

Timeline of Events

2005

Hurricane Katrina (August 23–30)

One of the most intense, largest, costliest, and deadliest hurricanes to hit the United States. Hurricane Katrina strengthened to a category 5 on August 28 and attained its peak intensity south of the Mississippi River. It made landfall as a high-level category 3 on August 29 near Buras, La., at the mouth of the river. Its final landfall was at the mouth of the Pearl River at the Louisiana and Mississippi border on August 29.

Hurricane Rita (September 18–26)

Slammed into the Gulf Coast just about 3 weeks after Hurricane Katrina had hit. By September 20 it was a hurricane off the coast of Key West, Fla. Gaining strength, Rita proceeded westward into the southeastern Gulf of Mexico as a category 3 on September 21 and eventually a category 5, reaching its peak intensity southeast of the mouth of the Mississippi River. Rita weakened to a category 4 on September 22 and a category 3 on September 24, when it made landfall in southwestern Louisiana, just west of Johnsons Bayou and east of Sabine Pass at the Texas-Louisiana border.

2006

Gulf Coast Fund Origins (January 11-15)

The Fund was created during an emergency conference call convened by HEFN to discuss the philanthropic response. During this call the need for independent sampling and testing for environmental contamination was discussed and funding was raised to hire chemist and MacArthur “genius” award recipient Wilma Subra, to conduct testing all along the affected Gulf Coast region. At the same time, funders understood that while immediate direct relief was necessary, philanthropy’s appropriate response would be to provide long-term, sustainable support for rebuilding.

Founding of the Gulf Coast Fund for Ecological Renewal (March 18)

The Gulf Coast Fund was founded after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by funders active in the Health and Environmental Funders Network (HEFN) and the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA). The Fund is a collaborative pooled fund where those at the epicenter of the disasters have been effectively organized to inform and direct the use of philanthropic resources. The Fund is dedicated to empowering historically disenfranchised communities, approaching recovery in a holistic manner and remaining focused on a multiplicity of issues and constituencies across the entire affected region.

- Fund launches with \$10,000 grants to each of the Advisory Group member organizations
Advisory Group’s first meeting will be at the Ashé Cultural Center in the Tremé neighborhood
- MaryKay Penn will facilitate
- Co-Founders of the Fund: Marni Rosen (Jenifer Altman Foundation), Michelle DePass (Ford Foundation), Annie Ducmanis (Environmental Grantmakers Association)

Advisory Group Established to Direct the Fund (February through March)

An advisory group of two dozen local/regional gulf coast advocates, non-profit and community based leaders is convened. Responsibilities include:

- Advise on Fund strategies, policies & grantmaking priorities
 - Represent the Fund to constituents and funders
 - Identify important on-the-ground projects and initiatives to support and distribute RFPs
- Serve on grantmaking panels