

# Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

Implementing the Gulf of Mexico  
Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy

JPAC Workshop”  
Resilient Communities in North America  
July 9, 2012



## An Unprecedented Collaboration

“ The president has made clear that he wants restoration plans to come from the Gulf Coast, and not be imposed on the Gulf residents by Washington. We’re counting on the people who know these areas best—the people who call the Gulf home—to shape our work. As someone who grew up here, I know the ecosystem is the key to our future. Our economy, our health and our culture are built on the coastline and the Gulf waters. I know this, the president knows this, and we are going to stand with you. ”

—EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, October 5, 2010



## Creation of the Task Force

Recommended by the Mabus report,  
*America's Gulf Coast*

Established through Executive Order October 5, 2010

Chair: Lisa Jackson, EPA Administrator

Vice-Chair: Garret Graves, Chair, Coastal Protection and  
Restoration Authority of Louisiana

# Task Force Membership

	State of Alabama		Department of Defense
	State of Florida		Department of the Interior
	State of Louisiana		Department of Justice
	State of Mississippi		Department of Transportation
	State of Texas		Domestic Policy Council
	Council on Environmental Quality		Environmental Protection Agency
	Department of Agriculture		Office of Management and Budget
	Department of Commerce		Office of Science and Technology Policy

# Importance of the Gulf of Mexico

- Dynamic, interconnected ecosystems spanning 600,000 across five U.S. states, six Mexican states, and Cuba
- Tourism and recreational activities, such as fishing, boating, beachcombing and bird watching, support more than 800,000 jobs across the region
- The Gulf yields nearly 1/3 of seafood production in the continental U.S.
- The Gulf is responsible for more than 90% of the nation's offshore crude oil and natural gas

# Problems Affecting the Gulf\*

- Loss of wetlands
- Erosion of barrier islands and shorelines
- Loss and degradation of coastal estuarine habitat
- Imperiled fisheries
- Hypoxia (low oxygen)
- Climate change

\*(As identified in *America's Gulf Coast*)

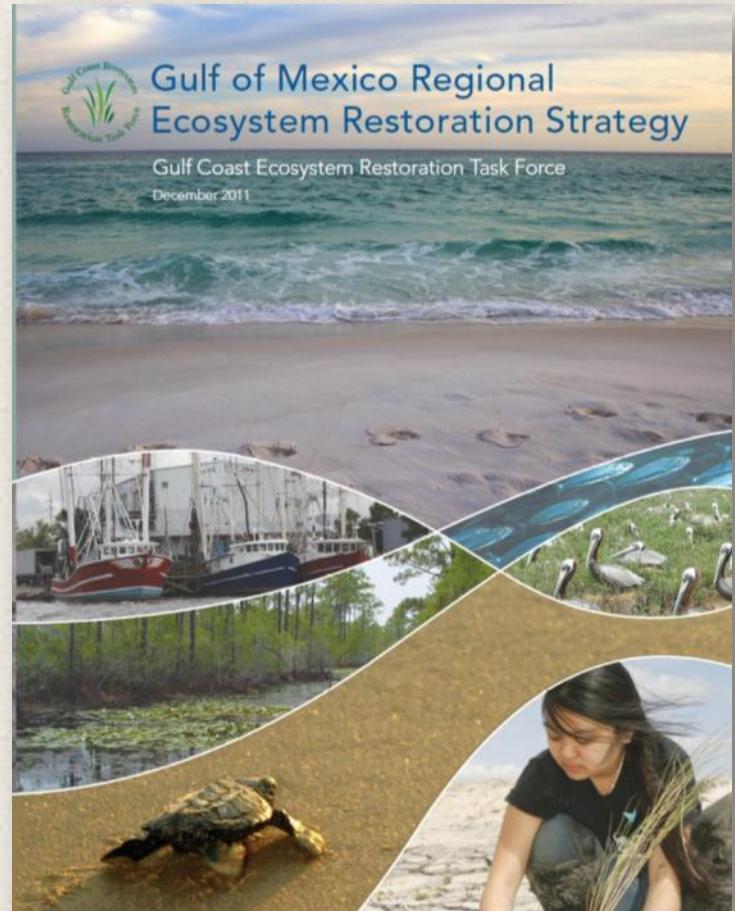


# The Restoration Strategy



# The Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy

- Final strategy released December 5, 2011
- Developed based on input from states, tribes, federal agencies, and citizens
- Unprecedented collaboration to address the health and restoration of the Gulf



# Goals

1. Restore and conserve habitat
2. Restore water quality
3. Replenish and protect living coastal and marine resources
4. Enhance community resilience



# Restore and Conserve Habitat

- Prioritize ecosystem restoration in the Gulf of Mexico
- Improve sediment management practices
- Restore and preserve more natural river processes of sediment and freshwater distribution
- Expand the network of state, federal and private conservation areas
- Restore and conserve coastal and near-shore habitats



# Restore Water Quality

- Decrease and manage excess nutrient levels
- Focus restoration actions in priority watersheds
- Reduce pollutants and pathogens
- Improve quantity and quality of freshwater flow into priority estuaries
- Coordinate and expand existing water quality monitoring efforts
- Collaborate with Mexico to assess and reduce emissions from oceangoing vessels



# Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources

- Restore deplete populations of living coastal and marine resources
- Conserve and protect offshore environments
- Restore and protect oyster and coral reefs and other coastal environments
- Coordinate and expand Gulf monitoring efforts to track sentinel species and sites
- Minimize, and eliminate where possible, invasive species



# Enhance Community Resilience

- Develop and implement coastal improvement programs
- Provide analytical support tools for communities
- Enhance environmental education and outreach



# Developing Coastal Improvement Programs

- Mississippi Coastal Improvement Program (MsCIP)
  - Jointly managed by State of Mississippi and the US Army Corps of Engineers
  - Addresses Reducing Risk, Habitat Loss, Living Coastal Resources and Water Quality
- Louisiana Master Plan
  - Jointly managed by State of Louisiana and the US Army Corp of Engineers

# Steps to Coordinating Comprehensive Implementation Efforts

- Identify shared priorities
- Maximize opportunities for efficiencies
- Provide scientific and technical support
- Identify resources needed to assist in implementation

# Analytical Support Tools for Communities

- Develop storm buffer options for local entities
- Inventory and evaluate models for storms and erosion
- Refine risk to enhance local understanding of risk
- Integrate and align available analytical tools, resources and technical assistance.

# **Enhance Environmental Education and Outreach for the Gulf of Mexico**

- Increase citizens' awareness
- Expand public-private partnerships to enhance education programs
- Include the economic value of Gulf ecosystems in environmental education
- Support and increase informal education programs for K-12 audiences
- Leverage existing partnerships with particular attention to under-represented communities

# Science-based Adaptive Management

- Establish a Gulf of Mexico modeling network
- Develop integrated decision-support tools and systems
- Expand ecosystem services and benefits analysis tools and capabilities
- Develop a Gulf-wide progress report

# Task Force Next Steps

- Further define restoration goals and identify milestones for measuring progress towards achieving those goals
- Review existing research, efforts and initiatives that can contribute to restoration of the Gulf
- Identify areas where different levels and sectors of government can work together on strategy implementation
- Propose new programs or initiatives where there are gaps in restoration capabilities
- Identify science, research and data collection needs required to inform effective restoration

# An Example of Restoration in Action: GoMI

- United States Agriculture Department's Gulf of Mexico Initiative: GoMI
  - \$50 million to help agricultural producers in seven Gulf Coast river basins improve water quality increase water conservation and enhance wildlife habitat.
  - Represents a 1,100% increase in financial assistance for Gulf priority watersheds



# For More Information

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Website

[www.epa.gov/gulfcoasttaskforce](http://www.epa.gov/gulfcoasttaskforce)

Email us to join our Listserv for automatic updates on  
meetings/activities

[GulfCoastTaskForce@epa.gov](mailto:GulfCoastTaskForce@epa.gov)