CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING
The 2017 Hypoxia Task Force Report to Congress

High nutrient loadings from the agricultural landscape and discharged treated sewage entering the Gulf of Mexico through the Mississippi River have created the largest recurring hypoxic zone in the United States, where oxygen becomes too depleted to support most marine life. This "dead zone" is disruptive to ecosystems and causes hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage to fisheries by some estimates. Last summer, the dead zone was a record size: 22,720 square kilometers, or roughly the size of New Jersey. While this dead zone is a problem concentrated in the Gulf, the solutions involve the entire Mississippi River Basin.

In November 2017, the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force released a report describing progress towards attaining the goals of its own Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan of 2008. The Task Force is a collaboration of federal and state agencies, co-chaired by EPA and Iowa. This briefing is an opportunity to educate Congressional staff and other interested stakeholders of the important conclusions in the report which are relevant to several upcoming pieces of legislation.

Katie Flahive
EPA Nonpoint Source Management Branch

Katie Flahive is an agricultural engineer with the Nonpoint Source Management Branch at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She works with federal, state, nonprofit, conservation and industry partners that research, develop, implement, track and measure the results of voluntary and/or incentive based controls to improve water quality in agricultural and rural areas. She works on the EPA Hypoxia Team, supports the EPA Hypoxia Task Force federal co-chair and is the federal co-chair of the Coordinating Committee.

Matt Lechtenberg
IDALS Water Quality Initiative Coordinator

As Water Quality Initiative (WQI) Coordinator for the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), Matt Lechtenberg manages implementation activities of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS). Matt has worked for IDALS since 2006. He earned his degree from Iowa State University in Ag Systems Technology with an environmental emphasis.

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Dr. Amanda Gumbert
University of Kentucky Extension Water Quality Specialist

Dr. Amanda Gumbert serves as an Extension Water Quality Specialist with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food & Environment. She has worked on agriculture water quality issues for the past 16 years, with special interest in the KY Ag Water Quality Act and streamside buffer zones. Amanda attributes her passion for agriculture and natural resources to growing up on a farm in Robertson County, Kentucky.

Dr. Beth Baker
Mississippi State University Assistant Extension Professor

Dr. Beth Baker is an Assistant Extension Professor in the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University. She is an Extension Specialist for Natural Resource Conservation and Water Quality, and leads the Research and Education to Advance Conservation and Habitat (REACH) program. Beth has worked in areas of environmental conservation and water quality for over ten years, with special interest in water quality monitoring, conservation effectiveness, and community engagement.

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