McDaniel, Secretary LA DEQ.

Mr. Palmer commented that this was one of the most well-attended meetings in the history of the Gulf of Mexico Program.

2. **Overview of Meeting Agenda & Objectives/Status Review of Follow-Up Action Items**

Bryon Griffith, Director of the Gulf of Mexico Program Office, reviewed completion of Action Items from the previous meeting in April 2005.

3. **Gulf of Mexico Alliance – Background & Status**

Jerry Brooks, Deputy, Office of the Secretary, FL DEP expressed pleasure to be a part of the Gulf of Mexico Program. Governor Bush of Florida in the Spring of 2004 asked the Gulf States to form an Alliance to better identify priorities. Five focus/priority areas were identified for attention. Governor Bush did not want to create new regulations or bureaucracies. The Gulf Program and the Alliance together create a forum to identify the overlap and to be more efficient without duplication.

Bryon Griffith's presentation included an overview of the Gulf Alliance and discussed federal support to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. The major milestones which have occurred are:

June 8-10 – State-Federal Coordination Meeting, Naples, FL,
August 10-11 – State-Federal Work Session, New Orleans, LA
September – Gulf Alliance *Plan of Action* ready for agency review
Nov 7-9 – *Gulf of Mexico Summit*, Harte Research Institute, Corpus Christi, TX
Inauguration of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance by 5 Gulf state Governors

Key Milestones to Date are:

March 10 – Initial meeting of CEQ, Gulf States, Federal Co-chairs
April 12 – Concept briefing to GMP Management Committee
April 13 – Concept briefing to SIMOR
May 5 – Initial Federal Workgroup telecon
May 10 – Kickoff Federal Workgroup meeting
May 11 to 31 – Initial Federal Response Proposals developed
June 1 – Pre-brief to AQUABOX, JSOST, SIMOR representatives
June 9 – Initial State-Federal Coordination Meeting (Naples, FL)
June 15 – Brief to OCEAN.US
July 2 – Brief to JSOST

Actions requested of the Policy Review Board:

Immediate

Ensure engaged, consistent representation on Federal Workgroup
Ensure Federal Workgroup representative has staff support

Mid-Term: Sept – Nov 2005

Ensure agency review of final draft *Plan of Action*
Ensure appropriate attendance at the November 7-9 Gulf of Mexico Summit in Corpus Christi, TX

Longer-Term

Ensure execution of agency commitments in *Plan of Action*

Some of the proposed actions for developing a Sustained Regional Partnership include: Exploring place-based, ecosystem approaches to management; Commit to a long-term partnership; Work within existing partnership frameworks; Overcome traditional impediments to federal and federal-state integration; Engage the AQUABOX, SIMOR, JSOST, OCEAN.US, and Regional Associations; Solicit local input through 9 Gulf region stakeholder workshops; Support involvement by Mexico and 6 Mexican Gulf states; Organize teams of federal officials, with designated co-leads, for each focus area; and provide Gulf managers with “knowledge” rather than just “data.”

Also discussed were the initial federal response concepts

Water Quality

- WQ-1: Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast System Improvement and Expansion – NOAA
- WQ-2: Implement a Regional Shellfish Information Management System – NOAA
- WQ-3: Mercury in the Gulf of Mexico – EPA and NOAA
- WQ-4: Bacterial Source Tracking – EPA

Nutrient Reductions

- NR-1: Gulf Hypoxia Reassessment – EPA
- NR-2: Facilitation of Innovative Producer Partnership Initiatives to Reduce Hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico – EPA

Wetlands Restoration

- WR-1: Gulf of Mexico Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP) – EPA
- WR-2: Assessing Risks to Energy and Chemical Transportation and Manufacturing Infrastructure – NOAA
- WR-3: Accurate Coastal Elevations to Support Wetlands Restoration – NOAA

Habitat Identificat

HI-1: Regional Coordination of Habitat Identification Efforts – NASA

HI-2: Biogeographic Habitat Assessments – NOAA

Environmental Education

GE-1: Campaign for the Gulf of Mexico – NOAA

GE-2: Gulf Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center (CELC) Network – EPA

GE-3: Educators Summit on Science and the Environment – NOAA

The Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) intersects with the Gulf Alliance in the following respects:

IOOS constitutes observations from offshore, near shore, and estuarine areas
IOOS is not observations for observations sake – management needs will drive IOOS deliverables

Understanding the scale, scope, and severity of issue: comprehensive observations are essential for a regional, ecosystem approach to management

Integrated observations are critical to addressing Alliance's focus areas

Regional Associations have local technical expertise

The opportunity that exists is that the Alliance's management issues can provide focus for initial Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System deliverables.

4. Hypoxia Task Force – Key Initiatives for FY06 - MS River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force Report Integrated Regional Initiatives to Address MS River Basin Nutrients

Darrell Brown, EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, presented a Hypoxia Task Force update: Steady progress is being made on the Action Plan reassessment: Sub-basin teams are making significant progress- Lower Mississippi, Upper Mississippi, and Ohio River; Resources for reassessment and sub-basin teams is a top priority. The Action Plan calls for periodic reassessments. At the St. Paul meeting in late August 2004, it was agreed to conduct a reassessment and the Coordinating Committee was directed to provide a detailed timeline and scoping document. A five-step approach was developed as follows:

Independent peer review of EPA Region IV White Paper

Science and management update conducted by: Science Reassessment Team (SRT) and Management Action Reassessment Team (MART)

Public science symposia

Expert panel to review and synthesize existing information and provide an independent set of recommendations to the Task Force

Revise the Action Plan

The cost for the reassessment is estimate to be approximately \$650K.

The Task Force meeting in December 2004 agreed to the approach except the choice of an expert panel and the format for a symposia. The Task Force will meet in Memphis in late November 2005. The Upper Basin Symposium is scheduled for September, 2005, in

Ames, Iowa. The Gulf science symposium is scheduled for spring 2006 and the Lower Basin symposium is scheduled for Spring 2006.

The deadline for a Request for Proposals for an Innovative Producer Partnership Initiative is August 17, 2005. The objective of this initiative is to develop, lead, and carry out a voluntary local basin-wide strategy of nonpoint source nutrient management in each state's critical watersheds, ultimately reducing the delivery of excess nutrients to the Gulf.

5. **Strategies for Enhancing Binational Cooperation on the Gulf of Mexico -Update on the Emerging Priorities of the Gulf States Accord**

Gary Springer, Secretary-General of the Gulf States Accord spoke of the strategies that are underway for enhancing international cooperation. During Governor Blanco's term as Lead State for the Gulf States Accord, the following are the objectives: Build on work of previous governors; Deepen and broaden gains from NAFTA; Red Tide Summit – binational scientific seminar on red tide – impacts to public health, tourism and fisheries throughout the Gulf; Gulf of Mexico Tourism Corridor Master Plan developed by Working Group; and Meeting of Gulf Governors during the Fall at the Southern Governors' Association meeting. Governor Blanco's initiatives include: strong support for Gulf environmental initiative - inclusive of all Governors; a Gulf Transportation Study - port security, transportation infrastructure and logistics, and an environmental assessment; an Accord Governor's Summit; and trade missions regarding energy and environment.

6. **Gulf of Mexico Summit & Gulf Guardian Awards**

Dr. Robert Ferguson, Executive Director, Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, reported on plans for the State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit 2005 to be held November 7-9, 2005, in Corpus Christi, TX. The design for the Summit integrates an international perspective on the issues related to the Gulf of Mexico. By examining the commitments and efforts of leaders of government, business and industry, science, conservation, and resource management to ensuring a sustainable quality of life for all future generations, this effort represents a major step toward creating a more in-depth awareness of those issues that lead to a sustainable quality of life based on sound economies and healthy and productive marine ecosystems.

Projected Summit outcomes include:

Focusing international attention on the Gulf of Mexico; bringing together leaders of government, industry, science, and conservation to discuss the issues and form collaborative efforts for the future; establishing a communication mechanism, the Report

Card; linking environmental quality and economic progress. Inseparable cornerstones of quality of life in the minds of the public.

The Summit was offered as a venue for presenting the Gulf Guardian Awards. The Board unanimously agreed that it would be an excellent opportunity. The Harte Institute offered to provide travel assistance to award winners.

Board members were urged to contact the Gulf of Mexico Program regarding invitations to the Summit.

7. Gulf Business and Industry Program Support Initiatives for FY06

Flinda Hill with Mississippi Power reported on Business and Industry participation with the Gulf Program during FY 2006 which included all committees and focus teams as well as project teams, and other activities and partnerships such as the Congressional Breakfast, Coastal America, Gulf Guardian Awards Program, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Strategies to Expand the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP) Gulfwide

John Bowie with Duke Energy presented information about the CWRP Program in Texas, and the Gulf Program and Alliance challenge to develop chapters in the other four Gulf States within 18-24 months. Some of the strategies during the fall of 2005 are to: secure letters of support for CWRP from state and federal partners; identify and meet with potential state corporate leads in the other four states; establish corporate leads on the Gulf Region Implementation Team; develop a charter and communication plan; list key corporate partners and secure commitments; schedule a launch date event; develop potential inaugural projects for Coastal America endorsement.

John emphasized that companies are very interested in making contributions to improving environmental quality in communities in which they operate and their employees live. CWRP provides attractive opportunities for companies to make meaningful contributions to wetland restoration.

8. FY05 Gulf of Mexico Program Accomplishments

Gloria Car, Deputy Director of the Gulf Program, presented the Program's accomplishments during FY 2005. The Program has made significant progress toward achieving the 2000-2009 objectives. Some of the accomplishments are as follows:

Supported projects in 137 Priority Coastal Area Segments/Waterbodies.. Achieved target of 20% of baseline;

Facilitated development of a characterization of estuarine ecosystems in Northern Gulf as related to nutrient concentrations and loadings. Developed a "living" database inventory. A final report for Phase I has been completed. Phase II to begin in FY 2006.

Completed the reorganization of the National Coastal America Partnership.
Coordinated cross-cut budget strategy to be developed in FY 2006.

Supported Bacterial Source Tracking workshops. Continued to expand the coastal Mississippi BST sample and isolate database and to study the effect of EN isolates on coastal water bacteriological conditions –USM received an earmark of \$595K to continue method development.

Supported a second consumer survey on vibrio vulnificus education efforts. Results will be reported on August 14 to subcommittee on VV Education.

Post harvest treatment capacity is over the 50% requirement, and the reduction in illness rate reported this past year is over 40%.

The mercury synoptic survey in marine and estuarine fish in the Gulf has been completed. Ten percent of the samples will be analyzed for methylmercury by the end of 2005. Plan for update of mercury database scheduled for Sept 2005.

A draft Business Plan Strategy for the Gulf of Mexico Regional Association for GCOOS – Gulf Coastal Ocean Observing System- was completed in April.

In Feb 2005, the final Report on the *K. brevis* Status and Red Tide Information was completed. Summarized preliminary finding of the sampling, monitoring, and reporting practices of each Gulf State.

Supported Gulf eutrophication monitoring and modeling project and ship time for hypoxia monitoring.

The Lower MS River Sub-basin Committee developed 3 watershed restoration demo projects – Lake Washington,MS; Bayou Bartholomew, AR; Cabin Teele, LA.

An RFIP was announced to fund Innovative Producer Partnership Initiatives to Reduce Hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. Deadline is Aug 17.

2627.5 acres protected,enhanced,; 15,995.5 acres achieved toward 2009 goal of 20,000. Assistance to LCA through wetland restoration projects in Barataria/Terrebonne and Lake Pontchartrain watersheds.Funded Louisiana Exotic Invasive Species Symposium as a follow-up to the Louisiana Aquatic Species Management Plan

Annual Gulf Guardian Awards to be presented at Harte Research Institute “State of the Gulf Summit” in November 2005.

News releases prepared for all projects; highlighted projects on web site; funded 2 outreach projects.

CAC held two meetings; participated in Comprehensive Meeting.

CAC members participated in Gulf Guardian reviews; met with Congressional members, and Mexican officials.

9. Review and Endorsement of the Proposed FY06 Program Workplan

Bryon Griffith reviewed the proposed FY06 Workplan. It was proposed that the Gulf Program set aside \$1M of FY06 funding to better match/support emerging Gulf Alliance priorities and actions. The Board unanimously endorsed the alignment of Gulf Program priorities with the Gulf Alliance activities.

10. Citizens Advisory Committee Report

Paul Maclean, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee, reported that the CAC wants to be involved. The Gulf Program is moving in the right direction and receiving real recognition through hard work and good decision making. The CAC greatly commends the Program and is ready to do what is necessary to serve the Program.

11. Board/Committee Roundtable Discussion

Lisa Berrios of the United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc. And the National Tribal Environmental Council requested to address the Board and make a presentation requesting tribal participation in the Gulf of Mexico Program. Some of the interest areas in relation to the Gulf Program are: outreach, advise tribal government, incorporate pollution prevention and environmental restoration in tribal community design; have a pilot project for tribal involvement in MS River Basin Initiative. Ms. Berrios requested tribal representation on the Policy Review Board. Response from the Board was very positive. The Program was requested to send Ms. Berrios the process in order to apply for membership.

Columbus Brown, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, requested to make a presentation on the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership and extended an invitation to the Gulf Program to join as a partner with SARP. The Gulf Program will investigate the specifics of the affiliation and will return to the Policy Review Board with information at the next meeting.

The Board thanked the guest Regional Administrators for attending and emphasized the importance of their participation with the Program.