

# **MISSISSIPPI PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

Greetings from the Magnolia State. We are looking forward to fall in Georgia at the annual SWPBA Meeting. In the meantime, here is our news:

## **Natural Resource Damage Assessment** **Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill**

We are now in our fourth year of conducting the Natural Resource Damage Assessment in response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. State agencies from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas are involved as well as the Department of Commerce (NOAA), the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the EPA. Thus far, we have prepared three Early Restoration Plans and completed the public comment and review process. Each of these plans details early restoration projects to begin to address damages to the environment and lost recreational use within the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the projects include repairs and construction of boat ramps to provide better access to the recreational uses of the Gulf, and others include construction of oyster beds, artificial reefs, living shorelines, and creation of marsh. Representatives from the agencies mentioned above continue to meet regularly to discuss the state of the assessment, and additional restoration projects. Additional field collection of data is still ongoing.

## **Fish Tissue Monitoring Program**

The Fish Tissue Monitoring Program has been reinstated after being put on hold as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Fish Tissue monitoring in Mississippi is being conducted in a limited capacity. Fish tissue is being collected from current Fish Consumption Advisory areas in 2014. Mississippi currently has Consumption Advisories for Mercury, PCB's, DDT, and Toxaphene. Results will help determine where more sampling efforts will be targeted in future years when monitoring resumes at normal sampling efforts.

## **Mercury Study for Marine and Estuarine Fishes**

Seafood is important to the economy of the Mississippi coast, as well as, the health and quality of life of many coastal residents so we are continuing our study of mercury and selenium levels in marine and estuarine fish tissue. We have collected samples from approximately 80 different species of fish across the Mississippi Coast. At present, we are still attending rodeos and collecting samples from primarily King Mackerel (at present, this is the only marine fish we have under advisory). We have also assisted other State agencies with their projects (eg. genetic studies on Alligator Gar, aging of Red Snapper) while working the rodeos. And as always, we work with the fishermen and they continue to bring us fish and help us to monitor any issues within Mississippi state waters.

## **Ambient Coastal Monitoring**

MDEQ has continued an effort to monitor the water quality of along the state's 3 coastal county areas. Currently 25 probabilistic sites will be used to assess the water quality of the Gulf Coast.

This program is crucial to evaluating the quality of coastal waters as communities rebuild and grow following the Deep Water Horizon Incident. It is additionally imperative as the implementation of the Governor's Gulf Region Water and Wastewater Plan comes into effect.

## **Ambient Fecal Monitoring**

Ambient fecal monitoring is continuing and includes approximately 47 sites. Our personnel are currently collecting samples from primary recreational areas throughout the state.

## **Ambient Fixed Station Monitoring**

Ambient fixed station monitoring continues and includes approximately 30 sites. Our personnel are collecting samples from bridges throughout the state.

## **Ambient Beach Monitoring**



Sampling for MDEQ's ambient beach monitoring program continues and includes approximately 22 sites along the 3 coastal counties. Current data and status of all beaches monitored in Mississippi can be seen at the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's website:

<http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/msbeach/index.cgi>

## **Wadeable Streams/§303d Monitoring**

MDEQ has currently completed its thirteenth year of wadeable streams sampling. Results from this M-BISQ effort will be used to assess the status of §303(d) listed water bodies and to steer future biological monitoring and assessment activities that are focused on wadeable streams and rivers.



## **Ambient Lake Monitoring**

Ambient lake monitoring continues and includes the sampling of 20 lakes. Our personnel are currently collecting samples from lakes throughout the state.

## **Gulf of Mexico Alliance**

MDEQ along with its sister Gulf of Mexico states has taken an active role in supporting the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and it's Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts. This plan is aimed at protecting and restoring water quality and habitat in the Gulf of Mexico and its estuaries, and improving public awareness of the Gulf through environmental education. The Alliance is devoted to accomplishing these goals through regional collaboration within the 5 US Gulf of Mexico States and it neighboring 6 Mexican states. Current information is available at the Gulf of Mexico Alliance website <http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org/welcome.html>

## **Personnel**

This past year we welcomed Cody Richey to our Surface Water Monitoring Section. He graduated from Mississippi State University with a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Agriculture Conservation. We welcome Cody onboard as he is currently learning to drink straight from the fire hose.