

SAVE OUR LAKE

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN FOUNDATION

July 28, 1999

Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Working Group
National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
WC 13446 SSMC4
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Hypoxia Working Group Members:

The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation is membership-based citizens' organization dedicated to restoring and preserving the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Our Basin was developed thousands of years ago by shifting actions of the Mississippi River. Our area continues to be influenced by the River through our municipal and industrial discharges of water. In addition, Lake Pontchartrain exchanges water with the Gulf of Mexico, making the Lake one of the largest estuarine ecosystems in the country. Due to these critical connections, the Foundation is very interested in ensuring that the health of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed be maintained and improved.

Thus, the Foundation would like to offer the following comments with regard to the Draft Reports that were released by the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources in May 1999 to address the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone.

The assessment of both the long-term and short-term ecological and economic consequences of nutrient pollution to the Mississippi River and Gulf Basins should be required before any conclusions are made with regard to the hypoxia impact on the Dead Zone. The identification of such consequences is necessary to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that targets current nutrient problems while planning for future biological and social concerns. Draft Report 2 admits that such an assessment was not completed yet asserts that there is no evidence of either any permanent ecological or economic impacts. This conclusion is unacceptable since little or no evidence is provided to support it. Therefore, the authors of Draft Report 2 must acknowledge the importance and necessity of performing such an assessment.

Furthermore, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) occur in great frequency on the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain and contribute substantial amounts of pollution to the Basin. The Foundation acknowledges CAFOs as one of the major causes of water quality loss along the North Shore. However, Draft Report 5 fails to acknowledge CAFOs as a growing hazard to water quality. The issue of CAFOs is one that must be emphasized so that CAFO management alternatives can be developed and implemented to ensure water quality improvement and maintenance.

Our public health, social structure, and ecological integrity are highly dependent on the resources of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico. The Foundation will continue to support efforts that protect and sustain these areas so as to ensure the social, economic, and environmental continuity in our region. The Foundation hopes that you will consider our concerns when developing the action plan to address the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone.

Very truly yours,



Carlton Dufrechou
Executive Director

Cc: Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network

