

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
Environmental Education  
Steering Committee Conference Call**

**Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Steering Committee Attendees:**

Rafael Calderon- The Nature Conservancy  
Richard Gonzales- Gulf of Mexico Foundation  
Alison Hammer- NOAA  
Flinda Hill- Mississippi Power Company  
Phillip Hinesley- AL Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, Coastal Section  
Valerie Kleinschmidt- GOMA/DISL  
Ericka McCauley- Galveston Bay Estuary Program  
Drew Puffer- EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program  
Tara Schultz- Texas State Aquarium  
Tracie Sempier- Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant  
Kris Shipman- Texas Parks and Wildlife  
Chris Simoniello- GCOOS EOC, University of South Florida, College of Marine Science  
Tabitha Stadler- Rookery Bay NERR  
Terry Teague- EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program  
Sharon Walker- JL Scott Marine Education Center, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium  
Ann Weaver- NOAA  
Lee Yokel- GOMA/DISL

**Current Homework**

- EEN to review new website [www.gulfallianceeducation.org](http://www.gulfallianceeducation.org). Date to be determined for a conference call.
- Liaisons need to be thinking of GOMA messages that your team would be interested in promoting. Tabitha will be in touch with liaisons.
- Quarterly Call will be taking place on Monday, May 4, 2009 at 1 pm CDT.

**Acronyms**

AMT= Alliance Management Team  
CHOW= Capitol Hill Ocean Week  
CTP= Coastal Training Program  
DISL= Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
EPA= Environmental Protection Agency  
EEN= Environmental Education Network  
GOMA= Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
GOM= Gulf of Mexico  
GCOOS EOC= Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System, Education & Outreach Council

HABs= Harmful Algal Blooms  
NERR= National Estuarine Research Reserve  
NOAA= National Oceanic & Atmospheric Association  
PIT= Priority Issue Team  
RFP= Request for Proposals  
SLAM= Sea Level Rise Affecting Marshes Model  
TCEQ= Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

## Agenda General Notes

### I. Update on Action Plan II-

#### a. Status on Public Input- Update by Lee Yokel

1. Online public input for Action Plan II was extended for 3 weeks on surveymonkey in order to acquire more feedback. EEN held a conference call on Monday, April 6, 2009 to review comments and decide on whether or not to alter Tier I education chapter of the plan based on those comments. Everyone agreed that comments related to education would be appropriately addressed in Tier II. It was decided not to alter the education chapter and notes on the call were sent to AMT.

#### b. Tier II

1. Next activity for EEN to work on is the Tier II document. Tier II will be printed in time for CHOW which is the first week of June, the 9th-11<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Valerie & Lee will work on getting Tier II prepared and making sure it matches up well with Tier I. They will also be inserting commitments. A lot of details to the education chapter have been cut out during the process of editing so they'll go back to ensure meaning from previous drafts is included in Tier II.
2. AMT wants us to come up with yearly work plan to include in Tier II. EEN should consider: what actions do we want to tackle first?
3. Sharon Walker asked Lee to give an overview of the public input response to Action Plan II. Lee explained: Louisiana had the most respondents and the other states averaged about 60 responses, with Alabama having the least. Due to the press from the *Gulf Restoration Network* a lot of people commented on wanting Climate Change included and having face to face meetings. During the call EEN agreed climate change is adequately addressed in other areas of the plan and that it is the EEN's responsibility to report out what the other teams are doing to address climate change.

## II. Updates

### a) Website – [www.gulfallianceeducation.org](http://www.gulfallianceeducation.org)

1. The new GOMA EEN website quietly went live on April 6, 2009. Two web developers from NGI took care of the technical work for the website. Valerie was very involved with gathering content and updating the site. We will need to link from public site [www.gulfmexicoalliance.org](http://www.gulfmexicoalliance.org). Alison Hammer will be the one to add the link.
2. Jay Ritchie asked: “Ocean Week might be a good time to do a formal release of the site.”
3. Lee asked EEN if they wanted to review the site now or schedule another call for that purpose. The team gave brief comments, but will conduct another call to review.
4. Richard Gonzales, Phillip Hinesley and Ericka McCauley stated LOOKS GOOD!
5. Chris Simoniello asked for the teacher workshops and real time information content to be developed more.
6. Lee asked Alison Hammer to review the site and give input since she was an integral part of the storyboarding process.
7. Valerie commented: “Sidebars are sparse so if anyone has suggestions for things to put in there, let me know.”

### b) Other Updates

1. August 2009 “All-Hands” meeting – During this meeting we are hoping to have a joint GOMAEEN/GCOOS EOC meeting.
2. GCOOS-Chris Simoniello gave update- GCOOS and GOMA both overlap in many ways which enables a collaborative relationship to come easily. We are pushing to populate the website with content so that it aligns with priority issues.
3. Ann asked- What projects are finished? Chris Responded- A GPS focused workshop was just held with 60 participants. Workshop applications are focused on GOMA issues like: water quality, hypoxia, coastal resiliency. GCOOS is developing lesson plans ideas and incorporating Year of Science Community Based suggestions. More development is needed.
4. Those who are interested in helping plan meeting: Sharon Walker, Richard Gonzales, Rafael Calderon and Tabitha Stadler. This group will work on drafting up an agenda by conference call in the next couple of months and if there’s something anyone would like to add then let EEN know.
5. Tabitha, Lee, Valerie, Rhonda Schoessel, LaKeshia, and Bridget Washburn will be having a GOMA Public Relations working group call to discuss messaging for each PIT. Tabitha will be in touch with liaisons for messaging ideas.
6. Sharon Commented- A meeting at All Hands would be a good way to keeps us coordinated and encourage a strong working relationship. Richard Gonzales commented- I have a personal interest with GPS

application from college and would be interested in finding out the latest in the technology.

### III. Priority Team Reports-

1. These reports will be initiated every other month. Lee mentioned that the GOMA EEN Quarterly Information Call would be taking place on May 4<sup>th</sup> and Valerie would be contacting everyone about participating.
- a. Water quality- Kris Shipman gave update
    1. The PIT had a conference call on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 2009. A monitoring forum was held in New Orleans on April 7, 2009 and was successful. The team is preparing for a HABS meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 2009. They will be discussing development of an effective monitoring program and a database to accompany collection of information. The Water Quality team has working groups that work on Pathogens, HABS, Mercury, and Monitoring. The HABS group is working on a matrix to identify and create public communication messaging about HABS. Messages will educate public about causes of HABS.
  - b. Nutrients-Richard Gonzales
    1. The Nutrients PIT call was occurring during the same time as the EEN call so Richard was doing double duty. He mentioned the new coordinator, Ann Porter, was doing a good job of organizing the team by sending out notes and updates regularly. St. Louis Bay, MS has been chosen for nutrient pilot study. Some criteria for this decision included the amount of historical data available and the freshwater in-flows. Tampa Bay was also considered, but eliminated since the team felt this area was already very well studied. Every month each Gulf state gives a nutrient criteria update. Laurie Rounds will be offering a webinar for the Nutrient PIT's formal meeting in June to review study of St. Louis bay site. Laurie Rounds and Ann Porter from the Nutrient team are the ones to contact for upcoming meetings, conferences, workshops and grants.
  - c. Resilience- Tracie Sempier started update
    1. The PIT is finishing up pilot testing of the Resilience Index and it is expected to be prepared June 1, 2009. The team has received a great response from the communities they've worked with which has helped to improve the Index and make it a stronger resource. Valerie did a great job with a write-up of the Index in a newsletter that discussed how the Index helps communities be more prepared for storms.

2. Storms Coast Network is expected to launch its site on June 1, 2009. The Network includes all 5 of GOM states enabling coastal decision makers to collaborate on important issues like sea level rise and climate change. The community pages are still being developed and hopefully will be ready with the launch of the site. There will be a Mississippi Smart Growth Conference in May and those attending will be able to utilize the site when it's launched in June. The target audience is for decision makers, but they are willing to enhance in order to reach a broader audience if necessary. The team is also developing a "Homeowners Handbook" to help people prepare for natural hazards. They are currently securing funding and hope to make it available for each Gulf state.
3. Jay Richie gave an update-They are in the initial design of the Coastal IQ instrument. The core team is pulling together questions from existing surveys to see any changes from past research. They will have a larger group review the questions in order to polish the tool. The team is hoping to reach many interest groups.
4. Rafael Calderon gave an update-A Coastal Resiliency meeting took place in New Orleans, LA a month ago. They discussed the SLAM modeling process. The data is in place and they expect to have it organized by late May to early June. They want these results to be accessible to as many people as possible. The data comes from various locations in Mississippi and Texas including the Sabine River and Grand Bay NERR site. Once information is available they will need to explain the process, what the data means, and how it can be used. The information could be used to guide adaptation projects.
5. Lee mentioned that Amy Gohres, the new CTP Coordinator, could provide support to Tracie. In regards to these projects and future activities, let the EEN know how they can help to disseminate your information and spread the word about these resources (this goes for all PITs). In August, it would be good to have a strategy on how to send out messages through a chain of communication.

d. Habitat-Drew Puffer gave update

1. The Habitat PIT held a meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> to go over the steps necessary to carry out actions from the new plan. They discussed a schedule of activities, including critical workshops, for the months ahead. A Regional Sediment Master Plan workgroup meeting will be taking place on May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009. When it comes to using dredge spoil there are many possibilities for use. The Habitat PIT is working to have federal standards reflect best-use practices by using dredge materials to restore and maintain coastal habitat. Someone inquired, "What normally is done with dredge spoil?" Drew commented that dredge is usually disposed of in the cheapest

way and in places with the most need. Tabitha mentioned- Sea Grant started a program called “Living Shorelines” and Rookery Bay NERR will be having a workshop soon. This brought about conversation on the “Living Shorelines” program and MS/AL Sea grant’s website describes the program: <http://www.masgc.org/page.asp?id=235>. And a brochure: <http://www.urban-nature.org/publications/documents/LivingShorelineBrochureFinal.pdf>

e. Ecosystem Assessment-Chris Simoniello gave update

1. EIA PIT and other GOMA members will be meeting tomorrow, April 15th until the 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at Harte Research Institute in Texas. They will be experimenting with a virtual option where people can attend on web cam. The meeting will focus on tool prototypes and hammering out the action plan. For the tool prototypes they will be focusing on the technical: how do we use data? How do we get maps to overlay? They want effective tools and aren’t worrying about the visual appeal at this stage. Friday morning representatives from each team will discuss the PITs data needs, which will help to ensure the tools EIA designs will meet those needs. The team will be discussing the use of GOMA & partner websites to promote or feature EIA tools. The team hopes to collaborate well with everyone to have strong tools that are useful for all the teams and ultimately for the public to see what the Alliance is working on.
2. Seneca Holland (EIA Coordinator) is excited about the CELC Kiosks. Each state has been designated a GOMA issue to highlight in their kiosk and Seneca is working with Tara on the TX Aquarium kiosk.
3. Richard Gonzales mentioned that he recently participated in a long distance learning workshop. He learned about the “Second life” software package that features a virtual world. He could see this being incredibly useful for the Alliance by creating a Gulf virtual world incorporating real time environmental data. Using this technology would take collaboration to be able to pull it off. <http://secondlife.com/>

f. Lee- Thanked everyone for their updates and appreciated the collaborative process.

IV. Calendar Announcements-

- It’s spring, which means plenty of activities are taking place. EEN was told to e-mail any announcements if they’d like to.
1. Florida: There are many upcoming Year of Science Activities- <http://www.yearofscience2009.org/calendar/events/>. The USGS Open House and Florida Marine Quest will be taking place next weekend 4/25/09.

2. Alabama: DISL Discovery Day will be taking place on the April 18, 2009. An Earth Day activity at Fairhope Pier will occur on April 25, 2009. Mobile is busy preparing for the GOMA All Hands in August.
  3. Mississippi- The Renew our Rivers Cleanup will occur on May 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Renew our Rives MS has a Facebook page. NGI's Annual Conference will occur on May 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 in Mobile. A Smart Growth conference will be taking place on the 12th-13th of May. This conference is expected to have a lot of attendees.
  4. Louisiana- No one from LA was on the call to give an update.
  5. Texas- Ericka McCauley gave update-The Trash Bash event in late march was a success. Armond Bayou water festival is coming up soon and it is the first ever regional watershed event. May Bay Day at the Boardwalk brings together different groups to showcase the work they're doing to protect Galveston Bay. TCEQ's Annual event will be coming up soon.
    - Richard Gonzales continued update-The City of Houston will be having it's Water Works Day on May 7<sup>th</sup> and will include a Bays & Bayous section. Bay Day will be taking place this Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup> and will have Kayak demonstration and over100 exhibitors. Earth Week in Bay City will be celebrating on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. May 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> will be a Coastal Expo where High School volunteers will have first-hand experience with GOM ecology. 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bahia Grande Limpianato Parade and Coastal Cleanup occurred on Saturday, April 4 with 150 participants. They had their first *Flowing of the Waters* ceremony where they mixed the waters from various Gulf locations. They also put shells back into the water to become habitat for crabs. Economic development in Rio Grande River and Port Isabelle has resulted in many tilapia farms and they are becoming a popular menu items. In June there will be the "Annual Shrimperi" with a sea grass tent and a floating classroom from Sea Grant Karma. The Science & Spanish Club Network will be having their Leadership Conference in Aransas Pass at the Civic Center on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.
    - Kris Shipman continued- On June 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>, TX Parks & Wildlife will partner with Austin's *Groundwater to the Gulf*, training for teachers. This training is in its' 4<sup>th</sup> year and it takes teachers to mouth of Colorado River to educate them on GOM issues. There will be a Wetlands Waterway Training available for 22 teachers on June 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. Minnesota started the "Charismatic Ecologist" and now it has extended to the MS River.
- V. Issue for the Alliance Management Team- No issues were brought up.

- VI. Any Other Questions- If there were any other questions regarding topics on the call then the EEN was encouraged to e-mail each other.
- VII. Next call Tuesday, May 12, 2009 10AM CDT