

Hypoxia Task Force



The Hypoxia Task Force and its 2015 Report to Congress

The Hypoxia Task Force (HTF) is a partnership of 12 states, five federal agencies and a representative for tribes that works collaboratively to reduce nutrient pollution in the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin (MARB) and the extent of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

On behalf of the HTF, EPA recently submitted a Report to Congress and the President, as called for by the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act of 2014. The report describes significant actions taken by the HTF, summarizes keys to success and lessons learned, and provides recommendations for how the Task Force will continue to implement or revise its 2008 Action Plan.

Significant actions taken by the HTF to implement the 2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan:

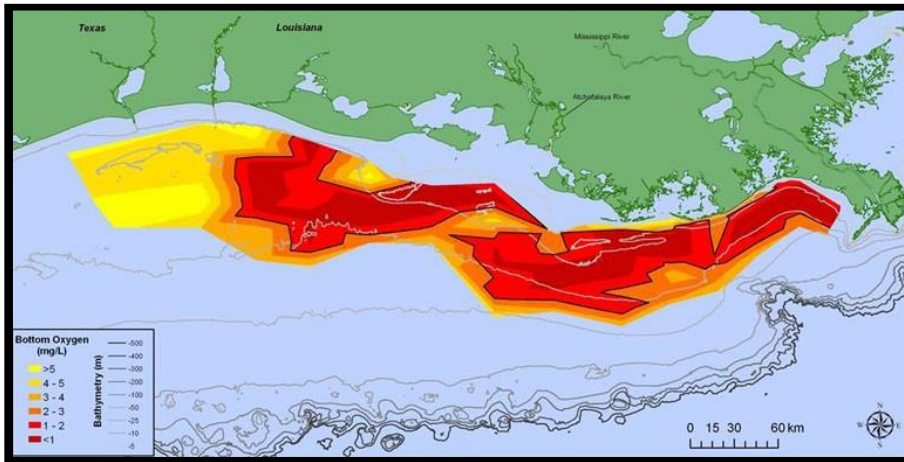
- Each HTF state has developed a first-ever nutrient reduction strategy through stakeholder participation. These strategies serve as the cornerstone for implementing nutrient reductions in each state.
- The federal members of the HTF have developed a unified federal strategy to guide technical and financial assistance to states and continued science support.
- The HTF is successfully expanding partnerships with organizations with similar goals, including most recently an agreement with 12 land grant universities to reduce gaps in research and extension/outreach needs in the MARB.

Keys to success and lessons learned by the HTF include:

- The value of cooperatively developing and implementing nutrient reduction strategies.
- The need to forge state and basin-wide partnerships to implement nutrient reduction strategies.
- Maximizing results requires:
 - Planning at a watershed scale;
 - Identifying critical pollutants, their sources, and means of transport;
 - Using appropriate models to plan for and evaluate implementation;
 - Using appropriate modeling and monitoring designs to evaluate conservation outcomes;
 - Striving to understand farmers' attitudes toward conservation practices and working with them to offer financial and technical assistance; and
 - Sustained assistance to and engagement with agricultural producers following their adoption of conservation systems.

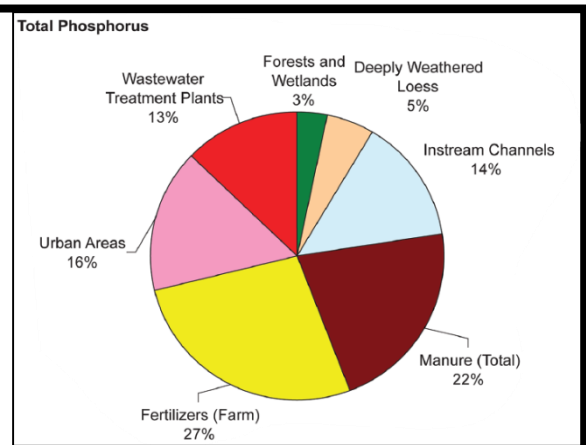
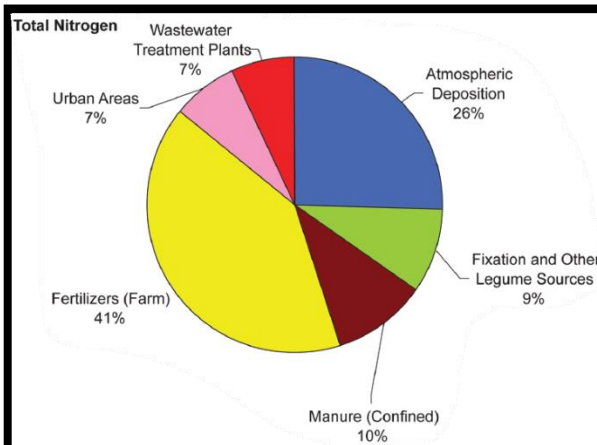
HTF Recommendations in the Report to Congress:

- Continue to implement the 2008 Action Plan: its most important recommendations remain valid.
- Accelerate implementation of actions in the 2008 plan while refining specific approaches as better science, tools and policy innovations become available.
- The HTF has revised its deadline for achieving its goal of reducing the size of the Gulf hypoxia zone to 2035, set an interim milestone for lead reduction (2025), and will track progress toward reducing nutrient loads from point and nonpoint sources.
- The HTF will track long term environmental conditions and trends using broad-scale statistical surveys and a network of site-specific monitoring stations from many partners and collaborators.



Distribution of bottom-water dissolved oxygen July 28-August 3, 2015 (west of Mississippi River delta). Black line indicates dissolved oxygen level of 2 mg/L.

Data: Nancy R. Rabalais, LUMCON, and R. Eugene Turner, LSU. Credit: NOAA.



USGS SPARROW model estimates of sources of total nitrogen and total phosphorus transported from Mississippi River Basin to Gulf of Mexico (Robertson and Saad 2013)

Members of the Task Force

State Agencies

Arkansas Natural Resources Commission
 Illinois Department of Agriculture
 Indiana State Department of Agriculture
 Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
 Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection
 Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
 Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
 Missouri Department of Natural Resources
 Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
 Tennessee Department of Agriculture
 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Federal & Tribal Agencies

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 (Research, Education, and Economics;
 Natural Resource Conservation Service)
 U.S. Department of Commerce
 (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 (U.S. Geological Survey;
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 National Tribal Water Council

Visit the website to learn more about Hypoxia and Task Force activities and successes:

<http://www.epa.gov/ms-htf>

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