

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2923

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a regional coordination partnership of Federal and State actions related to the management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 15, 2017

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana (for himself, Mr. PALAZZO, and Mr. RICHMOND) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Science, Space, and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a regional coordination partnership of Federal and State actions related to the management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, 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 Coordina-
5 tion Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS AND PURPOSES.**

2 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
3 gress that the United States should seek to attain coordi-
4 nation of the regional conservation and restoration efforts
5 for the Gulf of Mexico in order to facilitate the continued
6 economic uses of the Gulf of Mexico for the benefit of the
7 people of the United States, to reduce duplication of ef-
8 forts, and to maximize efficiencies, through a collaborative
9 regional effort through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in con-
10 sultation with Federal agencies and State and local au-
11 thorities.

12 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are the fol-
13 lowing:

14 (1) To expand and strengthen cooperative vol-
15 untary efforts to conserve and restore the Gulf of
16 Mexico and maintain its highly productive multiple
17 uses.

18 (2) To recognize and enable the Gulf of Mexico
19 Alliance as a lead coordinator of Federal and State
20 authorities with other voluntary efforts for the col-
21 laborative management of the Gulf of Mexico and to
22 coordinate such management with Mexico.

23 (3) To enable the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to re-
24 ceive Federal funding through an appropriation to
25 conduct the necessary scientific research and con-

1 servation and restoration management to achieve
2 these purposes.

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

5 (a) DESIGNATION AS A REGIONAL COORDINATION
6 PARTNERSHIP.—

7 (1) DESIGNATION.—The Gulf of Mexico Alli-
8 ance is designated as a regional coordination part-
9 nership of Federal and State actions related to the
10 management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

11 (2) LOCATION.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance
12 shall be located in a State all, or a portion of the
13 coastline, of which is on the Gulf of Mexico.

14 (3) FUNCTIONS.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance
15 may—

16 (A) promote coordination of the actions of
17 State agencies in the States that border the
18 Gulf of Mexico and other authorities with the
19 actions of the appropriate officials of the Fed-
20 eral agencies, local authorities, and representa-
21 tives of key regional industries in the Gulf of
22 Mexico region in developing strategies—

23 (i) to improve the water quality, pro-
24 tect living resources, increase valuable

1 habitats, and enhance coastal resilience in
2 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

3 (ii) to obtain the support of appro-
4 priate officials;

5 (B) in cooperation and consultation with
6 appropriate Federal, State, and local authori-
7 ties, and industry representatives, develop and
8 implement specific action plans to carry out the
9 Gulf of Mexico Alliance regional coordination
10 goals;

11 (C) coordinate and implement plans and
12 projects, and facilitate science, research, mod-
13 eling, monitoring, data collection, and other ac-
14 tivities, that support the Gulf of Mexico Alli-
15 ance's goals through the provision of grants
16 under subsection (c);

17 (D) implement outreach programs for pub-
18 lic information, education, and participation to
19 foster stewardship of the resources of the Gulf
20 of Mexico;

21 (E) develop and make available, through
22 publications, technical assistance, and other ap-
23 propriate means, information pertaining to the
24 environmental quality and living resources of
25 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

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

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

12 (b) GRANTS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance
14 may provide grants to nonprofit organizations, State
15 and local governments, colleges, universities, inter-
16 state agencies, and individuals to carry out this sec-
17 tion for use in—

18 (A) monitoring the water quality and living
19 resources of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

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

24 (C) developing and executing cooperative
25 strategies that address the water quality, coast-

al resilience, and living resource needs in the
Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

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

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

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

(c) LIMITATION ON REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—

Nothing in this section establishes any new legal or regu-
latory authority of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, itself,
other than the authority to provide grants in accordance
with this section.

1 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 (1) GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE.—The term
3 “Gulf of Mexico Alliance” means the formal collabo-
4 rative organization of Federal, State, local, and pri-
5 vate participants established by the 5 Gulf States in
6 2004 as a non-regulatory, inclusive network of part-
7 ners to provide a broad geographic focus on the pri-
8 mary environmental issues affecting the Gulf of
9 Mexico.

10 (2) GULF OF MEXICO ECOSYSTEM.—The term
11 “Gulf of Mexico ecosystem” means the ecosystem of
12 the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed.

13 **SEC. 4. GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

14 (a) GIFTS AND TRANSFERS TO GULF COAST ECO-
15 SYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL.—Section 311(t)(2)(E)
16 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.
17 1321(t)(2)(E)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
18 lowing:

19 “(iii) GIFTS AND TRANSFERS; SEPA-
20 RATE FUND.—

21 “(I) IN GENERAL.—Subject to
22 subclause (II), the Council may ac-
23 cept, hold, administer, and utilize for
24 the purpose of aiding or facilitating

1 the work and operations of the Coun-
2 cil—

3 “(aa) gifts, donations, and
4 bequests from any individual or
5 entity; and

6 “(bb) transfers from Federal
7 and State agencies of funds,
8 goods, services, and personal and
9 real property.

10 “(II) TREATMENT.—Any funds
11 accepted by the Council or transferred
12 to the Council under this clause
13 shall—

14 “(aa) remain available until
15 expended;

16 “(bb) be deposited in the
17 Treasury in a separate fund; and

18 “(cc) be disbursed upon
19 order by the Council.”.

20 (b) BORROWING AUTHORITY.—Section 1602 of the
21 Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Oppor-
22 tunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States
23 Act of 2012 (33 U.S.C. 1321 note) is amended by adding
24 at the end the following:

25 “(g) BORROWING AUTHORITY.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—To aid and facilitate the
2 purposes of this subtitle and the amendments made
3 by this subtitle, and subject to the terms and condi-
4 tions of this subsection, the Secretary of the Treas-
5 ury (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Secretary’)
6 and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council
7 (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Council’) may
8 each—

9 “(A) borrow money from any source; and

10 “(B) issue and sell notes, bonds, obliga-
11 tions, and other instruments of indebtedness.

12 “(2) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—Each instru-
13 ment of indebtedness issued under this subsection
14 shall have a term, bear an interest rate, and contain
15 other terms and conditions as may determined by
16 the party issuing the instrument.

17 “(3) LIMITATIONS ON AMOUNTS.—The aggre-
18 gate of the principal of funds borrowed under this
19 subsection and interest payable thereon may not ex-
20 ceed—

21 “(A) as to the Secretary, 35 percent of the
22 aggregate amounts paid or payable into the
23 Trust Fund from any source over the duration
24 of the Trust Fund; and

1 “(B) as to the Council, 60 percent of the
2 aggregate amounts paid or payable into the
3 Trust Fund from any source over the duration
4 of the Trust Fund.

5 “(4) DISBURSEMENTS.—Subject to paragraph
6 (6), the Secretary and the Council may disburse
7 funds borrowed under this subsection upon order—

8 “(A) by the Secretary, for any purpose au-
9 thorized under section 311(t)(1) of the Federal
10 Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.
11 1321(t)(1)), as if such borrowed funds were
12 available in the Trust Fund for such purpose;
13 and

14 “(B) by the Council, for any purpose au-
15 thorized under section 311(t)(2) or 311(t)(3) of
16 that Act (33 U.S.C. 1321(t)(2), 1321(t)(3)), as
17 if such borrowed funds were available in the
18 Trust Fund for such purpose.

19 “(5) REPAYMENTS.—The Secretary and the
20 Council may repay funds borrowed under this sub-
21 section and disbursed for the applicable purposes set
22 forth in paragraph (4) from funds available in the
23 Trust Fund and allocated for such purposes by this
24 subtitle.

1 “(6) FINANCING COSTS.—The Secretary and
2 the Council may pay interest and any other financ-
3 ing costs payable in connection with funds borrowed
4 under this subsection from—

5 “(A) the principal of such borrowed funds;
6 and

7 “(B) funds otherwise available in the Trust
8 Fund for repayment of the principal of such
9 borrowed funds.”.

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