

## **Gulf of Mexico Coastal Wetlands Survey Design and Indicator Development Workshop – Gulf Breeze, Florida.**

The EPA Gulf Ecology Division hosted a workshop to bring together scientists from EPA/ORD, OW, Regions IV and VI, the states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, and wetlands assessment experts to discuss the best available technology to estimate coastal wetland condition within the northern Gulf of Mexico region.

Recommendations generated from this workshop include the sampling frame, design, and indicators for an upcoming pilot study to assess Gulf of Mexico coastal wetland condition. The group suggested that this pilot project should use the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory, Status and Trends dataset for the Gulf of Mexico as the sampling frame. The group generated a list of suggested indicators of wetland condition within a 3-tiered conceptual framework, based upon existing wetland rapid assessment protocols in use in other coastal systems. Each specific indicator was evaluated for scientific relevance and feasibility with the final evaluation being the cost of implementation. Wetland types evaluated in this pilot survey will be limited to estuarine and palustrine systems with herbaceous, forested, and shrub/scrub vegetation classes. The survey will be conducted over a two year period using a subset of randomly selected NWI S&T plots to determine sampling locations within the target population.

Final results from the workgroup will be summarized and discussed with USGS for implementation in the pilot assessment to be conducted in 2007 – 2008.

**Expected Outcome:** The sample frame, design and indicators will be used in a pilot assessment of coastal wetlands condition in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

**Communication Opportunity:** A report of the workshop proceedings will be published in 2007, and used not only to guide the Gulf of Mexico pilot, but in development of protocols for national assessments of wetlands.

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