

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

The Gulf of Mexico
Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy

The Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Public Policy Forum
The Capitol
March 7, 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



State of Florida



State of Louisiana



State of Mississippi



State of Texas



Council on Environmental Quality



Department of Agriculture



Department of Commerce



Department of Defense



Department of the Interior



Department of Justice



Department of Transportation

Domestic Policy Council



Environmental Protection Agency



Office of Management and Budget



Office of Science and Technology Policy

The Importance of the Gulf of Mexico



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

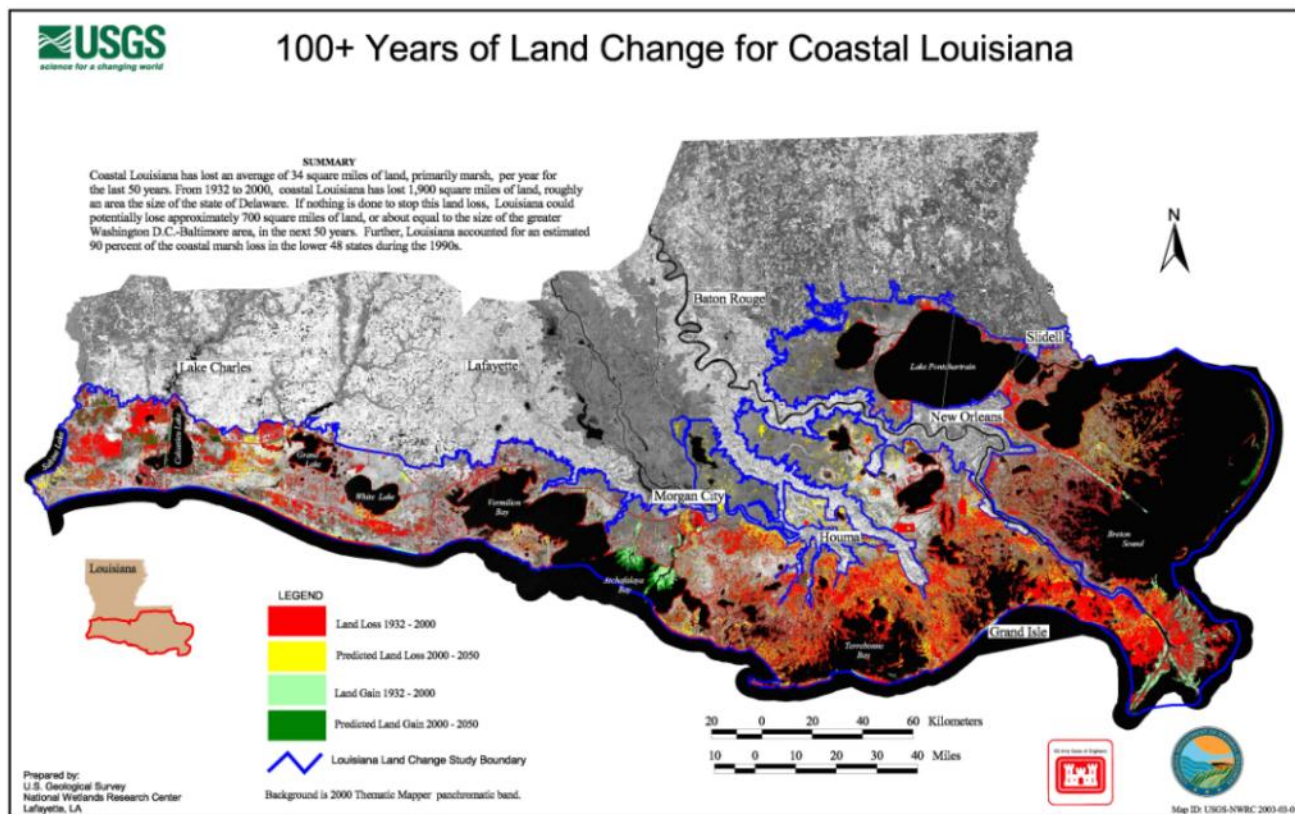
Problems Affecting the Gulf*

- 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)*



Loss of Wetlands and Erosion of Barrier Islands and Shorelines



<http://www.lca.gov/Library/ProductList.aspx?ProdType=0&folder=1202>

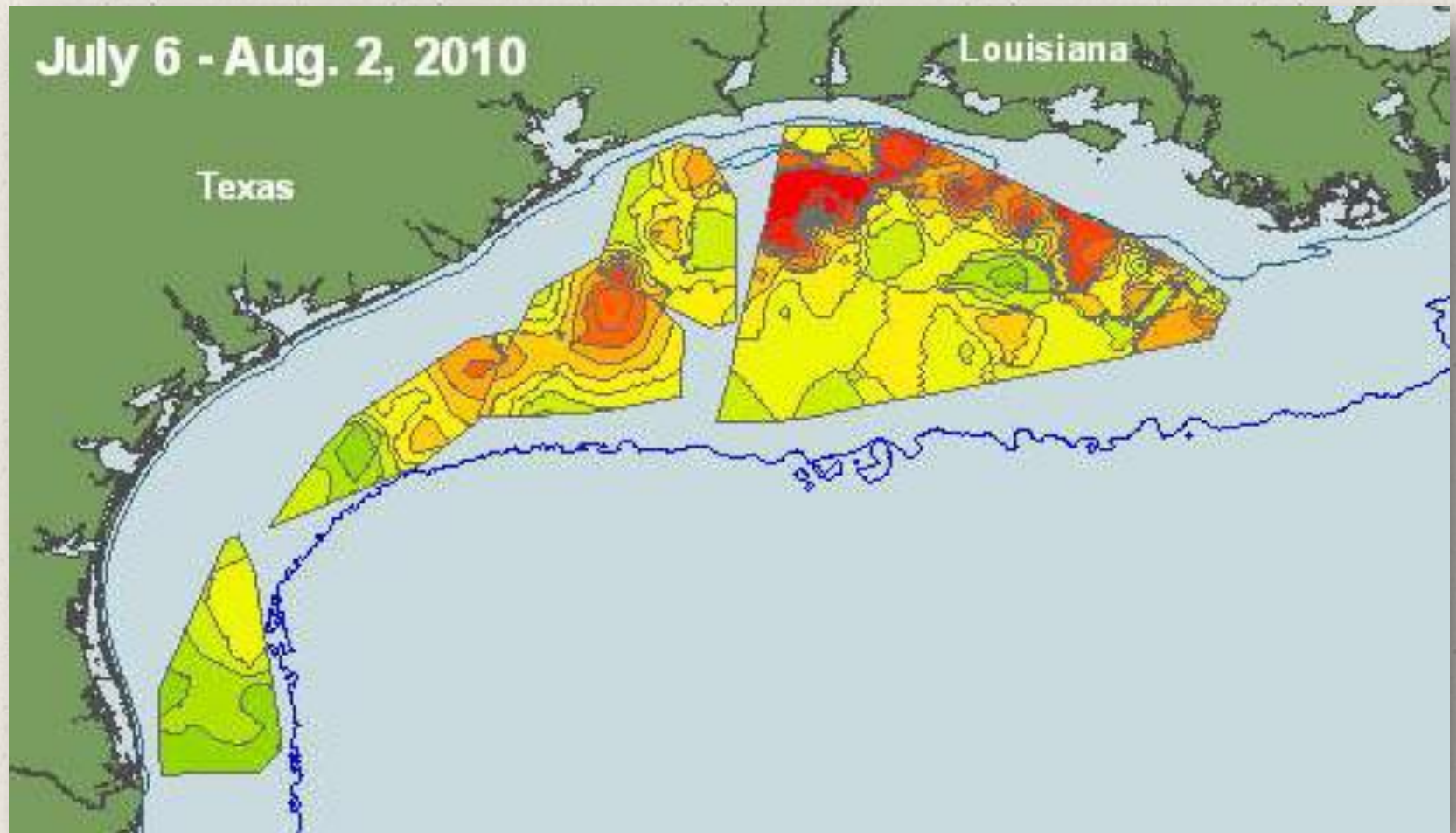
Loss and Degradation of Coastal and Estuarine Habitat



Imperiled Fisheries



Hypoxia (low oxygen)



<http://ecowatch.ncddc.noaa.gov/hypoxia/mapdescription>

Climate Change



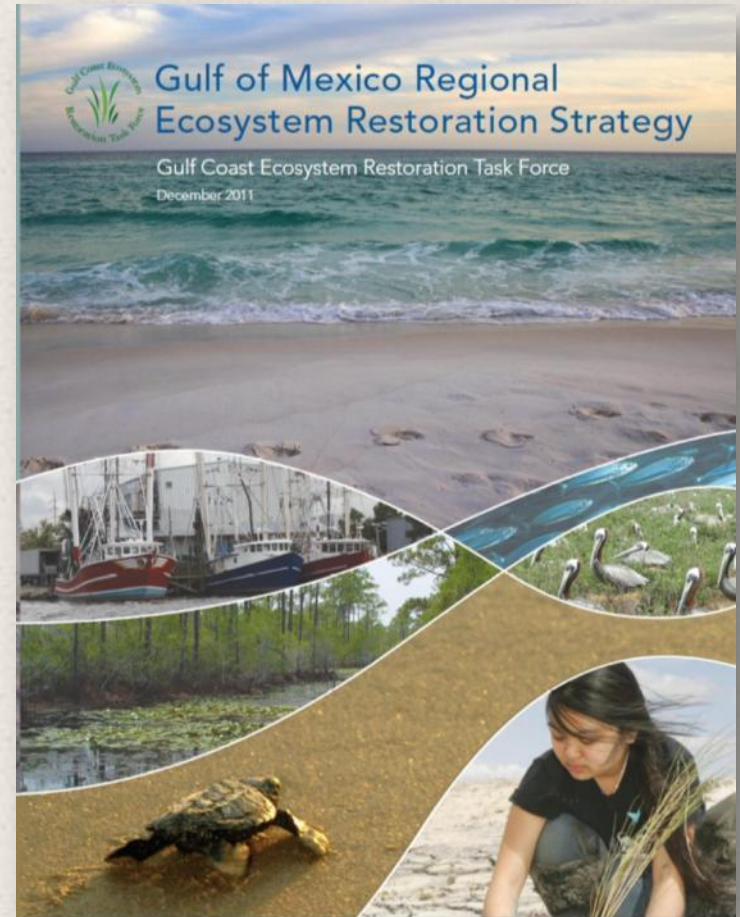
[Florida Oceans and Coastal Council. 2010. Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise in Florida: An Update of "The Effects of Climate Change on Florida's Ocean and Coastal Resources." [2009 Report] Tallahassee, Florida. vi + 26 p. www.floridaoceanscouncil.org.]

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



Science-based Adaptive Management

A satellite-style map of the Gulf of Mexico region, showing the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida peninsula, and parts of Mexico and Central America. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle that frames the text.

- 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

A person is walking away from the camera on a sandy beach during a golden sunset. The sun is a bright, glowing orb in the upper right corner, casting a warm, orange light across the entire scene. The ocean waves are visible in the foreground, and the horizon line is low, showing a dark silhouette of the person and some distant structures or trees.

Task Force Next Steps

- Identify science, research and data collection needs required to guide effective restoration
- Identify areas where different levels and sectors of government can work together on restoration implementation
- Further define restoration goals and identify milestones for measuring progress towards achieving those goals
- Propose new programs or initiatives where there are gaps in restoration capabilities
- Explore ways to make restoration implementation operate in a more timely, effective and efficient manner
- Continue to engage the public and local organizations to inform restoration efforts and to cultivate local participation and support

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





“ After the Deepwater Horizon disaster, this Task Force brought together people from across the Gulf Coast in unparalleled ways to talk about how we tackle both the immediate environmental devastation, as well as the long-term deterioration that has for decades threatened the health, the environment and the economy of the people who call this place home. It has all come to this moment—when we move from planning and researching to supporting real, homegrown actions aimed at restoring this vital ecosystem.”

—EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, December 5, 2011