



Sea Grant Programs of the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Science Outreach

ABOUT SEA GRANT

The mission of Sea Grant is to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal, marine and Great Lakes resources in order to create a sustainable economy and environment. There are 33 university-based Sea Grant programs throughout the coastal U.S. states and its territories. These programs are primarily supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the states in which the programs are located. For more information about the four Sea Grant programs that border the Gulf of Mexico, visit gulfseagrant.org.

ABOUT GOMRI

The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative is led by an independent and academic 20-member Research Board, which guides the research focus and the funding decisions to ensure the intellectual quality, effectiveness and academic independence of the GoMRI research. GoMRI was established using funds that are not associated with any oil spill penalties. For more information, visit gulfresearchinitiative.org.

An Introduction

The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) was established by a \$500 million commitment from BP in response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The 10-year research program aims to mitigate the impacts of hydrocarbon pollution and stressors on the marine environment and public health from the spill, as well as improve society's understanding of oil spill issues. GoMRI provides support to the Sea Grant programs of the Gulf of Mexico (Florida, Mississippi-Alabama, Louisiana and Texas) for an extension and outreach effort to increase the use of oil spill science by people whose livelihoods depend on a healthy Gulf. This is a new model of a private entity engaging with the four Sea Grant programs in the Gulf of Mexico to develop a regional outreach program.

Program Goals

1. Share emerging oil spill science with target audiences.
2. Collect input from target audience to inform the Sea Grant outreach program, and deliver input to the GoMRI Research Board to assist in assessing the direction of its investments.

The oil spill science outreach program allows Sea Grant specialists to find out what types of information target audiences want and develop tailor-made products for those audiences. The outreach specialists produce a variety of materials, such as fact sheets and bulletins, focused on meeting stakeholder information needs. The specialists also gather input from target audiences through workshops and work with researchers to share oil spill research results at science seminars that are facilitated by the specialists. The program's outreach materials and events offer information about numerous published GoMRI research findings on such topics as dispersants, fisheries issues and tar balls.

Target Audiences

The program has four oil spill science outreach specialists who work with the constituent groups listed:

- Elected officials
- Emergency responders or managers
- Environmental non-profit staff members
- Fishers, commercial
- Fishers, for-hire
- Fishers, recreational
- Natural resource managers
- GoMRI outreach specialists
- Port and harbor employees
- Public health officials
- Tourism specialists
- University and college researchers

The specialists work as a team to implement outreach programs at a state and regional level. In addition, the program engages with the 29 other Sea Grant college programs throughout the nation to provide the latest oil spill science information.

Contacts

The Sea Grant oil spill science specialists work together on multiple oil spill related research topics. Although each is based in a different state, they work regionally throughout the Gulf of Mexico.



Chris Hale – Based in Corpus Christi, Texas, with the Texas Sea Grant College Program, Chris has an interdisciplinary background in marine science, fisheries, restoration and human dimensions. She previously served as a Sea Grant extension agent in the U.S. Virgin Islands. She works primarily on the environmental effects of the oil spill on ecosystems. Email: chris.hale@tamu.edu

Emily Maung-Douglass – Based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program, Emily has expertise at the interface of ecology, chemistry and toxicology. She also has studied the impacts of environmental stressors on aquatic animals. She works on the chemical evolution of petroleum and dispersants and the interactions with ecosystems. Email: edouglass@lsu.edu



Learn more about this effort at gulfseagrants.org/oiloutreach.



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Larissa Graham – Based in Mobile, Alabama, with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Larissa has outreach experience through her previous work with Sea Grant, the National Estuary Program and the National Estuarine Research Reserves. Her degrees and interest are in fisheries and environmental science and human health. She works primarily on the environmental effects of the oil spill on humans and ecosystems. Email: larissa.graham@auburn.edu

Monica Wilson – Based in St. Petersburg, Florida, with Florida Sea Grant College Program, Monica has used her physical oceanography background to model circulation and flushing of coastal systems in the region and the impacts of tropical storms on these systems. She focuses on the distribution, dispersion and dilution of petroleum under the action of physical ocean processes and storms. Email: monicawilson447@ufl.edu



Steve Sempier – Based in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Steve has worked on Gulf-wide issues in several ways, including developing and updating the Gulf of Mexico Research Plan and implementing a Gulf of Mexico hydrological restoration program through a partnership with the NOAA Restoration Center. He coordinates the overall outreach effort and synthesizes the results from the outreach program for GoMRI. Email: stephen.sempier@usm.edu