



**GULF OF MEXICO UNIVERSITY RESEARCH  
COLLABORATIVE**  
**([www.gomurc.org](http://www.gomurc.org)):**

## **2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **GOMURC Director's Statement:**

Marine research consortia from the five U.S. Gulf of Mexico States have come together to create a unified voice for academia and science-based decisions affecting the Gulf States, Gulf ecosystem and its nationally important resources. While the Gulf States long ago realized that there is strength in numbers by forming state-wide university consortia, a similar regional alliance also makes sense considering the nature of ecosystem-wide disasters like Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill.

Universities are science warehouses and research engines required for an ecosystem approach to managing the Gulf. Just as ecosystem stressors cross geopolitical boundaries, so must efforts to understand, mitigate and restore. After the DHW spill, universities were among the first responders to monitor impacts and determine the nature and fate of spill event materials. There was little coordination between these investigator, program and institution-driven efforts, and early results sometimes conflicted with early industry and government results. Universities train the work-force of tomorrow that must deal with mounting stress and economic hardships, and there is no greater learning tool than "trial by fire," hands-on experiences.

In early 2011, heads of university research consortia in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging to communicate, advocate, and inform the nation about science and education efforts needed to address Gulf issues. This annual report summarizes related strategy and actions undertaken in 2011. We are especially thankful to the Dr. Carol Ballew, GOMURC's first coordinator, for her vision and tireless efforts to establish a firm foundation for 2012 and beyond.

The coming year offers critical challenges that GOMURC will tackle on behalf of our university colleagues, for example, continued support for the RESTORE the Gulf Act (S1400, HR3096) and ensuring settlements focus oil spill penalty payments on Gulf economic and ecological needs. We will continue to grow and serve a network of experts and students eager to collaborate with State and federal agencies as they strive to meet their mission objectives. As strategies develop for long-term science and education programs required for restoration and preparing for future disasters, GOMURC will be ready to assist regional and national planning.

*Andrew N. Shepard, Executive Director, GOMURC*

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**2011 STRATEGY**

**VISION AND MISSION**

As described in original Memorandum of Understanding that established the Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC) (available on-line at <http://www3.research.usf.edu/grc/docs/mou.pdf>), signed by the members' in November 2010, GOMURC's collective *vision and mission* included:

GOMURC "is established by agreement of its Principal Members (identified below [under Organization]) for the purpose of supporting and enhancing the Gulf of Mexico's coastal marine science, oceanography and related management programs through education, research, and public outreach. The Gulf Research Collaborative supports and facilitates the activities of educators, scientists, and agencies responding to state, regional, national, and international issues."

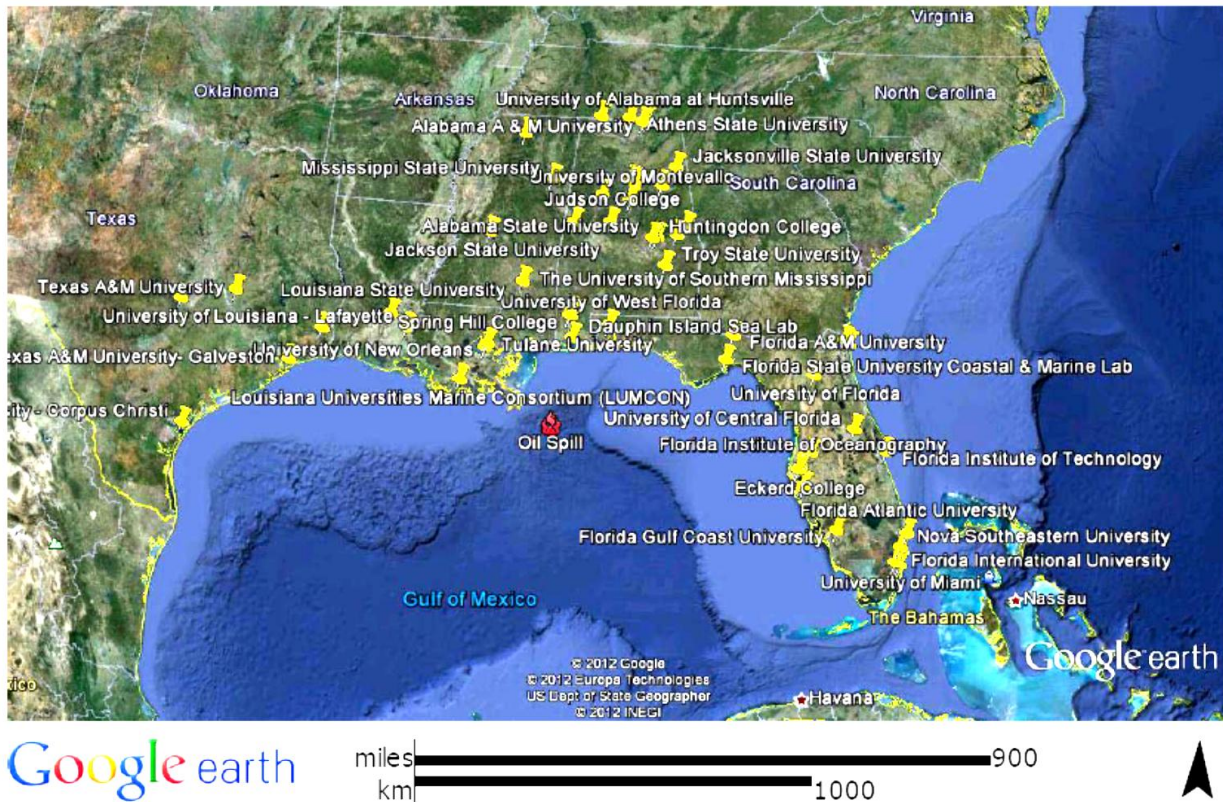
**ORGANIZATION**

GOMURC has five Principal Members representing the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. The objective is for the Principal Member in each Gulf State to be a representative or consortium, representing the university-based marine science organizations within such Gulf State, including over 60 institutions (Figure 1), which host over 100 marine science and socio-economic programs that work on Gulf ecosystem issues. Member consortia as of December 2011 include:

1. The Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium (AMESC)
2. The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO)
3. The Louisiana University Gulf Research Consortium (LUGRC)
4. The Mississippi Research Consortium (MRC)
5. The Texas Research Consortium (TRC).

The GOMURC Board includes a representative from each Member consortium and a Board chair, who shall: (a) be a representative of one of the Principal Members; (b) preside over Board meetings; and (c) call Board meetings at least two times each calendar year, and other meetings when requested by two Principal Members. The

Gulf Research Chair shall serve for a one year term, and no representative shall serve consecutive terms. The Chair duties in 2011 were split between FIO and LUGRC (latter to serve through December 2012).



**Figure 1.** Map showing locations of 60 universities currently part of the GOMURC member’s state consortia.

GOMURC day-to-day operations are administered by a Director (termed coordinator in original MOU, but revised by the Board in December 2011). Funding for the Director position is provided support from the USF Foundation. In 2011, the interim Director position was filled from April to November by Dr. Carol Ballew. Dr. Ballew oversaw creation and signing of the MOU, draft Strategic Plan, draft Board bylaws, and GOMURC web site ([www.gomurc.org](http://www.gomurc.org)). She also coordinated the hiring process for the new director, Mr. Andrew Shepard, who began Dec. 1, 2011. Mr. Shepard’s background includes 35 years of program management and ocean research activities covering ecosystems from New England to the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

**PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

As defined in the 2010 MOU, GOMURC “program goals for 2011 included:

1. **Serve as a university-based, multi-state research organization to respond to disasters** that endanger the Gulf of Mexico’s marine life, seabed, water column, surface, shoreline, and communities dependent upon these valued

ecosystem components. The disaster that provided the impetus for the creation of the [GOMURC] was the BP Deepwater Horizon oil well blow-out and resulting oil spill in 2010, and the short-term and long-term response to that disaster is a significant, but not exclusive, mission of the [GOMURC]. The [GOMURC] will respond to other incidents, and engage in other related and unrelated activities consistent with the missions described above, as may be determined by its members.

2. **Develop and promote research initiatives**, and provide and coordinate infrastructure and personnel for marine research initiatives within the Gulf of Mexico that expand opportunities for [GOMURC] members.
3. **Support, lead, and participate in conferences and other opportunities** to provide educational opportunities related to the [GOMURC] mission, for the marine science community and the general public.
4. **Seek opportunities to collectively advocate** to, and partner with local, state and federal organizations and authorities in opportunities that advance the mission of the [GOMURC]. As an example, without excluding other opportunities, the [GOMURC] will seek collaboration opportunities with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance and its partner organizations.
5. **Support and facilitate the programs of scientists, educators, and students** at institutions represented by the Principal Members. Among other activities, this support may include the following:
  - a. Promote inter-institutional oceanography and its related sciences within the Gulf States and on a national and international basis; with an important emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico.
  - b. Enhance the quality and scope of cooperative Gulf State educational and research programs.
  - c. Provide a forum within the Gulf States' marine science community, which can identify regional scientific and educational concerns, strategies, and expertise to encourage development of effective programs and policies addressing marine issues."

The Director's more specific objectives and tasks for 2011 addressed all of the above GOMURC program goals (Table 1).

**Table 1.** GOMURC director objectives and tasks for 2011 served all GOMURC goals shown above.

Objective	Related tasks/actions
Sustain and develop GOMURC education, outreach and inreach activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop GOMURC Communications Plan that defines how GOMURC communicates with members and assists region in responding to future environmental events/disasters.</li> <li>• Sustain and enhance <a href="http://www.gomurc.org">www.gomurc.org</a>.</li> <li>• Utilize Internet social networking tools to promote inreach and outreach.</li> <li>• Facilitate communications with GOMURC network of collaborators and promote accountability for GOMURC activities.</li> <li>• Develop new collaborations with GOMURC partners that enable use of University assets/expertise in support of GOM science and technology innovation needs.</li> <li>• Meet with regional alliances to coordinate and support activities of mutual</li> </ul>

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Objective	Related tasks/actions
	interest (e.g., GOMA, GRI, GCERTF, SAML, SURA). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize local (FIO/USF) resources to leverage and promote GOMURC activities.</li> <li>• Promote ocean literacy through partnerships with GOM education programs.</li> </ul>
Provide leadership and support for GOMURC program management and administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Member Board meetings (schedule, coordinate and record) and follow-through on action items.</li> <li>• Finalize By-laws that define how GOMURC Members Board (MB) works, and revise as needed.</li> <li>• Promote efficient use of GOMURC funds and growth of resources.</li> <li>• Assess performance through development and drafting of Annual report with budget, milestones and progress.</li> </ul>
Identify and promote GOMURC strategies and actions for 2012-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop GOMURC Strategic and Action Plans.</li> <li>• Identify and attend key regional meetings to network and support regional initiatives.</li> <li>• Identify international issues, mandates and partnerships.</li> </ul>
Identify and develop new partnerships and funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish GOMURC members network and assess collaborators needs.</li> <li>• Develop new partnerships that leverage and grow GOMURC capabilities and programs.</li> <li>• Find new support for GOMURC science and education activities.</li> <li>• Promote dedication of BP penalties to regional research needs; promote RESTORE Act passage; provide input to related settlement language.</li> </ul>

### 2011 PROGRESS

During 2011, GOMURC made progress in addressing all program goals and objectives (Table 2).

**Table 2.** GOMURC 2011 objectives, major milestones, and progress update.

Objective	2011 Milestone	Progress
Sustain and develop GOMURC education, outreach and inreach activities	Launch Web site	<a href="http://www.gomurc.org">www.gomurc.org</a> launched in Aug. with assistance from USF IT Services
	Contacts list	Excel workbook spreadsheets include: Board and admin contacts; Member institutions (Fig. 1) and their marine programs; Gulf congresspersons; Gulf regional alliances
	Document sharing	Google Docs site; posting of relevant docs to Web site
Provide leadership and support for GOMURC program management and administration	Board meetings	Bi-monthly board meetings with notes from April to Dec. 2011 (notes posted to secure FTP site)
	Bylaws	Latest version posted on Web site.
	Annual report	Draft 30 days after end of CY
Identify and promote GOMURC strategies and	Strategic Plan	Plan for 2012-2013 posted to Web site in Dec.

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Objective	2011 Milestone	Progress
actions for 2012-2013		
	Gulf of Mexico Summit	Dec. 7-8 in Houston; GOMURC co-sponsor, GOMURC special session; GOMURC exhibit
Identify and develop new partnerships and funding opportunities	RESTORE Act advocacy	Board meeting with legislators in DC in Nov.; several local meetings between board members and their state legislators

### 2012 STRATEGY

#### **GOMURC VISION:**

The Gulf of Mexico will be understood scientifically and used economically in a way that ensures its sustainability for the future. The Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC) members' strategies will contribute significantly to this vision, Gulf-wide, nationally and internationally.

#### **GOMURC MISSION:**

To work collaboratively as the responsible university-based research consortia within the Gulf States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas in pursuit of scientific knowledge and understanding that informs decisions on state, regional, national and international resource management and policy and practices affecting the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and economy.

As presented in the GOMURC Strategic Plan for 2012-2013 (on-line at <http://www.marine.usf.edu/gomurc/docs/StrategicPlan-1-10-12.pdf>), **program goals** include:

1. Promote **networking and communication** between GOMURC members and local, state, regional, Federal, and international organizations, authorities and NGOs that advance the GOMURC mission.
2. Develop and promote regional **science-based strategies** and involve cooperating disciplines to address priority problems and issues, advocating for regional academic focus on Gulf-wide research initiatives.
3. Identify and generate **opportunities** that utilize GOMURC Member institutions' assets and expertise to support and facilitate the research and education programs of scientists, educators, and students.
4. Improve **response to disasters** that impact the Gulf of Mexico large marine ecosystem including ocean and coastal habitats and communities.
5. Improve ocean literacy and understanding of GOM issues through **public outreach** and informal education activities.
6. Evaluate and account for **GOMURC progress**.

Priority objectives and milestones for 2012-2013 address these goals (Table 3).

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**Table 3.** Priority objectives for 2012-2013 and example milestones. Goals: 1) networking and communication, 2) science-based strategy, 3) opportunities, 4) response to disasters, 5) public outreach, 5) track progress.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>2012 milestones</b>
1	Establish GOMURC electronic network and contact list for sharing news and opportunities	Write GOMURC communications plan
1	Assess collaborators needs for GOMURC services	Conduct on-line assessment survey
1	Coordinate activities with GOM regional alliances (e.g., GOMA, GRI)	Meetings with GOMA and GOMRI Admin. Units
1	Communicate and advocate for GOMURC members' capabilities with Federal and State constituents, e.g., Congress, federal programs, NGOs.	Participate during COL Restoration Science Forum
2	Promote inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary oceanography and coastal sciences within the Gulf States, nationally and internationally with emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico large marine ecosystem	Co-host marine restoration workshop with Ocean Conservancy
2	Provide and participate in forums involving Gulf States' marine science community, e.g., to identify regional scientific and educational concerns, strategies, and expertise to encourage development of effective programs and policies addressing marine issues.	Develop plans for 2013 Gulf Summit in New Orleans (joint with GOMRI and other federal partners)
3	Promote legislation with potential to improve GOM ecosystem health and build GOMURC members capacities (e.g., RESTORE Act-- S1400, HR3096, BP settlement terms)	GOMURC letter campaign Briefings to discuss possible settlement terms
3	Develop new research and education partnerships that leverage and grow GOMURC members' capabilities and programs	Work with NOAA on development of Gulf Observing system and science-based network of shelf marine managed areas
3	Find new support required to sustain GOMURC activities beyond 2013	Submit proposals to co-fund GOMURC program initiatives
3	Promote international partnerships that serve the GOMURC mission	Plan for international partners session during 2013 Summit
4	Utilize GOMURC network and contacts list to inform members during disasters and response efforts	Section of Comms. Plan
4	Develop disaster response roadmap that defines how GOMURC members engage in response efforts to typical events (e.g., spills, storms, blooms), and share their assets and expertise	Section of Comms. Plan
5	Serve as a reliable, unbiased source of knowledge and understanding regarding GOM issues and events, especially for decision and policy-makers.	Section of Comms. Plan Continuous support for inquiries
5	Promote ocean literacy through partnerships with GOM K-12 education programs	Develop white paper for concept of Gulf-wide virtual classrooms/curricula
5	Provide insight to media partners regarding GOM issues and events	Continuous support for inquiries
6	Sustain Members Board activities through routine and ad hoc meetings	Bi-monthly meetings
6	Evaluate and report GOMURC performance	Annual report
6	Promote efficient use of GOMURC funds and growth of resources	Develop 2011-2013 Budget Plan and milestones