

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1373

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a Regional Coordination Partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 15, 2017

Mr. WICKER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. CASSIDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a Regional Coordination Partnership of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Gulf States Protection
5 and Restoration Coordination Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS; PURPOSES.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The Gulf of Mexico is a valuable resource
9 of national and international importance, continu-

1 ously serving the people of the United States and
2 other countries as an important source of food, eco-
3 nomic productivity, recreation, beauty, and enjoy-
4 ment.

5 (2) Over many years, the resource productivity
6 and water quality of the Gulf of Mexico and its wa-
7 tershed have been diminished by point and nonpoint
8 source pollution, increasing population demands,
9 economic development, and natural and man-made
10 hazard events.

11 (3) The protection of the Gulf of Mexico re-
12 gional ecosystem has been traditionally underserved
13 and overlooked compared to other great water bodies
14 of the United States, even though the region ac-
15 counts for 17 percent of United States gross domes-
16 tic product and would rank as the 7th largest econ-
17 omy in the world.

18 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
19 gress that the United States should seek to attain coordi-
20 nation of the protection and restoration efforts of the Gulf
21 of Mexico in order to reduce duplication of efforts and
22 maximize efficiencies through a collaborative regional ef-
23 fort by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, in consultation with
24 Federal agencies and State and local authorities.

1 (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act and the
2 amendments made by this Act are as follows:

3 (1) To expand and strengthen cooperative vol-
4 untary efforts to protect and restore the Gulf of
5 Mexico.

6 (2) To expand Federal support for monitoring,
7 management, and restoration activities in the Gulf
8 of Mexico and its watershed.

9 (3) To commit the United States to a com-
10 prehensive cooperative program to achieve improved
11 water quality in, and improvements in the produc-
12 tivity of living resources of, the Gulf of Mexico.

13 (4) To establish a Gulf of Mexico Alliance to
14 coordinate Federal and State authorities with other
15 voluntary efforts for the collaborative management
16 of the large marine ecosystem, thereby reducing du-
17 plication of efforts and maximizing opportunities to
18 leverage restoration support in the Gulf of Mexico
19 region.

20 **SEC. 3. GULF STATES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION CO-**
21 **ORDINATION.**

22 The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16
23 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
24 the following:

1 **“SEC. 320. GULF STATES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION**
 2 **COORDINATION.**

3 “(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 “(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Adminis-
 5 trator’ means the Administrator of the National
 6 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

7 “(2) ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM.—The
 8 term ‘Alliance Management Team’ means the gov-
 9 erning body of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance consisting
 10 of the designated voting members representing the
 11 Governors of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mis-
 12 sissippi, and Florida.

13 “(3) GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE.—The term
 14 ‘Gulf of Mexico Alliance’ means the formal collabo-
 15 rative organization of Federal, State, local, and pri-
 16 vate participants established by the 5 Gulf States in
 17 2004 as a nonregulatory, inclusive network of part-
 18 ners to provide a broad geographic focus on the pri-
 19 mary environmental issues affecting the Gulf of
 20 Mexico.

21 “(4) GULF OF MEXICO ECOSYSTEM.—The term
 22 ‘Gulf of Mexico ecosystem’ means the ecosystem of
 23 the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed.

24 “(b) AUTHORIZATION OF GULF OF MEXICO ALLI-
 25 ANCE.—

1 “(1) DESIGNATION AS A REGIONAL COORDINA-
2 TION PARTNERSHIP.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is
3 designated as a Regional Coordination Partnership
4 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-
5 tration.

6 “(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Gulf of Mexico Al-
7 liance shall be—

8 “(A) headed by a Director who, by reason
9 of management experience and technical exper-
10 tise relating to the Gulf of Mexico, is highly
11 qualified to direct the development of plans and
12 programs on a variety of Gulf of Mexico issues,
13 as determined by the Alliance Management
14 Team; and

15 “(B) located in a State all, or a portion of
16 the coastline, border the Gulf of Mexico.

17 “(3) FUNCTIONS.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance
18 shall—

19 “(A) promote coordination of the actions
20 of State agencies in the States that border the
21 Gulf of Mexico and other authorities with the
22 actions of the appropriate officials of the Fed-
23 eral agencies and State and local authorities in
24 the Gulf of Mexico region in developing strate-
25 gies—

1 “(i) to improve the water quality, pro-
2 tect nonregulated living resources, increase
3 valuable habitats, and enhance coastal re-
4 silience in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;
5 and

6 “(ii) to obtain the support of appro-
7 priate officials;

8 “(B) in cooperation with appropriate Fed-
9 eral, State, and local authorities, develop and
10 implement specific action plans to carry out the
11 Gulf of Mexico Alliance regional protection and
12 restoration coordination goals;

13 “(C) coordinate and implement priority
14 plans and projects, and facilitate science, re-
15 search, modeling, monitoring, data collection,
16 and other activities that support the Gulf of
17 Mexico Alliance’s goals through the provision of
18 grants under subsection (c);

19 “(D) implement outreach programs for
20 public information, education, and participation
21 to foster stewardship of the resources of the
22 Gulf of Mexico;

23 “(E) develop and make available, through
24 publications, technical assistance, and other ap-
25 propriate means, information pertaining to the

1 environmental quality and living resources of
 2 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

3 “(F) serve as the liaison with, and provide
 4 information to, the Mexican members of the
 5 Gulf of Mexico States Accord and Mexican
 6 counterparts; and

7 “(G) focus the efforts and resources of the
 8 Gulf of Mexico Alliance on activities that will
 9 result in measurable improvements to water
 10 quality and living resources of the Gulf of Mex-
 11 ico ecosystem by coordinating protection and
 12 restoration programs to minimize duplication
 13 and maximize leveraging opportunities.

14 “(c) GRANTS.—

15 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Gulf of Mexico Alli-
 16 ance may provide grants to nonprofit organizations,
 17 State and local governments, colleges, universities,
 18 interstate agencies, and individuals to carry out this
 19 section for use in—

20 “(A) monitoring the water quality and liv-
 21 ing resources of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

22 “(B) researching the effects of natural and
 23 human-induced environmental changes on the
 24 water quality and living resources of the Gulf of
 25 Mexico ecosystem;

1 “(C) developing and executing cooperative
 2 strategies that address the water quality, coast-
 3 al resilience, and living resource needs in the
 4 Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

5 “(D) developing and implementing locally
 6 based protection and restoration programs or
 7 projects within a watershed that complement
 8 such strategies, including the creation, restora-
 9 tion, protection, or enhancement of habitat as-
 10 sociated with the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

11 “(E) eliminating or reducing nonpoint
 12 sources that discharge pollutants that contami-
 13 nate the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, including
 14 activities to eliminate leaking septic systems
 15 and construct connections to local sewage sys-
 16 tems.

17 “(2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Administrative
 18 costs in the form of salaries, overhead, or indirect
 19 costs for services provided and charged against pro-
 20 grams or projects carried out using funds made
 21 available through a grant under this subsection shall
 22 not exceed 25 percent of the amount of the grant.

23 “(d) REPORTS.—

24 “(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than Decem-
 25 ber 30, 2017, and annually thereafter, the Director

1 of the Alliance shall submit to the Administrator
2 and make available to the public a report that de-
3 scribes—

4 “(A) each project and activity funded
5 under this section during the previous fiscal
6 year;

7 “(B) the goals and objectives of those
8 projects and activities; and

9 “(C) the net benefits of projects and activi-
10 ties funded under this section during previous
11 fiscal years.

12 “(2) ASSESSMENT.—

13 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than April
14 30, 2020, and every 3 years thereafter, the Ad-
15 ministrator, in coordination with the Alliance
16 Management Team, shall complete an assess-
17 ment on the effectiveness of the Gulf of Mexico
18 Alliance’s ability to coordinate regional prior-
19 ities and submit to Congress a comprehensive
20 report on such assessment.

21 “(B) REQUIREMENTS.—The assessment
22 and report described in subparagraph (A)
23 shall—

1 “(i) assess the overall status of coordi-
2 nated restoration and protection efforts in
3 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

4 “(ii) assess the effectiveness of the
5 Gulf of Mexico Alliance management strat-
6 egies being implemented, and the extent to
7 which the priority needs of the region are
8 being met through that implementation;
9 and

10 “(iii) make recommendations for the
11 improved coordination among the regu-
12 latory and nonregulatory programs oper-
13 ating in the region, including strength-
14 ening strategies being implemented or
15 adopting improved strategies.

16 “(e) BUDGET ITEM.—The Administrator, in the an-
17 nual submission to Congress of the budget of the National
18 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall include a
19 funding line item request for the Gulf of Mexico Alliance
20 as a separate budget line item.

21 “(f) LIMITATION ON REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—
22 Nothing in this section establishes any new legal or regu-
23 latory authority of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
24 Administration or of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, other

1 than the authority to provide grants in accordance with
2 this section.

3 “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
4 are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section,
5 to remain available until expended—

6 “(1) \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2018;

7 “(2) \$5,100,000 for fiscal year 2019;

8 “(3) \$5,202,000 for fiscal year 2020;

9 “(4) \$5,306,040 for fiscal year 2021;

10 “(5) \$5,412,160 for fiscal year 2022; and

11 “(6) \$5,520,404 for fiscal year 2023.”.

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