

# Gulf of Mexico – A National Resource

- The region is a vital economic engine for the country - supplying three trillion dollars annually to the U.S. economy.
- The Gulf of Mexico is critical to the nation's energy supply, contributing more than 44 percent of the crude oil, 43 percent of the dry natural gas, and more than 50 percent of liquid natural gas that fuels this nation.
- The Gulf Coast yields 69% of the shrimp and 70% of the oysters caught in the U.S.
- The Mississippi basin is a major flyway for migratory birds. It is used by up to 40% of North America's duck, geese, swan and eagle populations. Much of the continent's waterfowl population winters along the Gulf Coast.
- The transportation of goods via the Mississippi River represents a crucial link between our nation's Midwestern breadbasket and world markets. Overall, more than half the grain exported from the United States is transported via barge down the Mississippi River and then transported through Gulf of Mexico waters to markets around the world.
- Seven of the nation's top ten ports in terms of tonnage or cargo value are located in the Gulf of Mexico with two of these in the top global seven.
- Drainage into the Gulf of Mexico comes from one of the world's largest river basins and includes an extensive network of national watersheds from 33 states, 20 major river systems and over 150 individual rivers.
- Much of the atmospheric moisture supplied to the North American heartland during spring and summer has its origin over the Gulf of Mexico. A weakened jet stream contributed to the Great American Dust Bowl by depriving the region of much needed rain.

The Gulf of Mexico is an integral part of our nation's economic and ecological vitality. This region helps fuel and feed the nation by providing the largest domestic market for shrimp, oysters and many species of fishes for the nation. The Gulf of Mexico provides a critical transportation link to move our trading products worldwide. It also provides essential habitat for migrating waterfowl, other birds, many other species such as bullfrogs, alligators, dolphins and whales.