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Water Quality Listening Session

Commenter's Affiliation	Comment
NGO	Mississippi river basin connected to gulf, and part of what happens in gulf. Iowa presentation concept should be included Task Force strategy, and in planning and resource commitments up the basin. Some portion of BP funds should be directed upriver - focus is still on spending on the gulf, but the source of the problems is not just in the gulf. Need to address hypoxic zone, and the only way to do that is by taking action upstream
Business & Industry	Focus on maritime data collection. Supports the science based adaptive management part of the strategy. Need good data collection and management plans to identify and address the real issues. Most plans already on line do not yet have comprehensive data collection plans (eg hypoxia, nitrogen, phosphorus) to determine causes of the problems. Don't yet have a complete handle - need to first understand the problem, before deciding on actions that are needed. What are the true causes - nitrogen? phosphorus? mercury? - To answer these questions, we need to monitor current levels of these pollutants, and continue to monitor them over the coming years.
Business & Industry	Where is the data being posted for quick access by everyone? Want to avoid problems of ownership. Needs public avail since paid for by the public money.
Business & Industry	Does not see a clear, clean way for business or industry to get involved. How can we do this the most effectively and most efficiently - commercial partners do this on a daily basis. The Task Force needs to bring that partner back to the table to bring that approach into our implementation.

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General Public	Noted at the Galveston, Texas Task Force meeting that the BP oil spill was the worst man-made disaster, but no one mentioned that we carpet-bombed the gulf with Corexit that make the pollution sink. That pollution wasn't addressed until a huge loss of wildlife (hermit crabs died, ground worms, fish, white shrimp) resulted. Folks were trying to blame commercial fishermen for some of the impacts, e.g turtles dying, which seems like a expensive PR campaign.
General Public	Need to get the water quality probelm on the table. Looking for transparency, data availability. The sick people shouldn't be the ones responsible for proving these chemicals are harmful. Need water testing, need CAC with non-profit members to ensure checks and balances, so folks can trust they are gettingt the truth of the matter.
NGO	Justification to direct BP funds upriver, the policy change: now funding the Hypoxia Task Force through USDA's Mississippi River Foundation. More money is needed, and it would take a major policy change to do that. Crucial to help fulfill the post-disaster restoration efforts.
NGO	First, why are we here? The BP oil disaster heightened our awareness of the challenges in the gulf, and we should not discount it. There are no teeth to EPA's efforts addressing Louisiana, and Mississippi River pollution problems. We need monitoring of the oil industry infrastructure - there are oil spills <i>every day</i> offshore in the gulf. The Taylor Energy oil spill is ongoing leaking into the gulf for the past 6 years! The Task Force strategy should prioritize the industry cleaning up its act and minimize impacts.
NGO	Support the Citizen's Advisory Committee, so gulf citizens can report events and take part in the responses. This approach worked in Alaska.



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NGO	Second, other industry pollution having a huge impact. The recent Pearl River fish kill resulted from a discharge by the Temple Paper Company of BOD (biological oxygen demand) and black liquor into the river, home of endangered species, NPDES is not up to the task, need to bolster efforts to tackle point source pollution.
NGO	NPS: need to look at upstream pollutin, including Chicago and breadbasket sources. Hypoxia TF existed for a long time without much success. Underfunded, need to address. What are we doing to truly ratched down the N and P pollution. Without limits, we won't be able to get there.
Business & Industry	To make sure citizens really understand what the data means! Need to make sure that water quality results are communiated properly to the public. Communicate it in a way to support that goal: environmental education.
Business & Industry	Defines success as follows: anytime you have a strategic plan, you have to clearly state a measure(s) of success. Need very specific objectives, e.g. level of mercury, or O2, very clear metrics that are the goals. Then need a direct plan of action to reach those goals. Success would clearly be the approaching and meeting of those pre-set levels. Finally, need to provide updates, like a report card, to get the results out and explain how they were measured. Use all forms of communication to share the results with the public, including the internet.
Business & Industry	How can we communicate the results to folks who do not have access to the internet? Works on the EPA's care program. CARE - Community Action for a Renewed Environment. Gets the public out to community meetings and getting them involved is the most effective way. Use CARE to distribute the draft strategy.
Business & Industry	Would love to see the Task Force members return here in one year to give a report to the people on what we've accomplished.



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General Public	Works for a non-profit, serves non-English speaking folks in the Vietnamese community. To get the word out, the Task Force can work with leaders in the community, political leaders, preident of groups, religious groups. Written materials, even when translated, may not be the most effective approach. Having community meetings with interpreters and community leaders may be the most effective means. Having connections in the community needed to get the word out effectively.
NGO	The Preliminary Strategy needs to be as clear as possible, and explain the goals and approaches. Let the public know what the Task Force is going to do, and how they are going to do it. Avoid jargon. Task Force needs to acknowledge cynicism, distrust, confusion that currently exists.
NGO	Consider using partially treated sewage water to restore wetlands - it is a win-win. Whenever projects are identified for the Preliminary Strategy, make sure they will be successes. Need clear goals, measurable objectives, measures of success, and monitoring to show results. Really important for it to NOT be a plan that sits on the shelf. It needs to line up with existing budget and agency priorities. Make sure it is scalable, too. There are other opportunities out there. Coordinate with NRDA, especially with the possibility of BP fines and penalties be allocated to the activities the Strategy undertakes. The report needs to be ready to be applied by those who receive the resources. Plan needs to have the flexibility to be bigger so we can get to success.
Business & Industry	Once the Strategy is finalized, it is really important, before it is submitted, to get non-scientists to look at it and make sure they can understand it. If necessary, have it reviewed and rewritten by those who can translate it for public consumption.



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NGO	A critical component is recommendations for the direction of funds coming from the oil spill. Don't assume the public understands that process. Task Force needs to explain to the public where the funds are coming from, how they are allocated, and how they will reach the gulf and the restoration projects. explain the process clearly.
Business & Industry	A good idea would be to send hard copies to each city, each local government in the area and let them get the word out, hold community meetings. Want to think about it more and perhaps come up with additional ideas. Possibly going different churches, it depends on the community, perhaps also send hard copies to the libraries.
Business & Industry	PTA meetings would be a good place, some popular events in the communities.
NGO	One of her concerns is WQ since after Katrina - east Biloxi city groundwater - lived in a FEMA trailer for 2.5 years, same water issues. Water lines not functioning - do not drink the water! No trust in problem being fixed. Health issues possibly from the formaldehyde in the trailer if not due to the water; respiratory, skin, nosebleeds, etc. Water has foul smell, said it always smelled that way. For the last year, the problem has gotten worse, and spread to her office water supply.
NGO	Bathing, washing hair, washing clothes and dishes: the smell remains. Jackson County trying to minimize her concerns, saying they are flushing out the hydrants. Happening in a new brand new buildings dedicated to seniors and special needs tenants. Lives in Ocean Springs now, and they are explaining it as "You are not using enough water. Let it run!" Gets a little better, but it still has the smell. Doesn't help and runs up the water bill, too.



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NGO	Wildlife and plants are also suffering the effects of polluted water. Local government denying the problems, dismissing citizen's concerns. All the new building projects are displacing wildlife, there are no plans for handling them. Pecan trees are adversely affected - they are a food source and these impacts should also be considered. Why are they struggling? Other flowering plants affected - what came into the soil from the flood water?
NGO	Mail Preliminary Strategy to community centers and community development agencies, and to organizations like Coastal Women for Change.

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