



Comments and Recommendations on the NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program Draft Science Plan

A Presentation to the NOAA Science Advisory Board

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On behalf of the

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program Advisory Working Group

29 July 2014



Outline



- Working Group Members
- Purpose
- Process
- Overarching Recommendations
- General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions
- Final Comments
- Desired Outcome
- Acknowledgements



Working Group Members

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Gulf States Marine Fisheries
Commission

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WILSON, Charles A. ("Chuck")
Chief Science Officer
Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative



Purpose



The purpose of the RSPA WG is to ...

- Provide independent guidance and review of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Science Program along with general programmatic advice and recommendations.*
- The RSPA WG will also provide a mechanism for formal coordination between the multiple organizations conducting RESTORE related science within the Gulf of Mexico.*



Purpose



The initial charge to the RSPAWG and purpose of this briefing is ...

- Review the first draft of the NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program's Science Plan.
- Submit initial review comments and recommendations to the NOAA SAB.



Process



The stated Goals of the Science Plan are:

Support the science necessary for better understanding and management of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem, specifically:

- Healthy, diverse, sustainable, and resilient estuarine, coastal and marine habitats.
- Healthy, diverse, sustainable, and resilient coastal and marine resources, including fisheries.
- Resilient and adaptive coastal communities.

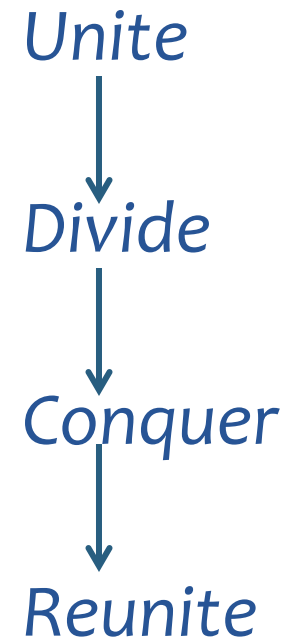


Process



The process implemented and adhered to by the RSPA WG was as follows:

Activity	Who is responsible?	How will they do it?	Due date
Co-Chair assignment: Provide a balanced perspective to the compilation of the information	Bob Dickey		6/20
Establish Focus Area Teams	All working group members	At in-person meeting	6/19
Create a revised draft Science Plan tool for Focus Area Team's proposed changes.	Anna Hermes, Ann Weaver, Marian Hanisko	Email and phone	To full WG by 6/25
Additional comments provided to Focus Area Teams (below)	All working group members		To Focus Area teams by 6/30
Form 4-two person Focus Area Writing Teams , one for each Focus Area and with one person from each break-out group. Focus Area teams will revise the draft Science Plan tool for their assigned Focus Area, incorporating changes from the draft tools and any additional comments received by WG members. Focus Area teams will provide a description of line-by-line changes.	Focus Area 1 – Thomas Miller Nancy Rabalais Focus Area 2 – Jeff Rester Paul Zimba Focus Area 3 – Yoko Furukawa Pamela Yochem Focus Area 4 – Joe Boyer Dick Dodge	Write the focus area in pairs	To Dwayne Porter, Bob Dickey, and the Overview Team (below) by 7/3
Form Overview Team to draft the Overview to the recommendations, including over-arching themes.	Overview Team Chris D'Elia Christine Shepard Maggie Walser		To Dwayne Porter and Bob Dickey by 7/14
Compile revisions and all writing team input and send to entire RSPA WG for additional comments.	Dwayne Porter and Bob Dickey		To full WG by 7/14
RSPA WG sends additional comments to co-chairs for assimilation	All working group members		To Porter and Dickey by 7/17
RSPA WG teleconference to discuss how the Science Plan priorities should be organized.	All working group members	Group call	7/18
Marked up Science Plan tool provided to SAB Office	Dwayne Porter and Bob Dickey		7/22 or earlier
Overview, recommendations, and line-by-line changes for the SAB to the SAB Office	Dwayne Porter and Bob Dickey	Cut and paste comments	7/22 or earlier
Presentation slides for the SAB presentation	Dwayne Porter and Bob Dickey		7/22 or earlier





Overarching Recommendations



Overarching comments and recommendations on the draft Science Plan include :

- Goals of the Plan need to be stated upfront.
- Plan was too focused on management.
- Plan was too focused and/or specific (e.g. focus on MPAs and TEDs).
- Plan did not adequately address the role of science in informing management decisions.



Overarching Recommendations



Overarching comments and recommendations...:

- Focus of the Plan should be on the identification and articulation of the science needs in support of informing management for improved decision making.



Overarching Recommendations



Overarching comments and recommendations... :

- Plan should address the higher-level science needs for the entire GoM region including waters of the GoM, watersheds impacting the GoM, and interconnected processes within the GOM and adjacent waterbodies and uplands (e.g. the Florida Loop Current).





Overarching Recommendations



Overarching comments and recommendations...:

- In addition to funding levels, a crosswalk between RESTORE Act elements 1603, 1604 and 1605 is critical, because there are many programs involved in Gulf of Mexico research, monitoring and recovery.
- A crosswalk would help identify gaps and reduce redundancies which could help with research prioritization.



Overarching Recommendations



Overarching comments and recommendations...:

- The prioritization of Long-term Science Priorities is the responsibility of NOAA.
- Prioritization must take in to consideration the current status of the science, the need for the science to support management decisions, and the availability of funds.



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Recommendations for realignments of Focus Areas and associated Science Priorities include:

- Working Group does not recommend any major overhauls to draft Science Priorities
- Working Group does recommend specific tweaking of several draft Priorities (i.e.

Priority: Forecasting, analysis and modeling...
to be merged with

Priority: Construct accurate, actionable and accessible ecosystem models ...
to form

Priority: Model weather and climate change effects on health, sustainability and resiliency of Gulf ecosystems.)



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions

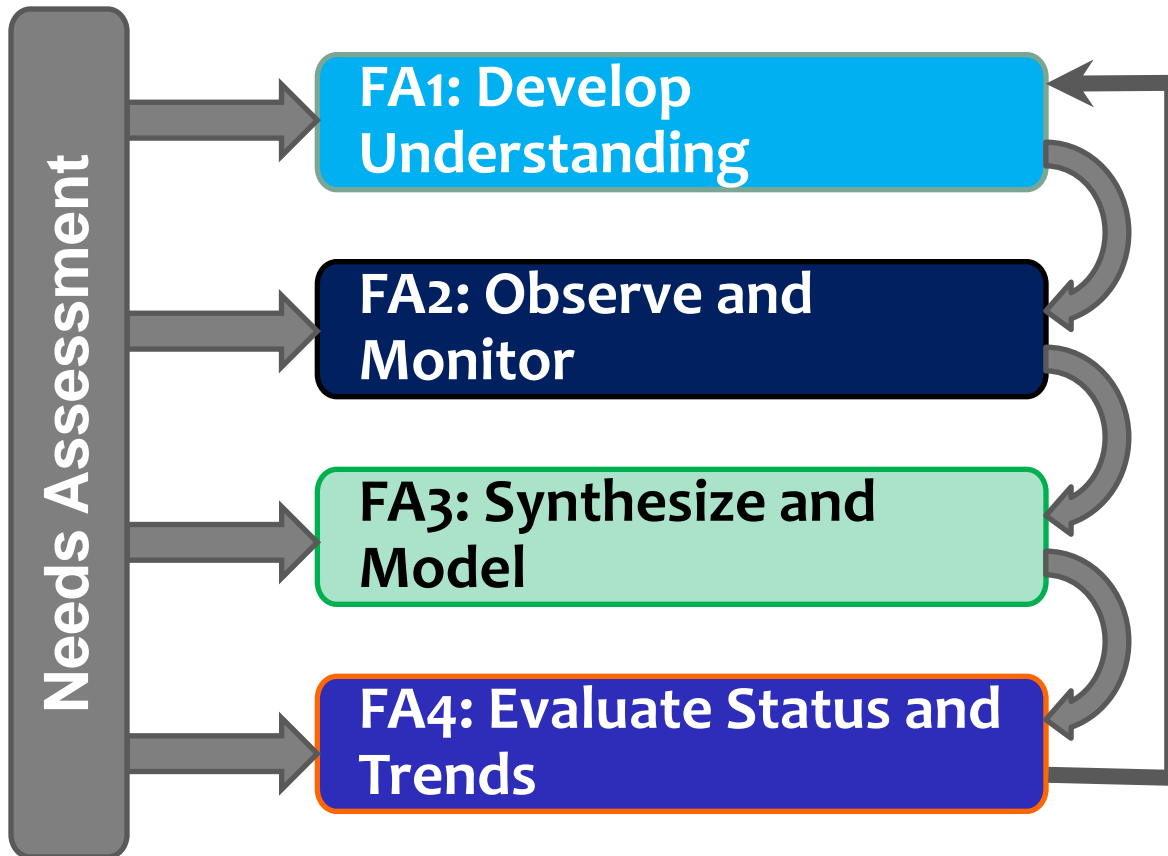


Recommendations for realignments of Focus Areas and associated Science Priorities include:

- Recognize that all Focus Areas are equal in importance but initial focus is dependent upon the “where” and “what” of science.



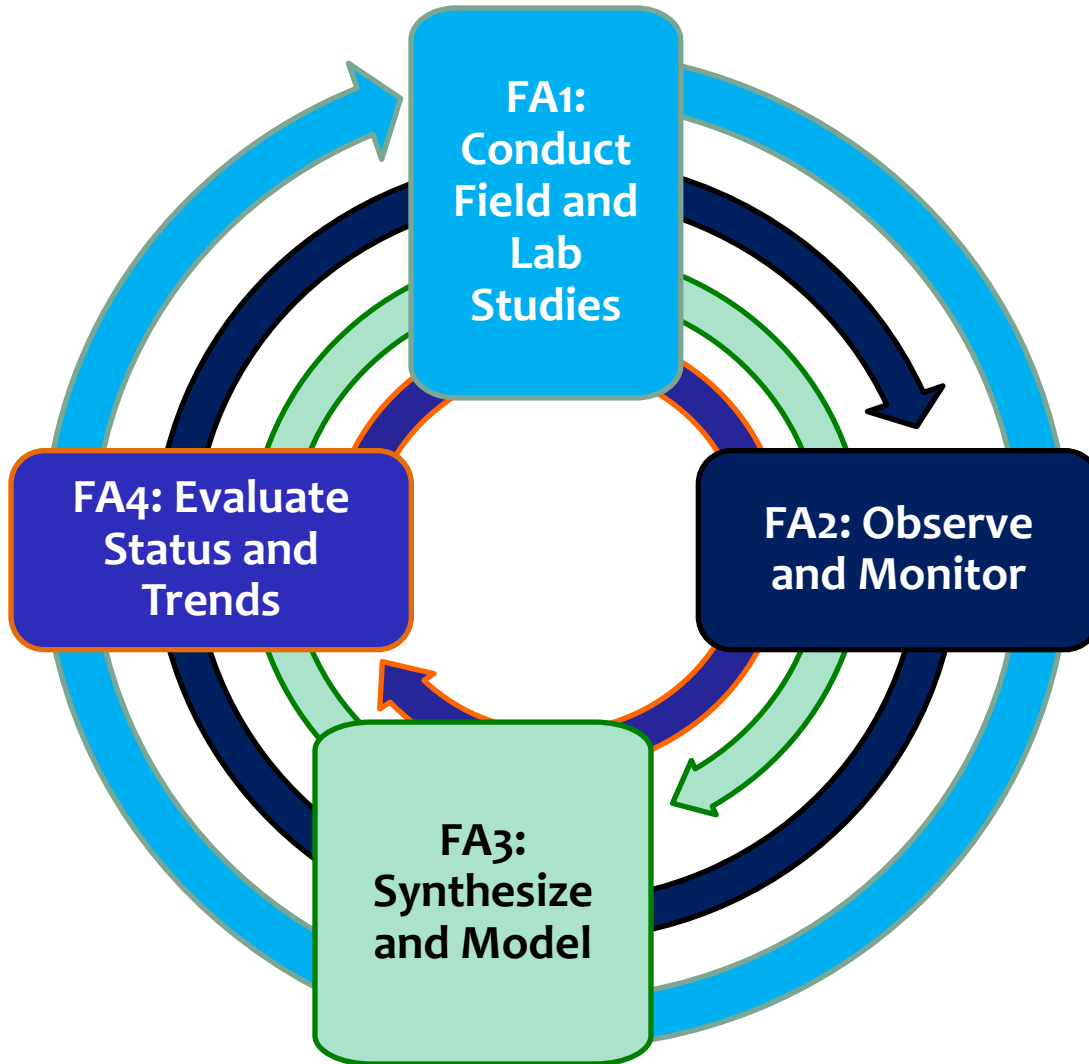
General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Logical and linear progression of Focus Areas and associated Long-term Science Priorities (Graphic courtesy of A. Hermes).



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Circular representation of hypothesis-driven science where entry is dependent upon “what” and “where” (Graphic courtesy of A. Hermes).



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Recommendations for realignments of Focus Areas and associated Science Priorities include:

- Focus Area 1: Ecosystem structure, function and connectivity through integrated field and laboratory studies.
 - Priority 1.1 - Increase comprehensive understanding of living marine resource life histories, food web dynamics, and habitat utilization.
 - Priority 1.2 - Increase comprehensive understanding of watershed, sediment, and nutrient impacts on coastal ecology and habitats.



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Recommendations for ...:

- Focus Area 2: Comprehensive monitoring and observation of marine resources.
 - Priority 2.1 - Develop and implement advanced physical, chemical and biological technologies to improve monitoring and observations.
 - Priority 2.2 - Network and integrate newly created and existing Gulf monitoring projects, programs and systems.



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Recommendations for ...:

- Focus Area 3: Interdependency of human socioeconomic and coastal ocean ecosystems.
 - Priority 3.1 - Create accessible data framework for social and environmental data query, analysis and synthesis.
 - Priority 3.2 - Model weather and climate change effects on health, sustainability and resiliency of Gulf ecosystems.



General Recommendations and Suggested Revisions



Recommendations for ...:

- Focus Area 4: Status and trends of socioeconomic and environmental health, sustainability and resiliency.
 - Priority 4.1 - Increase comprehensive understanding of Gulf ecosystem services and vulnerabilities.
 - Priority 4.2 - Validate system-wide indicators of Gulf coast environmental and socioeconomic conditions.
 - Priority 4.3 - Map and monitor demographic, socioeconomic and environmental health status and trends to inform management practices.



Final Comments

To reiterate key recommendations:

- Science Plan should address science in support of improved understanding and decision making.
- Science Plan must take in to consideration funding constraints in the prioritization of research.
- Developing a strategy to ensure interaction and communication with all partners in the GoM is critical.

And finally ...

- **NOAA RESTORE Act Science Program members should be applauded for their initial efforts on the Science Plan!**



Desired Outcome

- *Pending SAB-requested modifications, approve and submit to NOAA RSPA WG report entitled:*

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NOAA RESTORE ACT SCIENCE PROGRAM DRAFT SCIENCE PLAN



Acknowledgements



- **NOAA Science Advisory Board liaisons:** Jean May-Brett, Michael Donahue
- **NOAA Science Advisory Board Office:** Cynthia Decker, Mary Anne Whitcomb, Anna Hermes
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- **Meeting facilitators:** Ann Weaver, Marian Hanisko, Angela Salis