

GULF

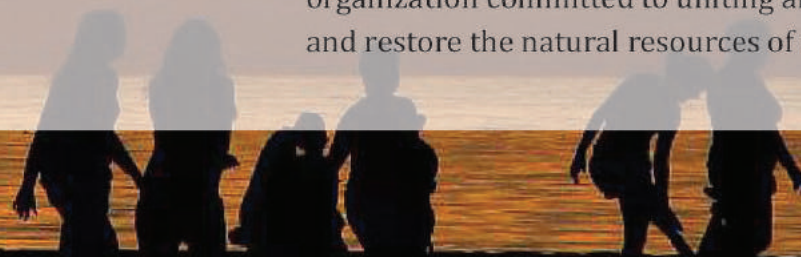
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Gulf Restoration Network, founded in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico region.



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ACTIVE SEASON SHOWS FLAWS IN INFRASTRUCTURE

2017 was forecasted to be an active season for hurricanes, and it certainly blew past anyone's expectations. With the help of our members, GRN was able to move like the wind to monitor impacts.

In late August, Hurricane Harvey smashed Port Aransas and washed over Port Comfort —Harvey then poured over nine trillion gallons of rainwater onto Houston and into Galveston Bay, and 60 inches of rain that pushed the Neches River into Beaumont by early September. An offshore rig smashed into the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, Formosa Plastics spilled into Lavaca Bay, refineries flushed their lines into the air and water all along the Texas coast, and hundreds of thousands of coastal residents were flooded. With the help of Southwings, GRN conducted three regional flyovers and filed multiple pollution and debris reports.

After causing catastrophic damage on several Caribbean islands, Hurricane Irma came ashore in Florida in early September. This sent thousands of gallons of raw sewage into streets and waterways. These were often caused by lift stations that lost power and did not have backup power —pointing out weaknesses in local wastewater systems. The storm's extensive rainfall brought huge discharges of polluted waters from Florida's replumbed interior, where farmland is drained through canals to both the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. These agricultural discharges cause major damage in estuaries through the explosive growth of algae.

After Nate turned from New Orleans to Pascagoula, MS and Bayou La Batre, AL, EPA was forced to open Mississippi Phosphates' failing containment into Bayou Casotte releasing an acidic plume "in excess of 40 million gallons." This was the fifth such emergency release from this potential Superfund site since July for a total of 270 million gallons of acidic water laced with phosphorus pollution and radioactive materials.

Thanks to your support, GRN tracks the ongoing impacts from these storms and supports actions that will resolve weaknesses exposed by the storms—from sewage treatment and industrial runoff to coastal resilience.



Exxon Beaumont's "Lower Refinery" becomes part of the Neches River as the water rises, 09/03/2017.

HOPE ALONG THE PEARL RIVER

The very first Pearl River Clean Sweep removed **36,782 lbs. of trash** from the Pearl thanks to **1,015 volunteers**. From its headwaters at Nanih Wayiah down to the Honey Island Swamp, Pearl Riverkeeper Abby Braman organized an event that proves how many people really care about the Pearl River.



Volunteers gathering and throwing trash that accumulated in the Pearl River.
Photo Credit: Abby Braman, Pearl Riverkeeper.

LITIGATION – A NECESSARY TOOL IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOOLBOX

Protecting the environment often requires the use of a stick – litigation – rather than a carrot. Despite GRN's best efforts to sway state and federal agency decision-makers through public comments, meetings and action alerts, sometimes we must sue to clean up water and protect wetlands. While litigation is rarely our first choice, it is an important tool in our toolbox.

Recently legal action brought by the GRN has resulted in real protection of the environment and communities.

For example, when contacted by residents of Centerville, MS about untreated sewage pollution flowing into their yards and neighboring creeks, our efforts to get city leaders to clean up their act and stop the pollution failed – until we filed suit. And in 2010, when we responded to complaints that Hattiesburg, Mississippi's sewage lagoons were pouring sewage into the Bowie and Leaf rivers, we couldn't even get the City to take us seriously until we filed suit. This despite evidence that brown, smelly water from the South lagoons was dumping directly into the Leaf. It was either sue or let the pollution continue. Now, improvements to the City's treatment system are ongoing.

WHILE LITIGATION IS RARELY OUR FIRST CHOICE, IT IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL IN OUR TOOLBOX.

Another example is our opposition to the inappropriate use of post-BP restoration funds in Alabama. Despite hundreds of comments opposing the inappropriate use of Natural Resource Damages monies to build a lodge and conference center at the Gulf State Park, AL and GRN's complaints about the inadequacy of the environmental review of the project, it took a lawsuit to get Alabama to agree to dedicate funds for their intended use – amenities that support public access to the Park and protection of the surrounding environment.

Regretfully, GRN and other environmental organizations are too often put into the position of either accepting the unacceptable or suing.

"BAYOU BRIDGE PIPELINE IS NOT THE FIRST PIPELINE TO DAM THE BASIN, BUT IT MAY BE THE WORST..."



Our partners at Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, Dean and Misha (and Shanka the dog), demonstrate the harmful effects of pipelines in the Basin. What used to be a deepwater swamp is now a large hill because of pipelines damming the waterways.

DECADES OF PIPELINES DAM THE ATCHAFALAYA

The Atchafalaya River Basin is the largest river swamp in North America. It is the beating heart of the Mississippi migratory bird flyway, and all that remains of the great swamps of the ancient Mississippi River Valley civilizations that once extended north from the Gulf to Illinois.

Nearly 22 million pounds of crawfish are commercially harvested annually from the Basin. Unfortunately, crawfishers' livelihoods are at stake because of constant threats from the oil & gas industry. Perhaps the largest threat is pipelines.

While these pipelines often pollute our water with spills, the biggest problem with these pipelines is their refusal to abide by the Clean Water Act. The cheapest way to build a pipeline is to dig trenches to bury it below the shifting sands. But companies rarely replace the soil they displace. This displaced earth—known as a spoil bank—creates a dam blocking the flow of water and the flow of

commerce. And dams silt in. Over time, a deep-water swamp becomes a hill. And any crawfisher will tell you, you can't catch crawfish on a hill.

After 50 years of pipelines criss-crossing the Atchafalaya River Basin, Tin Can Lake is now a hill; Beau Bayou's water is dead and still, and Cocodrie Swamp is impounded and buried. Sediment that should be headed to the Gulf Coast to build land is wasted in the middle of the Basin.

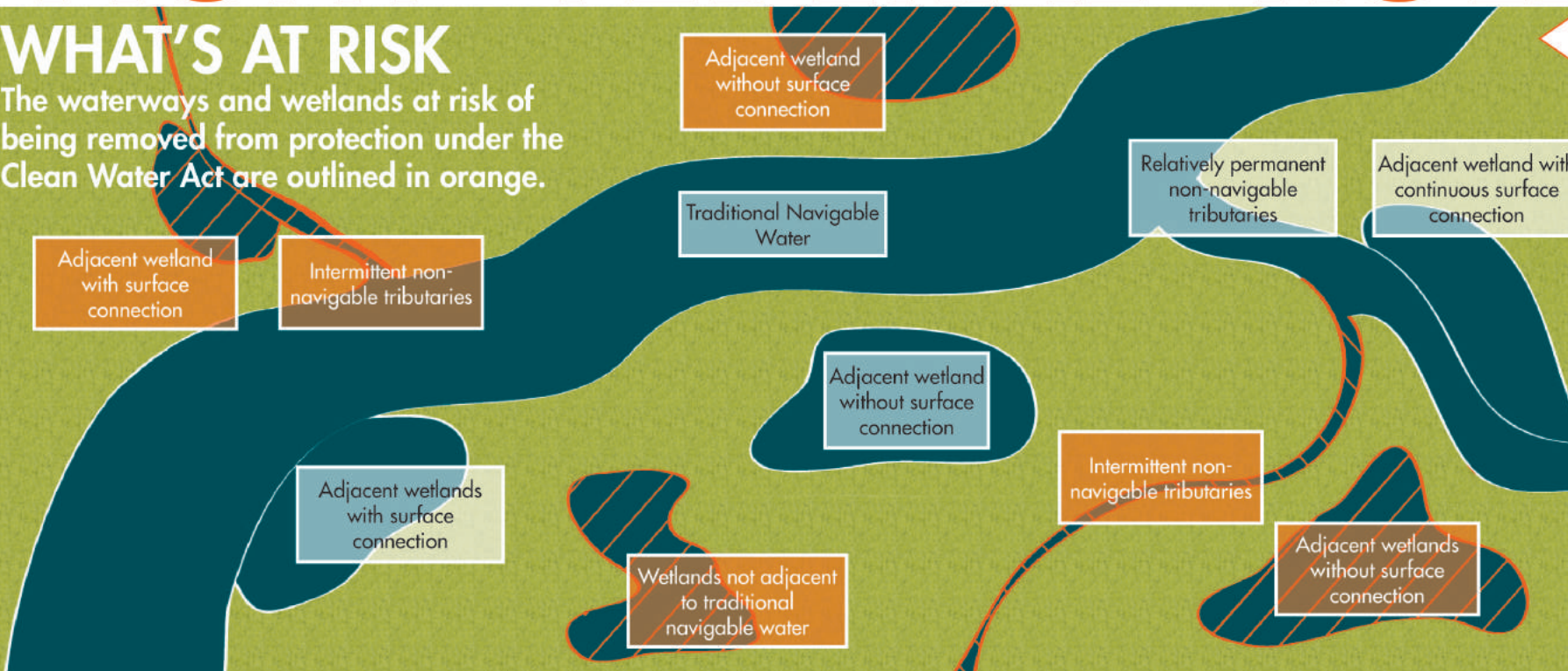
One of the latest threats to the Basin is the Bayou Bridge Pipeline. It is not the first pipeline to dam the Basin, but it may be the worst—with one of the biggest footprints of any wetland permit in Louisiana, by a company with one of the worst spill records in the country, Energy Transfer Partners. We demand an Environmental Impact Statement for this pipeline and a review of all pipeline dams in the Basin. We are fighting for our culture, for our communities.

**Become a member today at
healthygulf.org/donate**

FIGHT FEDERAL ROLLBACKS

WHAT'S AT RISK

The waterways and wetlands at risk of being removed from protection under the Clean Water Act are outlined in orange.



CLEAN WATER RULE

Enacted: June 2015

Successes/Protections: The Clean Water Rule clarifies what the Clean Water Act defines as Waters of the United States including tributaries and adjacent waters that are under federal jurisdiction. The Clean Water Rule protects the drinking water sources of 1 in 3 Americans.

Threat: In February of 2017, President Trump signed an executive order telling the EPA to review the Clean Water Rule for conflicts with economic growth. In March of 2017, the Trump administration signaled their intent to review and dismantle the Clean Water Rule.

Action: GRN members sent 2,072 letters to the head of the EPA, Scott Pruitt. We will alert members if future action is needed.

EASTERN GULF MORATORIUM

Enacted: December 2010

Successes/Protections: Congress' decision to place a moratorium on oil & gas exploration and drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico has protected millions of acres of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Threat: The moratorium will expire in 2022. Energy bills making their way through Congress have not explicitly mentioned the Eastern Gulf. However, we expect this to change as industry pressure mounts.

Action: GRN is keeping a close eye on any developments and will alert our members when action is needed. Stay tuned.

MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT

Enacted: April 1976

Successes/Protections: In 40 years, MSA rebuilt the stock of 41 fisheries in the U.S.

Threat: Congress is undermining the Magnuson-Stevens Act on several fronts. Rep. Young (R-AK) has introduced H.R. 200 in the House. It would weaken the MSA and put fisheries management in the hands of states and Regional Fishery Management Councils. Senate Bill 1520, introduced by Sen. Wicker (R-MS) and Sen. Nelson (D-FL), is markedly better than its House counterpart but still has much room for improvement.

Action: Send Congress a strong message today at healthygulf.org/fish.

MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTION ACT

Enacted: October 1972

Successes/Protections: NO marine mammals in U.S. waters have gone extinct—including 26+ species in the Gulf of Mexico--since the Act was enacted 45 years ago.

Threat: The SECURE American Energy Act would remove and weaken key provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to fast-track offshore oil and gas activities. This includes removing all protections for marine mammals from seismic exploration, which has been proven to cause significant harm to whales and dolphins.

Action: Please send your Representatives a letter at healthygulf.org/MMPA.

WELL CONTROL RULE

Enacted: April 2016

Successes/Protections: This is the only preventative measure that has been enacted to protect us from spills like the BP Disaster. The Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement enacted this rule in order to strengthen protections with stronger requirements for blowout preventer systems in deep sea environments.

Threat: President Trump issued an executive order on May 2, 2017, requiring reconsideration of the Well Control Rule.

Action: As more develops on this issue, GRN will actively fight any rollbacks on the Well Control Rule. Stay tuned.

"The Gulf is my home and my passion. I could not be happier to share my passion with a team of dedicated staff, members and board to fight for a healthy Gulf."

**-Dustin Renaud,
Communications
Director**



"I am so happy to join the GRN team to help empower chefs and fishers to protect Gulf fisheries. As both a professional cook and a conservationist I couldn't ask for a more perfect union of my two passions."

**-Kendall Dix,
Fisheries Associate**



NEW STAFF

GRN IS ON THE GROUND IN FLORIDA

Greetings Gulf advocates! I have the honor of serving as GRN's new coastal organizer, covering the Florida panhandle and South Alabama from Perdido Bay to Apalachicola Bay.

It's a special stretch of the Gulf coast, with an interior of pine forests bisected by small streams and rivers that flow to a series of coastal estuaries. This area is often called the Emerald Coast for the color of the nearshore Gulf waters that beckon thousands to its white sand beaches.

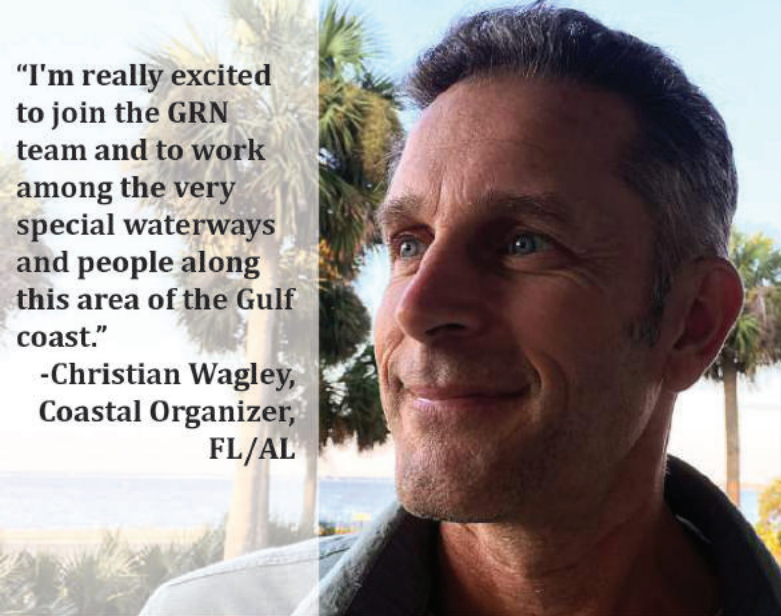
The beauty and accessibility of the Gulf here means that people tend to strongly identify with it and support its protection. Local residents and visitors recreate on and in the water—paddleboarding, surfing, swimming, wade fishing. There's nothing better than bringing these salty waters onto one's skin to make a personal connection to a clean and restored Gulf of Mexico.

As in so many places, the health of the Gulf and the waters that feed it are always tenuous. Our work here is focused on protecting and improving water quality—the foundation of a healthy Gulf. We'll also be working to keep offshore drilling away from Florida and supporting the transition to clean energy. With coastal development pressures surging, preserving coastal resilience by protecting wetlands, barrier islands, and other large natural areas is also a high priority.



Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.

For a clean and healthy Gulf,
Christian Wagley



"I'm really excited to join the GRN team and to work among the very special waterways and people along this area of the Gulf coast."

-Christian Wagley,
Coastal Organizer,
FL/AL

"My husband and I have been supporters for many years. We both understand the dire need to fix our coast and very much appreciate the role GRN takes in that endeavor."

-Bev Nichols, CPA,
Board Member



AND BOARD

GRN'S ANNIVERSARY

Another Year Because of You!

Because of members like you, GRN has been protecting the Gulf to build a cleaner future for our families for 23 years.

Last year, we celebrated this important work by highlighting the Gulf Fish Forever campaign and new, exciting work with Gulf corals.

Last year, Chefs Ryan Prewitt of Pêche, Dana Honn of Carmo and GRN's Harry Lowenburg met with politicians in DC to talk about defending the Magnuson Steven's Act, which prevents overfishing. The chefs added Jason Goodenough of Carrolton Market and stood up for the Gulf again, hosting GRN's Anniversary and cooking up a feast. Gulf oysters, seafood jollof, crab gazpacho, even eel pie!

The chefs talked to our members at the anniversary party about the need to maintain the Magnuson Steven's Act. GRN's Executive Director, Cyn Sarthou, discussed new protections for critical deep sea coral reef habitat.

At this event, you raised over \$12,000.
If you weren't able to join the party, it's
not too late! Protect the Gulf today by
donating to GRN.
We'll see you next year!

