



Mississippi River
Gulf of Mexico
Watershed Nutrient
Task Force

Moving Forward on
Gulf Hypoxia



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Members of the Task Force

State Agencies

Arkansas Natural Resources Commission
Illinois Department of Agriculture
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Tennessee Department of Agriculture
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Federal Agencies

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Commerce (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
U.S. Department of the Interior (U.S. Geological Survey)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

What is being done about hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico?

In 2007, the Gulf hypoxic zone was the third largest on record. Caused primarily by nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, the zone was bigger than the State of Massachusetts. The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Nutrient Task Force, made up of Federal and State agencies, has reassessed the 2001 Action Plan for Reducing, Mitigating, and Controlling Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico. The 2008 Action Plan is a product of this reassessment.

How is the 2008 Action Plan different from the last plan?

The 2008 Action Plan greatly increases accountability and specificity through the inclusion of an Annual Operating Plan and Annual Report that provide mechanisms for maintaining and tracking progress between reassessments, state-led nutrient reduction strategies, complementary federal strategies, and an outreach plan to engage stakeholders.

11 Key Actions in the 2008 Action Plan outline critical needs to complete and implement nitrogen and phosphorus reduction strategies, promote effective conservation practices and management practices, track progress, reduce existing scientific uncertainties, and promote effective communications to increase awareness of Gulf hypoxia.

Success Stories

Any environmental issue that covers the immense size and scope of the Mississippi River Basin and hypoxia in the Gulf is bound to be laden with obstacles. Despite limited resources to address an increasing problem, the Task Force and its member Federal and State agencies have made progress through actions and programs that achieve direct reductions in nutrients throughout the Mississippi River Basin. The Task Force is committed to continue to work towards the reduction of the hypoxic zone using the Annual Operating Plan as an implementation guide.



Lake Bloomington Watershed, Illinois

Incentive payments are offered to corn producers in the 43,000 acre watershed who develop a certified four-year nutrient management plan and use a nitrification inhibitor with fall nitrogen application or shift to spring application of nitrogen. The combined efforts of the Illinois Council on Best Management Practices, a coalition of agriculture organizations, the **Illinois Department of Agriculture** and local stakeholders led to overwhelming success the first year – 70% of all corn acres were enrolled. Preliminary reports show producers were already following University recommendations; nitrogen application was reduced an average of 0.9 lbs/acre (10,000 lbs total) while phosphorus application decreased 14 lbs/acre (140,000 lbs total). The project is funded by the Sand County Foundation.

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative, Minnesota

The Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative (SMBSC) is a farmer-owned cooperative with a beet-processing facility that wanted to build a wastewater treatment plant to serve the facility. The **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency** allowed SMBSC to obtain a permit for the proposed wastewater treatment plant, provided that they offset all of the additional loading through nonpoint source projects which reduced total phosphorus. The highest tier of nonpoint source trade offsets requires 13,000 lbs of total phosphorus reductions per year. SMBSC is achieving nearly 2.5 times the permit's required nonpoint source reductions.



Read about more successes throughout the Mississippi River Basin in the **2008 Action Plan** or visit the Task Force Web site at www.epa.gov/msbasin.



Tell me more.

Enhancing predictive models, assessing how hypoxia affects commercially and ecologically important species in the Gulf, providing agricultural assistance to farmers, and supporting states to develop water quality standards are just some of the diverse and progressive efforts of the Task Force partnerships.

Visit the Web site to read the 2008 Action Plan and learn more.
Become involved by helping the Task Force to preserve an ecosystem of environmental and national significance at:

www.epa.gov/msbasin

Contact Us

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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