Habitat Conservation & Restoration Team (HCRT)

Support and Coordination provided by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation

a Priority Issue Team of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance

EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS GAP II Action H-1

Identify and engage non-participating relevant United States stakeholders with interests in the health and sustainability of the Gulf, and coordinate specific issues with representatives from the Gulf Mexican States.

PROJECTS

International

Mexico and U.S. Workshops to Address International Partnerships and GOMA Involvement

Project Partners: CEMDA (Mexico) and the Environmental Law Institute (U.S.)

Project Description: Analyze and outline the environmental policy, law and management differences between Mexico and the U.S. and develop a bi-national strategy for enhanced conservation and restoration of habitat through collaboration and partnership. Three workshops are planned.

Timeline: First workshop held October 2010 in Veracruz, Mexico. Two more occur in 2011.

Private Lands

Increasing Restoration and Conservation on Private Lands

Project Partner: Land Trust Alliance

Project Description: Identify policy and economic, geographic, and other limitations that currently limit coastal habitat conservation and restoration on private lands. Outline differences between state laws regarding private land conservation and restoration, then develop recommendations and strategies for improvements. Include all five of the U.S. Gulf States.

Timeline: First workshop held November 2010 in Biloxi, MS. Project period ends January 2011.

POLICY CHANGES GAP II Action H-2

Address specific public policy issues impeding habitat conservation and restoration.

PROJECTS

Federal Standard

Federal Standard & Beneficial Use Working Session

Project Description: Through a workshop process, focus on the US Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) implementation of the Federal Standard, and what legislative, policy and programmatic efforts might be undertaken by the HCRT, working through the GOMA Alliance Management Team (AMT), to improve the amount of dredged sediment used beneficially in the Gulf of Mexico coastal area.

Timeline: First workshop held October 2009 in New Orleans, LA. Recommendations submitted to the Alliance Management Team in August 2010.

Funding and Grants

Increasing Effectiveness of Restoration and Conservation Funding and Grant Programs

Project Description: Outline the existing funding and grant programs that are relevant to habitat conservation and restoration in the Gulf of Mexico and its coastal zone. Identify concerns and develop recommendations to increase their effectiveness.

Timeline: Council on Environmental Quality's Louisiana-Mississippi Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Working Group released its Roadmap for Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration in March 2010. In developing its recommendations, the Working Group was directed to work closely with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance and received an inventory of funding and grant programs that had been compiled by the HCRT.

Policy/Regulatory

Comparison of Mexico and U.S. Policy, Law and Management

Project Partners: CEMDA (Mexico) and the Environmental Law Institute (U.S.)

Project Description: Analyze and outline the environmental policy, law and management differences between Mexico and the U.S. and develop a bi-national strategy for enhanced conservation and restoration of habitat through collaboration and partnership.

Timeline: Project period ends April 30, 2011.

State and Federal Policy & Regulatory Programs Intended to Provide Protection to Coastal Habitats

Project Description: Outline existing State and Federal policies that are intended to provide protection to coastal habitats in the Gulf of Mexico and its Coastal Zone, consulting key agencies and other stakeholders that have experience and relevant knowledge to address policy and regulatory limitations. Develop recommendations and strategies for policy changes that would increase the effectiveness of regulatory protection of vital coastal habitats and promote restoration.

Timeline: Proposal under development currently and, if accepted, project period would end in July 2011.

Coastal Zone Mgmt.

Investigation of Coastal Zone Management Policies

Project Partner: National Sea Grant Law Center

Project Description: Investigate the enforceable policies under the Coastal Zone Management Act.

Timeline: Currently under development.

Recognizing that the Gulf of Mexico is surrounded by 25 states and provinces in three countries, the HCRT is committed to addressing the wetland and coastal conservation and restoration priorities of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance from a regional standpoint by increasing coordination among the Gulf States and local, federal, business and non-profit partners.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance
State-Led & Federally Funded
HCRT Leadership Provided By

HCRT Funding Provided By

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT GAP II Action H-3

Identify and resolve specific scientific and technical issues so that conservation and restoration of Gulf habitats are more successful.

PROJECTS

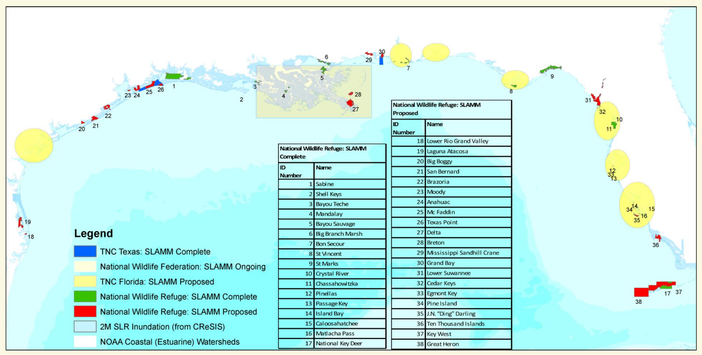
Sea Level Rise

Sea Level Assessing Marshes Model (SLAMM) Analysis of Gulf of Mexico Coastal Sites

Project Partners: The Nature Conservancy and Warren Pinnacle Consulting

Project Description: The HCRT expects that a programmatic series of SLAMM analyses using clearly identified and justified inputs may help elucidate potential long term landscape changes and how they might affect coastal habitat. Addressing any identified data gaps could then improve future SLR assessment capabilities. The visualizations provided by these modeling efforts could also help develop initial support for strategic conservation actions on a regional scale.

Timeline: Grand Bay NERR and Petit Bois Island in Mississippi, and Jefferson County, Texas have been modeled. 6 additional sites around the Gulf are being modeled currently and are expected to be complete before the end of 2010.



National Wildlife Refuge: SLAMM Complete

ID Number	Name
1	Sabine
2	Shell Keys
3	Bayou Teche
4	Mandalay
5	Bayou Sauvage
6	Big Branch Marsh
7	Bon Secour
8	St Vincent
9	St Marks
10	Crystal River
11	Chassahowitzka
12	Pinellas
13	Passage Key
14	Island Bay
15	Caloosahatchee
16	Matlacha Pass
17	National Key Deer

National Wildlife Refuge: SLAMM Proposed

ID Number	Name
18	Lower Rio Grand Valley
19	Laguna Atascosa
20	Big Boggy
21	San Bernard
22	Brazoria
23	Moody
24	Anahuac
25	Mc Faddin
26	Texas Point
27	Delta
28	Breton
29	Mississippi Sandhill Crane
30	Grand Bay
31	Lower Suwannee
32	Cedar Keys
33	Egmont Key
34	Pine Island
35	J.N. "Ding" Darling
36	Ten Thousand Islands
37	Key West
38	Great Heron

Freshwater Inflows

Collaboration on Freshwater Inflows

Project Sponsor: Harte Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI)

Project Description: Through an EPA Gulf of Mexico Program cooperative agreement and in pursuit of GOMA HCRT freshwater inflows goals, the HCRT is cooperating with Principal Investigator Dr. Paul Montagna (HRI) on his project "Assessment & Prioritization of Ecosystems Affected by Altered Freshwater Inflows." HCRT members working in the 5 Gulf Coast states provide a conduit to local water resource managers.

Timeline: Project period ends December 2011.

GULF REGIONAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT MASTER PLAN (GRSMMP) GAP II Action H-4

Address specific public policy issues impeding habitat conservation and restoration.

PROJECTS

GRSMMP

The Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan (GRSMMP)

Project Description: A collaborative effort, the GRSMMP will be a collection of products to guide more effective management of sediment resources in the Gulf region to contribute to habitat conservation and restoration, as well as coastal community resilience to natural hazards. Integral to the GRSMMP is recognition of sediments as valuable resources, and integration of knowledge about regional sediment management (RSM) and other dynamic processes that affect programs and activities involving sediments. The GRSMMP uses the understanding of sediment dynamics to inform management of sediment resources. It will help link sources of sediment with sediment needs, provide a basis for assessing competing needs for sediment, and provide regional strategies for sediment management that:

- make more effective use of sediment from inlets, navigation channels and other sources to support environmental & economic objectives;
- coordinate the collection and dissemination of data about the movement of sediment to better integrate the understanding of regional sediment process into planning, management and other decisions; and
- facilitate cooperation among states, federal agencies, and other stakeholders in sediment management.

Timeline: The GRSMMP is a living document. Several new chapters are being developed currently.

Technical Framework for the Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan

Project Description: The technical framework is a first step in developing the GRSMMP. It presents information about the regional sediment processes and resources that are key for establishing management guidelines, developing sub-regional strategies, and enhancing cooperative management decisions. It provides a basis for matching sediment resources with conservation and restoration needs, for assessing competing demands for sediment, and for understanding sediment-related ecological considerations which can help improve plans and management practices. It identifies agency authorities and policies related to sediment management to provide a basis for future discussions. Recommendations and guidelines resulting from this effort will aid the Gulf States in more effective management of sediment resources, recognizing their programs are part of a regional system involving natural processes, interrelated objectives, and a range of anthropogenic activities.

Timeline: The Technical Framework was drafted in December 2009. Currently, the document is being edited for publication in an upcoming special issue of the Journal of Coastal Research.

Regional Sediment Management Case Study Compilation

Project Partners: Applied Coastal Research and Engineering

Project Description: Compile case studies of dredging projects, federal navigation projects and other similar projects that were selected for their relevance to effective management of sediment and dredged material and illustrate issues, impediments, and successes that come into play when trying to implement a regional sediment management approach. The case studies will illuminate the role of Regional Sediment Management (RSM) Principles as they have been or could be implemented at each of the project sites. The HCRT anticipates applying the lessons learned toward developing improved RSM plans in the Gulf of Mexico.

Timeline: Project period ends June 30, 2011.

RSM Master Plan Update for Beneficial Uses of Dredged Material along Coastal Mississippi

Project Partners: CH2M Hill

Project Description: Review and update the "Long-Term Comprehensive Master Plan for Beneficial Uses of Dredged Material Along Coastal Mississippi", an RSM planning document prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mobile District and dated September 17, 2002. The revised plan should reflect and incorporate Regional Sediment Management (RSM) principles and the goal of optimizing beneficial use of sediment and dredged material for the protection, maintenance, restoration or creation of coastal habitats (e.g., barrier islands, beaches, salt marsh and its adjoining, supportive habitats). The HCRT anticipates applying the lessons learned toward developing RSM plans elsewhere in the Gulf of Mexico.

Timeline: Project period ends July 29, 2011.

REVERSING THE DOWNWARD TREND IN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES GAP II Action H-5

Monitor a Gulf-wide inventory of distribution, gain, and loss of coastal habitats and measure the ecosystem services they provide.

PROJECTS

Implementation

Assessment of Changing Ecosystem Services Provided by Marsh Habitat in the Galveston Bay Region

Project Partners: Harte Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies (HRI)

Project Description: Ecosystem services (ES) are the direct or indirect contributions that ecosystems make to the environment and human population. In recent years, ecosystem services have been discussed and researched, but rarely applied to real-world policies and decisions. The incorporation of ES to inform the decision making process is greater today than at any other time, so the HCRT is working with Dr. David Yoskowitz, Dr. Cristina Carollo, and Dr. Jennifer Beseres-Pollack toward building the capacity to achieve these goals. Building upon the expected results of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) Habitat Conservation and Restoration Team (HCRT) sponsored project of modeling changes in marsh habitat given changes in sea level in Galveston Bay, this effort will:

- Assess the change in the marsh structure and link that to the quality and capacity of particular ES provided, and
- Assess, the change in the value of ES as a result of relative sea level rise.

Timeline: The project period ends August 31, 2011.