FY 2015 NWPG Measure Definitions Gulf of Mexico

Measure Code: GM-SP38

Measure Language: Restore water and habitat quality to meet water quality standards in impaired segments in 13 priority areas. (cumulative starting in FY 07)

Type of Measure: Target measure; cumulative measure reported annually

Measure Contact: Lael Butler, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Office

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Measure Definition

Terms and phrases: There are 94 coastal watersheds at the 8-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) scale on the Gulf Coast. The five Gulf States identified 13 priority coastal areas to receive targeted technical and financial assistance for projects that restore impaired water quality. Those 13 areas include 30 of the 94 coastal watersheds and within those 30 watersheds the Gulf States have identified 755 specific water segments that are not meeting State water quality standards.

Methodology for computation of results: States provide a 303(d) report every two years to EPA which lists the status of the impaired segments for the state as required in the Clean Water Report 305(b) report. There are 3 data sources that are used to determine which of the impaired segments have been de-listed from the previous reports: Surf Your Watershed, Watershed Assessment Tracking and Environmental Results Expert Query Tool, and State Decision Documents.

Units: impaired segments

Universe: The total number of impaired segments that were previously listed as not meeting water quality standards for a particular pollutant but are de-listed from the current 303(d) report and meeting water quality standards.

Baseline: The number of impaired segments that were previously listed as not meeting water quality standards for a particular pollutant but are de-listed from the current 303(d) report and meeting water quality standards at a point in time (FY 2007).

Measure Code: GM-SP39

Measure Language: Restore, enhance, or protect a cumulative number of acres of important coastal and marine habitats.

Type of Measure: Target measure; cumulative measure

Measure Contact: Lael Butler, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Office

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Measure Definition

Terms and phrases: *Coastal habitat* includes marshes, wetlands, tidal flats, oyster beds, seagrasses, mangroves, dunes and maritime forest ridge areas.

Methodology for computation of results: The Gulf of Mexico Program achieves this target by cooperatively funding restoration projects with federal and state partners. QA/QC procedures include but are not limited to aerial photography, groundtruthing, transect growth monitoring, and digital topographic data. Site visits are conducted to provide verification of acreage restored. Data are subject to a second verification following the completion of the project.

Units: Acres of coastal and marine habitats.

Universe: The total number of acres of coastal and marine habitats in the Gulf of Mexico.

Baseline: acres of coastal and marine habitats (FY 2007) restored, enhanced, or protected at a point in time (FY 2007).

Measure Code: GM-SP40.N11

Measure Language: Reduce releases of nutrients throughout the Mississippi River Basin to reduce the size of the hypoxia zone in the Gulf of Mexico, as measured by the 5-year running average of the size of the zone.

Type of Measure: Long-term measure (no annual targets) with annual reporting

Measure Contact: Lael Butler, EPA Gulf of Mexico Program Office

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Measure Definition

Terms and phrases: The *hypoxia zone* in the Gulf of Mexico is an area where seasonal oxygen levels drop too low to support most life in bottom and near-bottom waters. This hypoxic area is primarily caused by high nutrient levels which stimulate an overgrowth of algae that sinks and decomposes. The decomposition process in turn depletes dissolved oxygen in the water. The hypoxic zone is of particular concern because it threatens valuable commercial and recreational Gulf fisheries.

Methodology for computation of results: Essential components of the environmental monitoring program in the Gulf of Mexico include efforts to document the temporal and spatial extent of shelf hypoxia, and to collect basic hydrographic, chemical, and biological data related to the development of hypoxia over seasonal cycles.

Units: Square kilometers

Universe: Not applicable. Due to the fluctuating size of the hypoxia zone which is the second largest in the world. Population of the Gulf coastal areas predicted to increase by 10% in 2015.

Baseline: the size of the hypoxia zone, 14,128 km^2, in FY 2005.