

Editor's Choice



A shoe polisher waits for customers under AK-14 graffiti on a wall in Kabul



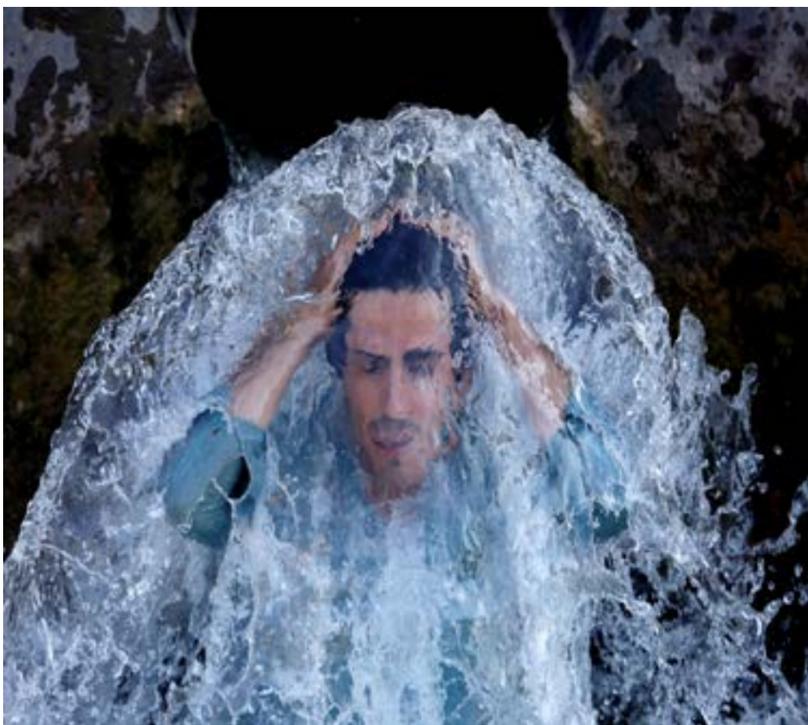
Farmer Jacob Gossen takes a break in his family's fields during harvesting of wheat in Corn, Oklahoma, U.S., June 12, 2019. REUTERS/Nick Oxford TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



An oil tanker is seen after it was attacked at the Gulf of Oman, June 13, 2019. ISNA/Handout via REUTERS ATTENTION EDITORS - THIS IMAGE WAS PROVIDED BY A THIRD PARTY.



Press photographers wear helmets and protective masks to denounce police treatment during yesterday's protest against a proposed extradition bill with China in Hong Kong, China, June 13, 2019. The press conference was attended by Deputy Commissioner of Police Tang Ping-keung, Commissioner of Police Lo Wai-chung and Media Liaison Officer Kong Wing-cheung. REUTERS/Thomas Peter TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



A man cools off under a water pipe from a canal on the outskirts of Peshawar



Boats are anchored at the bank of the river Buriganga which are used to carry passengers crossing the river in Dhaka



Kazakhstan's President Tokayev attends his inauguration ceremony in Nur-Sultan



Retired Air Force Col. Gail Halvorsen arrives at an event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift in Wiesbaden Germany

A 'Dead Zone' The Size Of Massachusetts Could Hit The Gulf Of Mexico This Summer



The rising waters of the Gulf of Mexico crash at the shoreline of the Treasure Island community of West Galveston Island, Texas March 6, 2014. (Photo Reuters)

By Guest Writer Nsikan Akpan, digital science producer for PBS NewsHour and co-creator of the award-winning, NewsHour digital series ScienceScope.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

April showers might mean May flowers, but this year's May showers could bring a giant choking swarm of death to wild-life in the Gulf of Mexico.

On Monday, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released its annual Gulf forecast for this summer's "dead zone" — a pocket of little to no oxygen created by overgrown algal blooms of phytoplankton. When the blooms die along the coast — a cycle that happens each year — their rotting corpses cause bacteria to suck up all the oxygen from the ocean, killing off other marine life, like shrimp, fish and molluscs.

NOAA forecasts a dead zone that spans approximately 7,800 square miles, which could be about as big as the state of New Jersey, or in more ominous estimates, Massachusetts. If this prediction holds true, this event would be the second largest on the list of Gulf dead zones in more than three decades, though measurements only date back to 1985.

This year's forecasted dead zone would be 50 percent larger than the average seen in the last five years.

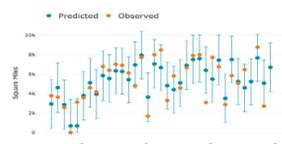
Why is this year so much worse? There are a few factors at play. Rainfall in May

is one of the drivers of the Gulf's dead zone. May 2019 capped off the wettest 12 months in U.S. history. Severe storms, including more than 500 tornadoes in a 30-day span, battered the Midwest and South, causing widespread flooding across much of the nation's farmland. "Even if farms ceased using nitrogen-based fertilizers today, it would take 30 years for agrochemicals in the soil to shrink to a level that didn't cause dead zones."

But "nutrients lay the groundwork for the dead zone," said David Scheurer, an oceanographer and deputy director of competitive research program at NOAA's National Ocean Service.

While the wet spring and historic flooding played a role, these nutrients — like the industrial fertilizers used by American farmers and animal waste that runs off into fresh waterways during rainfall and floods — also supercharges the growth of microorganisms.

In addition to the toxic consequences for the creatures that live in and around the Gulf, a dead zone of this size may affect the price of your seafood. Here's what you need to know.



The predicted size of Gulf dead zones (dark) versus the final observations (light), 1985 to 2019. (Image/Virginia Institute of Marine Science)

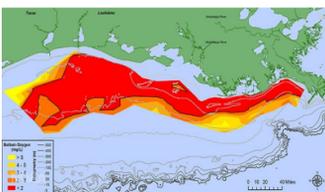
How NOAA forecasts dead zones

NOAA's forecast for the annual hypoxic zone — the technical name for a dead zone — is actually a compilation of predictions made by five universities: the University of Michigan, Louisiana State University, William & Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Science, North Carolina State University and Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Canada.

All of the models have a good reputation for predicting the size of the dead zone — typically pinning down about 70 percent of the variability from year-to-year. For example, here are the predictions versus the final observations made by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science over the last 35 years:

"Each [of these forecasts] work with slightly different assumptions," Scheurer said. "Some weigh the physical effects from the dead zone to different degrees. Some look at nutrient loading slightly different."

The nutrient load refers to the amount of nitrogen (namely nitrate) and phosphorus that wash into watersheds of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers, and then consequently into the Gulf of Mexico. Both nitrate and phosphorus are common ingredients in agrochemicals, and both can fuel algal blooms.



At 8,776 square miles, 2017's dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico was the largest ever measured (pictured). If

the 2019 forecast rings true, this year's dead zone could resemble the one from 2017. (Image/LSU)

In the case of the Gulf of Mexico dead zone, the nitrogen plays an outsized role. May's rainfall washed more than 156,000 metric tons of nitrate and 25,300 metric tons of phosphorus into the Gulf of Mexico, according to estimates from the U.S. Geological Survey.

More than half of that nitrate comes from agricultural activities in the surrounding watershed, said Nancy Rabalais, a Louisiana State University ocean ecologist, who co-authored one of the university forecasts.

Because of the heavy rains, this pollution discharge was 18 percent and 49 percent above the long-term average, respectively, even though many farmers hadn't had the opportunity to plant this year's crops. That could be because the farmers used more fertilizer last year — or, because the rains were so frequent this winter and spring.

"So there's still a history in the soil that could be washed out during a flood year," Rabalais said. Case in point: A 2018 study found even if farms ceased using nitrogen today, it would take 30 years for agrochemicals in the soil to shrink to a level that didn't cause dead zones.



Why it matters

We'll know the final verdict on this year's dead zone in late July, when marine scientists will cruise around the Gulf shore, capturing physical observations of the hypoxic zone. That time of year is typically when the size of the dead zone peaks, but it also represents the tail end of shrimping season.

"When the hypoxic zone is present you can't catch shrimp over an area as large as the size of the state of New Jersey,

which means a reduced catch," Rabalais said.

The dead zone builds over months, in the pockets of water where trawlers catch large shrimp. A bigger dead zone means those shrimp boats must travel farther offshore.

"It costs more to get offshore to get the larger shrimp outside of the low-oxygen zone, and of course that drives the price," Rabalais said.



Deckhand David Merrick shows some of the catch after returning from a two-day shrimp haul at Joshua's Marina in Buras, Louisiana May 17, 2010. (Photo/Reuters)

A 2017 study estimated that every time the Gulf's dead zone increases by 6 percent (400 square miles) over the average, the price of large shrimp rises by 1 percent. Small shrimp live closer to shore and are less affected by dead zones but also bring in less money for states like Louisiana.

Shrimpers along the Gulf Coast operate on fine margins — with the average person netting about \$55,000 per year — so even small fluctuations may affect people's livelihoods. Shrimp in Louisiana, overall, contributes \$170 million to the state's economy.

"It's going to take work in the watershed to try to reduce the nutrients before they get to the Mississippi River — that includes a whole suite of best management practices including cover crops, buffer strips, less fertilizer and more diversity in farming techniques," Rabalais said. "These practices are employed on a small scale, but not on the large scale that's needed to prevent dead zones." (Courtesy <https://www.pbs.org/news-hour/science>)

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Will Offer A Path To Citizenship **U.S. House Passes Immigration Bill To Protect 'Dreamers'**



The U.S. House of Representatives passed a sweeping immigration bill on June 4 that would grant citizenship to more than 2 million undocumented immigrants, including "dreamers." (Photo/Reuters)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The House on Tuesday passed a bill that would offer a path to citizenship to more than 2 million undocumented immigrants, including "dreamers" who were brought to the United States as children.

The vote was 237 to 187 for the American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, which would grant dreamers 10 years of legal residence status if they meet certain requirements. They would then receive permanent green cards after completing at least two years of higher education or military service, or after working for three years.

Cheers erupted in the chamber when the bill received the necessary votes, along with chants of "Yes we can!" Seven Republicans broke ranks to join all 230 Democrats present in backing the bill.

The measure would provide long-awaited clarity to the millions of dreamers who have been caught in legal limbo amid years of partisan maneuvering on the issue. The Obama administration granted work permits to many of them through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but President Trump ended the program in late 2017. Its fate rests with the Supreme Court, which may take up the issue in the coming months.

Democrats are proposing the bill as Trump and Republicans argue that more needs to be done to address the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, underscoring that the parties are approaching the issue of immigration overhaul from markedly different perspectives.

Rep. Joe Neguse (D-Colo.), a freshman congressman and the son of Eritrean refugees, prompted cheers and a standing ovation from Democrats as he quoted President Ronald Reagan to defend immigration as integral to the fabric of the country. He also described dreamers as "young people all across our country who know no other home but the United States."



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), joined by other Democrats at the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday. (Photo/Shutterstock)

"We can't allow these young people to continue to live in fear, to be at risk," Neguse

said.

Versions of the bill have been introduced in Congress over the years but never passed, despite support among members of both parties. The debate over the legislation has been emotional at times; in 2010, more than 60 young people crowded into the Senate gallery to push for passage of a previous version of the bill known as the Dream Act. The chamber ultimately defeated the measure.

"This is legislation that is consistent with who we are as Americans, as an aspirational people, as a nation of immigrants and as a place where people can come to pursue the American Dream," Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, told reporters ahead of Tuesday's vote.

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Calif.), the lead sponsor of the current bill, noted that Tuesday marked "the first time the Dream Act will be passed by a chamber of Congress as a top Democratic priority."

The House measure was introduced in March. That month, two groups of senators introduced similar legislation that would protect dreamers. One bill was authored by Sens. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) and Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.). The other was introduced by a group of Democrats, including Sens. Chris Van Hollen (Md.), Ben Cardin (Md.), Dianne Feinstein (Calif.) and Tim Kaine (Va.).



House Democratic leaders on Tuesday voiced optimism that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) would bring up the legislation in the Senate.

"There should be nothing partisan or political about this legislation," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said at a news con-

ference, flanked by other Democrats and supporters of the measure. "We are proud to pass it, we hope, in a bipartisan way."

But it is unlikely that the Senate will consider the bill: McConnell and other Senate Republican leaders made no mention of the bill at their weekly news conference Tuesday afternoon.

The measure's consideration comes more than a year after the Senate rejected four competing immigration proposals. Among those proposals was one backed by Trump that included citizenship for dreamers, billions of dollars in funding for the president's U.S.-Mexico border wall and changes to laws to speed up deportations, as well as sharp cuts to legal immigration.

As the 2020 presidential race heats up, Trump has taken a host of actions — such as declaring a national emergency over his border wall and threatening tariffs on imports from Mexico — that suggest that immigration will be a central focus of his reelection campaign.

House Republicans contended Tuesday that Democrats have not offered a proposal to pay for the legislation, which the Congressional Budget Office estimates would cost more than \$30 billion.



They also argued that the bill does not include funding for border security or changes to U.S. asylum laws, an issue that Trump emphasized in a White House memo in April proposing fees for those applying for humanitarian relief.

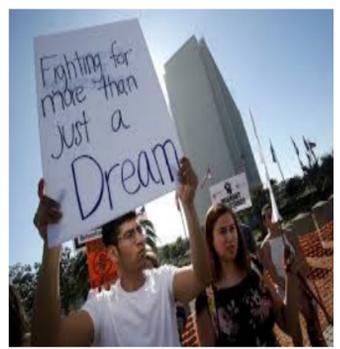
"If Democrats were serious about immigration, they would do something about the humanitarian and national security crisis along our southern border, but Speaker Pelosi has chosen to spend the House's time on H.R. 6, an expensive, partisan show vote," House

Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) said in a statement.

Rep. Douglas A. Collins (R-Ga.), the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, said that his party wants to provide legal status to DACA recipients but that "we want to do it the right way — to minimize fraud, ensure criminals cannot get legal status and bolster border security."

"Sadly, Democrats are making us consider a bill to worsen the border crisis by incentivizing more people to cross our borders illegally in hopes of getting a piece of the amnesty pie," Collins said. "No doubt at this very minute, the smuggling cartels are getting the word out: Congress is going to legalize millions."

In addition to dreamers, Tuesday's bill would offer protections to people with temporary protected status, which has allowed people from El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras and other countries to avoid being deported to nations engulfed in war or affected by natural disasters.



A smaller group of Liberians who have been granted "deferred enforced departure" also would be protected. Trump also has sought to end these protections, spurring lawsuits that halted at least one of the efforts.

Immigrants with temporary protected status or deferred deportations could immediately apply for green cards if they have been in the country for at least three years, had their status as of September 2016 and passed background checks. Five years after obtaining a green card, members of both groups could apply for citizenship. (Courtesy washingtonpost.com)

Notice of Proposed Goal for the Participation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in Federal Transit Administration Assisted Contracts

As required by Section 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 26, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County has determined a proposed overall goal of 19% for the participation of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) in its FY20 – FY22 contracts which are funded by U.S. Department of Transportation.

The proposed goal and its rationale are available for inspection during normal business hours at the Metropolitan Transit Authority's Headquarters, 1900 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77002; in Room 2021.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County and the Federal Transit Administration will accept written comments on the proposed goal through July 30, 2019.

Written comments may be directed to Metropolitan Transit Authority Office of Small Business, Attention: Karen Hudson, P.O. Box 61429, Houston, Texas 77208-1429 or Federal Transit Administration: Attention: Robert C. Patrick, Regional Administrator, Region VI, Federal Transit Administration, 819 Taylor Street, Room 14A02, Fort Worth, TX 76102.

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