



## UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

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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](http://www.healthygulf.org)

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**Contact:** Casey DeMoss Roberts  
(504) 525-1528 x205  
[casey@healthygulf.org](mailto:casey@healthygulf.org)

### **MISSISSIPPI GETS A D+ FOR WATER QUALITY PROTECTIONS**

*Gulf Restoration Network Report Card Reveals Poor Water Quality Policy Gulfwide*

JACKSON, MS- Today the Gulf Restoration Network released its **Clean Up Your Act! report card** for Gulf State water quality protections. The results are disappointing. Mississippi was joined by the other Gulf states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas in earning unsatisfactory grades for their failure to fully incorporate the Clean Water Act into state water quality protections. The report grades the Gulf States on issues including water quality standards, policies to prevent Dead Zone-causing pollution, public health protection, and facilitating public participation in the policy-making process. Combined, the Gulf States scored a D+.

**The Clean Up Your Act! report card** reveals that waters in the Gulf region are not being protected because of insufficient state policies. No Gulf state has adequately taken steps to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that causes the annual Dead Zone, and 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. Four Gulf States delayed a federally mandated process to re-evaluate state water policies and one of the only opportunities for the public to comment on state water policy.

In the areas assessed by the report card, Mississippi received a D+. The report highlights that Mississippi does not designate any of its water bodies as Outstanding Natural Resource Waters, a classification that provides a water body with the maximum level of protection under the Clean Water Act. According to **Cynthia Ramseur, the President and Co-founder of Natural Capital Development**, “Big Black River is a prime example of a superior water body that deserves the highest level of protection from the state. Yet, Big Black River continues to be degraded by pollution that could be stopped with this policy tool.”

This report card is timely for Mississippi as it approaches its next triennial review of water policy, a process during which MDEQ must review and engage the public in water quality decisions. **Casey DeMoss Roberts of the Gulf Restoration Network** notes that “We are hoping that Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality will adopt the rules necessary to stop water quality backsliding and also provide a better system of protection for our most pristine waterways.” The report also indicates that, although MDEQ works with citizens and citizen

groups who participate in water monitoring programs, it does not actually incorporate citizen data in major water policy decisions.

The full report can be reviewed at the Gulf Restoration Network's website at [www.healthygulf.org](http://www.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 natural resources of the Gulf region for future generations. Founded in 1994, the GRN has members in each of the five Gulf states.

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