

The Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment: Progress and Vision

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The Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is an across NOAA line office program whose goal is to support NOAA's effort towards evolving to a more ecosystem-based means of managing our nation's oceans and related ecosystem services. Through its across line office Steering Committee, the GOM IEA has been building a program structure based data, modeling, management and outreach, indicators, and human well being in an effort to integrate all these concerns into a single comprehensive assessment of the GOM resources so that they can be managed in a holistic manner. This effort takes into account the varied number of stakeholders and ecosystem services provided by the GOM and looks to lay out the management options and associated risk analysis through the use of Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) and related tools. To date the GOM IEA Program has successfully produced such products as the first Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Status Report, a formal Risk Analysis for South Florida, a collection of various ecosystem models geared towards conducting MSE, and has made several contributions to the Southeast Data and Assessment Review (SEDAR) process. Most recently the GOM IEA has begun execution of its three year plan IEA, based on the West Florida Shelf. This plan will evolve the GOM IEA program from single species MSE, through to multi-species MSE, and finally into a complete IEA that focuses on the entire West Florida Shelf ecosystem including human well being. The products from this three year effort will be presented to the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council as well a host of other management bodies with concerns on the West Florida Shelf.

Management Strategy Evaluation involves assessing the consequences of a range of management options and making obvious the trade-offs in performance across a range of management objectives.

