

**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**Between**  
**Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative**  
**and**  
**Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System—Regional Association**

**PURPOSE:**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) constitutes agreement by the undersigned representatives of the Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative (GOMURC) and the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System—Regional Association (GCOOS-RA), hereafter referred to as “the Parties,” confirming their commitment to collaborate on matters of critical importance to the Gulf of Mexico environment.

**RATIONALE:**

The shorelines, ecosystems and marine life of the Gulf of Mexico are critically important to the economy and quality of life of the people who live along its coasts. For those States within the United States that share a coastline along the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf States), these coastal regions and territorial seas host nationally important ecosystem services that support economically valuable resources, for example, mineral and energy industries, tourism, fishing and seafood industries, and many natural areas of critical importance to wildlife and natural resources. Collectively these resources generate over \$2.1 trillion to the nation’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and millions of jobs. Importantly, they are home to some of the most sensitive coastal and marine ecosystems in the world that are subject to stress from a variety of natural and human-induced disturbances. It is critically important that marine and other environmental data (including model output) in the estuarine and U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone of the Gulf of Mexico be collected, integrated and shared openly with all stakeholders including the public, the private sector, scientists, and federal and state partners. We wish to ensure that the Parties work in full cooperation toward these ends.

## **COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES:**

Pursuant to the MOU purpose, the Parties hereby agree to engage in collaborative activities, including but not limited to:

- **Develop and support Gulf of Mexico regional initiatives**

GOMURC welcomes collaboration in refining and advocating its regional initiatives. Example activities may include: share GOMURC priorities with GCOOS-RA participants and stakeholders; participation of GCOOS-RA in GOMURC proposals, meetings and projects; GOMURC nominations to serve on GCOOS-RA Board, Councils, Committees, or Task Teams; and advocacy for regional initiatives of priority to the Parties, for example, support for the GCOOS Build-out Plan for the Gulf of Mexico.

Whereas the Parties engage in collaborations with international partners to support regional activities, in the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) they will exchange information, sharing data products and educational and outreach materials related to LME science and education.

- **Facilitate educational opportunities that mutually benefit GOMURC partners and GCOOS-RA stakeholders**

The Parties are committed to education and outreach. The GCOOS-RA provides a dedicated amount of its budget to staff and resources in this area. GCOOS-RA activities offer opportunities for education and training for GOMURC's research and university education community, as well as state and federal agency partners. Example activities may include collaboration on creating professional development programs for educators and engagement of citizens in a monitoring system for the estuarine and near shore waters of the Gulf. GOMURC partners may offer courses of instruction and degrees or certificates, which address the needs of the GCOOS-RA for training in observing systems, data integration and related needs.

- **Identify and share observations and data products needed from the U.S. coastal estuaries, rivers and EEZ**

The GCOOS-RA attempts to identify and provide access to observations and data-based products needed by stakeholders in the Gulf States, including government agencies, the private

sector, educators, researchers, non-governmental organizations and the general public. The purpose is to meet those needs as resources become available. The GOMURC science and Information Technology (IT) community seeks to share data and related derivative products they generate, utilize the GCOOS-RA data management services to access data, and help innovate new data management services. Therefore, GOMURC may be viewed both as a stakeholder by and a data provider to the GCOOS-RA.

- **Collaborate on efforts to establish operational observing systems in the Gulf of Mexico**

Many groups around the Gulf of Mexico aspire to develop portions of a full Gulf coastal ocean observing system. The Parties will work together to plan and advocate for a Gulf-wide system that, for example, avoids duplication in observing system assets and integrates data management for observations. Collaborative efforts will maximize the regional and temporal extent of observations, and the quality and scope of related products.

#### **PARTIES' MISSIONS:**

GOMURC (source—GOMURC MOU, <http://gomurc.usf.edu/docs/mou.pdf>):

The GOMURC is a team of university-based consortia representing the marine-oriented research organizations within the Gulf States, established by agreement of its Principal Members 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. Principal Members include:

- Alabama Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium.
- Florida Institute of Oceanography.
- Louisiana Universities Gulf Research Collaborative
- Mississippi Research Consortium.
- Texas Research Consortium.

Mission objectives include:

- Serve as a university-based, multi-state research organization to respond to disasters

and chronic long-term ecosystem degradation that endanger the Gulf of Mexico's marine life, seabed, water column, surface, shoreline, and coastal communities that depend upon related ecosystem services. 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, which 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.

- 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.
- Support, lead, and participate in conferences and other opportunities to provide educational opportunities related to the Gulf Research Collaborative mission, for the marine science community and the general public.
- Seek opportunities to collectively advocate to, and partner and collaborate with, local, state and federal organizations and authorities in opportunities that advance the GOMURC mission.
- Support and facilitate the programs of scientists, educators, and students at institutions represented by the Principal Members, for example:
  - 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.
  - Enhance the quality and scope of cooperative Gulf State educational and research programs.
  - 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.

GCOOS-RA (source—GCOOS-RA MOA, [http://gcoos.org/?page\\_id=2201](http://gcoos.org/?page_id=2201)):

The GCOOS-RA Corporation is one of eleven regional associations that are building regional coastal ocean observing systems along the coasts of the United States and its territories, as part of the United States Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®); as such system is defined and authorized by The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009 (the “Act”). The system being built by the GCOOS-RA will provide data, information and products on a non-discriminatory basis to the Gulf of Mexico “stakeholder” community that includes, but is not limited to, the private sector, governmental agencies at all levels, academia and researchers, non-governmental organizations, and the general public. There are more than 100 members of the GCOOS-RA.

The GCOOS-RA is committed to (1) freely providing integrated, remotely-sensed and *in situ* information about the United States waters and related ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico for use by managers, mariners, military, industry, researchers, educators and others seeking to understand this coastal environment, manage ocean and littoral resources, and/or develop commercial uses of marine resources, data and information; (2) developing new sensor technologies; (3) stimulating innovation and supporting commerce; and (4) planning and implementing the Gulf of Mexico component of the IOOS®.

The GCOOS-RA shall pursue its purpose, all on a non-profit basis, as follows:

- a. Lead the planning, development, implementation, operation, management, and evaluation of a sustained, integrated regional coastal ocean observing system for the waters of the United States Gulf of Mexico that extend from the heads of estuaries and tidally influenced waters to the limits of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. This observing system is known as GCOOS.
- b. Determine the needs and priorities for data, information, and products by stakeholders that use, depend on, study and/or manage coastal and oceanic environments and the resources of the Gulf of Mexico and evolve the GCOOS to adapt new needs of user groups and to include the timely incorporation of new technologies and understanding based on these needs.

c. Promote the development, assessment, and dissemination of data and data products that meet the needs of end users to the extent that is feasible with available resources and freely distribute existing products, encourage the preparation and distribution of additional products, and prepare and distribute products. These activities may be accomplished, in part, through associations with other entities.

d. Seek new resources that will allow additional routine observations and/or products to help meet the needs of the stakeholder community.

e. Inform and/or advocate through education and outreach for the regional, national, and global ocean observing system and the application of scientific assessments using environmental data to meet societal needs; these activities may be accomplished, in part, through associations with other entities.

**SUNSET AND MODIFICATION:**

The Parties agree that, on or before December 31, 2014, the GCOOS-RA Executive Director and the Chairman of the GOMURC Board will submit to each Party an analysis of MOU activities and positive impacts. Within sixty days after delivery of the Two-Year Summary, the Parties shall meet and determine whether the MOU purpose is being met, whether modifications to this MOU are appropriate, and whether the MOU should continue.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused this MOU to be executed:



3/14/13

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, GOMURC, Board Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



7 March 2013

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, GCOOS-RA Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date