



#### HTF Member State Representatives

Secretary Mike Naig, Chair  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and  
Land Stewardship

J. Ryan Benefield, Deputy Director  
Arkansas Department of Agriculture

Kristi Jones, Deputy Director  
Illinois Department of Agriculture

Bruce Kettler, Director  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture

John Webb, Interim Member  
Watershed Management Branch  
Manager-Kentucky Division of Water

Harry Vorhoff, Deputy Director  
Louisiana Governor's Office of  
Coastal Activities

Katrina Kessler, Assistant Commissioner  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Chris Wells, Executive Director  
Mississippi Department of  
Environmental Quality

Kurt Boeckmann, Director of Soil and  
Water Conservation Program  
Missouri Department of Natural  
Resources

Kirk Hines, Deputy Director  
Ohio Department of Agriculture

John McClurkan, Program Manager  
Tennessee Department of Agriculture

James Zellmer, Deputy Division  
Administrator  
Division of Water - Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resources

July 1, 2021

To Whom It May Concern-

The Hypoxia Task Force is a partnership of 12 states and five federal agencies that has worked collaboratively for 20 years through the *Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan* to reduce nutrient loading throughout the Mississippi and Ohio River Basins and the extent of the hypoxic zone in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The *Action Plan* has a near term target of reducing nutrient loading (nitrogen and phosphorus) to the Gulf from the basin by 20 percent by 2025, and a long-term goal of limiting the Gulf Hypoxic Zone to an average annual size of less than 5,000-square kilometers by 2035, subject to availability of adequate resources.

We, as member states, have led the development and ongoing implementation of our respective state-specific nutrient reduction strategies, with extensive stakeholder engagement as a means for advancing the *Action Plan*. Many of our states have created dedicated programs and funding streams to advance the strategies' actions.

While important strides in conservation practices and point and nonpoint source loading reductions have been achieved, attaining the goals we have collectively set for reducing nutrient loading through the *Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan* will require acceleration of its implementation, through expanded regional collaboration among farmers, municipalities, and conservation interests. Conservation practices and ecosystem restoration efforts to increase nonpoint source nutrient reduction also have many supplemental national benefits such as flood risk reduction, improved habitat for wildlife and pollinator species, and greenhouse gas reductions.

We appreciate financial and technical support from USEPA, NRCS, and NOAA over the past decade to aid in the states' development of the nutrient reduction strategies. However, resources focused specifically at nutrient reduction actions continue to be the limiting factor in reaching the goals established in the *Action Plan*. The 2015 Revised Goal of the *Action Plan* indicates clearly "neither the Interim Target



nor the Final Goal can be achieved without significant additional resources.”<sup>1</sup> The ability to appropriately streamline programs and limit regulatory burden to advancing these important practices also enable states to scale-up implementation efforts.

As 2021 begins, we ask the Congress to ensure that any legislation introduced to address the important needs for improving water quality, in the Basin and Gulf also include fiscal support for each State’s Nutrient Reduction Strategies in support of the *Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan*.

Sincerely,

Mike Naig  
Iowa Secretary of Agriculture  
States Co-Chair – Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force

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<sup>1</sup> Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan New Goal Framework, December 2014,  
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-07/documents/htf-goals-framework-2015.pdf>.