

Did Hurricane Barry prevent a near-record 'dead zone'?

August 1 2019, by Janet McConnaughey



In this July 13, 2019 file photo, Chris Nguyen and his father, Trung, look at the moving water that breached the top of a levee in Plaquemines Parish just south of New Orleans as Hurricane Barry makes landfall along the coast. Scientists are back from measuring the Gulf of Mexico "dead zone" where there's too little oxygen to sustain marine life in a large underwater area starting at the sea floor. One big question is whether Hurricane Barry reduced the size from a predicted near-record 7,800 square miles. That June forecast was based on measurements of fertilizer and other nutrients carried by Midwestern floods to the Mississippi

River. But tropical storms roil the water, mixing in oxygen. (Chris Granger/The Advocate via AP, File)

Scientists are back from measuring the Gulf of Mexico "dead zone" where there's too little oxygen to sustain marine life in a large underwater area starting at the sea floor.

One big question is whether Hurricane Barry reduced the size from a predicted near-record 7,800 square miles (20,200 square kilometers).

That June forecast was based on the amount of fertilizer and other nutrients carried in Midwestern floodwaters to the Mississippi River. The nutrients feed algae, which die and then decompose on the sea floor, using up oxygen.

But [tropical storms](#) roil the water, mixing in oxygen. Hurricane Barry made landfall July 13—10 days before the measurement cruise began.

Scientists returned early Wednesday. There's a Thursday afternoon media teleconference to describe their findings.

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