



UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

338 Baronne St., Suite 200, New Orleans, LA 70112
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2245, New Orleans, LA 70176
Phone: (504) 525-1528 Fax: (504) 525-0833
www.healthygulf.org

For Immediate Release: September 2nd, 2009

Contact: Joe Murphy, Gulf Restoration Network
joe@healthygulf.org (504) 583-0870 / (813) 468-0870 (cell)

Matt Rota, Gulf Restoration Network
matt@healthygulf.org (504) 377-7840

FLORIDA GETS A “D+” FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTIONS *Gulf Restoration Network Report Reveals Poor Water Quality Protection Gulf-Wide*

TAMPA, FL - Today the Gulf Restoration Network released its “**Clean Up Your Act!**” report card, which grades Gulf of Mexico states on how they implement the Clean Water Act and protect their state waters and public health. Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas all received disappointing and unsatisfactory grades for their failure to fully incorporate the Clean Water Act into state policies. The report grades the Gulf States on issues such as establishing water quality standards, policies to prevent Dead Zone-causing pollution, public health protection, and facilitating public participation in the policy-making process.

“Florida’s economy and future depends on our waters, and Florida’s failure to successfully implement the Clean Water Act continues to hurt our environment, public health, and our economy” stated **Joe Murphy, Florida Program Director of the Gulf Restoration Network**. “It’s time for Florida, and for Governor Crist, to step and protect the lifeblood of our state’s future.”

The **Clean Up Your Act!** report card clearly establishes that the responsibility of maintaining healthy waters in the Gulf region has been neglected by state governments. In Florida that means more coastal pollution, degraded water quality, impaired lakes and rivers, and estuaries that struggle to survive. Florida’s coastal economy and state fisheries directly depend on clean, healthy rivers and estuaries.

“Local economies and the quality of life along the Florida’s coastline and in so many inland communities have been plagued by nutrient-fed algal blooms. Just this year we have witnessed the results of the many years of neglect on Tampa, Florida and Naples Bays and the St. Johns and Caloosahatchee Rivers to name just a few” asserted **Cris Costello, Regional Representative of the Sierra Club**. “And who can forget the red tide blooms and the Florida gulf coast’s very own dead zone of 2005?”

Florida received a D+, the average grade among Gulf states. Florida received this grade because it failed to:

- Set adequate, comprehensive standards to protect Florida's waters for people and wildlife
- Use EPA-recommended standards for pathogen pollution

No Gulf state has formally implemented criteria to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that causes the annual Dead Zone off the mouth of the Mississippi River and numerous other smaller dead zones across the Gulf. States fail to use the best water quality tests to protect the public from disease-causing organisms. Public involvement in state-level compliance with the Clean Water Act has been kept at a minimum.

The Report suggests Florida can raise its grade by:

- Applying and maintaining standards to protect healthy waters and restore impaired waters
- Updating the criteria that it uses to test for polluted waters

As Florida DEP moves towards a new classification system in terms of ensuring human and aquatic health in terms of Florida's water bodies, many Floridians are asking why Florida does not first do the hard, critical work to ensure clean, healthy waters for Florida's people, economy, and wildlife.

“Florida DEP has had years to get this right and spends more time deferring to the regulated industries and polluters than boldly moving to make Florida's waters fishable and swimmable for everyone. The Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, and 37 years later Florida is still struggling to get it right.” concluded **Jerry Phillips, Director of Florida PEER.**

The full report can be reviewed at the Gulf Restoration Network's website, healthygulf.org.

###

The Gulf Restoration Network is a diverse network of individuals and local, regional, and national groups committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the resources of the Gulf region for future generations. Founded in 1994, the GRN has members in each of the five Gulf states.