The Public Health and Safety Team has worked in three areas during this first part of the year.

1. Rebuilt the committee. We have representatives from public health areas covering recreational waters, rip currents, harmful algal blooms, shellfisheries, and vibrios. We are looking into possibilities of furthering the charge of safety in the work of the team. Suggestions from other GCOOS members are appreciated.

2. Worked toward revising the HABIOS plan 1. These efforts include updated state monitoring activities and contacts, data formats which may be useful for inclusion in the HABSOS platform and editorial corrections. HABSOS information was updated. Gaps in the current revision include updated Remote Sensing section, the Mexican states section, and products that have been developed in the last five years.

3. On February 12, 2015, GCOOS was asked to host a Dialogue on NOAA’s Ecological Forecasting Roadmap: Gulf of Mexico. Members of the Public Health and Safety team presented current status information on Vibrios and Pathogens. Key points were emerging technologies for the detection of Vibrio spp and specifically the pathogenic strains. The dialogue afterwards covered new test areas (microbiomes) and possibilities of determining their epidemiological relationship to current test methods and indicators. Emphasis was placed on maintaining robust QA-QC plans so that real time monitoring of hydrological data can be confidently included in state data sets and not used solely for informational purposes. This requires significant funding for calibration and maintenance.

Terms of Reference

The Public Health & Safety Task Team has been created to recommend and oversee public health activities within the GCOOS-RA. The terms of reference are:

- Increase capabilities to access available data used for public health decision making.
- Identify pathogen indicators that could be developed and, possibly, deployed to provide more accurate and faster predictions of beach water and sand quality related to illness.
- Initiate pilot projects to assess the use of beach water quality indicators at beaches in all five states.
- Develop and promote monitoring plans for restoration projects in the five states.
- Provide a readily accessible, web based, data tool that integrates pathogen indicators, HAB risks, rip current prediction, and weather conditions for Gulf of Mexico beach visitors and decision makers in all five states.
- Work with education and outreach to promote the beach tool.
- Promote use of metadata standards for long term use to facilitate data exchange in the future.
- Review data product proposals using the GCOOS infrastructure and make recommendations for consideration by the Products and Services Council.
- Work with national (Mexico/international?), state, and local representatives on needs and products related to Gulf of Mexico public health and safety.
- Expand observation and monitoring to enhance systems used for data collection and synthesis related to pathogens, illness from shellfish and finfish, HABs, rip currents, surf conditions, hazardous weather conditions, search and rescue, and climate change with sea level rise.
Committee Members

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