

Gulf Restoration Network: Healthy Waters Campaign

Why should I care about the health of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico?

- **Over 60% of all waterways in the U.S. empty into the Gulf of Mexico.** We need your help to protect the health of this national treasure. While you may not be able to see the Gulf of Mexico from your door, chances are that some of the pollution entering the waterways in your community will make it into our Gulf, including too much fertilizer, sewage, and other contaminants.
- Over 40% of the continental U.S. drains into the Mississippi River (including all or parts of AR, LA, MS, OK, TN and TX in the Neill territory) which ultimately empties into the Gulf. **More than 18 million people depend on the Mississippi River for drinking water.** While communities are able to treat and purify the water for drinking, nothing is done for the fish and wildlife that also depend on the River.
- **Up to 3.5 million Americans get sick every year from sewage pollution.** Many cities combine sewer water and stormwater systems. Heavy rains can flood the systems and flush dirty sewer water into surrounding rivers and streams. This means raw sewage, bacteria and other germs flow directly into our waterways and eventually to the Gulf, along with debris, oil and grease from city streets, road salt and other pollutants.
- **The Mississippi and the Gulf are an amazing economic and environmental resource to the Nation.** Healthy waterways mean healthy families, up and down the river!

What is the Dead Zone?

- **The Dead Zone is a huge area that forms every summer off the coast of Louisiana and Mississippi where there is no oxygen.** It can be as large as New Jersey, up to 8,000 square miles. Imagine if there were no oxygen available over your state! Everyone would have to move so they could breathe. Crabs, shrimp and other sea life are forced to swim away or suffocate.
- **Up to 210 million pounds of fertilizer runoff makes its way into the Gulf every year.** This pollution enters the Gulf, feeding a massive algal bloom that consumes the water's oxygen as it decomposes and creates the Dead Zone.
- Many tributaries of the Mississippi River are contributors to the Dead Zone including **the Ouachita River (AR and LA), the Red River (OK, TX and AR) and the Tennessee River.**

What is the GRN doing to improve the health of our waters for wildlife and our communities?

- GRN works in collaboration with other groups along the Mississippi River – from Minnesota to Louisiana – to push for the reduction of Dead Zone-causing pollution from agricultural runoff, factory farms, sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities.
- To safeguard the Mississippi River, and the people and wildlife that depend upon its waters, GRN advocates for stronger enforcement of clean water laws, projects to modernize sewage treatment systems, and policies to encourage agricultural practices that reduce soil erosion and chemical use.
- Using GRN's "Our Waters, Our Health: A citizen guide to sewage pollution" manual, we are conducting workshops across the region to help citizens keep their waters free from sewage pollution.
- Building a broad base of concerned and active citizens to ensure that state and federal agencies protect our waters.