



Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force Newsletter

April 2023 | Issue 14

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Hypoxia Task Force Highlights

The Hypoxia Task Force held a virtual and in-person public meeting on December 14, 2022, at EPA Headquarters in Washington DC. The meeting highlighted state activities supported by the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Gulf Hypoxia Program and explored federal task force agency support. Meeting resources are posted [here](#).

Radhika Fox, Task Force Federal Co-chair and Assistant Administrator for the EPA Office of Water, recognized the significant efforts of states and tribes in developing BIL workplans to advance programs and support nutrient reduction strategies, and shared EPA is committed to show progress to the public through Task Force meetings, the Task Force website, and various public engagements within the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River Basin (MARB). State Co-chair and Iowa Agriculture Secretary Mike Naig emphasized the significance of the Mississippi River and the need to “strike a balance between commerce, water quality, and water quantity and ensure the long-term ability to live, work, and play in the region.” Collaborating across state boundaries and creating partnerships are critical to success, as is working within the state to consider and address unique conditions. States across the basin are engaging in projects to leverage millions of dollars in funding to reduce both point and nonpoint source nutrient loads delivered to the Gulf of Mexico. While recognizing that additional funding and technological resources will be required to continue to make progress, Secretary Naig highlighted that the Task Force will continue to learn from one another and streamline, scale-up, and accelerate the rate at which we add practices to the MARB.

State Activities

Louisiana Nutrient Reduction and Management Strategy

The Louisiana Nutrient Reduction and Management Strategy (NRMS) Team developed two projects for the Gulf Hypoxia Program. The first project will implement agriculture practices in and around the Lake St. Joseph watershed in the northeastern part of the state with anticipated project benefits of localized reductions in nutrient and sediment loading, ecological enhancements, and water quality improvements downstream. These efforts include collaboration with USDA NRCS, Tensas-Concordia Soil & Water Conservation District, Louisiana State University, and the Louisiana

Department of Agriculture and Forestry. The second project was developed by the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to continue efforts to close a critical data gap in nutrient monitoring through data collection along an established monitoring transect extending from Barataria Pass, Louisiana to the inner Gulf of Mexico shelf. A transition from boat-based monitoring to autonomous vessel and technologies is planned to improve metrics, sampling capabilities, and logistical considerations. Monitoring this transect is the result of collaborative efforts between state and federal agencies, academics, and regional partnerships; data use is prioritized for baseline characterization and modeling Mississippi River diversion efforts and effects. The NRMS team would like to thank the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, EPA, and the Hypoxia Task Force for supporting previous and current funding in coastal transect monitoring. Both projects are expected to be continued through the five-year extent of Gulf Hypoxia Program funding in Louisiana. Information regarding Louisiana's nutrient-related activities can be found on the [NRMS Strategy website](#).

The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center Announces Arkansas Data Portal

The [National Great Rivers Research and Education Center \(NGRREC\)](#) recently announced the release of a new data portal used to track nutrient concentrations in Arkansas. The [Great Lakes to Gulf \(GLTG\) Arkansas data portal](#) allows users to review Arkansas' water quality trends specific to nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) concentrations. The GLTG portal is a user-friendly geospatial application that supports the interactive review of Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin water quality data. The three data layers available on Arkansas's GLTG include tier one site trend analysis, aggregated HUC-8 trend analysis, and water quality stations and data availability. In addition, the GLTG provides a Data Story of how data were used to help prioritize watersheds for Arkansas's Nutrient Reduction Strategy. The GLTG data portal provides the public with access to useful information about nutrient reductions and water quality and is expected to assist in the identification of effective monitoring locations. NGRREC reports that the GLTG will work to include portals for all 12 Hypoxia Task Force states; Arkansas and Illinois currently have existing data portals.

[Read more](#)

Federal Activities

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of Inflation Reduction Act Funding for Climate-Smart Agriculture Nationwide

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is making available \$850 million of Inflation Reduction Act funds in fiscal year 2023 for its conservation programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP).

[Learn more](#)

Gulf Hypoxia Program State Grants Awarded

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$50 billion in transformative investments for providing clean and safe water to all Americans, including \$60 million over five years to support states as they implement the Task Force's Gulf Hypoxia Action plan. The 12 Task Force states submitted workplans to EPA during fiscal year 2022, and all state grants have been awarded. The state

workplans include stakeholder outreach, conservation practice implementation and analysis, modeling and monitoring, wastewater treatment plant optimization, progress tracking, planning activities, and administrative support. See [State Workplan Summaries](#) for detailed information about the work each state will do to implement the Action Plan.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funds to Support Tribal Nations in Nutrient Pollution Reduction

In December 2022, EPA announced the new availability of \$6 million in funding from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support Tribal Nations across the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin in reducing nutrient pollution on Tribal lands in the Basin. EPA’s [funding implementation memorandum](#) will support EPA-tribal collaboration as all HTF members and partners work toward Action Plan goals.

[Learn more](#)

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program Awards First Ecosystem Construction Project

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recently awarded a new construction contract under the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) ecosystem restoration project. The \$324,000 contract, awarded to Togiak Management Services, will be used to complete a wing dam modification project in Pool 2 of the Mississippi River just south of St. Paul, Minnesota. The project will notch 17 existing wing dams to enhance fish habitat and improve the surrounding aquatic ecosystem. Work is expected to start in April 2023 and last through September 2023. The [NESP](#), a collection of projects, is an unprecedented, multi-purpose river management program that modernizes navigation infrastructures while augmenting ecosystem integrity. USACE describes the NESP as a long-term program that will yield ecosystem restoration and navigation improvements for the Upper Mississippi River System. The NESP is managed and implemented through an active partnership among federal and state agencies, engaging a wide range of individual and organizational stakeholders. The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association is committed to working with partners to support the shared vision of integrated, multi-purpose management for the Upper Mississippi River System.

[Learn more](#)

Resources

ANPC and NACWA Co-Host Symposium Focused on Watershed Collaboration

Building off themes of point and nonpoint source collaboration included in the 2022 EPA Nutrient Reduction Memorandum, the Agricultural Nutrient Policy Council (ANPC) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) co-hosted a symposium at the Reservoir Center for Water Solutions in Washington, DC on December 13, 2022. The symposium was entitled Collaborative Watershed Projects to Reduce Nutrient Losses and Protect Water Quality. ANPC is a council of state and national agricultural trade associations and businesses focused on engaging in the legal, technical, and policy aspects of Clean Water Act and Farm Bill programs associated with nutrients and water quality. NACWA represents the nation’s wastewater treatment facilities.

The event brought together representatives working on collaborative watershed partnerships across the public clean water and agricultural sectors. Bruno Pigott, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the EPA Office of Water, and Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, set the stage for the symposium, stressing the importance of collaboration and partnerships as key elements in addressing the nation's nutrient-related water quality challenges. Case studies were presented from Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Wisconsin showing wastewater and agriculture working together in various capacities to improve water quality.

ANPC and NACWA will continue their collaboration in 2023 and would welcome insight and ideas from any interested parties. For questions or comments, please contact ANPC's [Lauren Lurkins](#) or NACWA's [Chris Hornback](#).

EPA's Pollution Load Estimation Tool (PLET) Training Video Now Available

EPA recently announced the release of the new Pollution Load Estimation Tool (PLET). The PLET will be replacing the Spreadsheet Tool for Estimating Pollutant Loads (STEPL), which has been a standard modeling tool for nutrients and sediment for nearly 20 years. PLET provides a user-friendly web interface for creating custom watershed models by computing surface runoff, nutrient loads, and sediment delivery based on land usage and implemented best management practices (BMPs). To read more about PLET, click [here](#). To accompany this new software, EPA has released training materials, including a PLET training video. The training video has been compiled from excerpts of an Ohio Load Reduction Estimation workshop hosted by the Hamilton County Conservation District on July 20, 2022. The training video is comprehensive and reviews how to get started, model inputs, utilization of the BMP and Urban BMP calculators, and how to download results. The [training video](#) is available on the EPA NPS YouTube channel and includes section bookmarks for easy access to specific topics. If you have any technical PLET questions, or have specific scenarios you want to explore, there is a [PLET support email](#) for help; the [PLET user guide](#) is also available for reference.

Visit the EPA Hypoxia Task Force Website

To learn more about the work of the Hypoxia Task Force, visit EPA's website featuring recent reports and measurements, important documents, upcoming actions, and learning opportunities. The "In the Spotlight" section of the homepage provides a great introduction.

[Check out the Hypoxia Task Force Homepage](#)

[Sign Up for the HTF Newsletter](#)

The *Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force Newsletter* is a quarterly publication produced by EPA's Office of Water in partnership with the Hypoxia Task Force. The newsletter provides a snapshot of recent state activities, federal agency activities, publications, and resources.

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