



May 23, 2019

Angela Falls and Kurt Boeckmann  
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**Subject: Gulf Hypoxia Task Force Meeting and MO State Nutrient Reductions Strategy**

Dear Ms. Falls and Mr. Boeckmann:

The Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE) is grateful for the time that DNR spent at the May 7, 2019 Water Protection Forum discussing our state nutrient reductions strategy. Protecting and restoring the health of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their wider water systems is a primary mission of our organization. MCE is also a member of the Mississippi River Network (MRN), which is a coalition of over 50 nonprofit organizations and businesses from the River's headwaters in Minnesota, to where it drains into the Gulf of Mexico. MRN participates on the Coordinating Committee of the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force.

Last week's meeting of the Task Force provided an important occasion for its member agencies and states to advance implementation of the Action Plan for Reducing Hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico and to inform the public about the specific steps that are being taken to achieve the Plan's goals.

Chief among those is the commitment by federal agencies and HTF states to achieve an **Interim Target of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus loading to the Gulf by 20 percent by the year 2025**, as a key step in reaching an average annual size of the Hypoxic Zone of 5,000 square kilometers by the year 2035. The latter date represents a 20-year extension that the Task Force made to its initial commitment (in 2000) of achieving the 5,000 square kilometer goal by 2015.

Acknowledging these overall goals for the Task Force, MCE strongly supports DNR's efforts to create a baseline for nutrient loading and track nutrient trends over time, as mentioned during the Water Protection Forum in May and presented to EPA in April.

I attended the Task Force meeting via webcast and was pleased to hear updates from other states. We are hopeful that Missouri can be a leader among HTF states, especially considering



the broad support Missourians have for the Parks, Soils, and Water Sales tax that funds these efforts.

The 2015 New Goal Framework of the Action Plan stated clearly that accelerated action and additional resources would be needed for successful implementation. Our colleagues at the Mississippi River Network have prepared a detailed letter with more information about federal programs that can be utilized to complement and strengthen State Nutrient Strategies, along with state-level funding and private sector efforts. During past DC fly-ins, MCE has actively worked toward increasing federal funding for these programs so that the whole basin has the resources needed to achieve the goals of the Task Force.

The Task Force is now on a 5-year timeline to reach the 2025 Interim Target. We urge DNR and the Task Force as a whole to mobilize, pursue needed resources, and enlist public support to achieve that milestone for reducing the Gulf hypoxic zone and improving water quality in the Mississippi River Basin.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you sometime this summer to discuss the state nutrient loss reduction strategy in more detail and to learn about the outcomes of the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maisah Khan'.

**Maisah Khan**

Water Policy Director

Missouri Coalition for the Environment (MCE)

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