



healthygulf.org

Gulf Restoration Network

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UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

Trips to the woods, swamps and marshes provide generously for our tables.

Our rich, southern harvest depends on clean water and healthy wetlands. Rivers, swamps and marshes sustain and nourish us, our families and our culture.

This year, donate to Gulf Restoration Network and protect what you love - future generations will thank you.



Gulf Restoration Network, founded in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico region.



GULF CURRENTS

WINTER 2016

WATER IS LIFE

The eyes of the world are watching North Dakota. Since April, Water Protectors (led by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe) have been gathering in North Dakota to fight the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The DAPL would carry 470,000 barrels of oil a day from the oil fields of western North Dakota to Illinois - snaking through the lands of the Sioux tribe and crossing the Missouri River. From there, the pipeline will cut its way down to Texas and into the Gulf.

The Army Corps of Engineers recently made a historic decision to recognize tribal sovereignty and conduct an Environmental Impact Statement for the river crossing - postponing construction of the pipeline. Despite this significant victory, the Water Protectors will remain vigilant, knowing that this dangerous project will rear it's ugly head again. **Those of us who live in the Gulf are familiar with the dangers of pipelines.** We have lived through spills and explosions. We have suffered contaminated water and an ethic of putting profits over people.

"THOSE OF US WHO LIVE IN THE GULF ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE DANGERS OF PIPELINES."

Given the history of the oil and gas industry in our wetlands, it is no surprise that the tail of this black snake is proposed to wind through Gulf Coast waters and wetlands. Another Energy Transfer Partners project - the Bayou Bridge pipeline - threatens our waters and wetlands.

The last length of the black snake would traverse 160 miles, through 600 acres of Louisiana swamp and marsh. From Lake Charles through the Mermentau River, Bayou Teche, the Atchafalaya Basin, and Bayou Lafourche - the pipeline would burrow under 700 rivers. **It is the largest proposed pipeline impact to wetlands Louisiana has ever seen** - from a company with one of the worst health and safety records. The snake's coils cut through the heart of crawfish country and under a drinking water source for over 300,000 Gulf residents.

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Protest in New Orleans, Part of a National Day of solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota. Photo Credit: Julie Dermansky.

TOGETHER LET'S PROTECT THE GULF

The stakes have never been higher for the Gulf Coast. Our communities are on the frontlines of sea level rise, pollution, land loss and poisonous industry.



- For generations, we've fought to protect our waters, wetlands, coasts and communities. And together, we have won real victories.
- We cleaned polluted lakes, rivers and streams, so that they are now swimmable and fishable.
 - We protected the marine fish and mammals that are essential to the health of the Gulf ecosystem and our economy.
 - We saved wetlands and cypress forests which shield our communities from flooding and storm surge.
 - And, when faced with the biggest oil disaster in U.S. history, we held BP accountable for the damage they did to the Gulf, and the federal government accountable for their lack of oversight that made the disaster possible.

The results of the recent election pose a real threat to the work we have done together.

We have new leaders who scorn the importance of protecting water and wetlands, object to the public's right to have a voice in projects that harm the environment, and believe that regulation that impedes economic development, no matter how environmentally damaging, is objectionable.

"STRENGTHENED WITH NEW PARTNERS AND PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE, TOGETHER WE HAVE THE POWER TO PROTECT THE GULF."

As a result of this leadership transition, the new administration and members of Congress are threatening to roll back the improvements in oversight of the oil and gas industry that we achieved in the aftermath of the BP Disaster. They want to open Florida waters to drilling and reduce protection of the Gulf's dolphins and whales.

The threat is real, but the power of our movement is also real.

We are building a movement. Strengthened with new partners and people from all over the globe, together we have the power to protect the Gulf.

Thank you for all the support you've given - now more than ever, we need you in the fight for a healthy Gulf.

Cynthia Sarthou
Executive Director, GRN



GRN staff recently visited the Louisiana University Marine Consortium (LUMCON) in Cocodrie, LA for their annual staff retreat.

GULF FISH FOREVER ON CAPITOL HILL

Just one week after the election, Gulf Restoration Network sent a delegation to Capitol Hill to discuss the future of our Gulf fish. Two amazing New Orleans chefs joined our staff: Chef Ryan Prewitt (Peche Seafood Grill), James Beard award winner and Chef Dana Honn (Carmo), a local leader in sustainable and local seafood dishes .

Over the span of two days, the delegation met with 15 different members of Congress or their staffs. Each meeting emphasized the importance of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). The Act, which celebrated 40 years of successful fishery management in April, has allowed regional councils to manage their local fisheries using best available science. Between the 8 regional councils, we have seen almost 40 fisheries saved from near collapse nationwide since the inception of the Act.

"MANY OF US EAT SEAFOOD. AND EVEN IF WE DON'T, WE CARE ABOUT THE HEALTH OF OUR GULF'S PRECIOUS ECOSYSTEMS."

With the new Congress beginning in 2017, the MSA is likely to be up for reauthorization, making this an important time for the future of our Gulf fisheries. The chefs shared their concerns about how weakening fishery management in our Gulf hurts their business.

Many of us eat seafood. And even if we don't, we care about the health of our Gulf's precious ecosystems. **Elected officials who make decisions about fisheries must know that even those of us not involved in catching the fish are affected by poor fishery management.**

Our trip to DC was an effort to push for healthy fish and healthy ecosystems for everyone in the Gulf.



From left: Derek Breaux, Harry Lowenburg, Louisiana Congressman Steve Scalise, Chef Dana Honn and Chef Ryan Prewitt.

SEWAGE WOES IN FLORIDA

Due to massive rainfalls during Hurricane Hermine in September, the St. Petersburg sewage treatment systems dumped partially treated sewage, mixed with rain water, into Tampa Bay. **This resulted in over 111 million gallons of sewer overflows into the Bay where people swim, sail, and live.**

In the aftermath of this gross discharge, Gulf Restoration Network looked at the city of St. Petersburg’s response to the crisis. We found that:

- they stopped sampling the Bay before it could be shown that the continuing sewage problem was properly addressed,
- thresholds they were using did not meet state-mandated water quality criteria and
- sampling sites did not represent the Bay as a whole.

Based on our analysis, we recommended that there be public input and hearings before any negotiations between St. Petersburg and Florida Department of Environmental Protection were finalized. This sentiment was echoed by many members of the community and the City Council. **Thanks to this public outcry, St. Petersburg is conducting at least two hearings to make sure public concerns are heard.**



A closed beach due to sewage run off.

"THE ONLY REAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM LIES IN MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS THAT STOPS HARMFUL SEWAGE FROM POLLUTING OUR WATER."



Florida residents hold up protest signs during a City Council hearing.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding the sewage spills, ranging from the questionable closing of an additional sewage treatment plant to whistleblower allegations that the sewage wasn’t treated as the City claimed.

This situation will require continued monitoring, as the only real solution to the problem lies in major infrastructure improvements that stop harmful sewage from polluting our water. St. Petersburg is just an example of how our aging sewage and stormwater infrastructure, combined with neglect and climate change will result in more and more threats to Gulf communities.

TOUGH DECISIONS IN COASTAL TEXAS



Ibis and Snowy egrets on Bolivar Island.

In 2008, Hurricane Ike devastated Galveston Island and caused significant damage to the Greater Houston area—especially coastal communities surrounding Galveston Bay and the Houston Ship Channel. **Since that time, communities in and around Galveston have been thinking about how they will weather future, more intense storms.**

Currently, the discussion revolves around the Ike Dike and the need for improved storm surge protection. The Ike Dike is a multi-billion dollar proposal to build a wall along the entire length of Galveston Island. The dike would provide two floodgate openings, one at San Luis Pass, and a larger gate between Galveston and Bolivar Island. Although there have been several proposed coastal protection plans, there has been little discussion about the economic feasibility (short or long-term) of the Ike Dike, future storm protection and protection of the Galveston Bay ecosystem.

"IT'S IMPERATIVE THAT TEXAS CITIZENS AND DECISION-MAKERS KNOW HOW ANY COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE WILL AFFECT THEIR ENVIRONMENT, THEIR COMMUNITY AND THEIR POCKETBOOK."

While it’s evident that action must be taken to address the threats of stronger storms, climate change and rising sea levels, it’s imperative that Texas citizens and decision-makers know how any coastal infrastructure will affect their environment, their community and their pocketbook. Building hard structures in the environment will affect the ecosystem – potentially causing harm to fisheries and oyster reefs within Galveston Bay. And, after construction, the burden of maintenance will fall on taxpayers.

It’s important to know what this project would mean for Galveston Bay and its surrounding communities. **Until these questions are answered, it’s far too early to make decisions on what’s best.**




A tanker floats by in the proposed location of the Ike Dike.

2016: PROTECTING GULF WATERS AND WETLANDS



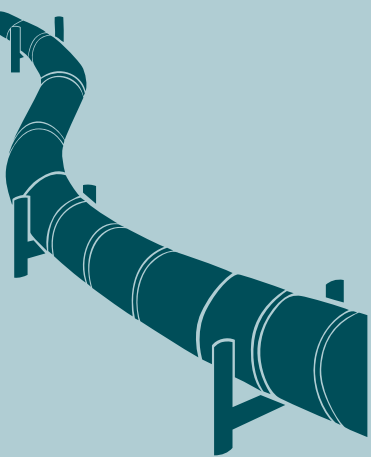
**FOUGHT TO
REDUCE
GULF DEAD ZONE**

**260 ACRES
OF ILLEGALLY FILLED
WETLANDS RESTORED IN
MISSISSIPPI**



**141 LETTERS
TO TAMPA BAY
MAYORS DEMANDING
TRANSPARENCY AROUND
200+ MILLION GALLON
SEWAGE SPILL**

**822 LETTERS
OPPOSING BAYOU BRIDGE
PIPELINE**



**7
N
Nitrogen
14.007**

**15
P
Phosphorus
30.974**

**66 MEDIA OUTLETS
COVER "DECADES OF DELAY"
REPORT DEMANDING
ACTION ON
POLLUTION**

**4,890 ACRES
OF WETLAND
PROTECTED**



LIVING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE



Flooding brought on during the August flood. Photo Credit: Ezra Boyd.

Climate change is coming to a coast near you. Rising seas and more severe storms are threatening the Gulf coast.

These threats are far too real for some communities in Louisiana. Thousands of Louisianans lost their homes and belongings in the August flood. The State recently decided that any area flooding more than 14 feet during a 100 year storm is deemed a "Resettlement Zone." Those living in Resettlement Zones are being advised to consider moving, but no money is available to assist communities most at risk. **This isn't just a Louisiana problem.**

"FLOODING FROM HISTORIC RAINFALLS, SEA LEVEL RISE AND SEVERE STORMS ARE PUTTING ALL OF OUR COASTAL COMMUNITIES AT RISK."

This year, flooding in Houston affected hundreds, and left the city covered with water contaminated by industrial and chemical facilities. Hurricanes Matthew and Hermine caused government shut downs in Florida. Mississippi faced the worst flooding since Hurricane Katrina in April.

Flooding from historic rainfalls, sea level rise and severe storms are putting all of our coastal communities at risk.

As sea levels rise and coastal land loss continues, our state and federal governments must offer options to the communities facing these threats. People need resources for voluntary buyouts of their homes and assistance with floodproofing and elevation. Without this assistance, our neighborhoods and homes will be left vulnerable or unlivable.

Climate change is happening. Will our local, state and federal agencies develop comprehensive approaches and stand with communities most at risk?

WATER IS LIFE

(Continued from pg. 1)

Any one of these concerns is enough to declare the project significant, warranting an Environmental Impact Statement. But Bayou Bridge disagrees, insisting that its permits be fast-tracked.

Gulf Restoration Network is working with our partners to unite Gulf residents and push our government for a full environmental review. We have already won a hearing on the project, set for January 12, 2017.

"WATER IS LIFE, WETLANDS ARE HOME, AND IT'S UP TO US -ALL OF US-TO PROTECT ONE ANOTHER."

The deltas of the Gulf coast sustain some of the largest US fisheries. The Mississippi River Valley is a breadbasket for the whole world. And yet the greed of Energy Transfer Partners, the company that is trying to build both DAPL and Bayou Bridge, threatens it all.

At Gulf Restoration Network, we believe that water really is life. The integrity of our water and our flood defenses are at risk. **We are proud to join the Water Protectors in North Dakota in the movement to protect water.** Water is life, wetlands are home, and it's up to us—all of us—to protect one another.

No Dakota Access Pipeline. No Bayou Bridge Pipeline.