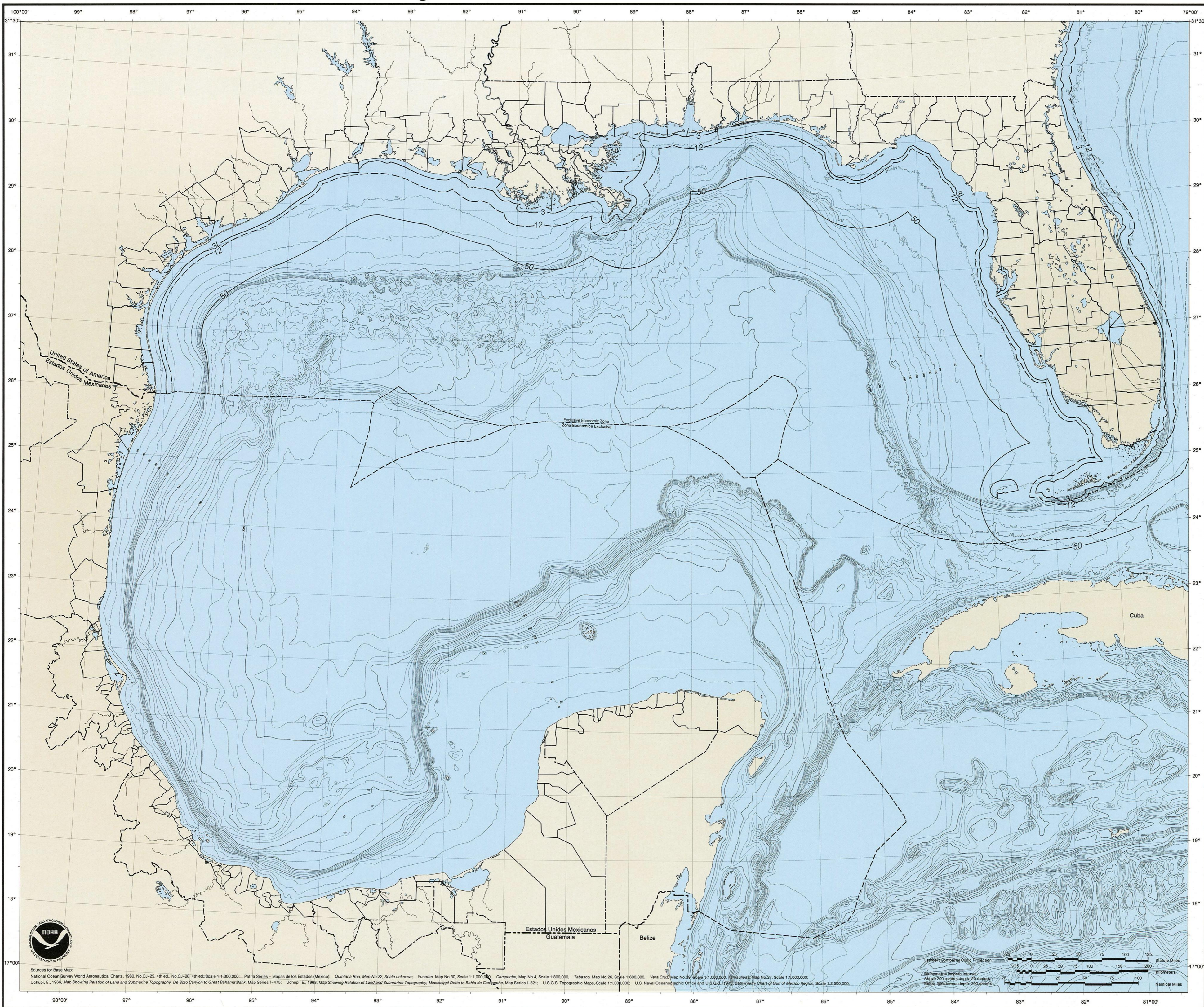


Political Boundaries and Maritime Zones



Description

Political boundaries shown on this map define selected jurisdictions of the Gulf of Mexico. These jurisdictions and their importance include:

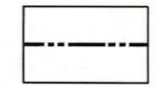
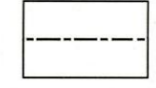
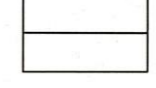
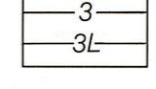
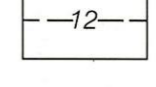
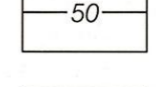
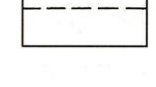
Territorial Sea: Coastal waters extending from a coastal baseline seaward within which a nation exercises sovereignty, but cannot deny the right of innocent passage to foreign nations. Mexico claims a 12 nautical mile (nm) territorial sea, while the USA claims a three nm territorial sea. In the USA, the Submerged Land Act of 1953 established the territorial sea for Texas and Florida's Gulf of Mexico coast as three leagues (about nine nm) and for Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana as three mi. This difference exists because the US Congress recognized the seaward claims of these states at the time of their admission to the Union. Claims of Florida were established in a new state constitution upon reentry to the Union after the Civil War Claims of Texas were established when it was an independent republic between 1832 and 1845.

Contiguous Zone: A band of high seas extending 12 nmi from the baseline of the territorial sea established pursuant to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone. Within its contiguous zone, a nation can exercise the control necessary to prevent infringement of its customs, fiscal, immigration, or environmental regulations. The USA claims a 12 nmi contiguous zone; Mexico claims no contiguous zone (Stevens, pers. comm.)

Prohibited Oil Pollution Zone: A band of high seas and coastal waters, 50 nmi from the nearest land areas, established by the 1973 International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). Both Mexico and the USA have signed the Convention. Oil tankers are prohibited from discharging oil within the zone (see Map 5.23) except under certain conditions specified in the MARPOL regulations. Ships other than tankers and greater than 400 gross tons generally are restricted from discharging oil within 12 nmi of the nearest land.

Exclusive Economic Zone: The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends 200 nmi from the baseline of the territorial sea. Where the extent of the EEZ's of nations overlap, boundaries are determined on the basis of equitable principles. The USA proclaimed its EEZ on March 10, 1983. Consistent with international law, within its EEZ, the USA claims: (a) sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving, and managing natural resources, both living and nonliving, of the seabed and subsoil and the superadjacent waters and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from water, currents, and winds; and (b) jurisdiction with regard to the establishment and use of artificial islands, and installation and structures having economic purposes, and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. This zone coincides with the US Fishery Conservation Zone where the USA claims exclusive rights to manage fishery resources, except for highly migratory species (Federal Register, March 14, 1983). Mexico claims similar rights and jurisdiction over its EEZ.

A 1976 maritime boundary agreement between the USA and Mexico established a shared maritime boundary in the Gulf of Mexico. It provides that neither country shall claim or exercise sovereign rights or jurisdiction over the waters or seabed and subsoil on the other country's side of the maritime boundary. The agreement has not yet entered into force (Smith, pers. comm.).

-  **International Boundary**
-  **State Boundary**
-  **County Boundary (Municipal Districts in Mexico)**
-  **3 Nautical Mile / 3 League Limit (Territorial Zone)**
-  **12 Nautical Mile Limit (Contiguous Zone)**
-  **50 Nautical Mile Limit (Prohibited Zone or Pollution Zone)**
-  **200 Nautical Mile Limit (Exclusive Economic Zone)**

Mexican jurisdictional claims illustrated on this map do not imply official recognition of those claims by the United States Government. Territorial Zone is 3 nautical mile offshore limit in Alabama and Mississippi, 3 league limit in Florida and Texas and 12 nautical mile limit in Mexico.

References

Secretaria de la Presidencia, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1976; Smith, R.W., ed., 1981, and pers. comm.; Torres, H.F.E., 1980; US DOI, Geological Survey, 1948-1966; US DOS, 1978.

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