



# OSA-041- Effects of Oil on GOM Ecosystem

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## Researchers to Receive \$50 Million to Investigate Effects of Oil on Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem

*GoMRI Announces Final Round of Grants to Study Effects of Deepwater Horizon Incident*

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Washington, DC -- The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative, or GoMRI, Research Board is awarding 31 new grants totaling approximately \$50 million to support research into effects of the Deepwater Horizon incident on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

The scientists funded submitted proposals to GoMRI's RFP VI program, the final large grant program GoMRI will administer. All research proposals underwent a competitive merit, or peer, review process similar to that used by the U.S. National Science Foundation. Only the top proposals were selected for funding.

RFP VI will provide approximately \$35 million to eight Research Consortia and \$15 million to 23 small research teams. The funding will support work to be done during 2018 and 2019.

GoMRI is an independent, 10-year research program established in 2010 with a \$500 million commitment from BP following the Deepwater Horizon incident. Twenty experts comprise a

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Research Board responsible for designing research programs, deciding funding, and providing research and budget oversight.

As evidenced by the more than 915 peer-reviewed scientific articles already published and 3,600 presentations given at scientific conferences, GoMRI is producing a rich legacy of research and technical innovation. The proposals funded under RFP VI will contribute further to this growing knowledge base.

“The findings from these studies benefit society by informing new strategies to prevent and mitigate any negative effects of an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, or elsewhere,” said Dr. Rita Colwell, Chairman of the GoMRI Research Board.

“I am pleased that GoMRI is a leader in efforts to ensure that research data are preserved and made available for the public and future researchers,” said Colwell. GoMRI requires researchers it funds to make all data available to others via its data management system, GRIIDC. More than 1,500 datasets have been archived and are available for further research. The database continues to increase as research is completed and published.

The funding announced today will support science in all five of the GoMRI thematic areas, which are:

1. Physical distribution, dispersion, and dilution of petroleum (oil and gas), its constituents, and associated contaminants (e.g., dispersants) under the action of physical oceanographic processes, air–sea interactions, and tropical storms.
2. Chemical evolution and biological degradation of the petroleum/dispersant systems and subsequent interaction with coastal, open-ocean, and deep-water ecosystems.
3. Environmental effects of the petroleum/dispersant system on the sea floor, water column, coastal waters, beach sediments, wetlands, marshes, and organisms; and the science of ecosystem recovery.
4. Technology developments for improved response, mitigation, detection, characterization, and remediation associated with oil spills and gas releases.
5. Impact of oil spills on public health including behavioral, socioeconomic, environmental risk assessment, community capacity and other population health considerations and issues.

“Because significant science has been accomplished and the GoMRI program will sunset in 2020, RFP VI is focused on integrating existing data and synthesizing research findings,” said Colwell. RFP VI requested proposals addressing: 1) Continuation of previously designated research themes and topics that emerged from prior research; 2) Data integration; 3) Scientific synthesis across themes and consortia; and/or 4) Other overarching scientific and technological

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products fulfilling the GoMRI scientific legacy.

To see a list of the projects, and lead investigators and institutions, please visit <http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/scientists-awarded-50-million-to-study-effects-of-oil-on-gulf-of-mexico-ecosystem/>.

*The [Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative \(GoMRI\)](http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/) is a 10-year independent research program established to study the effect, and the potential associated impact, of hydrocarbon releases on the environment and public health, as well as to develop improved spill mitigation, oil detection, characterization and remediation technologies. An independent and academic 20-member Research Board makes the funding and research direction decisions to ensure the intellectual quality, effectiveness and academic independence of the GoMRI research. All research data, findings and publications will be made publicly available. The program was established through a \$500 million financial commitment from BP. For more information, visit <http://gulfresearchinitiative.org/>.*

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