



Gulf of Mexico Alliance Community Workshops – Louisiana
Sponsored by: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

GOALS:

- Gain a local perspective on critical issues related to the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Gain a local perspective on the five issues that will be addressed in the Gulf Alliance Plan of Action for the Gulf
- Gain support for creation of a Plan of Action for the Gulf
- Identify programs that can help attain potential objectives in the Plan of Action for the Gulf
- Build better relationships between local, state and federal entities
- Provide some education/outreach about what makes a healthy Gulf of Mexico

Community Workshop Agenda	
8:30 –9:00	Reception, Coffee
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome and Introductions/Review of Agenda <i>Kerry St. Pé, BTNEP Program Director and Representative of the Governor’s Office</i>
9:30 –10:00	The Gulf of Mexico: A Conservation Perspective and Review of U.S. Ocean Action Plan and Opportunities for the Gulf of Mexico <i>Dr. James Coleman, Boyd Professor Coastal Studies Institute LSU</i>
10:00 –11:00	Challenges from Local Perspectives: Brainstorming Possibilities <i>Heidi Recksiek, NOAA Coastal Services Center</i>
15 min	Break
11:15 –12 Noon	Overview of White Papers from Gulf Alliance Meeting w/ Q and A <i>To Be Announced, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program</i> 1. Reductions in nutrient loading 2. Improving water quality, emphasis on beaches & shellfish beds 3. Restoration of coastal wetlands 4. Identification of Gulf habitats 5. Gulf of Mexico environmental education
60 min	Lunch
1:00 –2:00	Case Studies LSU Ag Center – Dr. Rex Caffey Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation – Dr. John Lopez Barataria – Terrebonne National Estuary Program – Kerry St. Pé
2:00 –3:00	Breakout Sessions on Gulf Issues <i>Facilitated Small Group Sessions</i>
15 min	Break
3:15-4:30	Summary of Breakouts & Wrap Up <i>Rex Caffey</i> Announcement of additional efforts that complement this effort



ROLE OF COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS WITHIN LARGER GULF INITIATIVE

The five Gulf states have joined together in the Gulf Alliance to improve the ecological health of the Gulf of Mexico. The states have identified five priority areas in which to begin their efforts:

- Reducing nutrient loading
- Improving water quality, especially for beaches and shellfish beds
- Restoration of Coastal Wetlands and Other Habitats
- Identification of Gulf habitats to inform management
- Environmental Education

The federal government committed to assist the states in this effort in the *U.S. Ocean Action Plan*. To help the federal agencies better understand the needs of the states, the Gulf states drafted a white paper for each of the five focus areas. The white papers give some background on the issue, progress to date, the challenges or barriers to greater success, and the priority needs a greater state/federal partnership can help address. With the white papers as the starting point, the states and various federal agencies are currently working to identify specific goals to achieve on-the-ground accomplishments to address these five priority issues within the next few years. The states and federal agencies plan to release an Action Plan for the Gulf in November 2005 at the Gulf of Mexico Summit in Corpus Christi, Texas. The public is encouraged to comment within the next couple of months on the Gulf Alliance website: www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org.

In parallel with Action Plan for the Gulf development, the Gulf Alliance is hosting nine community workshops in all five Gulf states to solicit local perspectives on issues and solutions related to a healthy Gulf, to inform the public about what the states and federal agencies are currently working on, and to engage the local communities around the Gulf in this effort. After the workshops, a summary of the priorities and discussions will be sent to the respective state representatives. After all of the workshops are completed, a compilation report synthesizing the results of all 9 workshops will be written, and an Executive Summary will be prepared and be included in the Action Plan. It is the Alliance's plan to present the results of the community workshops at the Gulf of Mexico Summit. This community input is critical in the development of a long-term, successful effort because true success will only occur if federal, state, and local communities are equally engaged and playing their part to achieve a healthier Gulf of Mexico.