



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL

January 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Notification of Preliminary Research to Evaluate the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxic Zone Reduction, Project No. OPE-FY13-0012

FROM: Carolyn Copper, Assistant Inspector General
Office of Program Evaluation

TO: Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator
Office of Water

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is starting preliminary research on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) and states' efforts to reduce the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone. This evaluation is included in our fiscal year 2013 Annual Plan.

The purpose of this memorandum is to confirm our mutual understanding about the objective and scope of the evaluation and the responsibilities of the Office of Water and the OIG during the project. The OIG's preliminary research objective is to determine the steps EPA and states in the Mississippi River watershed are taking to reduce nutrients that contribute to the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone.

The anticipated benefits of this project are potential improvements in protection of human health and the environment through verifying that EPA and selected states are implementing water quality protection activities in a manner that will help EPA achieve the goal of reducing the size of the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxic zone. We will analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of EPA and state activities to reduce nutrients in the Mississippi River Basin in order to identify alternatives for how EPA might address the Gulf hypoxic zone.

We plan to perform work within the Office of Water, the Gulf of Mexico Program Office, EPA regions, selected states, and other federal agencies, as necessary. The project will be conducted using applicable *generally accepted government auditing standards*.

The OIG product line director, Dan Engelberg, and project manager, Tim Roach, will supervise the project. We will provide updates on a regular basis via monthly meetings and e-mail correspondence with agreed upon contacts from your office.

We will contact you to arrange a kickoff meeting at a mutually agreeable time to discuss our objectives and the purpose of the preliminary research phase of the project. We will answer any questions that you may have about the project process, reporting procedures, methods used to gather and analyze data, and what we should expect of each other during the course of the project. At the kickoff meeting, we will also be interested in hearing about any of your concerns.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 566-0829 or carolyn.copper@epa.gov, or Dan Engelberg at (202) 566-0830 or engelberg.dan@epa.gov if you or your staff members have any questions.

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