

Gulf of Mexico Research Planning Workshop Summary
Prepared for the:
Gulf of Mexico Alliance's Environmental Education Priority Issue Team
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Overview of the Gulf of Mexico Research Planning Effort

The purpose of the Gulf of Mexico Research Plan (GMRP) is to 1) identify regional research and information needs and 2) address these needs through collaboration with agencies and organizations that conduct and use Gulf of Mexico-related research. The GMRP is rooted in stakeholder input, and workshops were one of the primary methods used to collect this input. One workshop was held in each of the five Gulf of Mexico states and approximately 300 participants and facilitators representing over 100 organizations, universities and departments of local, state, and federal agencies participated in the workshops. The research priorities from each workshop were linked to one of the GOMA priority issue team areas. This summary describes the research priorities identified at the workshops that most closely align with the Environmental Education Priority Issue.

Summary

The focus of the workshops was on research needs for the Gulf of Mexico, and there were several educational research needs identified at these meetings (table 1). The highest rated educational research priorities focused on examining the methodology to effectively deliver information and initiate behavior change. Work is needed to develop user-friendly educational tools (e.g. GIS, web-based programs, media) and identify opportunities to engage with the public (e.g. workshops, volunteer opportunities, lobbying, scholarships). Studies are needed to evaluate existing programs to learn of their effectiveness and assess the publics' and decision makers' current understanding of ecosystem, natural resource, climate change, and resilience related topics.

You can find out more about the GMRP at the project's web site at: masgc.org/gmrp or by contacting Steve Sempier, Gulf of Mexico Research Planning Coordinator, at stephen.sempier@usm.edu.

Table 1. Research topics identified at the GMRP workshop that relate to the Environmental Education Priority Issue Team.

Topic	Rank at Workshop	State Workshop
Understand the effectiveness of education about resources and examine our methodology	10	FL
Research of delivery methods and messages that promote stewardship behavior change -Evaluation of existing programs	13	AL
Research on how to present information most effectively, and in a user-friendly way (how to disseminate and present to public) -GIS layers, web-based products (efficacy of different delivery mechanisms) -use of the media	16	FL
Research most effective methods for encouraging public participation in protecting fisheries and other natural resources – informing decision-makers/officials (e.g., education, outreach workshops, volunteer opportunities, scholarships, lobbying)	19	AL
Measure citizens' and decision makers' understanding of vulnerability and how to translate / communicate technical data to improve decisions	12	LA
Marine Debris -Research on origins -Research on why education and enforcement of laws haven't been effective -Effects on ecosystems (habitats, species)	20	MS
Investigate techniques to better educate the public and municipal officials about climate change and coastal ocean ecosystems	32	MS
Which approach--education, regulation, incentives--is more effective in increasing resiliency?	32	MS
Evaluate the human dimension - e.g. relative to decision makers. Develop metrics to assess how they process, understand and apply climate change science	33	FL
Local social understanding of benefits / burdens on restoration	38	LA
Is there a link between education and resiliency?	41	MS
How do we educate stakeholders regarding health risks from contaminated seafood and water quality; good stewardship?	44	MS

“Topic” was the raw comment that was presented as a priority at the workshop and voted for by workshop participants.

“Rank at Workshop” is based on the number of votes the topic received at the workshop. A rank of “1” indicated that the topic received the most votes.

“State Workshop” is the workshop where the topic was presented and received votes.