

The Gulf of Mexico – Where Economy and Environment Coexist and Contend

Long-Term monitoring and Ocean Observation is the Key to a Sustainable Gulf

Why is something so obvious so difficult to achieve?

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The Gulf of Mexico is of great strategic importance to the U.S., Mexico and Cuba. All three countries are integrally linked through demographic, economic and ecological commonalities associated with the world's ninth largest waterbody. The Gulf of Mexico is often called the "working Gulf" and for good reason. No other coastal water is more important to regional energy security and overall economic health. The Gulf economy generates \$230 billion in economic activity each year and is critical to the economic health of the region. The dynamic nature of the Gulf continually affects the countries that surround it and indirectly, the world's economic stability. Economic and environmental sustainability, as well as, the health and well-being of those living around the Gulf are dramatically enhanced by our ability to understand the Gulf as a large marine ecosystem. The key is a robust trilateral, long-term monitoring and ocean observing capability. Billions of dollars and lives depend on it. Hurricanes like Katrina and oil spills like Macondo showed we did not have adequate resources dedicated to this need. Today, years later many feel we are no better prepared for the next manmade or natural disaster, despite the billions of dollars now focused on the Gulf. Incremental progress is being made but may be too little and too late to meet anticipated needs. This presentation explores that conundrum, as well as, the challenges and opportunities we face securing this most basic tool to our understanding of and living with, the Gulf of Mexico.