

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



***United South and
Eastern Tribes
2011 Annual Meeting
and Expo
Choctaw, MS***

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Gulf Coast Ecosystem
Restoration Task Force

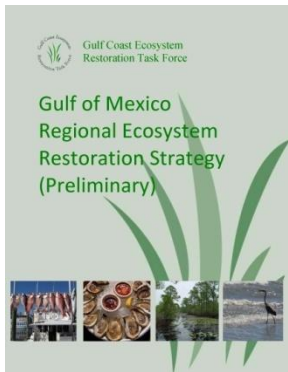
**Gulf of Mexico
Regional Ecosystem
Restoration Strategy
(Preliminary)**





Background

- Executive Order 13554, October 5, 2010:
 - “To effectively address the damage caused by the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, address the longstanding ecological decline, and begin moving toward a more resilient Gulf Coast ecosystem, **ecosystem restoration is needed.**”
 - Establishes Task Force (TF) to develop a Restoration Strategy
 - Requires tribal consultation
- DWH NRDA independent but informed by TF



Tribal Consultation and Coordination Process

- Followed EPA's Tribal Consultation Policy
- Mechanisms included:
 - EPA Tribal Portal
 - Face-to-face meetings
 - Conference calls
 - Webinars
- Involved tribes in strategy development and preliminary draft phases
- Will continue to consult with tribes in implementation



MAJOR ACTIONS

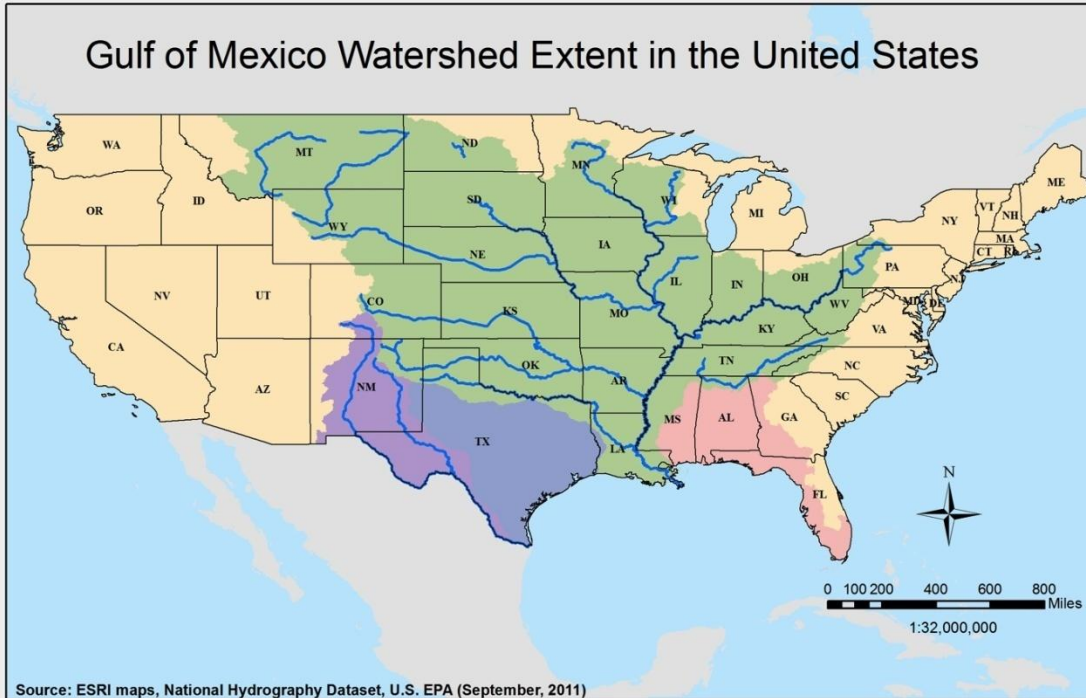
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Restore and Conserve Habitat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prioritize ecosystem restoration in the Gulf of Mexico by ensuring that social, environmental and economic outcomes are fully considered in all river management decisions, and by placing it on equal footing with other priorities such as navigation and flood damage risk reduction. ✓ Improve current sediment management practices to maximize to the extent practicable and ecologically acceptable the quantity and effective use of sediments by taking a “strategic use” approach to sediment management. ✓ Restore and preserve more natural river processes of sediment and freshwater distribution. ✓ Expand the network of state, federal and private conservation areas to ensure healthy landscapes that support the environment and culture of the region and the diverse services provided by the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. ✓ Restore and conserve coastal and near-shore habitats, with a focus on marshes, mangroves, seagrasses, barrier islands, natural beaches and dunes, and coastal forests and prairies.
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Restore Water Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decrease and manage excess nutrient levels in the Gulf through the development and implementation of state nutrient reduction frameworks. ✓ Focus restoration actions in priority watersheds to address excess nutrients in coastal waters and reduce hypoxic conditions. ✓ Reduce pollutants and pathogens from stormwater flows and other sources. ✓ Improve the quality and quantity of freshwater flow into priority estuaries to protect their health and resiliency. ✓ Coordinate and expand existing water quality monitoring efforts supporting adaptive management of programs and projects designed to improve water quality. ✓ Collaborate with Mexico to assess and reduce emissions from oceangoing vessels in the Gulf that degrade water quality.
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Replenish and Protect Living Coastal and Marine Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Restore depleted populations of living coastal and marine resources. ✓ Conserve and protect offshore environments. ✓ Restore and protect oyster and coral reefs. ✓ Coordinate and expand existing Gulf monitoring efforts to track sentinel species and sites. ✓ Minimize, and eliminate where possible, invasive species that impact the Gulf of Mexico.
<p>Goal:</p> <p>Enhance Community Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Develop and implement comprehensive, scientifically based, and stakeholder-informed coastal improvement programs. ✓ Provide analytical support tools to enhance community planning, risk assessment and smart growth implementation. ✓ Promote environmental stewardship by expanding environmental education and outreach.



3rd Largest Watershed in the World

66% of the Rivers within
the Continental U.S. Flow
to the Gulf.....

...and, 80% of
all precipitation reaches the
Gulf.



Total U.S. Gulf Watershed Extent:
1,741,246 sq miles (56% of continental U.S.)

Contributing U.S. Watershed Regions:
Mississippi 1,295,860 sq miles (41.9%)
Rio Grande 132,845 sq miles (4.2%)
South Atlantic-Gulf 133,263 sq miles (4.3%)
Texas-Gulf 179,278 sq miles (5.8%)

Legend

- Major Rivers
- Mississippi Region
- Rio Grande Region
- South Atlantic-Gulf Region
- Texas-Gulf Region
- State Boundaries



Gulf Coast Ecosystem
Restoration Task Force

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FUTURE EFFORTS OF THE TASK FORCE:

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

The Hypoxia Task Force

Natural Resource Damage Assessment Trustee Council

National Ocean Council

“promote and sustain a culture of shared stewardship, both across federal agencies and between federal, **tribal**, state and local jurisdictions.”

“shared commitment to openness, transparency, and a bottom-up, regionally driven approach to planning and action, with opportunities for **tribal**, state and local governments, private sector, academic and non-profit stakeholders, and the public to engage and help define the way forward.”



NEXT STEPS: Executive Order Requirements

- ✓ Support the NRDA process by referring potential ecosystem restoration actions to the Trustee Council for consideration and facilitating coordination among the relevant departments and agencies as appropriate.
- ✓ Engage local stakeholders, communities and the public to ensure they have an opportunity to share their needs and viewpoints to inform the work of the Task Force.
- ✓ Identify major policy areas where coordinated intergovernmental action is necessary.
- ✓ Prepare a biennial update to the President on progress toward the goals of Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration as outlined in the Strategy.
- ✓ Provide leadership and coordination of research needs in support of ecosystem restoration planning and decision-making and facilitate consideration of relevant scientific and technical knowledge.
- ✓ **Communicate with affected tribes in a manner consistent with Executive Order 13175.**
- ✓ Coordinate with relevant agencies and offices on ways to encourage health and economic benefits associated with ecosystem restoration.



NEXT STEPS: For New Actions

- ✓ Specify the current status of each issue, including which agency is working on the issue, under which authority, and with which resources.
- ✓ Identify a lead agency, state or other actor for each task needed to implement the action, along with appropriate partners.
- ✓ Create a schedule of specific activities to accomplish each goal, along with any necessary or available resources, authority, science or external support needed.
- ✓ Establish a science-based approach for ensuring success of actions undertaken.
- ✓ Provide critical decision-support tools to reflect ecosystem trends over time, communicate progress of restoration projects, and inform critical decisions and necessary changes in restoration efforts.
- ✓ Continue to engage the public and communities on the restoration effort by providing a forum for the public to bring its ideas and needs regarding ecosystem restoration to governmental leaders.
- ✓ Establish and maintain the core interagency staff expertise needed to develop the implementation plan and guide its execution as envisioned in this Strategy.
- ✓ Expand opportunities for collaboration with local governments, business entities, and NGOs as a critical component of Strategy implementation.



Questions?