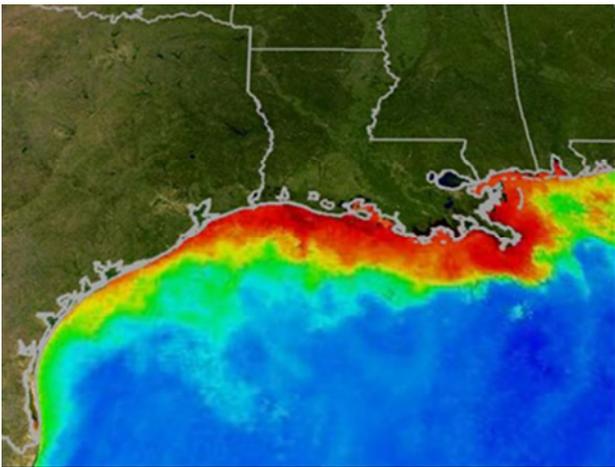




How long can we afford to continue to whistle past the graveyard?



Gulf of Mexico Hypoxic zones – “dead zone” estimated to be the size of Massachusetts

The argument has been debated as far back as early 19th century whether climate change is caused by human beings or Mother Nature? Whatever! What we do with certainty is what we’re doing to protect our planet isn’t working and it’s taking an enormous toll.

The recent report by the Scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a perfect example. On June 10, 2019 the NOAA published a report forecasting one of the largest “dead zones” ever recorded in the Gulf of Mexico expanding to an area the size of Massachusetts – 7,829 square miles.

The zone is caused by erosion and nutrient runoff from soil. The unusually heavy spring rains and melting snow washed tons of precious soil from farms all across the Midwest down the Mississippi and into the gulf. Soil full of nitrogen and phosphorous,

crucial for producing bumper crops of corn and soybeans, also produce bumper crops of algae which then die and decomposes on the ocean floor consuming most of the oxygen in the process killing marine life.

The original topsoil in the Midwest took 12,000 years to make as vast prairies of biomass grew, flourished and died every year. This natural cycle of nature resulted in building up to twelve feet of the most luscious high organic matter topsoil in the world. But there’s a problem – in less than 100 years erosion has blown and washed away half of that twelve feet of soil. Soil that is almost impossible to replace. According to Cornell University, it takes 20 years to naturally replenish less than a millimeter of soil.

Soil is the foundation of agriculture and without it mankind would literally starve. It’s crucial that we all work together to protect our most valuable asset. From large corporations to small family farms we must put in practice sustainable regenerative agriculture. We should do everything we can to stop the erosion and protect this thermonuclear based photosynthetic bounty producing organism. An organism the whole world relies on it for sustenance.

We are well past the tipping point – climate change is here. Flooding, droughts, unseasonably warm weather are occurring with increased frequency. We are at a climacteric moment and can no longer afford to wait for someone else to fix the problem. In 2015 the UN warned farmers that much of the soil could be so eroded or chemically degraded that it could disappear in 60 years. We have already lost enough and the price has been steep.

Incredibly, we already know much of what we need to do. Reduced tillage, cover crops, grass buffers, efficient nitrogen application, methodical crop rotation, integrated pest and livestock management, creating bioreactors have all proven effective in controlling erosion and nutrient runoff. These and other good practical sustainable agriculture practices should become the principal model of agriculture today – not the exception.

In addition to the ag sector, as a society we need to step up our efforts to significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and chemical products. Every one of us should adopt a holistic approach of low earth impact sustainable waste-not want-not life styles. It's not only the right thing to do – it's the smart thing to do.

We can no longer afford to whistle past the graveyard ignoring reality. Protecting the planet is not an option – it's imperative. Our grandchildren depend on it.

“Despite all our achievements we owe our existence to a six-inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains.”
Farm equipment association of Minnesota and South Dakota.



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