



**Community Workshop Afternoon Breakouts  
Tampa, Florida – August 23, 2005  
Florida Aquarium**

**ISSUE 1: GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

**How do you define this issue with respect to the health of the Gulf of Mexico?**

- Lack of management of water quality, water quantity and habitat loss, etc
- Lack of understanding of inland counties and states of their impacts on the Gulf
- Cumulative impact of many small decisions.
- Local economic needs driving growth
- Competition among local governments to attract growth

**Where do you go for information and assistance on this issue?**

- Public television forums
- Regional planning councils
- Departments of Commerce
- Local newspapers
- Articles in academic journals
- Watershed Atlas
- Seminars, workshops, etc

**What constraints have kept you from helping to resolve this issue?**

- Zoning decisions made in years past
- Water use permits issued years ago
- No linkage between land decisions and water supply and other infrastructure
- Comprehensive data/maps not available to assess growth impacts on regional level, much less the entire Gulf
- No focus on “smarter growth” and low impact development

**What role should the public play in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Retire to Canada
- Become more engaged in local government decision-making
- Hold elected officials accountable for land use decisions
- Do more volunteer work to develop greater appreciation for environment

**What role should the government play at the local, state, and/or federal level in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Encourage infill and redevelopment
- Remove current zoning restrictions
- Implement mass transit system
- Assess true cost accounting of current development patterns
- Increase government services to meet needs of growing population in coastal zones
- Put infrastructure in place **before** development approval
- Provide economic incentives for smarter growth
- Remove barriers to smarter growth
- Educate public about consequences of unmanaged growth
- Improve intergovernmental communication
- Identify cumulative impacts of current development trends at regional and larger scale

**ISSUE 2: HABITAT LOSS**

**How do you define this issue with respect to the health of the Gulf of Mexico?**

- Sea grass, salt marsh, coastal habitat, turtle nesting areas, coral reefs, mangroves
- Habitat change
- Inter-tidal habitat
- Sandy bottom areas (shrimping)
- Transitional-inter-tidal to uplands (habitats cannot migrate when there is sea level rise resulting in subsidence)
- Invasive plant encroachment (Brazilian pepper, Australian pine)
- Fishing gear impacts
- Green mussels
- Loss of habitat for migrating birds
- Pelican areas
- Dead zones

**Where do you go for information and assistance on this issue?**

- Government
- Private industry
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- City of Tampa Bay study group
- Tampa Bay Estuary Program
- Non-governmental organizations
- Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
- MOTE Marine Lab
- Universities
- Private research institutions

- Counties and cities (Pinellas County)
- Foundations
- Private individuals
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Environmental organizations
- Gulf Restoration Network
- U.S. Geological Service

**What constraints have kept you from helping to resolve this issue?**

- Political agendas
- Funding
- Permitting (e.g. restoration)
- Business may feel it's just the cost of doing business
- Population growth
- Lack of education
- Lack of appropriate management such as inappropriate use of sensitive areas
- Failure to put economic value on resources
- Over-value protection of development (seawalls, hardening)
- Managers have too much to do
- Lack of engagement of business community stemming from a lack of incentives or non-proactive behavior
- Lack of understanding of values being lost
- Failure of industry to do more than the minimum required
- Lack of enforcement of federal "no net loss" policy
- Lack of adequate enforcement of state policy
- Science of restoration (mitigation) is behind what policy-makers think it is/say it is – not a value-to-value exchange
- Lack of coordination – could pool resources
- Lack of prioritization
- Non-compliance with mitigation & unsuccessful mitigation
- Cheaper to pay fine than to mitigate
- Insufficient acreage set aside for restoration & protection of habitats
- Lack of historical data on past habitats
- Failure to think about full suite of habitats (upland to pelagic)

**What role should the public play in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Public needs to require and support appropriate habitat acquisition programs
- Failure of public to write their representatives or vote on issues that are important to them
- Public needs to organize to address some of the constraints, such as inadequately educated community leaders
- Volunteer

- Environmental education, both K-12 and adult, should fill information gaps
- Coastal landowners should be better stewards of own property
- Policies re: real estate transactions should include information on environmental issues for buyers
- Need diverse interests at the table, including industry
- Public should get involved by attending public meetings and commenting on issues online
- Get children engaged to build stewardship
- Foster civic responsibility to participate in public process
- Donate time and money

**What role should the government play at the local, state, and/or federal level in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Buy more land
- Federal government should disperse money to leverage funds in areas where it can most effectively be used (local counties)
- Government needs to listen to the scientists
- Take long-term view (beyond next election)
- Heavier fines and fines that match offense. Fines should be more than just the cost of doing business.
- Enforcement
- Improve efficiency by increasing manpower directed to important areas
- Timely data distribution
- Put data in a form that decision-makers can use to help “tell the story”
- Government needs to phrase question in way that scientists can address in time
- Reduce both unnecessary duplication of efforts and gaps in management
- Reward/recognition programs for private industry & citizens (expand existing programs in Environmental Protection Agency, Mineral Management Services, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
- Support collection and maintenance of long-term data sets
- Need grant funding that covers labor costs
- Collaborate
- Prioritize
- Ensure coordination of GOMA partners
- Accountability for states
- Geospatial data at regional level
- Protect full suite of habitats (uplands to pelagic, not just wetlands)
- Inventory all habitats at state & regional level
- Do better job with water-quality protection
- Identify linkages with all of the issues (i.e. habitat loss, population increase, water quality)
- Issues should be addressed proactively and not just following crises

- Involve all levels of government (federal, state, regional, and local)
- Encourage and enhance partnerships

### **ISSUE 3: WATER QUALITY/QUANTITY**

#### **How do you define this issue with respect to the health of the Gulf of Mexico?**

- Important to look at land-derived and water-derived properties
- Need to take a more holistic look at system
- Have better control of coastal inputs
- Need to understand **natural variability** and anthropogenic impacts including spatial and temporal variability
- Consider influence of fresh water flow
- Regulatory and environmental requirement that help define factors such as water quality
- Need to look at cumulative impacts such as the Mississippi River plume coupled with land use
- System-wide issues with local application
- Need regional approaches to link sources to effects

#### **Where do you go for information and assistance on this issue?**

- Need to catalog and identify data sources and purpose
- Satellite imaging products such as
  - SEAWFS/MDOS
- Ocean color
- Mineral Management Service – PROFILES (what is this?)
- National Coastal Data Development Center
- University of South Florida Institute for Marine Remote Sensing
- University of South Florida OCC ??
- Coastal Ocean Monitoring and Prediction System

#### **What constraints have kept you from helping to resolve this issue?**

- Federal water quality data collection system (STORET) not always usable because data is hard to upload, difficult to determine what data is appropriate, and may lack metadata
- Don't have data we need, for example, there is inadequate fresh water inflow data for Tampa Bay to determine salinity. There is a need for time series dates with physical and chemical parameters to define natural variability.
- Select zones in the Gulf are affected by water quantity and could benefit from increased data
- There are some good sources, however, some data sources overlap or doesn't support one another.
- Need better information on available data such as where it is located and who manages it.

- Lack of integration of monitoring programs
- States should standardize data from their regional ambient monitoring programs
- Need regional approach for data
- Need to develop a long-term sampling plan
- Needed to understand data dictionary parameters and be able to overlay data/one port
- Need to be able to use data sources so environmental professionals can improve coastal decisions
- Improve communication within the pre-existing frameworks

**What role should the public play in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Participate in volunteer water monitoring programs
- Public awareness is not good
- Need to get through to media so they can engage the public
- Need to reach homeowners associations, developers, and land project managers using positive programs, such as Florida Yards & Neighborhoods program
- Need to figure out how to better tie research to outreach and education
- Public needs to take ownership of its own backyard

**What role should the government play at the local, state, and/or federal level in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Communication across all levels of government needs to be better
- Look for partnership opportunities and share funding
- Increased involvement in school programs
- Catalog agencies/stakeholders/non-profits at various levels to look for and address data gaps
- Facilitate interagency/stakeholder dialogue and celebrate successes
- Better enforcement of regulations and incentives for environmental protection

**ISSUE 4: APATHY/SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS**

**How do you define this issue with respect to the health of the Gulf of Mexico?**

- It's somebody else's problem
- We want to help, but don't know how or don't have the power/resources to do so
- Political apathy
- Personal impact
- If it impacts a person, then they care
- Pointing fingers at someone else
- Lack of education about Gulf issues

- Where are the carrots to encourage better stewardship?
- The rules are for somebody else
- Absence of recognizing “I am part of the whole”

**Where do you go for information and assistance on this issue?**

- Social scientists

**What constraints have kept you from helping to resolve this issue?**

- Methods to translate and make compelling messages for Gulf issues
- Linking what is impacting people on the street to problems
- Need to bring in social science methods
- Need a CRISIS ??????
- We don't know how to convey that the Gulf is in crisis
- Science is messy and cannot quantify a result
- Decision-makers need to understand bounds of uncertainty and then accept and address the risk
- Inadequate bridging of scientific information to the public
- Need to make the issue compelling by simplifying and replicating the message
- There are currently no good spokesmen or motivational salesmen for the issue
- Lack of celebrity backing. For example, Jimmy Buffet could write a song about the issue.

**What role should the public play in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Media needs to educate the public instead of focusing on a sensation or crisis
- Asking the public how to reduce public apathy may not be appropriate

**What role should the government play at the local, state, and/or federal level in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Translate science into meaningful messages for the public
- Stay on course to take on these issues longer than several years, e.g., long enough to measure a response
- Inform individuals how they can be part of the solution
- Regional governance sharing resources, perhaps through an annual report or conference
- Translate the idea of uncertainty and risk to decision makers and the public, including the risk of not doing anything
- Alliance should look for a charismatic spokesmodel to get messages to the public

## **ISSUE 5: PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### **How do you define this issue with respect to the health of the Gulf of Mexico?**

- Present issues to the public in a way that they understand
- Must relate it to the local area and individual health and well being
- Involve citizens in actual improvements and research and monitoring efforts
- Demystify science
- Communication
- Translate the problem for ease in understanding

### **Where do you go for information and assistance on this issue?**

- Water Management Districts
- MOTE Marine
- Public TV
- Cable channels (animal planet)
- Centers for ocean science education excellence
- Sea Grant
- University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
- Tampa Bay Estuary Program
- Schools (science trips) cost limited
- Websites
- Beach cleanups
- Government access TV
- Public service announcements
- School system
- Newspapers, especially op-eds
- Speakers bureaus
- Festivals and fairs

### **Underutilized Sources:**

- Community leaders
- Boat ramps, marinas, parks, preserves, stores, hotels

### **What constraints have kept you from helping to resolve this issue?**

- Funding
- Effective tools
- Need popular figures as spokesperson
- Lack of dedicated and trained personnel
- Lack of a solid message
- Need to raise and manage the expectation of quality
- Have trouble connecting local issues to the other parts of the Gulf region

- Competing messages in the media could be reduced by having an environmental page everyday
- Lack of expertise in relaying the messages
- Enforcement cannot do it all

**What role should the public play in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Take responsibility
- Vote
- Learn about the Gulf; become a citizen-scientist
- Understand the consequences of their actions
- Share the knowledge
- Reach BALANCE between conservation and economics
- Understand the role of science

**What role should the government play at the local, state, and/or federal level in helping to resolve this issue?**

- Protect resources
- Balance development and conservation
- Include COST of growth when looking at revenues
- Adopt impact fees that cover costs
- Cooperate with each other and partner with the private sector
- Support science and education
- Offer recycling