**NASA DEVELOP National Program**

****NASA Goddard Space Flight Center

**Spring 2016**

**Short Title: Gulf of Mexico Health & Air Quality**

**Subtitle:** Utilizing NASA Earth Observations to Manage Air Quality and Pollutants over the Gulf of Mexico

**VPS Title:** Send in the Clouds: Examining Air Quality in the Gulf of Mexico

**Project Team & Partners**

**Project Team:**

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**Advisors & Mentors:**

Dr. Robert Levy (NASA GSFC)

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**Partner Organizations:**

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (End-User), POC: Dr. Jose Hernandez; Boundary Organization

Goddard Earth Sciences, Technology and Research/Universities Space Research Association (Collaborator), POC: Dr. Pawan Gupta

**Project Details**

**Applied Sciences National Applications Addressed:** Health & Air Quality

**Study Area:** Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the Gulf of Mexico including onshore areas of Texas (TX), Louisiana (LA), Mississippi (MS), and Alabama (AL)

**Study Period:** January 2000 - December 2015

**Earth Observations & Parameters:**

Aqua/Terra, MODIS – Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) at 550nm wavelength

Aura, OMI – Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) and Sulfur Dioxide (SO2)

**Ancillary Datasets Utilized:**

* BOEM Gulfwide Emissions Inventories (2000, 2005, 2008, 2011) – Annual emissions estimates
* NOAA WP-3D Airborne Chemical Laboratory Flights of June 2010 – Air pollution measurements
* NASA AERONET – Quality assurance and validation of satellite data
* EPA AirData – Criteria pollutant summary data for onshore monitoring sites

**Software Utilized:**

ArcGIS - Raster manipulation/analysis, image enhancement & map creation of Aqua/Terra MODIS and Aura OMI data

Microsoft Access – Conversion of data into Microsoft Excel format for upload into ArcGIS

Microsoft Excel – Platform measurements of aerosols, NO2, and SO2 for upload into ArcGIS

Python – Extraction and processing of Aqua/Terra MODIS and Aura OMI data

**Project Overview**

**80-100 Word Objectives Overview:**

The objectives of the Gulf of Mexico Health and Air Quality project were to map and analyze airborne pollutant concentrations of PM 2.5 aerosol, nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and sulfur dioxide (SO2) using remotely sensed data from NASA’s Aqua/Terra MODIS and Aura OMI satellite instruments. Pollutant data was compared to *in situ* offshore emissions data collected by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and onshore surface concentrations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to determine correlations between these pollutants and primary emission sources.

**Abstract:**

The Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the Gulf of Mexico houses over 3,000 offshore oil and gas production facilities. These facilities emit criteria pollutants that are known to have both human health and environmental impacts. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is tasked with monitoring the onshore impacts of these emissions under federal regulations. Current practice requires that facility operators collect monthly emissions inventory data which is used to model air quality. NASA Earth observations were utilized to a produce long-term, regional study in the Gulf of Mexico to monitor changes in air quality. Aqua/Terra Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) and Aura Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI) data were used to create emissions profiles for PM 2.5, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide for the Gulf of Mexico. These data were then validated against ground truth data using NASA’s AERONET dataset comparison and correlation tool. Post validation, time series and time averaged maps were created to illustrate emissions over the 2000-2015 timeframe. Lastly, satellite data were extracted and linked with data provided by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s platform sites to identify areas where emissions levels are above the permitted thresholds. Data provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) onshore pollutant monitoring sites were used to further validate satellite and BOEM data. The project methodology will allow BOEM to use satellite data to monitor atmospheric plumes associated with offshore drilling by oil and natural gas platforms to address future environmental concerns in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Community Concerns:**

* Offshore oil and natural gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico on over 3,000 platforms produces aerosols, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide emissions.
* These emissions can impact the air quality of communities onshore, causing health impacts for species living along the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico.
* Point data from individual platform and non-platform sources does not provide the regional coverage necessary to answer larger scale scientific questions regarding the Gulf of Mexico.

**Current Management Practices & Policies**:

To make a decision regarding air quality, offshore facility operators must include air emission information when they submit exploratory, development, and production plans. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management applies laws presented in the 30 Code for Federal Regulations 550.302 through 304, and, in general, follows the National Ambient Air Quality Standards defined by U.S. EPA. The EPA defines threshold amounts of PM 2.5, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide that must not be exceeded. BOEM developed a baseline criteria pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions inventory in 2000 for all OCS oil and gas production sources in the GOM and have produced subsequent inventories every 3-5 years. While BOEM is able to monitor air quality through their monthly inventories of platform and non-platform emissions, this type of data is cost prohibitive in producing long-term, regionally scaled studies.

**Decision Support Tools & Benefits:**

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| **End-Product** | **Earth Observations Used** | **Benefit & Impact** |
| Time Series Analysis: Monthly, seasonal, and annual maps of PM 2.5, NO2, and SO2 pollutants | Aqua/Terra MODIS, Aura OMI | Determine long-term emissions trends; validation of facility operator modeling input data |
| Methodology workflow to analyze concentration profiles of pollutants | None | Decision support to effectively monitor and allocate resources for regional evaluation of future emission scenarios and potential disaster events |

**Project Imagery**

**[Insert image here]**

**Caption:** [Insert Caption Here. Max of 25 words.] Image Credit: Gulf of Mexico Health & Air Quality Team.

**Image:** File Name (Please submit your image as a separate .jpeg as well as inserting it in this document)

**Software Release Requirements**

What category do the tools your project is creating fall within? Category I