

Basin 25

Gulf of Mexico



Gulf of Mexico Narrative Summary

For purposes of water quality management, the Gulf of Mexico is classified as a single segment and basin (Segment 2501). The Gulf of Mexico includes about 40 major estuarine systems plus the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Plume, encompassing more than 23,938 square miles. The entire region is part of the Gulf Coastal Plain, which encompasses the Eastern and Western Gulf Plain and the Mississippi Alluvial Plain. The Gulf Coast is characteristic of a gently sloping lowland environment. Historical periods of coastal flooding and intense sediment deposition have contributed to formation of the Gulf of Mexico shoreline. Within the Texas portion of the Gulf from Sabine Lake on the eastern Texas-Louisiana border to the lower Laguna Madre near the US-Mexico border on the south, much of the shoreline area is comprised of extensive wetland areas, sandy beaches and barrier islands. The open water portion of the Gulf in Texas encompasses an area that covers approximately 3,879 square miles and includes 624 shoreline miles. Nine surface water quality monitoring sites on the Gulf of Mexico have been monitored over the past five years. The sites are typically located near the outer boundaries of classified bay segments from Sabine Lake to the Rio Grande and tend to reflect quality of the nearshore waters rather than the open gulf .

The Texas Department of Health issued on June 10, 1997 a consumption advisory for the Gulf of Mexico due to elevated concentrations of mercury in King Mackerel edible muscle tissue. The consumption advisory is dependent of length of the fish, but since part of the advisory suggests no-consumption, the fish consumption use is not supported for the segment. King Mackerel less than 37 inches are safe for unrestricted consumption. Adults are advised to limit consumption of fish in the 37 to 43 inch range to one eight-ounce meal per week, while women of child bearing age and children should limit consumption to one eight-ounce meal per month. For King Mackerel greater than 43 inches in length, the advisory recommends no-consumption.