Gulf Sea Grant Programs bring $3 million in additional national resources to address regional needs while strengthening regional partnerships

**RELEVANCE:**

The Gulf of Mexico has experienced an extraordinarily large number of technological (oil spills) and natural disasters (hurricanes) within the last 10 years. These stressors have confirmed the importance of federal agencies, state agencies, universities, non-government organizations and others to collaborate to address a wide range of regional concerns facing coastal communities and the environment.

**RESPONSE:**

The four Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant college programs have been responsive to current and emerging regional needs and have developed a unified approach to address regional issues. This has been achieved through partnering with multiple NOAA groups, the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team and other federal agencies, as well as serving in leadership positions in several regional collaboration efforts including the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, which is the coastal regional governance structure. The Gulf Sea Grant Programs and the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Coastal Storms Program are partnering to improve coastal community resilience Gulfwide. In addition, the Gulf Sea Grant programs led the development of the Gulf of Mexico Research Plan (GMRP) and are addressing regional research priorities identified in it. The Sea Grant programs worked with numerous partners to bring additional resources to the region to directly address the GMRP priorities. Sea Grant extension and education specialists have developed outreach products and services customized for the Gulf of Mexico.

**RESULTS:**

- During the past six years, the Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant programs have expanded from a single regional research competition solely funded by the Sea Grant programs to managing five regional competitions that address a wide range of topics, such as restoration, coastal resilience, sea-level rise, ecosystem service valuation, marine mammal interactions and more. This represents approximately $3.3 million in regional research and outreach funds for the region.

- Because of the importance of the original Gulf of Mexico Research Plan in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the NOAA Gulf regional team is funding an update to the plan.

- The Gulf Sea Grant oil spill activities and research database has been accessed by 5,700 unique visitors.

- The networks of Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant extension agents have successfully brought regional tools and services, such as the Sea Grant-developed Coastal Community Resilience Index, peer listening training, seafood safety training and hydrological restoration indicators, to more than 72 communities across the region.

A regional Sea Grant project found that businesses were more likely to bounce back after Katrina if they were located in a cluster with other businesses that reopened.