



**Community Workshop Results of Individual Participant Issues
Naples, Florida – June 10, 2005
Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve**

Rationale: Participants were asked to write down two priority issues regarding the economic and/or environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico on two separate index cards. These cards were collected and categorized by the facilitators into 22 broad issues, listed numerically below. Beneath each issue, the exact responses from the index cards are listed. The 22 broad issues were posted and all 99 participants voted twice to arrive at the top five. These issues then became the focus of smaller breakout groups. Please refer to the summary of the breakouts for participant responses to that aspect of the workshop.

PRIORITY ISSUES

1. Freshwater Management (Quantity) – 11 out of 99 votes
 - Hydrological Alteration – develop minimum flow levels for SW Florida waterways
 - Freshwater mis-management (2 index cards)
 - Water Management (3 index cards)
 - Water quality and quantity
 - Water retention and reuse delivery reverse negative impacts of excess runoff into Gulf of Mexico - % conversion to potable
 - Flow rate/discharge from Lake Okeechobee to the gulf via Caloosahatchee River
 - Dumping of freshwater from Lake Okeechobee (containing nutrients) down Caloosahatchee – kills seagrass, disrupts estuary salinity balance, affects gulf coastal water quality
 - Estuary flushing
 - Altered freshwater flows, changing land use
 - Freshwater as a pollutant

2. Gulf Water Quality (non point source pollution, storm water) - 9 out of 99 votes
 - Addressing land based sources of pollution to protect beaches, estuaries and shellfish/fishing grounds
 - Non point source pollution (6 index cards) – urban areas/farms/agriculture
 - Water quality/runoff (storm water nitrates, fertilizer) – manage and control
 - Storm water runoff/nutrient pollution/freshwater as pollutant
 - Water quality protection by – controlling storm water runoff, limiting fertilizer applications
 - Developing total maximum daily loads for SW Florida waterways (TMDLs)

3. Life-long education (K-12 + adults) – 9 out of 99 votes
 - Education
 - Education – it all starts here – formal/informal/media – how best to implement
 - Lack of training for professionals/decision makers to help them use science in their daily lives
 - Need for increased emphasis on environmental education for students of all ages
 - Education – K-12 and higher ed
 - Education (all levels)
 - Strengthen environmental education → birth to retirement – people of all ages must be made aware of issues related to Gulf of Mexico
 - Educate, motivate and empower local citizen's voice in support of Gulf of Mexico
 - Education at the local level - provide people with tools they can begin to use right away, people need to feel that what they do can make a difference

4. Habitat Loss (wetlands, seagrass, corals) - 16 out of 99 votes
 - Continued loss of coastal wetlands
 - Loss of coastal wetlands
 - Estuary erosion control vs. non-interference
 - Estuary erosion control
 - Loss of habitat – upland and wetland
 - Near shore coral reef systems
 - Estuary habitat destruction (grasses and mangroves)
 - Estuary habitat destruction (seagrasses)
 - Protecting and restoring coastal and inland wetlands
 - Estuary health – seagrass bed health, why is it deteriorating?
 - Habitat destruction
 - Loss of Habitat

5. Population Growth and Development - 9 out of 99 votes
 - Watershed protection through land conservation (acquisition and conservation easement)
 - Land use conversion
 - Impact of population growth on the long term sustainability of the Southwest Florida environment (*paraphrased*)
 - Development standards
 - Population/development location/urban sprawl
 - Population growth
 - Increasing population → over development → environmental and social problems
 - Development (continual, location choice) expanding population
 - Development pressures and management

- Uncontrolled growth/growth management
6. Enforcement – 7 out of 99 votes
 - Enforcement of existing regulations, policies and rules (state, local, federal and international)
 - Holding state, federal and local agencies and governments responsible for upholding the duty they have been charged with – ex: enforcing current ordinances and statutes
 - Lack of enforcement of environmental regulations
 - Enforcement of current environmental regulations (clean water act etc.)
 7. Nutrient Loading (e.g. nitrates and phosphates) – 6 out of 99 votes
 - Phosphate mining discharges which are not properly permitted or enforced by DEP, which threaten drinking water supplies and pollute rivers and estuaries with nutrients and toxic pollutants
 - Discharges from phosphate mining and the permitting process as a whole
 - Fertilizer runoff – nutrient pollution/loading (4 index cards)
 - Nutrient overloading – homeowners, agriculture, golf courses (direct) – I.D. products naturally derived from earth to utilize for these needs
 - Land derived coastal nutrients – watershed, rivers, estuaries, coastal, gulf
 - Estuary pollution from nutrients
 8. Public Awareness – 5 out of 99 votes
 - How land, ocean and estuarine waters are dependent on each other for life and standard of living – lack of knowledge
 - Education/awareness/media
 - Public awareness of the differences they can make
 - Public awareness of environmental issues (6 index cards)
 - Public understanding and education
 - General communication with the public concerning issues (far too little is imparted to the public via any kind of media)
 - Understanding of public outside of gulf states – impact their actions (i.e. Midwest) could have on gulf (*paraphrased*)
 9. Red Tide/ Harmful Algal Blooms – 4 out of 99 votes
 - Red tide (2 index cards)
 - Harmful algal blooms
 - Increase in Toxic Algal Blooms
 10. Connecting Science and Management - 4 out of 99 votes
 - Educating policy makers in science
 - Lack of communication – Science and politics
 - Coordinating research and management activities
 11. Environmental Regulations (too much, too little, conflicting) – 4 out of 99 votes
 - Inadequate stewardship/governance

- Undermining of the clean water act by the FL legislature and FDEP by weakening FL statutes and DEP rules that implement the CWA – such as the Impaired Waters Rule & 403.067, Florida Statutes
 - Consistent laws/regulations and conflicting regulations
 - Reduction of excessive government regulations
 - Environmental regulations based on scientific data
12. Access (beach use, boating, fishing) - 3 out of 99 votes
- Access to gulf by recreational and commercial boaters/fishermen
 - Preserve recreational boating and fishing – they keep people connected to the resource
 - Access for boaters and beach with educational outreach coupled with registrations permits and passes
13. Human and Animal Health – 2 of 99 votes
- Health – ecosystem/disease-human, animal, plant
 - Health of animals; Harrison’s medical component (sp?)
14. Wildlife Management (e.g. listed species) - 2 out of 99 votes
- Wildlife issues – maintaining the health and numbers of fish, turtles, birds, etc.
 - Disappearance of Specific Species (loggerhead turtle nests down this year, death of crabs)
 - Endangered species (mammals, birds, fish, coral)
 - Comprehensive sea turtle/shorebird monitoring programs
15. Invasive Species - 2 out of 99 votes
- Preventing destruction of native habitat by invasive species
 - Exotic invasive species
16. Funding – 2 out of 99 votes
- Funds for agencies to do job properly
 - Sustainability of funding
17. Sediment Management – 1 out of 99 votes
- Sediment management
18. Over fishing - 1 out of 99 votes
- Over fishing
 - Fishing issues, esp. marine protected areas
 - Over fishing – gulf wide to the extent that ecosystem balance is significantly disrupted; waste-lands result; no top predators; algal takeover
19. Fish as Food Source - 1 out of 99 votes
- Depletion of fisheries – public, restaurants and stores need to recognize that certain fish species are endangered

- Sustainable food source (grouper, stone crabs, redfish, pompano etc.)
20. Offshore Uses (e.g. aquaculture) - 1 out of 99 votes
- Esp. offshore leases – aquaculture
21. Climate Change - 0 out of 99 votes
- Climate change impact and planning
 - Global climate change
22. Lack of Incentives for Effective and Efficient use of Natural Resources – 0 out of 99 votes
- Lack of incentives for re-use/recycling efficiency of natural resources
 - Lack of support for organic farming to lessen pesticides from commercial agriculture