

Charter of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force

May 1998

Task Force

Mission of the Task Force

The Task Force is established to understand the causes and effects of eutrophication in the Gulf of Mexico, to coordinate activities to reduce the size, severity and duration of this phenomenon, and to ameliorate its effects. Activities include coordinating and supporting nutrient management activities from all sources, restoring habitats to trap and assimilate nutrients, and supporting other hypoxia related activities in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico watersheds.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Task Force is to provide executive level direction and support for coordinating the actions of participating organizations working on nutrient management within the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed. The Task Force will designate members of a Coordinating Committee, and solicit information from interested stakeholders.

Membership

Membership will include the following federal, state and tribal entities:

Federal

1. Environmental Protection Agency: Assistant Administrator for Water
2. Department of Agriculture: Under Secretary for Research, Education & Economics; and Under Secretary for Natural Resources & Environment
3. Defense/Army Corps of Engineers: Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works
4. Commerce/National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
5. Interior: Assistant Secretary for Water and Science
6. Department of Justice: Assistant Attorney General for Environment and Natural Resources Division
7. Office of Science and Technology Policy: Associate Director for Environment

States and Tribes

8–11 State Cabinet-level (Commissioners or Secretaries) members or Tribal leaders from throughout the Mississippi River Basin; "balanced" in terms of program responsibility among agricultural, environmental and natural resources agencies.

1. Arkansas: Commissioner, Soil and Water Conservation Commission
2. Illinois: Director, Agriculture Department
3. Iowa: Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

4. Louisiana: Director, Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Water Resources
5. Minnesota: Commissioner, Pollution Control Agency
6. Mississippi: Executive Director, Department of Environmental Quality
7. Missouri: Director, Natural Resources Department
8. Tennessee: Commissioner, Agriculture Department
9. Wisconsin: Secretary, Natural Resources Department
10. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians: Tribal Chief
11. Prairie Island Indian Community: President

Resource Commitment

As a minimum attend and participate in Task Force meetings (2-3 per year) and provide support (staff time and/or financial commitment) for Task Force or Committee sponsored activities.

Coordinating Committee

Roles and Responsibilities

The Coordinating Committee is comprised of senior managers from the Task Force member agencies. The role of the Coordinating Committee is to facilitate communications and coordination of all Teams and Committees, and make recommendations to the Task Force for their action. The group is responsible for ensuring that all actions complement each other and that communication flows effectively to all Committees and Teams.

Membership

Membership includes the following federal, state and tribal entities:

Federal

1. Environmental Protection Agency and Gulf of Mexico Program: Robert Wayland and Jim Giattina
2. Department of Agriculture: Carole Jett and Fred Swader
3. Defense/Army Corps of Engineers: Barry Kennedy and Tom Pullen
4. Commerce/National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration: Don Scavia
5. Interior/ Geological Survey: Jeff Williams and Herb Buxton
6. Department of Justice: Scott Siff
7. Office of Science and Technology Policy

States and Tribes

1. Arkansas: Earl Smith, Soil and Water Conservation Commission
2. Illinois: Chet Boruff, Agriculture Department
3. Iowa: Jim Guilliford, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
4. Louisiana: Dugan Sabins, Department of Environmental Quality
5. Minnesota: Wayne P. Anderson, Pollution Control Agency
6. Mississippi: Charles Chisolm, Natural Resources Department
7. Missouri: Ron Kucera, Natural Resources Department

8. Tennessee
9. Wisconsin: Bruce Baker, Natural Resources Department
10. Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians: Bernadette Hudnell
11. Prairie Island Indian Community: Heather Westra

Resource Commitment

As a minimum attend and participate in Coordinating Committee meetings (4 per year) and provide support (staff time and/or financial commitment) for Coordinating Committee sponsored activities.

Strategic Assessment Team

Background/Status

All participating departments and agencies of the Coordinating Committee were solicited to participate in development of a model process and organizational structure for the conceptual Strategic Assessment Team. Five of those organizations (e.g., USDA, USGS, Army/COE, NOAA, and EPA) have formed a workgroup and are participating in the development of a model proposal for consideration and adoption by the Coordinating Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Strategic Assessment Team is to provide the Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force, Coordinating Committee, and the supporting Scientific Evaluation and Ecosystem/Watershed Management Committees with a "virtual" inter-organizational team of environmental analysts. The team is responsible for conducting the required descriptive and predictive environmental assessments as identified by the Task Force and supporting committees. Additionally, the team has the responsibility for organizing and convening regional workshops for gathering and disseminating data and information relevant to the environmental assessment requirements of the Task Force and the supporting Committees.

Membership

USDA, USGS, Army/COE, NOAA, and EPA are participating in the development of a proposal to structure and operate the Strategic Assessment Team. Membership will be determined by the acceptance or modification of that proposal.

Total Membership (To Be Determined)

Resource Commitment

A comprehensive proposal to charter, staff, resource, initiate, and maintain the operations of the Strategic Assessment Team is under development by the five member agency workgroup.

Scientific Evaluation and Support Committee

Roles and Responsibilities

The Scientific Evaluation and Support Committee (SESC) is conducting a scientific assessment

of the causes and consequences of Gulf of Mexico hypoxia under the leadership of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) Subcommittee on Ecological Systems as part of the process of developing and implementing potential hypoxia policy actions.

Membership

1. Commerce/National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration: Donald Scavia, Chair
2. Environmental Protection Agency: James Giattina, Mary Belefski, Arnold Kuzmack, Michael Slimak
3. Department of Agriculture: Fred Swader, Dale Bucks
4. Interior/U.S. Geological Survey: Donald Goolsby, Jeff Williams
5. Interior/Minerals Management Service: Ken Turgeon
6. Defense/Army Corps of Engineers: John Bellinger
7. Defense/Office of Naval Research: Louis Goodmal
8. Department of Energy: Curtis Olsen
9. Health & Human Services/National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences: Warren Piver
10. National Science Foundation: Penelope Firth, Joann Roskoski
11. Smithsonian Institution: David Correll
12. Department of State: William Cocke
13. Illinois State Water Survey: Derek Winstanley

The Assessment

Six interrelated topic papers will be developed by scientific experts drawn from the academic and governmental sectors. The topic papers and team leaders identified by the SESC are:

1. Characterization of hypoxia: distribution, dynamics, and causes. Lead: Dr. Nancy Rabalais, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium.
2. Ecological and economic consequences of hypoxia. Ecological co-lead: Dr. Robert Diaz, Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Economics co-lead: Dr. Andrew Solow, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Center for Marine Policy.
3. Sources and loads of nutrients transported by the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Lead: Mr. Donald Goolsby, U.S. Geological Survey.
4. Effects of reducing nutrient loads to surface waters within the basin and Gulf of Mexico. Upper watershed co-lead: Dr. Patrick Brezonik, University of Minnesota. Gulf of Mexico co-lead: Dr. Victor Bierman, Limno-Tech, Inc.
5. Evaluation of methods to reduce nutrient loads to surface water, ground water, and the Gulf of Mexico. Lead: Dr. William Mitsch, Ohio State University.
6. Evaluation of social and economic costs and benefits of methods (identified in topic #5) for reducing nutrient loads. Lead: Dr. Otto Doering, Purdue University.

In addition to being developed by appropriate scientific experts, each report will be subjected to a rigorous independent peer-review facilitated by the SESC. Also, an "integration team", composed of topic paper leaders and additional government and academic experts, will integrate information from the six reports into an assessment that will provide ecological and economic analysis of various policy actions for reducing nutrient loads to surface waters in the Mississippi

River Basin and the Gulf of Mexico. The SESC will also facilitate an external review, prior to submitting the assessment for formal agency review.

Resource Commitment

As a minimum attend and participate in Scientific Evaluation and Support Committee meetings and provide support (staff time and/or financial commitment) for Scientific Evaluation and Support Committee sponsored activities

Ecosystem/Watershed Management Committee

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Ecosystem/Watershed Management Committee is to foster win-win cost effective stewardship actions for nutrient management and other hypoxia related activities at the local implementation scale. The group is responsible for identifying target priority areas supporting local, watershed-specific nutrient management actions that will result in measurable environmental and economic benefits.