

110th CONGRESS
1st Session
S. 1126
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. COCHRAN (for himself, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. LOTT) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to expand and strengthen cooperative efforts to monitor, restore, and protect the resource productivity, water quality, and marine ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the `Gulf of Mexico Restoration and Protection Act'.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) Findings- Congress finds that--

- (1) the Gulf of Mexico is a valuable resource of national and international importance, continuously serving the people of the United States and other countries as an important source of food, economic productivity, recreation, beauty, and enjoyment;
- (2) over many years, the resource productivity and water quality of the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed have been diminished by point and nonpoint source pollution resulting largely from the impacts of agricultural runoff, increasing population growth and development in the Gulf of Mexico watershed, and other factors;
- (3) the United States should seek to attain the protection and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem as a collaborative regional goal of the Gulf of Mexico Program; and
- (4) the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in consultation with other Federal agencies and State and local authorities, should coordinate the effort to meet those goals.

(b) Purposes- The purposes of this Act are--

- (1) to expand and strengthen cooperative efforts to restore and protect the Gulf of Mexico;
- (2) to expand Federal support for monitoring, management, and restoration activities in the Gulf of Mexico and its watershed;
- (3) to commit the United States to a comprehensive cooperative program to achieve improved water quality in, and improvements in the productivity of living resources of, the Gulf of Mexico; and
- (4) to establish a Gulf of Mexico Program to serve as a national and international model for the collaborative management of large marine ecosystems.

SEC. 3. GULF OF MEXICO RESTORATION AND PROTECTION.

Title I of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) is amended--

- (1) by redesignating the second section 121 (33 U.S.C. 1274) (relating to wet weather watershed pilot projects) as section 122; and
- (2) by inserting after section 122 (as designated by paragraph (1)) the following:

`(b) Continuation of Gulf of Mexico Program-

- `(1) GULF OF MEXICO PROGRAM OFFICE-

`(A) REESTABLISHMENT- The Program Office established before the date of enactment of this section by the Administrator is reestablished as an office of the Environmental Protection Agency.

`(B) REQUIREMENTS- The Program Office shall be--

`(i) headed by a Director who, by reason of management experience and technical expertise relating to the Gulf of Mexico, is highly qualified to direct the development of plans and programs on a variety of Gulf of Mexico issues, as determined by the Administrator; and

`(ii) located in a State all or a portion of the coastline of which is on the Gulf of Mexico.

`(C) FUNCTIONS- The Program Office shall--

`(i) coordinate the actions of the Environmental Protection Agency with the actions of the appropriate officials of other Federal agencies and State and local authorities in developing strategies--

`(I) to improve the water quality and living resources in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

`(II) to obtain the support of appropriate officials;

`(ii) in cooperation with appropriate Federal, State, and local authorities, assist in developing and implementing specific action plans to carry out the Program;

`(iii) coordinate and implement priority State-led and community-led restoration plans and projects and facilitate science, research, modeling, monitoring, data collection, and other activities that support the Program;

`(iv) implement outreach programs for public information, education, and participation to foster stewardship of the resources of the Gulf of Mexico;

`(v) develop and make available, through publications, technical assistance, and other appropriate means, information pertaining to the environmental quality and living resources of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

`(vi) serve as the liaison with, and provide information to, the Mexican members of the Gulf of Mexico States Accord and Mexican counterparts of the Environmental Protection Agency.

`(c) Interagency Agreements- The Administrator may enter into 1 or more interagency agreements with other Federal agencies to carry out this section.

`(d) Grants-

`(1) IN GENERAL- In accordance with the Program, the Administrator may provide grants to nonprofit organizations, State and local governments, colleges, universities, interstate agencies, and individuals to carry out this section for use in--

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

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

`(C) developing and executing cooperative strategies that address the water quality and living resource needs in the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem;

`(D) developing and implementing locally-based protection and restoration programs or projects within a watershed that complement those strategies, including the creation, restoration, protection, or enhancement of habitat associated with the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem; and

`(E) eliminating or reducing point sources that discharge pollutants that contaminate the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, including activities to eliminate leaking septic systems and construct connections to local sewage systems.

`(2) FEDERAL SHARE- The Federal share of the cost of any project or activity carried out using a grant provided under this section shall not exceed 75 percent, as determined by the Administrator.

(3) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS- Administrative costs in the form of salaries, overhead, or indirect costs for services provided and charged against programs or projects carried out using funds made available through a grant under this subsection shall not exceed 15 percent of the amount of the grant.

END