



GULF OF MEXICO NEWS

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Winter 2011



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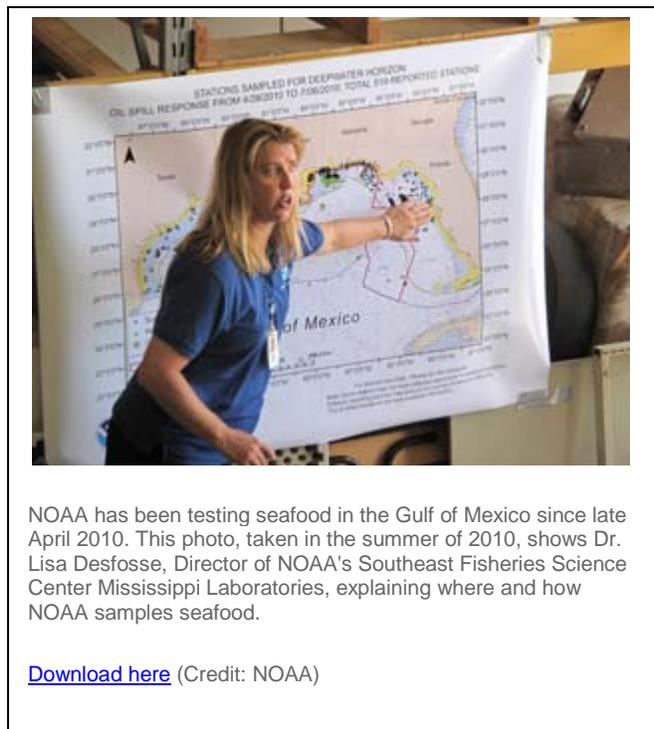
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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA, FDA Continue to Re-test Gulf Seafood and Post Results Sampling in last closed area also underway

March 24, 2011



NOAA has been testing seafood in the Gulf of Mexico since late April 2010. This photo, taken in the summer of 2010, shows Dr. Lisa Desfosse, Director of NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center Mississippi Laboratories, explaining where and how NOAA samples seafood.

[Download here](#) (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA continues to re-test seafood from the Gulf of Mexico to demonstrate to American and worldwide consumers that it is safe to eat, and announced today it will continue this re-testing into the summer.

Before waters were opened to fishing, NOAA and FDA extensively tested seafood from those waters, and NOAA has now completed two additional rounds of sampling and testing from each of those reopened areas. Thousands of test [results](#), all publicly available, prove Gulf seafood is safe from oil and dispersant contamination.

In June 2010, NOAA, FDA and the Gulf states agreed upon an extensive sampling and testing [procedure](#). Areas once closed to fishing were reopened only when all seafood sampled in the area passed both the established sensory and chemical testing for oil and dispersant.

“Gulf seafood is consistently passing FDA’s safety tests by a wide margin,” said Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator in charge of NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “We are continuing to test, and we are making the data available to the public, so they can make fully informed purchasing decisions.”

“The system set up to keep tainted seafood out of circulation has worked,” said Don Kraemer, acting deputy director for FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. “Consumers should know that Gulf seafood is extensively tested and is safe to eat.”

The nearly 500 samples in the two rounds of post-opening testing are comprised of more than 4,300 fish and shrimp, since a sample consists of multiple individuals. They are a representative sample of the commercially and recreationally important fish in the Gulf, and cover the 87,481 square miles of the Gulf that have been reopened to fishing. The specific locations, dates of sampling, species type, and test results are [available publicly](#) for each of the samples.

“Increased testing, and communicating about the increased testing, is vital for Gulf fishermen and the Gulf economy, and for consumers,” said David Krebs, a commercial fisherman and president of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance. “It’s important to show that our seafood has been proven safe time and time again.”

Funding for the ongoing testing comes from the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund, operated by the U.S. Coast Guard, which is available to finance clean-up costs that responsible parties are ultimately required to pay. The government continues to bill responsible parties regularly for the reimbursement of these costs.

An area covering 1,041 square miles immediately surrounding the wellhead still remains closed to all commercial and recreational fishing. NOAA will use an FDA-approved plan to begin sampling the closed area on March 12, and will announce the reopening of the area if all the samples pass the established sensory and chemical tests.

The first fishing area closure was instituted on May 2, 2010, covering about 3 percent (6,817 square miles) of Gulf waters around the wellhead. As oil continued to spill from the wellhead, the area grew in size, peaking at 37 percent (88,522 square miles) of Gulf waters on June 2.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Find us on [Facebook](#).

New "Guide to Ecological Scorecards for Marine Protected Areas in North America" Publication

On March 15th, the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) released a "how-to" guide on MPAs in North America, providing a standard method for managers to report on the status and trends of MPAs. The "Guide to Ecological Scorecards for Marine Protected Areas in North America" is an introduction to the use of marine ecological scorecards and condition reports, which are tools for assessing the condition of marine protected areas in North America. It was developed in close collaboration with protected area agencies in Canada, Mexico and the United States. The ecological scorecard provides a visual summary of the status of, and trends in, water, habitat, and living resources within the MPA, and the condition report provides a written summary of this information. The report is available online at http://www.cec.org/Storage/98/9685_Marine_scorecard_en.pdf. Contact: Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov.

New Website Tracks Coastal, Ocean Investments and Successes by State

March 7, 2011



[NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management](#) (OCRM) has launched a new interactive web page that shows the scope of coastal program investments and successes in NOAA's 34 partner states and territories.

Using the latest GIS/web technology, *OCRM in Your State* lets users click on a state to see current federal funding and state matching funds for coastal programs administered by OCRM. It also has thumbnail descriptions of results from those investments in every state and territory and links to more information about each state's coastal programs.

OCRM in Your State will be updated to report new funding and success stories. A future phase of the page is planned to let users click on regions and Congressional districts for funding and success stories. The website is [online](#).

Carefully managing coastal resources has become increasingly important as impacts of climate change and human use threaten coastal communities and habitat. More than 53 percent of the nation's population lives in coastal counties, and that number is growing. Coastal areas also generate billions of dollars annually in jobs and revenue, including over half to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

NOAA leads the nation's efforts to manage and conserve ocean and coastal resources. OCRM plays a major role by providing funding, technical assistance and a national perspective to state and territory coastal management programs established under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). OCRM oversees three programs established under the CZMA: 1) the National Coastal Zone Management Program, a voluntary partnership between NOAA and U.S. coastal and Great Lakes states and territories; 2) the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), a system of 28 research reserves established for long-term research, education, and stewardship; and 3) the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP), which provides matching grant funds to state and local governments to purchase coastal lands for preservation.

In addition to housing programs established under CZMA, OCRM also administers the Coral Reef Conservation Program, which partners with states and territories to protect coral reefs; and the National System of Marine Protected Areas, a system of marine protected areas that advances the conservation and sustainable use of the nation's vital natural and cultural marine resources. Information related to these programs will also be made available on the *OCRM in Your State* website.

NOAA Shoreline Images Aid Mississippi Restoration

The state of Mississippi passed a bill last year requiring all dredging permits to identify beneficial use locations in deposition plans. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mobile District plans to use dredge material from navigation dredging projects for coastal restoration projects and asked for assistance to meet the new state requirement. Coast Survey responded and is providing NOAA's vector shoreline data showing present and historical shoreline for coastal Mississippi. Using 1950 to 2011, as the time parameter from which to extract data, NOAA is able to provide images of historical land change that has taken place north along coastal Mississippi. For more information, contact [Patrick Fink](#).

NOAA, NERRS Present Web Training for Science Teachers on Deepwater Spill

On February 2, Atziri Ibanez, Education Coordinator for OCRM's Estuarine Reserves Division, and education specialists from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Grand Bay, MS, National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), in the Gulf of Mexico, gave a live web seminar for science teachers on possible Deepwater Horizon impacts on estuaries. The seminar was sponsored by NOAA and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) and delivered on the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Symposium website. Forty two teachers signed in to the session, which focused on the Grand Bay NERR and the effect of the oil spill on this rich and sensitive ecological area. The presenters talked about monitoring water quality and steps taken to minimize damage to the Grand Bay area after the spill. Contact: Atziri.Ibanez@noaa.gov

Understanding the Legacy of Environmental Change at the Grand Bay NERR

With a \$355,000 grant from NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System Science Collaborative, researchers from the Dauphin Island Sea Lab are working with staff from the Grand Bay NERR to support future land use decisions by documenting the impact of historic and current human activity on local water quality, habitats, and wildlife.

Increased nitrogen pollution from development and overtaxed wastewater treatment systems are impacting human health and seafood fisheries in the Grand Bay estuary, where local communities are dependent on commercial fishing and eco-tourism. As they plan for the future, decision makers need to understand the past impacts of human activity and natural forces.

This project will provide the information they need by studying the nitrogen content of oyster shells from historic shellfish middens and contemporary shellfish communities, sediment cores, and modern sediment and water samples. The information collected during this project will improve our ability to measure the impacts of human activity, hurricanes, and oil spills on the plants, animals, and habitats in the Gulf of Mexico. It also will help establish the Grand Bay as a benchmark estuary in Mississippi. Contact: Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov.

Federal Natural Resource Trustees Announce Next Step in BP Deepwater Horizon Spill Gulf Restoration Process

Following spill, Resource Trustees seeking multiple rounds of public input

February 19, 2011

To advance the ongoing natural resource restoration planning process following the BP Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico, NOAA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) today announced plans to develop a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) in cooperation with state co-trustees as part of the ongoing Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). The first step in the PEIS process will be public scoping meetings in each of the affected Gulf Coast states.

In a notice published in the Federal Register, NOAA, DOI, DOD, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas are taking the next step in the ongoing effort to restore the Gulf of Mexico environment to its pre-spill condition. This comes as scientists from those agencies are conducting a comprehensive assessment of the injury to the Gulf Coast region's fish, wildlife and habitats caused by last year's oil spill. The public scoping process will evaluate a range of activities and alternatives that could restore, rehabilitate, or replace injured resources and compensate the public for the loss of human uses of those resources.

"The overall goal of this process is to hold the parties responsible for the spill fully accountable to restore, rehabilitate, replace or acquire the equivalent of natural resources and services injured by the oil spill," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph. D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The PEIS will build a framework for future restoration actions, ensuring that the public's voice is incorporated into those designs."

At these PEIS meetings, members of the public will learn about the environmental impacts of the spill, get an early picture of the region's natural resource restoration needs, and may submit comments on the types of programs and projects they would like to see incorporated in future restoration strategies in response to the oil spill. Members of the public also may submit their comments online where the full meeting schedule will be posted by the end of February.

“This is a really important time for the public to become fully engaged in the restoration planning process,” said Chris Doley, director of the NOAA Restoration Center. “By sharing their views on types of restoration efforts they feel are appropriate to address resource impacts, the public can help define the overall shape of the plan that will restore the Gulf to its pre-spill conditions.”

“This represents the latest step in our shared commitment to closely involve the public in the restoration of the Gulf Coast ecosystem,” said Cindy Dohner, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Southeast regional director who is serving as the Secretary of the Interior’s authorized official for the Deepwater Horizon NRDA. “These natural resources make up one of the world’s most diverse and complex ecosystems and are a vital part of the region’s tourism economy and citizen’s way of life. That’s why this engagement is so important.”

The comments provided during scoping will help define the parameters of a draft PEIS on which the public will again be invited to comment later this year. In addition to providing an avenue for initial comments, the scoping meetings will give the public the opportunity to learn more about various aspects of the damage assessment.

NRDA is the legal process authorized by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and other laws, to determine the type of environmental restoration needed to compensate the public for harm to natural resources as a result of a spill. The PEIS is part of the overall NRDA effort, whose final restoration plans will be enacted by BP and the other parties responsible for the spill with no expenditure of taxpayer funds. The NRDA process is separate from the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, announced by President Obama last October. While separate, it will work to coordinate its planning with the final NRDA Restoration Plan.

NOAA Issues Regulations Governing Navy’s Training Activities in the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex

February 16, 2011

NOAA’s Fisheries Service has issued regulations and a letter of authorization to the U.S. Navy that includes measures to protect marine mammals while conducting the Navy’s Atlantic Fleet training operations at the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex. The regulations and authorization letter require the Navy to take measures to protect and minimize impacts to marine mammals.

The Navy requested authorization under the Marine Mammal Protection Act because the sound and pressure generated by detonating explosives may affect the behavior of some marine mammals or cause a temporary loss of their hearing sensitivity.

The Navy’s planned training exercises at the complex are expected to be small scaled and short in duration, with a total of seven underwater explosions planned. These detonation events are scheduled to be widely dispersed throughout several sites within the complex.

NOAA’s Fisheries Service does not expect the training activities to result in serious injury or death to marine mammals, and is requiring the Navy to use mitigation measures to avoid injury or death. However, exposure to nearby underwater explosions can injure marine mammals, and some injury may occur despite the best efforts of the Navy. Therefore, the proposed authorization allows for a small number of incidental injuries to marine mammals.

NOAA’s Fisheries Service has made a determination that these effects would have a negligible effect on the species or stocks involved.

Under the authorization, the Navy is required to follow mitigation measures to minimize effects on marine mammals, including:

- establishing marine mammal safety zones around each vessel during exercises involving underwater detonations;
- using Navy marine observers to shut down sonar operations if marine mammals are seen within designated safety zones;
- using exclusion zones to ensure that explosives are not detonated when animals are detected within a certain distance.

These measures should minimize the potential for injury, and significantly reduce the number of marine mammals exposed to levels of sound likely to cause temporary loss of hearing. Additionally, the regulations and authorization letter include an adaptive management component that requires that the Navy and NOAA's Fisheries Service meet yearly to discuss new science, Navy research and development, and Navy monitoring results to determine if modifications to mitigation or monitoring measures are appropriate.

NOAA's Fisheries Service and the Navy have worked to develop a monitoring plan to help better understand how marine mammals respond to various levels of sound and to assess the effectiveness of mitigation measures. The implementation of this monitoring plan is included as a requirement of the regulations and the authorization letter. Additionally, the Navy has developed (with input from NOAA's Fisheries Service) an integrated comprehensive monitoring plan to better prioritize monitoring goals and standardize data collection methods across all of their U.S. range complexes and study areas.

The Navy has been conducting the training activities, with systems similar to those employed today, for national defense purposes for more than 70 years. The land, air, sea, and subsurface space of the complex has provided and continues to provide a safe and realistic training and testing environment to ensure military readiness. The complex provides the infrastructure and proximity that allows for all levels of training and the efficient use of resources.

This regulation, in effect for five years, governs the incidental take of marine mammals during the Navy's training activities, and includes required mitigation and monitoring measures. The letters of authorization, which are required for the Navy to legally conduct their activities, are issued annually, provided the Navy abides by the terms and conditions of the letter, submits the required annual reports, and shows its activities do not result in more numerous effects or more severe harm to marine mammals than were originally analyzed or authorized.

NOAA Announces FY 2012 Budget

Science and Innovation Cited as Keys to Economic Recovery

February 14, 2011

President Obama today issued the FY 2012 budget for NOAA, requesting \$5.5 billion for the nation's oceanic and atmospheric agency. The proposed budget includes key investments to strengthen NOAA's most critical programs and initiatives while addressing the administration's goals of ensuring long-term economic growth, promoting innovation and American competitiveness, and reducing government spending.

The budget request represents a \$56.8 million decrease compared to the 2011 budget. This budget focuses on program needs, identifies efficiencies, and ensures accountability across the agency. Core functions and services are sustained, increases are requested for only the most critical programs, projects, or



NOAA Ship Thomas Jefferson at the Deepwater Horizon oil spill site. [Download here.](#) (Credit: NOAA)

activities necessary to meet the nation's growing demand for NOAA's services, and careful cuts are made throughout the budget.

"Perhaps most significantly, this budget clearly recognizes the central role that science and technology play in stimulating the economy, creating new jobs and improving the health and security of Americans," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Americans rely on NOAA science, services and stewardship to keep their families safe, their communities thriving, and their businesses strong. Our work is everyone's business."

NOAA's budget will focus on an ambitious

array of strategic priorities, including:

- Improving prediction of high impact weather and water forecasts;
- Supporting sustainable oceans, fisheries, and communities; and
- Providing critical investments in satellites and sensors to further NOAA's observational mission.

This budget furthers NOAA's commitment to strengthen science throughout the agency, providing support for the next generation of research and information to meet the growing demand for NOAA's science and services and to drive economic recovery. The proposed request includes \$737 million for research and development related to climate, weather and ecosystem science and for infrastructure to support NOAA's R&D enterprise.

NOAA will also build upon and enhance its existing climate services to meet the nation's rapidly growing data and information demands. Included in the FY 2012 budget proposal are the details for a reorganization to establish a climate service within NOAA. The reorganization is "budget neutral"; it does not change staffing levels, create new facilities or physically relocate any programs or laboratories.

NOAA Navigation Managers Support Training with Oil Companies

Navigation managers from the Office of Coast Survey are supporting new training exercises involving oil companies in the Gulf of Mexico and off the coast of Hawaii to help better prepare for future emergencies. Last week, a NOAA Coast Survey navigation manager provided charts and navigation resources to Marathon Oil and the U.S. Coast Guard as they develop response drills simulating oil spills near New Orleans and near Tampa Bay. In the Pacific, the Coast Survey navigation manager is serving as liaison between Tesoro (an oil refiner) and NOAA working divers. The divers will soon dive on Tesoro's offshore oil transfer buoys to gain familiarity with underwater equipment and hazards. For more information, contact [Tim Osborn](#) (Gulf of Mexico) or [LT Kyle Ryan](#) (Pacific).

NOAA Launches Website on Emerging Marine Renewable Energy

February 10, 2011



In response to resurging interest in renewable energy production, NOAA has launched a [website](#) containing legal and licensing information for industries interested in developing Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) capability in the United States.

OTEC produces renewable energy by using temperature differences between deep cold water and warm surface water to power a turbine. The electricity generated from an off-shore facility is sent to land by power cable. The technology is considered particularly viable in tropical areas with year-round warm surface water. In addition to generating electricity, OTEC technology has the potential to produce other products such as potable water, hydrogen and ammonia. Surplus cold water from OTEC can also be used for aquaculture and air conditioning systems.

The new website contains information on OTEC technology and potential environmental impacts

and on NOAA's licensing authority under the *Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Act of 1980*. It also contains information on workshops with federal, state, academic, non-government and private sector interests to explore the technological and environmental issues of commercial-scale OTEC systems.

There are currently no commercial OTEC facilities and to date, NOAA has not received any license applications. However, federal agencies and private industry are conducting and pursuing OTEC-related demonstration and research projects. The U.S. Department of Energy may authorize demonstration projects after consulting with NOAA.

Interested companies must submit an application for a license through NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. To access the website, visit: <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/programs/otec.html>.

Commerce, NOAA Release Draft National Aquaculture Policies, Invite Public Comment

February 9, 2011

The Department of Commerce and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) today released complementary draft national aquaculture policies that support sustainable marine aquaculture to increase the U.S. supply of healthy seafood, create jobs in coastal and other communities, spur innovation in technology, and help restore depleted species and marine habitats. Marine aquaculture is the farming of marine organisms such as shellfish, finfish, and algae for food, habitat restoration, and rebuilding of wild fish stocks. The public is invited to comment on both draft policies for the next 60 days.



Shellfish farming (oysters, clams, mussels) is the largest single sector of the U.S. marine aquaculture industry and accounts for about two-thirds of total U.S. marine aquaculture production. Pictured above, an oyster farm in the Damriscocta River in Maine. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA Aquaculture Program)

“Americans love seafood, and we consume approximately 5 billion pounds of it each year—a significant portion of which are imports. In fact, our current trade deficit is approximately \$9 billion,” Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said. “Supporting the U.S. aquaculture industry will encourage economic growth and employment opportunities at home, support exports to global markets, and spur new innovations in technology to support the industry.”

Aquaculture is playing a significant and growing role in global food production. Already, nearly half the fish consumed by people is produced by aquaculture, and a significant portion of future increases in the global seafood supply will come from aquaculture. In the U.S., some 84 percent of the seafood Americans eat is imported, and about half of those imports are aquaculture products. The domestic aquaculture industry supplies only about 5 percent of the seafood

Americans consume.

Once in place, the aquaculture policies will benefit the industry by outlining how NOAA plans to fund research into innovative aquaculture technologies, work with partners to create job initiatives that encourage the growth of the industry, and grant access to favorable sites for aquaculture facilities.

In the last decade, American expertise and innovation played a significant role in the development of aquaculture in foreign countries. Once they are final, the Commerce and NOAA policies will promote a sustainable industry in the U.S., encouraging Americans to apply their ingenuity at home.

“If done wisely, aquaculture can complement wild fisheries while contributing to healthy oceans and coastal economies,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “As we rebuild wild fish populations, we recognize the world’s demand for safe, healthy seafood will continue to grow. Sustainable aquaculture increases our country’s food security.”

The draft Commerce Department policy supports the development of sustainable aquaculture within the context of the key Commerce goals of encouraging economic growth and employment opportunities in the United States.

The draft NOAA policy provides guidance for NOAA’s actions regarding the development of all forms of marine aquaculture, from shellfish farming and habitat restoration to the culture of marine fish and algae on land and offshore. The policy provides a national approach for supporting sustainable commercial production, expanding restoration aquaculture, and researching and developing new technologies, and is part of NOAA’s national approach to sustainable seafood, which encompasses both aquaculture and capture fisheries.



Mussels farmed in coastal areas and in the open ocean are one of the most promising sectors of the U.S. marine aquaculture industry. Pictured above, workers harvest a mussel raft in Shelton, Wash. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA Aquaculture Program)



The new draft NOAA Aquaculture Policy provides guidance for agency actions regarding all forms of marine aquaculture, from shellfish farming and habitat restoration to the culture of marine fish and algae on land and offshore. Pictured here, a researcher shows visitors microalgae tanks which supplies a steady supply of nutrients for young oysters. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA Aquaculture Program)

The Commerce and NOAA draft policies echo several priorities of President Obama's National Ocean Policy, including the emphasis on protecting, maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems; supporting sustainable uses of the ocean; and increasing scientific understanding and applying that knowledge to make better decisions.

Commerce and NOAA are accepting comments on the draft policies through April 11. Directions for submitting comments online are at <http://aquaculture.noaa.gov>.

Comments also may be submitted: By fax to 301-713-9108 (Attn: Susan Bunsick)

By mail to:
NOAA Aquaculture Program
Attn: Public Comment
1315 East West Highway
SSMC3, Mail Code: F
13th Floor, Room 13152
Silver Spring, MD 20910

After the submitted comments have been reviewed, Commerce and NOAA will issue final national aquaculture policies.

NOAA, Partners, Launch New Website Highlighting African-American Maritime Heritage

February 1, 2011



Photo # NH 73688 USS Monitor crewmen cooking
Siah Carter on the deck of the USS Monitor.

[Download here](#). (Credit: With permission from The Mariners' Museum)

[NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#), in partnership with Murrain Associates, Inc., and the [National Association of Black Scuba Divers](#) (NABS), today launched [Voyage to Discovery](#), a new website and education initiative highlighting untold stories of African-Americans and the sea.

Aimed at everyone from students to adults, the Voyage to Discovery website offers feature stories, interviews, and videos about African-American seafaring achievements since the period of pre-Civil War to today. Information about marine careers will also be available.

The website is part of a broader NOAA initiative to build public awareness about the legacy of African-American maritime heritage and engage a broad spectrum of Americans in the stewardship of the country's coastal and

ocean resources through education, archaeology, science and underwater exploration.

Daniel J. Basta, director, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, said the Voyage to Discovery education initiative honors African-Americans' deep connection to the sea and highlights the continuing, historic role of the ocean in the security, stability and prosperity of the nation.

"Our economy and way of life are inextricably linked to the health and productivity of the global ocean," Basta said. "Through this initiative, African-American youth can learn about their maritime heritage and the various educational and career opportunities that exist in the 21st century global economy."

Michael H. Cottman, a NABS member and author of "The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie," said he hopes Voyage to Discovery will inspire young adults to identify with their maritime roots and consider careers in marine science and oceanography.

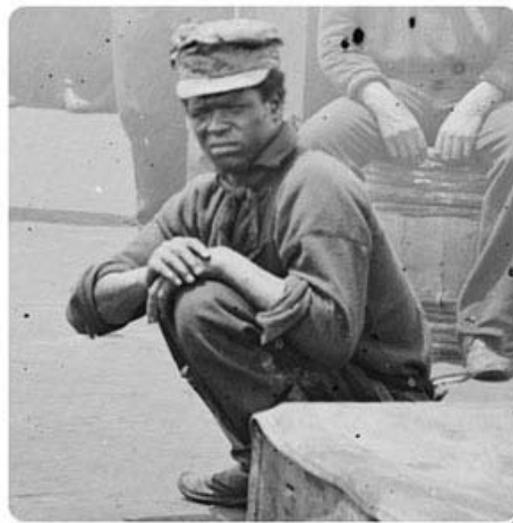
"Minorities are the fastest growing population in the country, but are vastly underrepresented in science and technology fields," Cottman said. "In order for the U.S. to maintain its competitive edge, the future workforce will need to draw on the minds and talents of all its citizens."

As far back as the American Revolution, blacks have been involved in virtually every aspect of maritime work. Despite an uncertain and sometimes dangerous racial climate, blacks worked as skippers and captains as well as whalers, lobstermen and fishermen. They also managed lighthouses, steered paddleboats and warships, along with owning sea industry businesses. The Underground Railroad used ships to spirit slaves to freedom, and black mariners helped shaped the identity of free black communities. Among the people profiled on the website:



Members of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers inspect memorial on Henrietta Marie wreck site.

[Download here.](#) (Credit: With permission from NABS)



Siah Carter on the deck of the USS Monitor.

[Download here.](#) (Credit: With permission from The Mariners' Museum)

- **Captain Absalom Boston**, a free black born in 1785 who led an all-black crew aboard the whaling schooner *Industry* and amassed substantial real estate holdings.
- **Robert Smalls**, a slave who became a Civil War hero in the Union Navy and served as a congressman from South Carolina during Reconstruction.
- **Rear Admiral Evelyn Fields**, the first African-American and first woman to become director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officers Corps, the nation's seventh uniformed service.

Bill Murrain, founder of Murrain Associates, said the ocean and marine environment provides a wealth of services that are vital to communities nationwide.

“The rich, untold history that is chronicled throughout this project is a reminder that all of us have a responsibility to keep our ocean and waterways healthy so future generations will continue to reap the benefits,” he said.

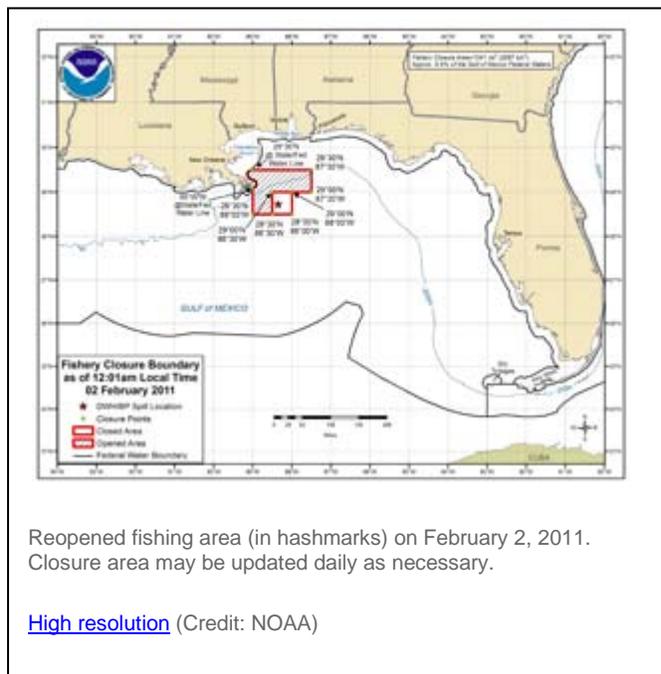
The National Association of Black Scuba Divers was established in 1991 to foster camaraderie among black divers and to address the unique problems and concerns of the African-American community. The organization has more than 2,000 members across the country and internationally. Membership is open to anyone regardless of race, color, gender, physical challenges or diving agency affiliation.

Murrain Associates Inc. is a management consulting firm with a focus on strategic planning, project evaluation, community development, health services planning, assessment and management. Murrain Associates consists of three members of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers who have shared experiences in marine biology, marine archaeology, slave ship exploration, history, law, journalism and marketing. The founder of Murrain Associates is Bill Murrain, a lawyer based in Atlanta, Ga.

[NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#) manages a system of 14 marine protected areas covering more than 150,000 square miles of ocean and Great Lakes waters. The [Maritime Heritage program](#) promotes appreciation and protection of the country's maritime heritage resources including historic shipwrecks and prehistoric archaeological sites, archival documents, oral histories, and traditional seafaring and ecological knowledge of indigenous cultures.

NOAA Reopens More Than 4,000 Square Miles of Gulf Waters to Royal Red Shrimping

February 1, 2011



NOAA tomorrow will reopen 4,213 square miles of Gulf of Mexico federal waters off Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to royal red shrimping. The area was closed to this type of deep water fishing on Nov. 24 as a precautionary measure after a commercial shrimper discovered tar balls in his net. The "fingerprint" analysis to determine whether the source of the tar balls was the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil was inconclusive. Further fish and shrimp sampling and testing from the area showed no oil or dispersant contamination.

This reopening was announced after consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. All commercial and recreational fishing is allowed within this area.

“Extensive testing of royal red shrimp and other fish from this area revealed they are safe to eat,” said Roy Crabtree, assistant NOAA

administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service southeast region. “Seafood safety and consumer confidence

remain a priority for NOAA, and we will continue monitoring Gulf seafood for as long as necessary to ensure its integrity.”

NOAA continues to work closely with the FDA and the Gulf states to ensure seafood safety. Additionally, the agency is continuing its post-spill broad-scale seafood sampling strategy that includes sampling seafood from inside and outside the closure area.

To date, all seafood tested by NOAA and FDA post-spill demonstrates seafood is safe for consumption. Results from the sensory analysis found no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and results from the chemical analysis for oil-related compounds and dispersants were well below the levels of concern.

Royal red shrimp are caught in Gulf waters deeper than 600 feet and are the only shrimp species targeted with trawls at these depths. The more common Gulf shrimp species are brown, white and pink shrimp, and are caught in waters less than 300 feet deep. NOAA has not received reports of tar balls in fishing catches at shallower depths in this area.

These waters were initially closed to all commercial and recreational fishing last summer because of the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill and were reopened to all fishing on Nov. 15 after hundreds of seafood specimens sampled from the area, including royal red shrimp, passed both sensory and chemical testing.

An area covering 1,041 square miles immediately surrounding the wellhead still remains closed to all commercial and recreational fishing. The fishing area closure was first instituted on May 2, at which time it covered about 3 percent (6,817 square miles) of Gulf waters around the wellhead. As oil continued to spill from the wellhead, the area grew in size, peaking at 37 percent (88,522 square miles) of Gulf waters on June 2.

NOAA has a number of methods for the public to obtain information or be notified when there is a change to the closed area:

- Sign up to receive Southeast Fishery Bulletins by email at SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov
- Call 1-800-627-NOAA (1-800-627-6622) to hear a recording of the current coordinates (message in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish – coordinates in English)
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio for messages about the closure
- Follow us on Twitter: usnoagov to get a tweet when the closed area changes

New Tool Allows Managers to Visualize Potential Impacts from Sea Level Rise

The NOAA Coastal Services Center recently released the Sea Level Rise Impacts Viewer, a new tool for visualizing sea level rise and coastal flooding that is now available for coastal Mississippi and Texas’ Houston and Galveston metro areas. The tool will be expanded for use in other geographic areas in the near future. Tool features include coastal flooding scenarios, coupled with photos of well-known locations that illustrate marsh impacts; uncertainty maps; flood frequency information; and social and economic vulnerability information. For more information, contact [Doug Marcy](#).

Departments of Energy and Commerce Announce New Partnership to Further Cooperation on Renewable Energy Modeling and Forecasting

January 24, 2011

The Department of Energy and the Department of Commerce today announced a new agreement to further collaboration between the agencies on renewable energy modeling and weather forecasting, which will help enable the nation's renewable energy resources to be used more effectively by business and entrepreneurs. The [Memorandum of Understanding](#) signed by Acting Under Secretary of Energy Cathy Zoi and Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., will encourage the two agencies to work together to develop and disseminate weather and climate information needed for renewable energy technologies that are dependent on short-term weather and longer-term climate trends. Better information on weather patterns and improved modeling of the variability of the wind, sun, water, ocean currents and other sources of renewable energy will ultimately increase the country's ability to efficiently and reliably integrate renewable energy into the electrical grid.

"This collaboration will bring together scientists and experts across the federal government to support our efforts to integrate renewable energy into our power system," said Zoi. "By providing us with a deeper understanding of how weather impacts the generation of renewable energy, this partnership will help to more effectively deploy these important resources across America."

"Our ability to increase America's supply of renewable energy is based in part on our ability to predict and harness precipitation, wind and cloud patterns," said Lubchenco. "Observations, forecasts and climate information tailored to the needs of the renewable energy industry will promote growth of this vital sector."

The agreement announced today builds on reports from both agencies that recognize the need for improved meteorological, oceanic, and climatological observations, modeling, and forecasting to expand the efficient use of renewable energy sources and further integrate these energy sources into the U.S. energy system. For example, DOE's *20% Wind Energy by 2030* report identifies several key research areas, such as improved wind forecasting techniques, that would enhance electrical grid system operations. NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan states that NOAA will develop integrated environmental information services for the unique needs of weather-sensitive sectors, including solar, wind, and oceanographic information critical to the development, production, and transmission of renewable energy.

The partnership will help renewable energy system designers, operators, and electric power system administrators in improving the cost effectiveness and reliability of weather-dependent renewable energy technologies. The collaboration includes a working group from DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that will identify areas for continued focus and research and help lay out next steps for improving the efficiency of renewable resources and better integrating renewable energy sources onto the electrical grid.

The group will produce an Action Plan in the coming months that will address:

- Improving renewable resource characterization models and methodologies for optimizing system reliability and performance
- Advancing meteorological and oceanic forecasting technologies, models and methodologies
- Defining national weather and oceanic monitoring systems needed to support renewable energy
- Predicting climate effects on renewable energy resources
- Coordinating both public and private sector contributions to addressing renewable resource needs.

Under the partnership, both agencies agree to provide the necessary resources to coordinate or carry out the designated tasks outlined in the Action Plan.

To learn more about wind as a renewable energy source, please visit DOE's Wind Program website: <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/windandhydro>. More on NOAA's renewable energy program: http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/research/renewable_energy. See the full text of the Memorandum of Understanding [here](#).

NOAA: Persistent Drought to Linger Across Southern United States

January 20, 2011

While wet and snowy weather has dominated the western U.S., persistent drought conditions are likely to linger in the Southern Plains and Southeast through mid to late spring, according to NOAA's National Weather Service. La Niña has kept storms and most of their precipitation in the north, leaving the South drier than normal.

"The speed with which the drought developed across the southern United States is rather unusual considering that just last year El Niño dominated the region with abundant precipitation," said Bill Proenza, director of NOAA's National Weather Service southern region. "Then it was as if a switch was flipped during the summer, changing to La Niña conditions."

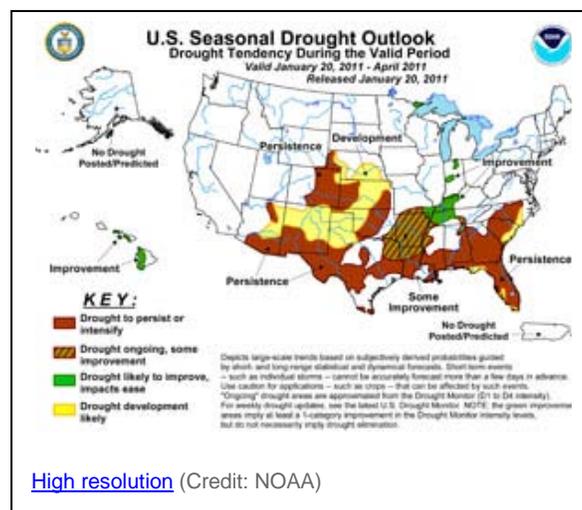
One of the major aspects of the emergence of La Niña was a very busy Atlantic hurricane season, which spawned 19 tropical storms, making it the third most active on record. Despite the large number of storms, only Hurricane Alex and Tropical Storm Hermine produced any appreciable rainfall in the southern United States. Those storms only affected Texas; no significant rainfall from an organized tropical system fell along the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Florida.

Sparse tropical rainfall and the dry conditions associated with La Niña combined to create severe to extreme drought conditions for nearly a third of the South and Southeast by late fall and early winter.

While the drought touches all of the Gulf Coast states, Texas and Florida are the most affected. From October through December, Texas received only five to 50 percent of normal precipitation, with portions of the lower Rio Grande averaging less than five percent of normal. During that period, for example, Brownsville received only 0.14 inches (normal is 6.55 inches) and Del Rio received 0.04 inch (normal is 3.89 inches). To the north in Austin, only 1.55 inches of rainfall was observed, compared to the normal of 8.34 inches.

In Florida, 51 percent of the state was in severe to extreme drought by the end of 2010. Some areas experienced the driest July 1 – December 31 period on record. For example, Gainesville received only 12.95 inches of precipitation, compared to the previous record low of 15.25 inches. The city normally receives 27 inches. Daytona Beach ended the period with 14.71 inches compared to the previous record low of 15.35 inches – its normal is 30 inches.

In central and southern Florida, the South Florida Water Management District rain gauge network recorded an average of only 2.97 inches during the October through December period, breaking the



previous record low average of 4.07 inches. Moreover, the District reports that Florida's Lake Okeechobee ended the year at 12.4 feet, 2.3 feet below average.

In addition to agricultural and water conservation concerns, one of the major threats from the drought is the growing wildfire danger. More than 42,000 fires accounted for more than 775,000 acres burned throughout the affected southern tier states during 2010.

Texas and Florida were among the hardest hit states. In Texas, the severe wildfire threat prompted Governor Rick Perry to issue a disaster proclamation for 244 of the state's 254 counties. Meanwhile, Florida lost more than 400,000 acres to wildfires last year, with more predicted to come. Florida's Forestry Division notes La Niña is expected to continue at least through spring and again anticipates greater than normal wildfire activity in 2011.

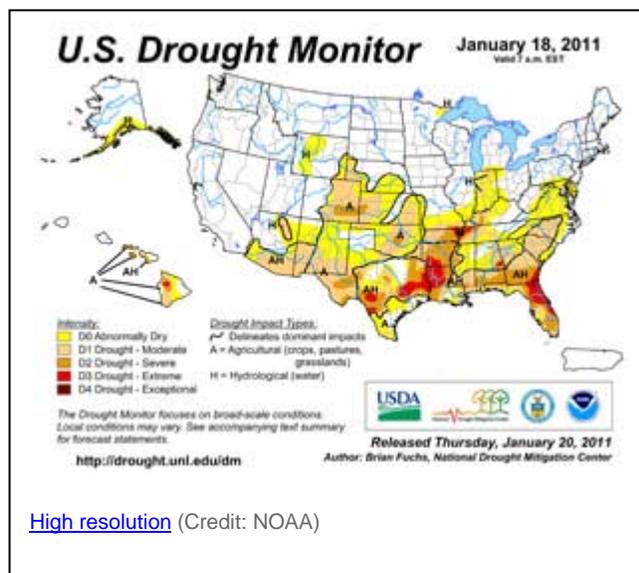
Getting the word out regarding likely La Niña impacts is imperative. "By providing information on current and future climate conditions to the public and to other federal, state and local decision makers, the National Weather Service can help them prepare for and react to such extreme weather events and to climate variability," said David Brown, Ph.D., regional climate services director for NOAA's National Weather Service southern region.

La Niña has developed 13 times since 1950, and the current La Niña ranks as the sixth strongest. The question climate experts are asking now is whether it will fade with the approach of summer or continue into next year.

"Of the five stronger La Niñas that occurred, four resulted in multi-year events," said Victor Murphy, climate program manager for NOAA's National Weather Service southern region. "If this La Niña persists until next winter, the threat of drought conditions in the south extending into next year will be heightened."

NOAA's polar satellites are key to measuring, tracking, and forecasting drought conditions because they provide consistent observations of the globe not possible with only land-based instruments. Data from the NOAA's Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellites, or POES, supports a broad range of environmental monitoring applications including weather analysis and forecasting, climate research and prediction, global sea surface temperature measurements, forest fire detection, global vegetation analysis, search and rescue, and many other applications. For more on satellites and drought monitoring, see <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/climate-monitoring/dyk/satellite-drought>.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. It operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Visit us online at weather.gov and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nws).



Report on Coastal Zone Societies, Economies, Environments, and Hazards Released

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management released its [fourth annual report](#) on the “contextual indicators” within the Coastal Zone Management Act Performance Measurement System. These indicators are intended to give context to the work of Federally-funded State coastal zone management programs by illustrating the many pressures on coastal areas. The indicators were identified collaboratively by State and Federal partners, and indicator data is drawn from existing, widely available data sets with assistance from the NOAA Coastal Services Center. For more information, contact [Zac Hart](#).

In the Gulf States

Program Lands Charter-boat Operators in Classroom

Capt. Ben Fairey of Orange Beach, Ala., heard about the Dolphin SMART program a while back. It is a program geared toward the nature tourism industry that teaches tour operators the best ways to view dolphins and the laws that protect the marine mammals.

“It was very evident to me that we needed the same type of program for our charter fishing industry,” he said.

Acting on this suggestion from the captain of the *Necessity*, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and a group of its partners, including the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Orange Beach Fishing Association and Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism, created a program to offer charter boat operators information about their industry and the environment.

“We are excited to bring this education opportunity to our local fleet and preserve the cultural integrity of our family businesses,” said Joanne McDonough of the Nature Tourism Initiative, which is overseeing this training program. “Our course encourages sustainable fishing practices by following the program’s code of ethics and statement of commitment, which are based on best practices, guidelines and legal requirements.”

The Certified Fisher Invested in Sustainable Harvests (CFISH) program includes classroom training and hands-on activities, as well as a review of charter-fishing businesses’ advertising and websites. CFISH program coordinators also will climb aboard and evaluate the fishing charter and teach ways of fishing that help sustain fish stocks. In the end, qualifying captains and deckhands will receive a CFISH certification.

“As an avid fisherman and a tourism professional, fishing plays a key role in our guests’ vacation experience, and we are honored to support this ground-breaking program,” said Herb Malone, president/CEO of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism. “Our local captains have been through a lot, and this training will help everyone secure a bright future.”



Maj. Chris Blankenship of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division was an instructor at the Feb. 15 workshop at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab in Dauphin Island, Ala.

“The good thing about this training,” he said, “is that deckhands and captains will be able to give information to the people about possession limits and why they are where they are. They will also be able to give information about the artificial reefs and what they are fishing over. And, this program gave me the opportunity to talk to a direct group about the laws and regulations that affect them.”

Other workshop instructors included scientists who are part of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Marine Resources Division. They taught the basics of stock assessments and fisheries research, management issues, catch shares, artificial reef program history and reef updates. The fishermen ended the day with a tour of the Estuarium.

“We can educate the captains and mates to be able to convey the important environmental and fish-related issues to our customers,” Fairey said. “It makes us more professional.”

Celebrate Seagrass Awareness Month



Florida waters contain the largest sea grass meadow in the world. Approximately 2.2 million acres of seagrass beds have been mapped in nearshore Florida waters, but the total area of seagrasses in our state's coastal waters is declining. This extremely valuable resource provides ecological services worth over \$40 billion each year. Seagrass is important in providing many functions that contribute to a healthy marine ecosystem.

Florida is a world renowned fishing destination, and many economically important commercial and recreational fish and shellfish species depend on healthy seagrass beds for critical stages of their life cycle. Recreational fishing activity injected more than \$4.5 billion into Florida communities in the form of retail sales, employment compensation and business earnings in 2006.

Unfortunately, seagrass beds are susceptible to injuries such as boat propeller scaring and vessel groundings. Florida has nearly one million registered boats, and boating activities can severely impact or completely wipe out localized seagrass meadows. Resource managers, scientists, and private industry consultants work together to restore damaged areas and investigate new seagrass restoration products and methods. Coastal eutrophication, the process by which water is depleted of oxygen due to overgrowth of competing smaller plants, impacts sea grass as well. Eutrophication is a major concern among leading marine and estuarine scientists because murky water limits sunlight which slows seagrass growth. Major efforts to improve and restore water quality have resulted in seagrass expansion in some Florida estuaries.

In an effort to protect and conserve this invaluable habitat, resource managers and scientists throughout Florida have been conducting intensive seagrass monitoring and mapping programs. In 2009, a total of 34 seagrass monitoring programs were indentified throughout the state. March is set aside to educate residents, visitors, and all Florida boaters about the threats facing our vital seagrass meadows. Please join Governor Rick Scott in acknowledging the 10th annual Seagrass Awareness Month.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) is responsible for the State's 41 aquatic preserves. It is the mission of CAMA to protect, enhance,

and restore the natural habitats and resources of nearly 2 million acres of submerged lands. CAMA is helping to protect seagrasses by mapping and monitoring existing seagrass communities, posting signs to advise boaters of the presence of seagrasses, informing the public of the benefits of sea grass and developing restoration plans with other agencies.

- [Learn More About Seagrasses](#)
- [Seagrass Awareness Month Proclamation](#) (pdf - 369 KB)
- [To Other CAMA Articles](#)
- [Back to Home Page](#)

Team to Grow Awareness about Proper Fertilizer Use



Gulf of Mexico Alliance members and partners worked recently with a social-marketing firm to brainstorm potential messages to be used in the upcoming Gulf of Mexico Alliance Nutrient-Reduction Campaign.

They attended a workshop, learned about social marketing and shared their ideas on creating a message that might raise homeowner awareness about the connection between fertilizer use and the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

In another effort to develop the campaign, groups of homeowners in Mississippi and Alabama coastal counties participated in focus groups to discuss their lawn-care practices and learn about how the nutrients in fertilizer impact the Gulf of Mexico.

“Homeowners can assist in reducing the dead zone through their individual actions,” said Nutrients and Hypoxia Engagement Specialist Stacy Ray with the NOAA Engagement Program in Mobile, Ala. “Information provided by the focus groups is being tailored into a message that will make sense to individual homeowners. The nutrient-reduction campaign will be promoted in coastal neighborhoods in Alabama and Mississippi. We are also partnering with the Cooperative Extension Service’s Master Gardeners in both states to help spread the word about using proper fertilizer practices.”

Improperly applied fertilizer used on lawns and gardens is carried by rainwater into storm drains and streams. Ultimately, it is deposited in the Gulf of Mexico. Nitrogen and phosphorus, nutrients found in the fertilizer, contribute to the development of a process called hypoxia, which means the dissolved oxygen in the water is not sufficient to support most marine life – including fish and shrimp.

The campaign will be designed to raise awareness of proper fertilization practices, save homeowners’ time and money on lawn care and protect and enhance water quality in the Gulf of Mexico.

The northern Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone, also known as the ‘dead zone,’ has been well documented by scientists since the 1970s and is the largest hypoxic zone in the United States. In recent years, its size has averaged over 7,000 square miles, according to scientific reports.

The nutrient-reduction campaign is organized by the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Engagement Program, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance’s Environmental Education Network and the Gulf of Mexico Alliance’s Nutrients and Nutrient Impacts Priority Issue Team. The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium is a partner in the campaign.

Beneficial Use Regulations Maximize Resources Dedicated To Coastal Protection

Monday, March 7, 2011

Today, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Angelle and the DNR Office of Coastal Management (OCM) announced that improved rules on the beneficial use of material dredged in projects requiring a coastal use permit have improved the percentage of qualifying projects that provide material or funding for coastal protection.

Beneficial use refers to taking material dredged for a project and using it to help build or protect coastal wetlands. The intent of the new rules is to ensure as much material as possible from dredging projects under state regulation is put to that beneficial use. The beneficial use rules apply to any project requiring a state coastal use permit that involves dredging 25,000 cubic yards or more to facilitate the movement or mooring of vessels.

The total amount of material in eligible projects has amounted annually to about 3 million cubic yards, but logistical impediments and other issues meant only about 22 percent of it was put to beneficial use under Coastal Management rules in place until late 2009. Rules adopted and made public in late 2009 have succeeded in achieving the goal of 100 percent of qualifying dredging projects providing resources for coastal efforts – either in dredged materials or funding contributions to the coast. Recognizing a need for more options and greater flexibility to capture more resources, DNR Secretary Scott Angelle directed Assistant Secretary Lou Buatt to develop rules that would provide for a greater percentage of dredged material providing a benefit to Louisiana’s coast.

“It is critical that we make full use of every available resource and continually seek new ways to add to the assets needed to strengthen our coast,” Angelle said. “The flexibility offered in our beneficial use rules helps balance the needs for development and for protection of our coastal zone in a manner that strengthens both.”

The rules for beneficial use adopted by the Office of Coastal Management in 2009 include four options for permit applicants involved in coastal projects that include dredging – implementing a project that makes beneficial use of the dredged material, providing for the use of the dredged material on an approved coastal restoration project, using dredged material at another location that creates the same amount of beneficial use, or making a voluntary contribution to the Coastal Resources Trust fund, based on the amount of material dredged.

One of the most significant changes to the beneficial use rules was allowing in-lieu contributions instead of direct use of the dredged material for projects where direct use of the soil on beneficial coastal projects is not feasible due to quality of soil or the expense of transportation. This also allows several smaller projects to make contributions to the Coastal Trust Fund that can be combined to fund larger projects. The in-lieu option alone created the opportunity for the coast to benefit from 14 dredging projects involving nearly 370,000 cubic yards of soil – bringing in \$415,000 to the Coastal Resources Trust Fund in situations where the old rules might have meant no resources could have been direct to the coast.

“Those 14 projects could have been missed opportunities, but instead are adding to the pool of resources the state can draw from in combating the forces that are costing us coastal wetlands,” Buatt said.

Beyond the in-lieu contributions, beneficial use rules offer three other options for permit applicants involved in coastal projects that include dredging – implementing a project that makes beneficial use of the dredged material, providing for the use of the dredged material on an approved coastal restoration project, or using dredged material at another location that creates the same amount of beneficial use.

Buatt said that the old rules created permitting delays because of the difficulty of meeting the requirement of the limited allowable options, but OCM staff aggressively sought to remove those delays in the crafting of the current beneficial use guidelines.

Windell Curole, general manager of the South Lafourche Levee District, said the new flexibility in beneficial use rules means a reduction in potential to wasted critical coastal resources. “Beneficial use is one of the best ways to support the preservation of what we have left in our coastal areas,” he said. “DNR’s effort in maximizing that will continue to pay dividends for coastal protection for years to come.”

Ted Falgout, retired executive director of Port Fourchon, said that he hopes to see the state build on the early success of the effort to broaden beneficial use of dredged material. “It’s a worthwhile effort and hopefully one that will set the stage for even greater opportunities to bring resources to bear on our coast,” he said. Angelle added, “Windell and Ted were both instrumental in working to develop this public policy. We owe the success of this program to their input and guidance.”

Buatt said that the strong response in the first year of implementation is encouraging, but that much more work must be done to maximize potential resources that could be dedicated to the coast. He said that DNR is continuing in its effort to improve the percentage of dredged material from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers navigation projects that is targeted to strengthening Louisiana’s coastal zone and protecting the lives and homes of its citizens, and a significant part of the nation’s shipping and energy infrastructure.

Atchafalaya Basin Program Draft FY2012 Plan Presented to CPRA

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Today, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Office of Coastal Management’s Atchafalaya Basin Program presented the Draft FY 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan at a meeting of the Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority (CPRA) in Lake Charles, LA.

“Today’s presentation is a significant step in the process of finalizing the 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan,” said DNR Secretary Scott A. Angelle. “This plan is critical to the enhancement of the Basin, and I believe this plan represents an immensely successful effort to combine public input and the best science available to propose projects with positive impacts to the Basin.”

“Louisiana is home to the most productive swamp in the world, and we have been given the tremendous responsibility to serve as stewards of the Basin and preserve its productivity,” added Angelle. “The goals of the Atchafalaya Basin Program and this FY 2012 Annual Plan are to ensure that this natural treasure continues to serve as a fertile animal and fisheries habitat, that its natural beauty is preserved, and that residents and visitors alike are provided recreation access to the Basin.”

Upon approval from CPRA as consistent with the Master Plan for Coastal Protection and Restoration, the draft plan will be reviewed by the Atchafalaya Basin Research and Promotion Board and then submitted to the legislature for consideration 30 days prior to the initiation of the 2012 Regular Legislative Session, which begins April 25.

The FY 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan is developed in accordance with Act 606 of the 2008 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, which requires the Atchafalaya Basin Program to focus on the management of and access to Basin resources. The Plan identifies projects related to water quality and water management in the Basin, as well as access and recreational projects that will enhance the public’s opportunities to enjoy the natural resources of the Basin.

At today's meeting, Cynthia Duet of the National Audubon Society expressed support for the state's efforts that were outlined in the presentation, both in the direction of the Atchafalaya Basin Program development and specifically the creation and implementation of the science based natural resource inventory and assessment system.

Duet said, "The 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan is a vehicle that sets the stage for future projects and proposals that will significantly improve the natural function of the Atchafalaya Basin and will continue to positively impact the rest of the coastal area. We will continue to work closely with the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and the Atchafalaya Basin Research and Promotion Board on these and future Basin projects."

"The Atchafalaya Basin is vital our state's ecological, environmental and economic well-being," said DNR Coastal Management Assistant Secretary Lou Buatt. "The Draft FY 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Annual Plan does an excellent job of addressing those issues and furthering the goals of the Atchafalaya Basin Program."

"The Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan recognizes three distinct project categories: water quality/water management, access and other projects consistent with the mission of the Atchafalaya Basin Master Plan," said Atchafalaya Basin Program Director Stephen Chustz. "The proposed projects in the FY 2012 plan are all excellent opportunities to enhance the Basin for current and future generations."

To view the Draft FY 2012 Atchafalaya Basin Program Annual Plan, please visit http://dnr.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/Atchafalaya_Basin/2012-draft-annual-plan.pdf.

Coastal Development Strategies Conference Set for May 11-12 in Biloxi

BILOXI, Miss. – Register now for the Mississippi 12th annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference, to be held May 11-12 at the IP Casino Resort Spa in Biloxi. This year's conference explores "The Mississippi Gulf Coast and Its People." The conference is hosted by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) Office of Coastal Management and Planning, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area and conference partners the Gulf Coast Business Council and Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce.

A welcome reception will kick off this year's event on May 10, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art. Conference attendees may also register for a Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area golf tournament to be held May 13.

This year's conference features two full days of speakers and breakout sessions. The first day of the conference will feature keynote speaker, author Carolyn Haines. Haines is a Lucedale, Miss., native and worked for nearly a decade as a photojournalist before writing fiction. Known as "the original Mississippi Delta Mystery Author," she has written the Them Bones mystery series, featuring fictional private investigator Sarah Booth Delaney. Other works include Delta Blues, Growing Up in Mississippi, Summer of the Redeemers and Summer of Fear. Haines will talk about how our heritage and landscape are intertwined with the lives we live and the stories we tell.

Other topics will include climate change, energy and resiliency; implementing Smart Growth; infrastructure; financing, real estate and development; and redevelopment. A preliminary agenda is available for download at www.dmr.ms.gov.

This multidisciplinary event draws elected officials, city and county staff, contractors, developers, bankers, planners, zoning officials, realtors and appraisers, engineers, landowners, industry, students, federal and state agencies, boards of supervisors, lawyers, private and corporate entities, environmentalists, resource managers and others committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

Real estate agents can earn 10 hours of continuing education credit by attending the 12th annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference. (Appraiser credits to be announced at a later date.) Receipts will be provided to all other professions—such as, engineers, teachers and architects—to submit for credit to their respective organizations.

The deadline for pre-registration is April 1, 2011, and is \$125 per person (\$80 for students). After April 1, the registration fee will be \$155 (until May 11) and on-site registration is \$175. Conference fees include breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunches, receptions and conference materials.

For information on how you can be a sponsor, call Susan Perkins at 228-523-4124 or Leslie Young at 228-523-4123.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

Mississippi Coastal Program Helps Coastal Communities Reduce Flood Risk

In 2009, the Mississippi Coastal Program launched an initiative to help communities in the state's three coastal counties reduce their flood risk. The initiative focuses on improving community status in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS), which is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages floodplain management activities that exceed the NFIP's minimum requirements. Residents of participating communities receive flood insurance discounts that reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from these activities. Since the initiative began, almost half of the cities have improved their ratings, and the two counties not previously participating are completing their requirements to join.

The initiative was developed by the state as a coastal hazards enhancement strategy under Section 309 of the Coastal Zone Management Act. Through the National Coastal Zone Management Program, OCRM worked with the Mississippi Coastal Program to fund, develop, and implement this strategy, which also includes a primer on how communities can get started in the CRS. In addition, this initiative was leveraged by the NOAA Coastal Storms Program to extend the support to the Mississippi counties immediately adjacent to the coastal zone, which are also subject to coastal hazards. Contact: Christa.Rabenold@noaa.gov.

DMR's Coastal Preserves Program Partners with NWF, MWF and NCD to Kick-off Habitat Stewards Program in Coastal Mississippi

February 1, 2011

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Coastal Preserves Program, under the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), will partner with the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Mississippi Wildlife Federation (MWF), Natural Capital Development (NCD) and local conservation partners, including Mississippi Sandhill Crane and Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuges and the Land Trust for Mississippi Coastal Plain to kick-off the Habitat Stewards Program in Coastal Mississippi.

The two-year pilot project is a natural outgrowth of NWF's initial response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Small groups of volunteers will serve as local "friends" groups on specific tracts of conservation land along the Mississippi Coast. Volunteer habitat stewards will be trained and supported as they conduct various services, such as clearing and monitoring trail conditions, cleaning up litter and ensuring safe conditions for visitors, observing wildlife, documenting human use of public lands and treating and monitoring invasive species. Thus, volunteer habitat stewards will enhance wildlife habitat and help improve people's connection with important conservation areas and nature.

Those interested in volunteering to become a habitat steward can contact local Project coordinators, Cynthia Ramseur or Leah Bray at 228-875-1032 for more information.

The main objective of the Coastal Preserves Program is to acquire, protect, and manage sensitive coastal wetland habitats along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, therefore ensuring the ecological health of Mississippi's coastal wetland ecosystems. The State currently has title to approximately 36,000 acres of the designated 72,000 acres of crucial coastal wetland habitat within Mississippi's 20 coastal preserve sites.

"Managing 36,000 acres is a tremendous undertaking," said Jeff Clark, director of the DMR's Coastal Preserves Bureau. "Having the Habitat Stewards Program in place is extremely beneficial to the Coastal Preserves Program because it puts more people on the ground and helps us get more accomplished."

Natural areas require active management and restoration in order to maintain the integrity of ecosystem services that conservation lands provide. Invasive species can cause terrible harm to an area and must be monitored and controlled as much as possible. Other management activities include removal of storm debris, preparation and application of prescribed fire, restoration and mitigation for coastal erosion and compatible public use including interpretation and education about coastal habitats.

MDEQ and MDMR Announce Release of the Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Commission's "Vision" of Recovery, Protection

BILOXI, Miss. – Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Commission Co-Chairs Dr. Bill Walker, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and Trudy Fisher, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, announced Jan. 14, 2011, the release of the commission's report "Vision for Gulf Coast Recovery, Restoration and Protection."

The commission will accept public comments on the vision plan for the next 30 days. The full vision plan is available on the Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Commission Web site, www.mgomc.org.

Governor Haley Barbour formed the commission in August and charged the group to develop a long-term vision plan to enhance the Gulf of Mexico for the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Mississippi Gulf of Mexico Commission is a broad-based board of scientists, business leaders and seafood industry workers, with representatives of state and local governments acting as ex officio members.

“The Deepwater Horizon explosion and spill last summer showed us all how many different ways the Gulf Coast is important to Mississippi,” Gov. Haley Barbour said. “It’s important that we have a plan going forward to look out for the economic and ecological interests, because on the Gulf Coast especially, the economy is tied so closely to the environment.”

The commission worked closely with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance and various state agencies to develop the plan to submit to Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, the former Mississippi governor tapped to lead the long-term restoration of the Gulf of Mexico.

The commission’s vision plan contains a broad set of goals and objectives designed to create positive long-term, sustainable benefits for the region. The vision plan also assesses and evaluates existing and emerging data, reports and plans relative to those goals and objectives.

“I am very thankful to the commissioners for spending quality time producing this vision document for the recovery, restoration and protection of the Mississippi Gulf Coast,” Walker said. “The final draft released today is a comprehensive document that provides a path forward as we all work together to implement this comprehensive vision for the future of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Region.”

“It has been a privilege for me to have the opportunity to work with the members of the commission on this important work,” Fisher said. “I look forward to the public’s review, their opinions, and also their comments to enhance the report.”

Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to be Dedicated on March 22 **Facility is first in South Texas able to handle wildlife oiled by large-scale spill**

March 18, 2011

Contact: Jim Suydam, jim.suydam@glo.texas.gov

AUSTIN — The Texas General Land Office and the University of Texas Marine Science Institute are proud to announce the grand opening of the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at the Animal Rehabilitation Keep.

The dedication ceremony will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday, March 22 at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas. Nueces County Judge Lloyd Neal and Greg Pollock, deputy commissioner for the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Division at the General Land Office, will be on hand to help cut the ribbon.

While the General Land Office and the Animal Rehabilitation Keep, or ARK, have worked together on moderate and small-scale responses to oiled wildlife, this new facility will be the first in South Texas ready to help large numbers of oiled wildlife recover in the event of a significant spill.

The Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will be activated in the event of a spill, providing a place where trained rehabilitation personnel can clean oiled birds or other wildlife. The facility houses a climate-controlled room with sinks and tables for handling and cleaning wildlife. Another room will be used to let the birds or other animals that have been cleaned rest and recover.

The Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will also help ARK expand its normal operations. Between spills, the facility can be used to help the ARK staff with research or educational outreach efforts. Valero paid for the Oiled Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to increase ARK's oil spill response readiness through a Supplemental Environmental Project.

Surfside Beach is Back, Just in Time for Spring Break

167,500 tons of sand — more than 10,000 dump trucks full — rebuild Texas surf spot

March 14, 2011

Contact: Jim Suydam. jim.suydam@glo.texas.gov

SURFSIDE, Texas — Spring Break revelers hit the new-and-improved Surfside Beach Monday, where the General Land Office just finished work on a \$4.7 million effort to restore this iconic Texas surf spot to its former glory. Surfside Mayor Larry Davidson and Larry Laine, chief clerk at the General Land Office, cut a ribbon to rededicate the expansive new swath of sand, more than 10,000 dump trucks worth shipped by barge and truck from the Port of Bay City and then spread on the beach.

"Look at that beach, Surfside is back!" said Laine, a one-time Surfside resident. "We worked hard to get this project done before Spring Break so everyone can enjoy the best new beach in Texas."

Once an iconic Texas surf spot, Surfside Beach suffers from one of the highest erosion rates on the Texas coast. Years of erosion - sometimes as much as 16 feet of beach a year - had thinned the beach to a sandy ribbon. Hurricane Ike destroyed what was left, leaving the Gulf's waves lapping at Beach Drive and threatening to claim more than \$53 million worth of streets, sewers and other public infrastructure.

After Ike, Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson made the preservation and restoration of Surfside Beach a priority. The resulting project to renourish the beach and rebuild and enhance a protective stone revetment to withstand a 25-year storm event combined local, state and federal money. More than 167,500 tons of sand later, Surfside Beach is once again in business.

The new beach is about a mile long and more than 100 feet wide. It stretches from Jettyview Road to Whelk Street. Laine said the state's investment of \$480,000 through the Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act helped leverage more than \$4.2 million in other funding to make the project possible.

"I think members of the Legislature can feel good about their investment in this project," Laine said. "Surfside Beach is a great example of how a big beach project, where it makes economic sense, can save millions of dollars worth of public infrastructure. Surfside is worth saving."

Links:

 **Nourishing Beaches**

Texas Open Beaches Act Gets Second Chance

Supreme Court grants rare motion for rehearing on case that threatens public access

March 11, 2011

Contact: Jim Suydam, jim.suydam@glo.texas.gov

AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson today welcomed news that the Supreme Court will rehear arguments in a case brought forward by a California resident that some say has gutted the Texas Open Beaches Act.

"This is nothing less than a second chance for the Texas Open Beaches Act," Patterson said. "Public access to the beach is a Texas tradition that predates the Republic. Today's decision by the Court to take another look at its decision in this case is great news."

In 2005, California resident Carole Severance purchased several houses on the beach in Galveston. After Hurricane Rita hit that summer, the General Land Office sent Severance a letter stating her property was on the public and subject to removal under the Open Beaches Act. She was later offered up to \$50,000 in public money to move each house off the beach. Instead, Severance sued, claiming the public's right to access the beach violated her constitutional rights.

In November, the Supreme Court issued an opinion in the case that called into question the definition of the public beach easement, a key provision of the Texas Open Beaches Act. The Court ruled there is no longer a public beach easement on West Galveston Island. The opinion threw the Texas tradition of public beach access into legal limbo and caused Patterson to cancel a much-needed \$40 million beach renourishment project on West Galveston Island.

The opinion also triggered a robust response from Texans defending the Open Beaches Act. Patterson filed a motion for rehearing and twenty briefs were filed supporting Patterson's motion from a diverse group of private citizens, coastal advocacy groups, chambers of commerce and coastal cities and counties. Just one brief was filed on Severance's behalf.

"I think today's decision clearly shows that the judges on the Supreme Court understand how important the Open Beaches Act is to Texans," Patterson said. "When Texans voted overwhelmingly in 2009 to sanctify the Open Beaches Act in the Constitution, they really meant it."

Patterson also thanked the Court for expediting the decision to rehear the case. "I very much appreciate the Court's swift attention to this," Patterson said. "It's encouraging to think we may have some clarity on whether or not the Open Beaches Act still stands before we get into the thick of the next hurricane season."

Patterson said that's important because the state can't spend money to rebuild beaches the public can't use. On Monday, Larry Laine, chief clerk at the General Land Office, will join Surfside Mayor Larry Davidson to rededicate Surfside Beach, which has been restored to its former glory by the General Land Office. Since the project was done on land that had become submerged after Hurricane Ike, public access was not an issue for Surfside Beach following the Severance opinion, allowing the General Land Office to move forward quickly. The \$7 million project protects more than \$53 million worth of public infrastructure such as utilities, sewers and roads, as well as private property.

"Surfside Beach is a good example of what's at stake here beyond public access," Patterson said.

The Court will hear arguments in the case of Severance versus Patterson at 9 a.m. Tuesday, April 19.

Adopt-A-Beach Celebrates 25th Anniversary

General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program celebrates 25 years with \$50,000 from Shell and Motiva

February 18, 2011

Contact: Jim Suydam, jim.suydam@glo.texas.gov

AUSTIN — Ronald Reagan was president, Top Gun was the top draw at the box office and 2,800 Texans volunteered for the inaugural General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup in 1986. Since then, the General Land Office's Adopt-A-Beach Program has grown into one of the most successful all-volunteer efforts in the nation. In the past 25 years, 406,000 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 7,800 tons of trash from the Texas Gulf Coast. And thanks to a generous \$50,000 donation by Shell Oil Company and Motiva Enterprises LLC, Adopt-A-Beach will celebrate its 25 th anniversary by reaching out to even more beach lovers.

"Adopt-A-Beach volunteers don't just clean the beach a few times a year, they make a lasting difference," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the General Land Office. "Shell and Motiva's donation will bring in even more volunteers by helping spread the message that trashing Texas beaches isn't cool."

Shell and Motiva are the exclusive sponsors of the General Land Office's Adopt-A-Beach 25 th Anniversary. This donation will also help to develop a public service announcement that will be distributed across the Texas coast, made available on YouTube, and will help create a web-based advertising campaign for various social media. The donation will also help fund a direct mail campaign along the coast reminding volunteers about the date of fall and spring cleanups as well as a full-page ad in Texas Highways to run before the fall and spring beach cleanups.

"Adopt-A-Beach has long enjoyed the support of Shell and Motiva in this campaign against beach trash," Patterson said. "They are a good corporate citizen with a long history of working hard to protect Texas beaches and bays."

The Texas General Land Office's Adopt-A-Beach Program is funded primarily by private contributions. To help out, or for more information, call the General Land Office at 1-877-TXCOAST or visit our website at <http://www.texasadoptabeach.org>.

Link:  **Adopt-A-Beach**

Patterson Announces \$1.7 Million in Grants for Texas Coast

February 07, 2011

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced grants for 16 projects worth \$1.7 million to protect and preserve the Texas coast. "These projects will get a lot of bang for the buck, restoring vital marshlands, improving public access to the beach and even rebuilding oyster beds with recycled shells, just to name a few of the good things they're going to accomplish," Patterson said. The grant funding was approved Monday by the Coastal Coordination Council, which oversees Texas' Coastal Management Program. The 16 projects* selected are:

- **Shell Bank:** An Oyster Shell Recycling Program for the Texas Coastal Bend Harte Research Institute will expand the oyster shell recycling program, increase community involvement, develop lesson plans for high school students, and monitor oyster growth and reef development. \$96,647

- Habitat Restoration at the Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve - Phase I: The city of Corpus Christi will develop a restoration and monitoring plan to begin implementation of on-the-ground restoration activities within the preserve. Project activities will also include the development and implementation of a public outreach/education program to interpret the restoration effort. \$100,000
- Prairie Rising - A Grassroots Restoration Partnership: Armand Bayou Nature Center will carry out The Prairie Rising project, which includes the use of prescribed fire, prescribed mowing and invasive species control via ground-based herbicide application. Opportunities to learn about aspects of prairie management will be provided to volunteers during their work at Armand Bayou Nature Center. \$96,419
- Nueces Bay Marsh Restoration: Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program will initiate dredge-and-fill operations (in accordance with its USACE permit) that will create another 15+ acres of marsh complex (with a high percentage of planting area) within the 80-acre containment cell. \$399,000
- San Antonio Bay Watershed Protection Plan - Phase I : Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program will support the development of a San Antonio Bay Watershed Protection Plan. Specifically, funding will be used to develop plan components (subplans or chapters) for two often interrelated subject areas – habitat conservation/restoration and public access to coastal resources. \$100,000
- Nueces Delta Freshwater Inflow Management: Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program will design and install a freshwater inflow management structure upstream from a discharge pipeline and implement earth-moving activities as needed to maximize the retention of freshwater inflows in the Nueces Delta. \$210,000
- Tabbs Bay Project: The city of Baytown will improve shoreline access, benefit and enhance public utilization, and aid ecotourism development. Specifically, the project entails the removal of chemically treated, submerged and partially submerged pilings from derelict drilling rigs, defunct derrick platforms, and damaged service docks and piers from Tabbs Bay. \$81,000
- The Live Oak Nature and Education Trail: Aransas County will develop Upper Tule Creek West as a "living lab." It will include trails, educational kiosks, timber observation blinds and interpretive areas with educational signage. A bridge being constructed on the city's hike and bike trail adjacent to the new stream will make it easily accessible to students and teachers. \$100,000
- Coastal Enhancement and Education: Cameron County Drainage District #1 will construct a parking area, trail and viewing platforms and install educational signage as part of a storm water retention and biofiltration project to mitigate nonpoint source pollution, protect coastal resources, and provide wetland habitats and educational opportunities. \$100,000
- Armand Bayou Watershed Plan - Phase IV Implementation Project: Armand Bayou Nature Center will implement Phase IV of the Armand Bayou Watershed Plan. The implementation project will focus on three strategic themes that have been consistent throughout the process: (1) "Continue Strong Leadership" to maintain collaborative stakeholder processes that guide and implement watershed initiatives; (2) "Enhance community commitment" to increase awareness and involvement for greater stewardship, especially for water quality; and (3) "Conserve High Priority Land in the Watershed" to protect and restore valuable habitat, for wildlife, human enjoyment, flood management, and water quality protection. \$58,985
- The Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Marine Debris Public Relations Campaign: The Texas General Land Office will develop a new outreach campaign to help increase public awareness of the threat caused by marine debris on the Texas coast, and to spur volunteer participation in the program's coastwide cleanup efforts. \$76,647

- **Boater Waste Education Campaign:** Galveston Bay Foundation will continue its marketing campaign for boaters and marinas. The campaign emphasizes (1) environmental harm caused by raw sewage and (2) how boaters can properly dispose of their waste. \$31,066
- **Development and Implementation of a Sanitary Survey Program for Texas Beaches:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi will initiate a standard sanitary survey program, currently lacking in Texas, to characterize and categorize Texas beaches, assess potential sources of pollution and predict water quality based on existing data. \$99,144
- **Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program:** The University of Texas - Bureau of Economic Geology will continue implementing "The Texas High School Coastal Monitoring Program," which engages high school students, teachers and scientists to work together to gain a better understanding of dune and beach dynamics on the Texas coast. Students and teachers will learn how to measure topography, map the vegetation line and shoreline, and observe weather and wave conditions. \$81,716
- **Lower Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Water Quality Initiative: Phase 1:** The University of Texas at Austin - LBJ School of Public Affairs will: (1) protect human health by ensuring clean water for consumption, irrigation, and safe recreation; (2) encourage the restoration and protection of riparian, coastal marsh and wetland areas, improving water quality and natural flood protection; (3) improve the effectiveness and efficiency of water resource management and pollution control; and (4) encourage sustainable economic growth. \$90,160
- **Training Program for Certifying Nesting Sea Turtle Monitors:** Texas A&M University at Galveston will develop and conduct workshops across the Texas coast to train personnel required by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to monitor sea turtle nesting activity concurrent to on-beach projects during the nesting season. \$19,216

* projects will be submitted to NOAA for final funding approval by the National Coastal Zone Management Program

The Coastal Coordination Council sets goals and policies to guide all entities regulating or managing natural resources along the Texas coast. The members of the Coastal Coordination Council are: the commissioner of the General Land Office, the chair of the Parks and Wildlife Commission, the chair of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, a member of the Railroad Commission of Texas, the chair of the Texas Water Development Board, the chair of the Texas Transportation Commission, a member of the State Soil and Water Conservation Board, the director of the Texas A&M University Sea Grant Program and four gubernatorial appointees. The gubernatorial appointees are a local elected official who lives along the coast, an owner of a business located on the coast who lives on the coast, a resident from the coast and a representative of agriculture.

Other News

Obama Administration's National Ocean Council Names State, Local and Tribal Representatives to Coordinating Body

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

February 23, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Recognizing that successful ocean stewardship requires inter-governmental collaboration, the Obama Administration's National Ocean Council today announced the inaugural members of the Governance Coordinating Committee, a group of state, local and tribal representatives that will serve as a key coordinating body on ocean policy issues.

President Obama signed an Executive Order in July, 2010, establishing the Nation's first comprehensive, integrated National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and Great Lakes. America's oceans and coastal regions support tens of millions of jobs and contribute trillions of dollars a year to the national economy. The National Ocean Policy identifies priority areas to focus our Nation's stewardship efforts, including a collaborative, regionally based planning process to ensure healthy ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources for the many communities and economies that rely on and enjoy them.

The Executive Order created the Cabinet-level National Ocean Council to coordinate across the Federal Government on ocean policy, and directed the establishment of the inter-governmental Governance Coordinating Committee (GCC). The 18-member GCC will coordinate with the National Ocean Council on inter-jurisdictional ocean policy issues. GCC members were selected from a pool of nominees submitted by state governors and tribal and local officials. They consist of three at-large tribal representatives, one state representative from each of nine regional planning areas, one state legislative representative, two a-large representatives from inland states, and three local government officials from coastal states.

"The National Ocean Policy helps us to manage the significant and often competing demands on the ocean to ensure these resources can continue to fuel our communities and economies in the long term," said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and Co-chair of the National Ocean Council. "Working closely with the state, local and tribal representatives on the Governance Coordinating Committee is vital to achieving the goal of healthy oceans, coasts and Great Lakes that work for American communities."

"I welcome the inaugural members of the Governance Coordinating Committee and thank them for their willingness to serve in this important capacity," said John P. Holdren, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and Co-chair of the National Ocean Council. "The range of skills and experiences these new members represent will be crucial to ensuring the success of the National Ocean Policy."

The National Ocean Policy establishes a cooperative planning process among Federal, state, tribal, and local authorities, and solicits extensive input from the public and stakeholders for approaches that are tailored to the unique needs of each region. It is designed to foster communication among all levels of government, save taxpayer dollars by eliminating waste, and reduce the conflict and inefficiency resulting from implementation of a maze of nearly 100 different laws, policies and regulations affecting the oceans.

The members being announced today are:

Brian Baird, California (West Coast Region)
Assistant Secretary for Ocean and Coastal Policy, California Natural Resources Agency

Kathleen Leyden, Maine (Northeast Region)
Director of Maine's Coastal Zone Management Program

David Naftzger, Illinois (Great Lakes Region)
Executive Director, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Council

Lelei Peau, American Samoa (Pacific Islands Region)
Deputy Director, Department of Commerce for the American Samoa Government

Mark Robbins, Alaska (Alaska Region)
Associate Director, Office of the Governor

Paige Rothenberger, U.S. Virgin Islands (Caribbean Region)
Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator, USVI Dept. of Planning & Natural Resources

George Stafford, New York (Mid-Atlantic Region)
Deputy Secretary of State

Bill Walker, Mississippi (Gulf of Mexico Region)
Chair of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Management Team and Executive Director of the MS Department of Marine Resources

Steve Crawford, Maine (Tribal Representative)
Environmental Director, Passamaquoddy Tribe of Pleasant Point, ME

Jacque Hostler, California (Tribal Representative)
Chief Executive Officer and Director of the Transportation and Land-Use Department, Cher-Ae Heights Indian Community of the Trinidad Rancheria

Micah McCarty, Washington State (Tribal Representative)
Tribal Chairman & Marine Policy & Fisheries Advisor, Makah Tribal Council

Kristin Jacobs, Florida (Local Government Representative)
County Commissioner - District 2, Broward County, Florida

Geraldine Knatz, California (Local Government Representative)
Executive Director, Port of Los Angeles

Joan Murphy, Illinois (Local Government Representative)
Cook County Commissioner, IL, 6th District

Kevin Ranker, Washington State (State Legislative Representative)
Washington State Senator

Additional members will be announced shortly. For more information about the GCC and the National Ocean Policy, please visit: www.whitehouse.gov/oceans.

Vulnerable Communities Seek Resiliency in Wake of a Degrading Gulf Coast

America's WETLAND Foundation launches new program to assist communities in preparing for their future

Contact:

John Hill, America's WETLAND Foundation
504.756.0101 (mobile), talktojhill@aol.com

If the link doesn't work then copy and paste the URL into your browser

<http://hometownproductions.com/videos/satellitefeeds/download.php?f=sat021511.mpg>

BELLE CHASSE, LA, February 15, 2011 – The America's WETLAND Foundation (AWF) announced the **"Blue Ribbon Resilient Communities: *Envisioning the Future of America's Energy Coast*"** (BRRC) initiative today to help Gulf Coast communities from Texas to Florida prepare for resiliency against the threats of storms, rising sea levels, and disasters like the BP oil spill.

The AWF initiative, chaired by Louisiana Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne, and co-chaired by commissioner of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Buddy Garcia, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Dr. William W. Walker, Alabama State Senator, Vivian Davis Figures, and State Representative Randy Davis, will host 12 community leadership forums across the five Gulf states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. During the 18-month initiative, communities will consider new data about coastal vulnerabilities, including a recently released Gulf Coast Adaptation Study on protective measures, and will determine plans and actions needed to ensure a sustainable future.

Economic data from a \$4.2 million study commissioned by Entergy and AWF shows the cost of doing nothing could result in \$350 billion in losses over the next 20 years across the four America's Energy Coast states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Each community will receive local data gleaned from this landmark study. The BRRC process will help local stakeholders determine core values and how to protect them, based on their vulnerabilities and the tools and options available to them.

"The economic and environmental consequences of not restoring this degrading ecosystem are even greater than we thought," said R. King Milling, chairman of the America's WETLAND Foundation, who announced the major initiative at the press conference held in Plaquemines Parish, one of the most vulnerable coastal communities on the Gulf Coast. "There is an urgent need to empower our local citizens to envision their futures and make critical decisions, given these facts."

"Louisiana and the entire Gulf Coast offer tremendous benefits to the nation - its seafood, offshore energy, critical navigation routes, tourism, and incomparable wildlife and marine habitats," Dardenne said. "The Blue Ribbon Resilient Communities project gives weight to the gravity of long-term consequences to those national assets if we don't act soon. Most importantly, it gives our communities the opportunity to be part of charting our own destiny as we face risks that can impact our unique culture and way of life."

As a result of the initiative, BRRC strives for the following outcomes:

- Sustain the ecological, economic, and cultural values of Gulf Coast communities;
- Reduce risks associated with natural and man-made disasters and vulnerabilities;
- Provide communities the tools to make decisions and plans based on realistic timelines; and
- Empower communities to take decisive actions to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future.

Upcoming BRRC Communities:

- Lake Charles, LA
- Plaquemines Parish, LA
- Houston, TX
- Lafourche/ Terrebonne Parishes, LA
- Biloxi/Gulfport/Bay St. Louis, MS
- Galveston, TX
- Mobile, AL
- Orange Beach, AL
- Pascagoula, MS
- St. Mary/Iberia Parish, LA
- New Orleans, LA
- Florida (TBD)

Over the next year and a half, the AWF will compile information and recommendations from the individual communities that will serve as the basis for resiliency plans and will provide the nation with a snapshot of the urgent issues facing the Gulf Coast. Local communities will benefit from the sharing of valuable research and information on setting future planning agendas by both experts in coastal restoration and everyday citizens.

“There is no better poster child for vulnerability than here in Plaquemines Parish,” said Plaquemines Parish President, Billy Nungesser. “Repeated onslaughts of storms and man-made events such as the oil spill, demonstrate just how vulnerable we are and how the complicated mechanisms of government make it difficult for local communities to deal with these problems. Our survival depends on our ability to stop coastal land loss and this program will give our people a greater voice in their collective future.”

“The Gulf Coast faces environmental risks that cross political, national and generational boundaries. If we do nothing, it’s inevitable that the region is headed for disaster. While many in the country seem oblivious to this risk, the U.S. economy, in particular, will certainly miss us when we’re gone,” said Wayne Leonard, chairman and chief executive officer of Entergy. “The formation of the BRRRC displays collective leadership and the necessary commitment to solve the problems threatening not just America’s Energy Coast, but coastal communities everywhere.”

Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach said he’s pleased his city will host the first Blue Ribbon Resilient Community Leadership Forum. “Southwest Louisiana is home to the coastal Chenier Plain and vegetated wetlands of Cameron and Vermillion Parishes. These areas are still recovering from the economic effects of Hurricanes Rita and Ike,” Roach said. “Their future affects us all and therefore demands the immediate attention of all who want to save their communities and the cultures that make them unique. The clock is ticking and with each day the loss of our land and culture is incalculable.”

Elizabeth “Boo” Thomas, president and chief executive officer of the Center for Planning Excellence, said that for five years, her organization “has assisted communities in the planning process, designed to fortify them and ensure their viability. This project allows us a conduit to a broader constituency who can now take advantage of strategies to fortify their communities.”

“Although divided by state lines, this is one, vast and vulnerable coastal environment we all rely upon to support us economically and, in too many cases, it is degrading in front of our very own eyes,” said Alabama State Sen. Vivian Davis Figures of Mobile, who joined several BRRRC co-chairs. Texas environmental commissioner, Buddy Garcia, said, “it is only by building a broad coalition and working together as a cohesive region that we can move forward.” And, Alabama Representative Randy Davis noted a move of populations away from the coast due to high insurance cost and lost coverage, which will have long-term impacts. “We need a sustainable environment as populations shift and the ecosystems are altered,” Davis said.

Dr. William Walker, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources director and BRRRC co-chair, said that “while coastal land loss is a crisis in Louisiana, Mississippi and the other states Gulf states face similar environmental challenges, like water quality issues that only increase each year.” “There is strength in developing regional resiliency plans,” Walker said.

New Guide to Help Natural Resource Managers Make Climate-Smart Conservation Decisions

January 19, 2011

WASHINGTON, DC-- A new guide released today offers conservationists and resource managers a way to understand the impact of climate change on species and ecosystems and will support efforts to safeguard these valuable natural resources.

Scanning the Conservation Horizon: A Guide to Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment is the product of an expert workgroup consisting of leading scientists from federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, and universities. The peer-reviewed guide is designed to help conservation professionals and natural resource managers craft effective strategies to prepare for and cope with the effects of rapid climate change on the nation's fish, wildlife, and natural habitats.

The crucial first step in protecting our wildlife and wild places from global warming is to understand which ecological resources are in greatest jeopardy, said Dr. Bruce Stein, Director of Climate Change Adaptation for the National Wildlife Federation and a report author.

Vulnerability assessment is an essential tool for crafting truly climate-smart conservation strategies.

Preparing for and coping with the effects of a changing climate, known as "climate change adaptation" rapidly is becoming the dominant framework for conservation and natural resource management. Increasing air and ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, and shifting rainfall patterns already have begun to impact wildlife and habitats across the United States. Understanding and dealing with these impacts has become a top priority for land and wildlife managers across the country.

"Vulnerability assessments are critical to nationwide conservation planning efforts such as those being undertaken by Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, a network of partnerships utilizing shared science to address climate change and other landscape-scale environmental stressors", said Rowan Gould, Acting Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "This new guide is a powerful tool to help the conservation community support climate adaptation efforts aimed at ensuring the sustainability of our natural resources in the face of uncertainty."

"Climate change is the most pervasive threat to parks that we have faced", said Jon Jarvis, National Park Service Director. "This guide will help managers determine what is most threatened, and why. We need these kinds of scientific tools to effectively design and implement adaptation actions that protect National Park Service cultural, natural and historic resources in a changing environment."

The 176 page guide includes:

- An overview of the general principles of climate change vulnerability as it relates to species, habitats, and ecosystems.
- A description of the scientific methods currently available for assessing vulnerability and its components, and for tailoring these approaches to particular situations and needs.
- Examples of vulnerability assessments carried out by government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders.

"We can no longer assume that the climate of tomorrow will be the same as the climate of Today", said Naomi Edelson of the National Wildlife Federation and co-chair of the report's working group. "Without this type of information, adapting to climate change would be like fumbling in the dark." To download a copy of the report, visit www.nwf.org/vulnerabilityguide.

Other Sources of Information for the Gulf of Mexico Region

The following websites provide information about activities, announcements, and events in the Gulf of Mexico region.

[Restore the Gulf](#)

RestoretheGulf.gov is the official federal portal for the Deepwater BP oil spill response and recovery. This site provides the public with information on the response, current operations, news and updates, how to file a claim and obtain other assistance, and links to federal, state and local partners. This site also provides information and updates on activities by the [Gulf of Mexico Ecosystem Restoration Task Force](#).

[Gulf of Mexico Alliance](#)

[The Gulf of Mexico Alliance](#) is a partnership of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, with the goal of significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico.

Other Gulf of Mexico Alliance Related Links

Partnerships throughout the Gulf-region are developing between universities, governments, businesses, and others. Local non-profits are becoming more and more a part of the decision-making process in the gulf. Some of the partnerships and organizations listed below provide opportunities for collaboration with the Alliance.

[Alliance Environmental Education Network Website](#)

[Support the Gulf](#)

[Gulf Alliance Training](#)

[Alliance Diversity Website](#)

[Alliance Environmental Education Network digital library](#)

[Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative](#)

The mission of the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GRI) is to improve society's ability to understand and mitigate the impacts of hydrocarbon pollution and stressors of the marine environment, with an emphasis on conditions found in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, the knowledge accrued will be applied not only to resolve, but also to improve the long-term environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico.

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Laurie Rounds

Coastal Management Specialist

NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov

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