

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2923

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a regional coordination partnership of Federal and State actions related to the management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 15, 2017

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana (for himself, Mr. PALAZZO, and Mr. RICHMOND) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Natural Resources, and Science, Space, and Technology, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To designate the Gulf of Mexico Alliance as a regional coordination partnership of Federal and State actions related to the management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Gulf States Coordina-  
5 tion Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS AND PURPOSES.**

2 (a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
3 gress that the United States should seek to attain coordi-  
4 nation of the regional conservation and restoration efforts  
5 for the Gulf of Mexico in order to facilitate the continued  
6 economic uses of the Gulf of Mexico for the benefit of the  
7 people of the United States, to reduce duplication of ef-  
8 forts, and to maximize efficiencies, through a collaborative  
9 regional effort through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance in con-  
10 sultation with Federal agencies and State and local au-  
11 thorities.

12 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are the fol-  
13 lowing:

14 (1) To expand and strengthen cooperative vol-  
15 untary efforts to conserve and restore the Gulf of  
16 Mexico and maintain its highly productive multiple  
17 uses.

18 (2) To recognize and enable the Gulf of Mexico  
19 Alliance as a lead coordinator of Federal and State  
20 authorities with other voluntary efforts for the col-  
21 laborative management of the Gulf of Mexico and to  
22 coordinate such management with Mexico.

23 (3) To enable the Gulf of Mexico Alliance to re-  
24 ceive Federal funding through an appropriation to  
25 conduct the necessary scientific research and con-

1       servation and restoration management to achieve  
2       these purposes.

3   **SEC. 3. GULF STATES PROTECTION AND RESTORATION CO-**  
4       **ORDINATION.**

5       (a) DESIGNATION AS A REGIONAL COORDINATION  
6   PARTNERSHIP.—

7           (1) DESIGNATION.—The Gulf of Mexico Alli-  
8       ance is designated as a regional coordination part-  
9       nership of Federal and State actions related to the  
10      management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

11          (2) LOCATION.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
12      shall be located in a State all, or a portion of the  
13      coastline, of which is on the Gulf of Mexico.

14          (3) FUNCTIONS.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
15      may—

16           (A) promote coordination of the actions of  
17      State agencies in the States that border the  
18      Gulf of Mexico and other authorities with the  
19      actions of the appropriate officials of the Fed-  
20      eral agencies, local authorities, and representa-  
21      tives of key regional industries in the Gulf of  
22      Mexico region in developing strategies—

23           (i) to improve the water quality, pro-  
24      tect living resources, increase valuable

1 habitats, and enhance coastal resilience in  
2 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

3 (ii) to obtain the support of appro-  
4 priate officials;

5 (B) in cooperation and consultation with  
6 appropriate Federal, State, and local authori-  
7 ties, and industry representatives, develop and  
8 implement specific action plans to carry out the  
9 Gulf of Mexico Alliance regional coordination  
10 goals;

11 (C) coordinate and implement plans and  
12 projects, and facilitate science, research, mod-  
13 eling, monitoring, data collection, and other ac-  
14 tivities, that support the Gulf of Mexico Alli-  
15 ance's goals through the provision of grants  
16 under subsection (c);

17 (D) implement outreach programs for pub-  
18 lic information, education, and participation to  
19 foster stewardship of the resources of the Gulf  
20 of Mexico;

21 (E) develop and make available, through  
22 publications, technical assistance, and other ap-  
23 propriate means, information pertaining to the  
24 environmental quality and living resources of  
25 the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

1 (F) serve as the liaison with, and provide  
2 information to, the Mexican members of the  
3 Gulf of Mexico States Accord and Mexican  
4 counterparts; and

5 (G) focus the efforts and resources of the  
6 Gulf of Mexico Alliance on activities that will  
7 result in measurable improvements to water  
8 quality and living resources of the Gulf of Mex-  
9 ico ecosystem by coordinating protection and  
10 restoration programs to minimize duplication  
11 and maximize leveraging opportunities.

12 (b) GRANTS.—

13 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Gulf of Mexico Alliance  
14 may provide grants to nonprofit organizations, State  
15 and local governments, colleges, universities, inter-  
16 state agencies, and individuals to carry out this sec-  
17 tion for use in—

18 (A) monitoring the water quality and living  
19 resources of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

20 (B) researching the effects of natural and  
21 human-induced environmental changes on the  
22 water quality and living resources of the Gulf of  
23 Mexico ecosystem;

24 (C) developing and executing cooperative  
25 strategies that address the water quality, coast-

1 al resilience, and living resource needs in the  
2 Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

3 (D) developing and implementing locally  
4 based protection and restoration programs or  
5 projects within a watershed that complement  
6 such strategies, including the creation, restora-  
7 tion, protection, or enhancement of habitat as-  
8 sociated with the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

9 (E) eliminating or reducing nonpoint  
10 sources that discharge pollutants that contami-  
11 nate the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, including  
12 activities to eliminate leaking septic systems  
13 and construct connections to local sewage sys-  
14 tems.

15 (2) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—Administrative  
16 costs in the form of salaries, overhead, or indirect  
17 costs for services provided and charged against pro-  
18 grams or projects carried out using funds made  
19 available through a grant under this subsection shall  
20 not exceed 25 percent of the amount of the grant.

21 (c) LIMITATION ON REGULATORY AUTHORITY.—

22 Nothing in this section establishes any new legal or regu-  
23 latory authority of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, itself,  
24 other than the authority to provide grants in accordance  
25 with this section.

1 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 (1) GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE.—The term  
 3 “Gulf of Mexico Alliance” means the formal collabo-  
 4 rative organization of Federal, State, local, and pri-  
 5 vate participants established by the 5 Gulf States in  
 6 2004 as a non-regulatory, inclusive network of part-  
 7 ners to provide a broad geographic focus on the pri-  
 8 mary environmental issues affecting the Gulf of  
 9 Mexico.

10 (2) GULF OF MEXICO ECOSYSTEM.—The term  
 11 “Gulf of Mexico ecosystem” means the ecosystem of  
 12 the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed.

13 **SEC. 4. GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

14 (a) GIFTS AND TRANSFERS TO GULF COAST ECO-  
 15 SYSTEM RESTORATION COUNCIL.—Section 311(t)(2)(E)  
 16 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.  
 17 1321(t)(2)(E)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
 18 lowing:

19 “(iii) GIFTS AND TRANSFERS; SEPA-  
 20 RATE FUND.—

21 “(I) IN GENERAL.—Subject to  
 22 subclause (II), the Council may ac-  
 23 cept, hold, administer, and utilize for  
 24 the purpose of aiding or facilitating

1 the work and operations of the Coun-  
2 cil—

3 “(aa) gifts, donations, and  
4 bequests from any individual or  
5 entity; and

6 “(bb) transfers from Federal  
7 and State agencies of funds,  
8 goods, services, and personal and  
9 real property.

10 “(II) TREATMENT.—Any funds  
11 accepted by the Council or transferred  
12 to the Council under this clause  
13 shall—

14 “(aa) remain available until  
15 expended;

16 “(bb) be deposited in the  
17 Treasury in a separate fund; and

18 “(cc) be disbursed upon  
19 order by the Council.”.

20 (b) BORROWING AUTHORITY.—Section 1602 of the  
21 Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Oppor-  
22 tunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States  
23 Act of 2012 (33 U.S.C. 1321 note) is amended by adding  
24 at the end the following:

25 “(g) BORROWING AUTHORITY.—



1           “(1) IN GENERAL.—To aid and facilitate the  
2           purposes of this subtitle and the amendments made  
3           by this subtitle, and subject to the terms and condi-  
4           tions of this subsection, the Secretary of the Treas-  
5           ury (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Secretary’)  
6           and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council  
7           (referred to in this subsection as the ‘Council’) may  
8           each—

9                   “(A) borrow money from any source; and

10                   “(B) issue and sell notes, bonds, obliga-  
11           tions, and other instruments of indebtedness.

12           “(2) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—Each instru-  
13           ment of indebtedness issued under this subsection  
14           shall have a term, bear an interest rate, and contain  
15           other terms and conditions as may determined by  
16           the party issuing the instrument.

17           “(3) LIMITATIONS ON AMOUNTS.—The aggre-  
18           gate of the principal of funds borrowed under this  
19           subsection and interest payable thereon may not ex-  
20           ceed—

21                   “(A) as to the Secretary, 35 percent of the  
22           aggregate amounts paid or payable into the  
23           Trust Fund from any source over the duration  
24           of the Trust Fund; and

1           “(B) as to the Council, 60 percent of the  
2           aggregate amounts paid or payable into the  
3           Trust Fund from any source over the duration  
4           of the Trust Fund.

5           “(4) DISBURSEMENTS.—Subject to paragraph  
6           (6), the Secretary and the Council may disburse  
7           funds borrowed under this subsection upon order—

8           “(A) by the Secretary, for any purpose au-  
9           thorized under section 311(t)(1) of the Federal  
10          Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C.  
11          1321(t)(1)), as if such borrowed funds were  
12          available in the Trust Fund for such purpose;  
13          and

14          “(B) by the Council, for any purpose au-  
15          thorized under section 311(t)(2) or 311(t)(3) of  
16          that Act (33 U.S.C. 1321(t)(2), 1321(t)(3)), as  
17          if such borrowed funds were available in the  
18          Trust Fund for such purpose.

19          “(5) REPAYMENTS.—The Secretary and the  
20          Council may repay funds borrowed under this sub-  
21          section and disbursed for the applicable purposes set  
22          forth in paragraph (4) from funds available in the  
23          Trust Fund and allocated for such purposes by this  
24          subtitle.

1           “(6) FINANCING COSTS.—The Secretary and  
2           the Council may pay interest and any other financ-  
3           ing costs payable in connection with funds borrowed  
4           under this subsection from—

5                   “(A) the principal of such borrowed funds;  
6                   and

7                   “(B) funds otherwise available in the Trust  
8           Fund for repayment of the principal of such  
9           borrowed funds.”.

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