



GULF OF MEXICO NEWS

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June 2009



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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

User Group Support for Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Continues to Increase

June 4, 2009



Snorkelers in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Stakeholder support for management strategies and regulations of the [Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#) grew dramatically among key user groups over a 10-year period, according to a study conducted by researchers from NOAA, the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, and Thomas J. Murray and Associates. The increase in support is particularly significant among commercial fishermen, the majority of whom were against the creation of the sanctuary.

“Among commercial fishermen, dive operators and environmental group members, a majority or a plurality believe that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has benefited both the environment and community of the Florida Keys,” said Bob Leeworthy, chief economist for the [NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#).

The peer-reviewed study compared perceptions of key users in a 1995-96 baseline study with users in 2006. The study was funded by [NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program](#) and conducted through a partnership between the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and other government agencies and academic institutions. The study revealed greater support for the sanctuary among the commercial fishing community, with a shift from highly negative responses to a supportive or neutral position. In the original baseline study, 78.4 percent of commercial fishermen were against the sanctuary's creation. However, the 10-year replication survey found 42 percent were against the sanctuary, 41.7 percent supported it and 14.3 percent were neutral.

“Most commercial fishermen cited the public process that resulted in the creation of the no-take [Tortugas Ecological Reserve](#) within the Florida Keys sanctuary as the reason for changing their attitudes,” said Leeworthy. “That process really allowed the local community to have a say in the Sanctuary boundaries and regulations.”

The report fulfills a commitment made to stakeholders, who met in 1998 to design the Socioeconomic Research and Monitoring Program for the Florida Keys sanctuary, that the study would be replicated in 10 years. After a decade of experience with management of the sanctuary, the study found significant movement in a positive direction on management processes, performance and support.



More than 2.5 million people visit the Keys each year, and of those, 70 percent visit the waters of the Sanctuary to fish, dive, and boat. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

For example, dive operators' support for establishing the Keys sanctuary increased from 64 percent to 87 percent after 10 years, and a majority believes that 18 no-take zones within the sanctuary have reduced conflicts among user groups.

The goal of the study is to use the results to enhance cooperation between key user groups. The full study, with an executive summary and a series of fact sheets for each user group, is available [online](#). Results of a second socioeconomic study of visitors and Keys residents will be released later this year.

Established in 1990, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,900 square nautical miles of important marine habitat, including maritime heritage resources, as well as coral reef, hard bottom, seagrass meadows, mangrove communities and sand flats. NOAA and the state of Florida manage the sanctuary. NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources.

NOAA Takes Delivery of Pisces, New Fisheries Survey Vessel

Pascagoula-based Ship's "Quiet Hull" Design Aids Marine Observations

June 5, 2009



Pisces launched into the Escawtawpa River at VT Halter Marine's Moss Point, Miss., shipyard in 2007. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA today took delivery of *Pisces*, the third of four new fisheries survey vessels and a significant achievement in the agency's efforts to modernize its fleet of fisheries, oceanographic, and hydrographic survey ships.

The ship, which will carry a crew of 21 and up to 17 scientists, will support NOAA's mission to protect, restore, and manage the use of living marine, coastal, and ocean resources. Her primary objective will be to study, monitor, and collect data on a wide range of sea life and ocean conditions, primarily in U.S. waters from the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and South Atlantic to North Carolina. This region includes important commercial and recreational fisheries, and is one of the world's best known and most productive marine areas.

Pisces is the third in a series of four planned 208-foot fisheries survey ships replacing aging ships in the NOAA fleet. It was launched in December 2007 and delivered to NOAA today by VT Halter Marine Inc. It will be commissioned and placed into operation in October 2009, after several more months of outfitting and shakedown with its homeport in Pascagoula, Miss.

"The *Pisces* represents a new generation of advanced fisheries survey vessels," said Rear Adm. Jonathan Bailey, director of [NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations](#). "This ship is vibration and noise-dampened and is an extremely quiet vessel under way. The *Pisces* is equipped with state-of-the-art technology in order to carry out a wide variety of research work for the nation for years to come."

The data collected by the ship will be used by scientists who study variation in ocean conditions and sea life and how they relate to such issues as sustainable fisheries, fish habitat, habitat restoration, coral reefs, and protected species status. *Pisces* also will observe weather, conduct habitat assessments, and survey marine mammal and bird populations.

Foremost among Pisces's state-of-the-art capabilities is the ship's "quiet" hull, which minimizes underwater sounds made by the ship. This allows scientists to use hydroacoustic methods for surveying marine life, and significantly reduces changes in the natural behavior of animals caused by ship noise.

"With its dramatically lower background noise levels, this ship will greatly enhance our ability to use the most sophisticated acoustic devices to assess fish, marine mammal and sea turtle stocks," said James Balsiger, acting NOAA assistant administrator for [NOAA's Fisheries Service](#). "Pisces will not only expand the type of information we are able to obtain, but as a multipurpose vessel will improve our ability to support ecosystem approaches to management of the oceans."

The ship was named by a team of five seventh grade students from Sacred Heart School in Southaven, Miss. The team won a regional NOAA contest to name the ship by submitting a winning essay that supported their name selection. The contest was an educational initiative to help students learn more about their region's marine and coastal environment as well as to generate a greater interest in scientific studies.

NOAA Scientists, Students to Study Gulf Coast Meteorology

June 11, 2009



Monitoring Station. [High resolution](#)
(Credit: NOAA)

This month as beachgoers and coastal residents enjoy gentle sea breezes, a group of NOAA scientists and students from Jackson State University will take a deeper look at what happens when the wind blows. "Sea breezes can be refreshing, but they can also tell us a lot about how the wind moves and what's moving along with it," said Will Pendergrass, a NOAA physical scientist and project manager. "During this field study, we'll concentrate on how sea breezes develop and evolve, as well as what they carry as they move on to land."

Scientists from [NOAA's Air Resources Laboratory](#) in Oak Ridge, Tenn., will team up with 15 students from the Jackson State University Trent Lott Geospatial Visualization and Research Center in Jackson, Miss., for a two-week field study beginning June 15 in Mississippi.

Air samples will be taken from six monitoring stations – two already installed at Harrison County schools for a previous study and four new stations to be installed inland of Gulfport, Miss., along US-49. The instruments will measure ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitric acid, and particulate matter, or soot. Other instruments, such as a Doppler sodar, will measure the boundary winds and temperature. Sodars measure sound waves similar to radar, which measures radio waves.

Scientists and students will also explore how the air mixes as the breezes move inland – useful data if pollutants are intentionally or accidentally released into the air. Under such a circumstance, NOAA is responsible for providing accurate and timely dispersion forecasts to protect the public.

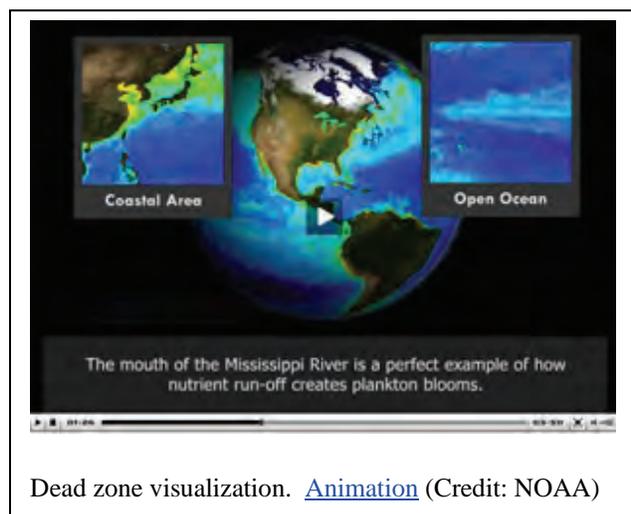
Work this summer will contribute to the three-year-old collaborative effort between the university and ARL to develop a forecasting system tailored for use in the Gulf region. With a large percentage of the population living at or near the coastline, this study will further enhance NOAA's knowledge of Gulf Coast meteorology.

High Mercury Concentrations in Mobile Bay Algal Bloom Opens New Research Path

National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science researchers reported high concentrations of methylmercury in a dinoflagellate bloom in Mobile Bay at the third annual meeting of the Northern Gulf Institute (NGI), a NOAA Cooperative Institute, held May 30-31, 2009 in Mobile, Alabama. This surprising association highlights the need for enhanced research on the environmental behavior of mercury if water quality forecasting goals are to be met by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. NGI partners reported on past accomplishments and planned for future research supporting Gulf of Mexico environmental priorities. A new round of competitive funding between NOAA and academic partners was ready to be announced, targeting the Institute's priority areas of ecosystem management, geospatial data information, climate change impacts on regional ecosystems, and coastal hazards and resiliency. A broad array of papers were presented, grouped into sessions on fish populations, sediments, monitoring, watershed management, modeling, harmful algal blooms and hazards, social sciences, education and outreach, data sources, hurricanes, metadata and ontology, and modeling fish. For more information, contact David Evans at David.W.Evans@noaa.gov.

NOAA Forecast Predicts Large "Dead Zone" for Gulf of Mexico this Summer

June 18, 2009



Dead zone visualization. [Animation](#) (Credit: NOAA)

A team of NOAA-supported scientists from the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, Louisiana State University, and the University of Michigan is forecasting that the "dead zone" off the coast of Louisiana and Texas in the Gulf of Mexico this summer could be one of the largest on record. The dead zone is an area in the Gulf of Mexico where seasonal oxygen levels drop too low to support most life in bottom and near-bottom waters.

Scientists are predicting the area could measure between 7,450 and 8,456 square miles, or an area roughly the size of New Jersey. However, additional flooding of the Mississippi River since May may result in a larger dead zone. The largest

one on record occurred in 2002, measuring 8,484 square miles.

Dead zones are caused by nutrient runoff, principally from agricultural activity, which stimulates an overgrowth of algae that sinks, decomposes, and consumes most of the life-giving oxygen supply in the water. The dead zone size was predicted after researchers observed large amounts of nitrogen feeding into the Gulf from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers. The rivers experienced heavy water flows in April and May that were 11 percent above average.

"The high water volume flows coupled with nearly triple the nitrogen concentrations in these rivers over the past 50 years from human activities has led to a dramatic increase in the size of the dead zone," said Gene Turner, Ph.D., a lead forecast modeler from Louisiana State University.

This forecast helps coastal managers, policy makers, and the public better understand and combat the sources of the dead zones. For example, the models that generate this forecast have been used to

determine nutrient reduction targets required to reduce the size of the dead zone. This hypoxic, or low-to-no oxygen area, is of particular concern because it threatens valuable commercial and recreational Gulf fisheries by destroying critical habitat.

“As with weather forecasts, this forecast uses multiple models to predict the range of the expected size of the dead zone. The strong track record of these models reinforces our confidence in the link between excess nutrients from the Mississippi River and the dead zone,” said Robert Magnien, Ph.D., director of [NOAA’s Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research](#).

“This advanced warning is just one example of NOAA’s growing ecological forecasting capabilities that allow managers to protect valuable resources and coastal economies in a proactive manner.”

NOAA has been funding investigations and forecast development for the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico since 1990 and currently oversees the two national hypoxia programs authorized by the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act. Data from the U.S. Geological Survey on river flow and nutrient concentrations this spring was critical information required by the models to produce the forecasts.

An announcement of the official size of the 2009 hypoxic zone, which is an annual requirement of the Gulf of Mexico Task Force Action Plan, will follow a NOAA-supported monitoring survey led by the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium on July 18-26. In addition, NOAA’s Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program currently is providing near real-time data on the hypoxic zone during a five-week [NOAA Fisheries Service](#) summer fish survey in the northern Gulf of Mexico between June 8 and July 18.

The information is available on the [NOAA’s Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Watch](#) Web page. The objective of Hypoxia Watch is to develop new near-real-time data and map products using shipboard measurements of bottom-dissolved oxygen and to disseminate them over the Internet. These products form the basis for summertime advisories to fishermen in the North-central Gulf of Mexico, indicating where fish and other living marine resources may not be found due to low or non-existent oxygen levels.

NOAA Seeking Public Comment on the Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on the Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico (FMP). The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) has submitted the FMP to NOAA Fisheries Service for review, approval, and implementation. The Notice of Availability for public comment on this FMP was published in the *Federal Register* on June 4, 2009.

Background

Currently, NOAA Fisheries Service requires an exempted fishing permit to conduct aquaculture in federal waters. This permit is of limited duration and is not intended for commercial production of fish and shellfish, making aquaculture in federal waters not viable under the current permitting process. If implemented through rulemaking, this FMP would establish a comprehensive permitting and regulatory framework to manage the development of an environmentally sound and economically sustainable aquaculture industry in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Actions in the FMP

- Establish aquaculture permit requirements, eligibility, and transferability.
- Establish application requirements, operational requirements, and restrictions for aquaculture permits.

- Establish permit duration and renewal periods.
- Specify allowable species for aquaculture purposes.
- Evaluate proposed aquaculture systems on a case by-case basis.
- Establish marine aquaculture siting requirements and conditions.
- Create a restricted access zone for each aquaculture facility.
- Establish recordkeeping and reporting requirements.
- Establish biological reference points and status determination criteria.
- Specify framework procedures for modifying biological reference points and management measures for offshore marine aquaculture in the Gulf.

Other information on the Gulf aquaculture permit is also discussed in the FMP. If this aquaculture program is implemented, the administrative functions associated with it (e.g., registration and account setup, landing transactions, and most reporting requirements) are intended to be accomplished online via the aquaculture Web site. A participant must have access to a computer and Internet access and must set up an appropriate online aquaculture account to participate.

Dates and Addresses

Written comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., Eastern time, on **August 3, 2009**. You may submit comments by any of the following methods:

- **Electronic Submissions:** Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change. All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. To submit comments enter "NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233" in the keyword search and then check the box "send a comment or submission." Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
- **Mail:** Jess Beck, Southeast Regional Office, NOAA Fisheries Service, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505.

The FMP, which includes an Environmental Impact Statement, a Regulatory Impact Review, and an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis, is available in electronic format from the Council's Web site at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org>, or by contacting the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, 2203 North Lois Avenue, Suite 1100, Tampa, FL 33607; telephone (813) 348-1630; fax (813) 348-1711; e-mail gulfcouncil@gulfcouncil.org.

Please Note: A proposed rule that would implement measures outlined in the FMP has also been developed. In accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), NOAA Fisheries Service is evaluating the proposed rule to determine whether it is consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law. If that determination is affirmative, NOAA Fisheries Service will publish the proposed rule in the *Federal Register* for public review and comment. NOAA Fisheries Service will also announce this request for comment through the release of another Southeast Fishery Bulletin.

Comments received by August 3, 2009, whether specifically directed to the FMP or the proposed rule, will be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in its decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the FMP. Comments received after that date will not be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service in this decision. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service on the FMP or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be addressed in the final rule.

Gulf of Mexico Alliance to Reveal New Action Plan & Education Website at Capitol Hill Ocean Week

On June 9th-11th, 2009 the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation will be coordinating Capitol Hill Ocean Week in Washington D.C. to focus on the “Blue Economy- Understanding the Ocean’s role in our Nation’s Financial Future.” During this influential week, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA) is releasing its’ new Governor’s Action Plan II which outlines the work that will be done in the next five years to enhance the economic and ecological health of the Gulf of Mexico. The rollout of Action Plan II and the official launch of the new GOMA Environmental Education Network website will be held in the Capitol Building on Wednesday, June 10th from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the Congressional Briefing Room.

With a GDP of over \$2.2 trillion (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2006) the economy of the Gulf of Mexico region provides jobs for more than 20 million people and provides for roughly ½ of the U.S. oil, natural gas and refinery production. Capitol Hill Ocean Week is calling attention to the vital link between the ocean and our economy. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance will showcase successes of the work it’s done and the work to be achieved in keeping the vast resource, the Gulf of Mexico, resilient. Building on accomplishments of the first Action Plan, the Gulf States and their partners developed the Governors’ Action Plan II, a farther-reaching, five-year regional plan that looks to expand partnerships. Focusing on six priority issues including: Water Quality for Healthy Beaches and Seafood, Habitat Conservation and Restoration, Ecosystems Integration and Assessment, Reducing Nutrient Impacts to Coastal Ecosystems, Coastal Community Resilience and Environmental Education; the Alliance has set up a strategy to accomplish real results for a healthy future of the Gulf Coast (to view the Governor’s Action Plan II please log on to www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org).

The opportunities for the average citizen to learn, engage, and improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico are vast and the Alliance is working to increase awareness about these opportunities. To accompany the rollout of Action Plan II, the GOMA Environmental Education Network is announcing the official launch of its’ new website www.gulfallianceeducation.org to inform the public about current happenings in the world of the Gulf Coast. The website is designed to be a resource for all Gulf State citizens, visitors and educators. Featuring an RSS feed with the latest Gulf Coast news, a digital library focused on the most important issues facing the Gulf of Mexico, environmental education projects that are making a definite difference in the health of the Gulf, as well as opportunities like events, volunteering, funding, and jobs. Soon to come is an Educator Resource section that offers lesson plans, data and tools for teachers to incorporate in their class rooms.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance will have an active presence at Capitol Hill Ocean Week with a shared goal in protecting our oceans for the future of our nation’s economy. The Governors Action Plan II emphasizes how the Alliance provides balanced stewardship of Gulf resources to preserve the financial security and unique character found in all Gulf communities. The new GOMA Environmental Education site will be bridging the gap between the Alliance and the public, by letting people know about important issues facing the Gulf Coast, including a “What You Can Do” section, and opportunities to engage with nature locally. Be sure to log on today to view the new website www.gulfallianceeducation.org and GOMA’s Action Plan II for Healthy and Resilient Coasts to see what’s being done to keep the Gulf of Mexico a treasured resource. For more information contact: Valerie Kleinschmidt, Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Specialist at vkleinschmidt@disl.org.

NOAA Mobile Day

On June 23, the Alabama State Port Authority, the U.S. Coast Guard, and NOAA hosted a meeting to obtain user feedback on NOAA's maritime services in Mobile, AL. NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time Systems (PORTS®) Program Manager, Eastern Gulf Navigation Manager, and Regional Forecast Meteorologist in Charge led discussions on NOAA's navigation services and marine weather products and information. Reaching out to members of the coastal, port, industry, and state communities around Mobile is critical to making improvements to NOAA products and services such as PORTS®, nautical charts, and weather forecasts and emergency response in the Port of Mobile and the surrounding area. During the meeting, a briefing and scoping was also conducted for the location and installation of a first-ever demonstration of a visibility (fog) sensor to be deployed in Mobile Bay near the Port of Mobile. For more information, contact [Mike Szabados](#) or [Tim Osborn](#).

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke Announces \$167 Million in Recovery Act Funding for 50 Coastal Restoration Projects

June 30, 2009



Staking Eyak Lake.
[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke announced today 50 habitat restoration projects that will restore damaged wetlands, shellfish beds, coral reefs and reopen fish passages that boost the health and resiliency of our nation's coastal and Great Lakes communities. Under the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#), the Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration.

"These Recovery Act projects will put Americans to work while restoring our coasts and combating climate change," Locke said. "They reflect our investment in sound science and commitment to help strengthen local economies."

Healthy coastal habitats are critical to the recovery and sustainability of the U.S. economy. Coastal areas generate more than 28 million jobs in the United States. Commercial and recreational fishing employs 1.5 million people and contributes \$111 billion to the nation's economy.

"NOAA is investing in green jobs for Americans to restore habitat for valuable fish and wildlife and strengthen coastal communities, making them more resilient to storms, sea-level rise and other effects of climate change," Commerce under secretary of oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco said. "In addition to the immediate jobs created by the projects, stronger and healthier coastal communities will boost our nation's long-term economic health."

A significant number of these coastal and Great Lakes restoration projects — in 22 states and two territories — are in areas with some of the highest unemployment rates, including the states of California, Oregon, and Michigan. The projects will employ Americans with a range of skills including laborers, nursery workers, design engineers, restoration ecologists, landscape architects, hydrologists, and specialized botanists.

In addition to direct jobs, the projects are estimated to create indirect jobs in industries that supply materials and administrative, clerical, and managerial services.

When complete, the projects will have restored more than 8,900 acres of habitat and removed obsolete and unsafe dams that open more than 700 stream miles where fish migrate and spawn. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of debris, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reefs.

The 50 projects were chosen from a pool of 814 proposals totaling more than \$3 billion in requests. The agency worked through a rigorous selection process to identify and prioritize projects meeting the Recovery Act's criteria.

More than 200 technical reviewers from across NOAA worked in groups to review all the applications and the top 109 were chosen for panel review. Proposals were ranked by overall quality and with consideration given to program priority areas and geography. The determining criteria were that projects meet NOAA's highest priority mission needs for ecological restoration, be "shovel ready" and generate the largest number of jobs in the shortest period of time, and create lasting value for the American public.

For further information on funded projects nationwide, go to the [NOAA Recovery Act](#) Web site. The public will be able to follow the progress of each project on the recovery Web site, which will include an interactive online map that enables the public to track where and how NOAA recovery funds are spent.

Projects in the Gulf of Mexico are:

Coastal Alabama Restoration (Bayou la Batre, Ala.) – \$2.9 million – Rebuilds oyster reef and natural breakwater structures along 1.5 miles of shoreline. 19 acres of property will be protected by this project.

Lost River Preserve Restoration (St. Petersburg, Fla.) – \$750,000 – Rebuilds 43 acres of estuarine, freshwater wetlands and restore native vegetation, also reconnecting to the Cockroach Bay Preserve.

Grande Isle Shoreline Restoration (Grande Isle, La.) – \$4 million – Bio-engineers 5 acres of living shoreline along the Louisiana coastline, resulting in the restoration and protection of 300 acres of vulnerable marsh habitat.

Mississippi River Tidal Marsh Restoration (Myrtle Grove, La.) – \$3 million – Hydraulically dredges sediment from the Mississippi River to create 50 acres of intertidal marsh to support recreationally and commercially important fisheries as well as help to reduce storm surge and flooding.

West Galveston Bay Estuary Restoration (Galveston, Texas) – \$5.1 million – Restores 329 acres of intertidal wetlands in Galveston Bay, which serve as a nursery for recreational and commercial fish species in the Gulf of Mexico.

The full list of funded projects is at:

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2009/20090630_restoration.html.

Other NOAA News

NOAA and National Park Service Urge Beach-Goers to Break the Grip of the Rip

June 4, 2009

With summer vacation on the horizon, NOAA and the [National Park Service](#) are alerting beach-goers to the threat of [rip currents](#) and how to prevent drowning from their strong and potentially fatal grip. Rip currents are the leading surf hazard, claiming more than 100 lives per year nationally. For that reason, NOAA and NPS are teaming up to sponsor Rip Current Awareness Week, June 7-13, with the theme Break the Grip of the Rip®.

Rip currents are narrow channels of fast-moving water that pull swimmers away from the shore. Moving at speeds of up to eight feet per second, rip currents are surprisingly strong and swift. They account for more than 80 percent of the tens of thousands of rescues performed by beach lifeguards in the United States annually.

"Before going into the water, check the rip current outlook, swim on guarded beaches and know how to escape a rip current's grip," said Jack Hayes, Ph.D., director of [NOAA's National Weather Service](#). "Doing so can save your life."

If you are caught in a rip current, swim in a direction following the shoreline. When free of the current, swim at an angle away from the current toward shore. Swimmers who try to swim against a rip current straight back to shore often fail to overcome its strength, risking exhaustion and drowning.

"Every year, more than 75 million visitors come to swim, fish, snorkel, scuba dive, boat and enjoy the wildlife and majestic scenery in the coastal areas of our National Park System," said Dan Wenk, acting director of the National Park Service. "The National Park Service has a long partnership with NOAA and its National Weather Service to enhance our ability to provide visitors with the latest information on water safety."

Rip currents can form at all surf beaches so keep these safety tips in mind:

- Check for surf zone forecasts [online](#);
- Look for signs and flags posted to warn about rip currents;
- Do not swim against a rip current;
- Escape rip currents by swimming in a direction following the shoreline until you are free of the rip current;
- Never swim alone.

"Sea Grant and the National Weather Service have placed rip current signs in English and Spanish on ocean and Great Lakes beaches throughout the nation to warn swimmers of the dangers posed by this hazard. It is critical that all beach-goers know how to identify a rip current, and that they know what to do if they are caught in one," said Leon M. Cammen, Ph.D., director of [NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program](#). Break the Grip of the Rip is a registered trademark of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



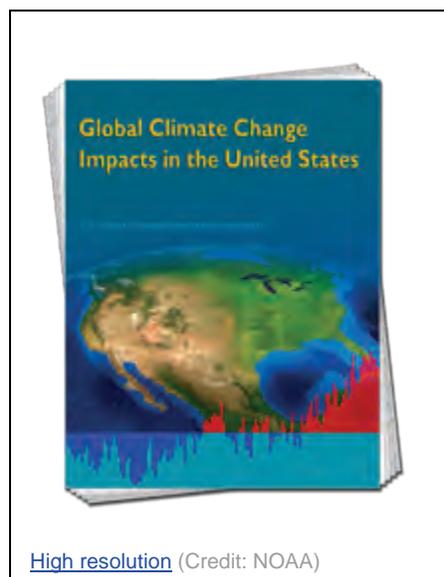
Climate Change Adaptation Publication Surveys Existing Actions and Highlights Unmet Needs

Sponsored by the California Energy Commission and the NOAA Coastal Services Center, “Good Morning, America! The Explosive U.S. Awakening to the Need for Adaptation,” by Susanne Moser of Susanne Moser Research and Consulting, provides an overview of the public, political, and scientific concern with adaptation in the U.S. It examines the call that the media and all levels of government are making for a comprehensive approach to managing the risks from climate change. The report also identifies barriers to adaptation planning and policy development, and provides suggestions to enable effective adaptation while avoiding the dangers of insufficient preparation. The report can be found online at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications.html.

New Report Provides Authoritative Assessment of National, Regional Impacts of Global Climate Change

Details Point to Potential Value of Early, Aggressive Action

June 16, 2009



Climate change is already having visible impacts in the United States, and the choices we make now will determine the severity of its impacts in the future, according to a new and authoritative federal study assessing the current and anticipated domestic impacts of climate change.

The report, “Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States,” compiles years of scientific research and takes into account new data not available during the preparation of previous large national and global assessments. It was produced by a consortium of experts from 13 U.S. government science agencies and from several major universities and research institutes. With its production and review spanning Republican and Democratic administrations, it offers a valuable, objective scientific consensus on how climate change is affecting—and may further affect—the United States.

“This new report integrates the most up-to-date scientific findings into a comprehensive picture of the ongoing as well as expected future impacts of heat-trapping pollution on the climate experienced by Americans, region by region and sector by sector,” said John P. Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. “It tells us why remedial action is needed sooner rather than later, as well as showing why that action must include both global emissions reductions to reduce the extent of climate change and local adaptation measures to reduce the damage from the changes that are no longer avoidable.”

The report, which confirms previous evidence that global temperature increases in recent decades have been primarily human-induced, incorporates the latest information on rising temperatures and sea levels; increases in extreme weather events; and other climate-related phenomena. Adding greatly to its practical value in the realm of policy and planning, it is the first such report in almost a decade to break out those impacts by U.S. region and economic sector, and the first to do so in such great detail.

“This report stresses that climate change has immediate and local impacts – it literally affects people in their backyards,” said Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “In keeping with our goals, the information in it is accessible and useful to everyone from city planners and national legislators to citizens who want to better understand what climate change means to them. This is an issue that clearly affects everyone.”

A product of the interagency U.S. Global Change Research Program, the definitive 190-page report, produced under NOAA’s leadership, is written in plain language to better inform members of the public and policymakers. Commissioned in 2007 and completed this spring, the science-based report is a consensus product spanning two presidential administrations and transcends political leanings or biases. It underwent intensive review by scientists inside and outside of government and includes information more recent than that incorporated into the last major report on global climate change released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The report is not intended to direct policy makers to take any one approach over another to mitigate climate change or adapt to it. But it emphasizes that the choices we make now will determine the severity of climate change impacts in the future. “Implementing sizable and sustained reductions in carbon dioxide emissions as soon as possible would significantly reduce the pace and the overall amount of climate change,” the report states, “and would be more effective than reductions of the same size initiated later.”

The study finds that Americans are already being affected by climate change through extreme weather, drought and wildfire trends and details how the nation’s transportation, agriculture, health, water and energy sectors will be affected in the future. The study also finds that the current trend in the emission of greenhouse gas pollution is significantly above the worst-case scenario that this and other reports have considered.

Among the main findings are:

- Heat waves will become more frequent and intense, increasing threats to human health and quality of life. Extreme heat will also affect transportation and energy systems, and crop and livestock production.
- Increased heavy downpours will lead to more flooding, waterborne diseases, negative effects on agriculture, and disruptions to energy, water, and transportation systems.
- Reduced summer runoff and increasing water demands will create greater competition for water supplies in some regions, especially in the West.
- Rising water temperatures and ocean acidification threaten coral reefs and the rich ecosystems they support. These and other climate-related impacts on coastal and marine ecosystems will have major implications for tourism and fisheries.
- Insect infestations and wildfires are already increasing and are projected to increase further in a warming climate.
- Local sea-level rise of over three feet on top of storm surges will increasingly threaten homes and other coastal infrastructure. Coastal flooding will become more frequent and severe, and coastal land will increasingly be lost to the rising seas.



[High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

By breaking out results in terms of region and economic sector the report provides a valuable tool not just for policymakers but for all Americans who will be affected by these trends. Its information can help:

Farmers making crop and livestock decisions, as growing seasons lengthen, insect management becomes more difficult and droughts become more severe;

Local officials thinking about zoning decisions, especially along coastal areas;

Public health officials developing ways to lessen the impacts of heat waves throughout the country;

Water resource officials considering development plans; and,

Business owners as they consider business and investment decisions.

Responses to climate change fall into two categories. The first involves “mitigation” measures to limit climate change by reducing emissions of heat-trapping pollution or increasing their removal from the atmosphere. The second involves “adaptation” measures to improve our ability to cope with or avoid harmful impacts, and take advantage of beneficial ones. “Both of these are necessary elements of an effective response strategy,” said Jerry Melillo of the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA, a report co-chair.

“By comparing impacts that are projected to result from higher versus lower emissions of heat-trapping gasses, our report underscores the importance and real economic value of reducing those emissions,” said Tom Karl, director of [NOAA’s National Climatic Data Center](#) in Asheville, N.C. and one of the co-chairs of the report. “It shows that the choices made now will have far-reaching consequences.”

The report draws from a large body of scientific information, including the set of 21 Synthesis and Assessment reports from the U.S. Global Change Research Program. The government agencies affiliated with the program include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Interior, State, and Transportation; the Environmental Protection Agency; NASA; National Science Foundation; Smithsonian Institution; and the United States Agency for International Development.

The report is available for download [online](#). Accompanying video will be available on NASA TV June 16 at 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. For coordinates and schedule information, please see the [NASA TV Web site](#).

NOAA Administrator Keynote Speaker at Capitol Hill Ocean Week

From June 9-11, Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) explored the theme “The BLUE Economy: Understanding the Ocean’s Role in Our Nation’s Financial Future.” Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator and Department of Commerce Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, was the keynote speaker for the event. Panel speakers included Members of Congress and representatives of the Federal Government, State governments, industry, academia, and nonprofit organizations. The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, which coordinates CHOW, is a private, nonprofit, 501©(3) tax-exempt organization created to assist the federally managed Office of National Marine Sanctuaries with education and outreach programs designed to preserve, protect, and promote meaningful opportunities for public interaction with national marine sanctuaries. For more information, contact [Joy Williams](#).

NOAA's National Weather Service says "When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors"

Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 21-27



Our love of outdoor activities and the frequency of thunderstorms make summer the most likely time to be injured or killed by lightning, according to statistics compiled by [NOAA's National Weather Service](#). In order to reduce lightning injuries and fatalities, the National Weather Service is promoting [Lightning Safety Awareness Week](#) the last week of June.

More than 70 percent of lightning fatalities occur between June and August, says John Jensenius, the National Weather Service lightning expert who tracks and evaluates lightning deaths for the agency.

Annually lightning strikes more than 400 people in the United States. About 60 of those die, and many more

are left with devastating and permanent disabilities. The National Weather Service studies lightning fatalities in order to know where to best target its lightning education efforts. For example, men are struck far more often than women, sustaining about 85 percent of lightning deaths. And men under 40 account for 60 percent of all lightning fatalities.

"At the start of summer when people are getting ready to enjoy outdoor activities, we want to remind them that lightning is very dangerous," says Jensenius. "Lightning can kill – so remember - when thunder roars, go indoors."

New for its 2009 campaign, NOAA has produced a dramatic [video public service announcement](#) by Ohio college student Ellen Bryan. Bryan's sister, Christina, was seriously injured in a lightning strike nine years ago. A Miss America hopeful, Ellen Bryan has made lightning safety her personal pageant platform. View the video public service announcement on the [National Weather Service Lightning Safety](#) Web site.

NOAA also has published a new brochure, [Lightning Safety for You and Your Family](#), which provides basic facts about lightning and information on how to stay safe during potentially deadly thunderstorms. It provides information for people participating in organized outdoor activities and identifies actions to take if someone is struck by lightning. The brochure is available on the lightning safety Web site.

To avoid being struck by lightning, the National Weather Service recommends that you:

- Get into a fully enclosed building or hardtop vehicle at the first rumble of thunder;
- Stay indoors for 30 minutes after the last thunder clap;
- Monitor the weather forecast when you're planning to be outdoors;
- Have a plan for getting to safety in case a thunderstorm moves in;
- Do not use a corded phone during a thunderstorm unless it's an emergency; cell phones are safe to use;
- Keep away from plumbing, electrical equipment and wiring during a thunderstorm.

NOAA Awards Grant to World Wildlife Fund to Support Innovative Ideas to Reduce Bycatch

Designs Now Being Accepted for 2009 Smart Gear Competition

[NOAA's Fisheries Service](#) has awarded a \$364,000 grant to the [World Wildlife Fund](#) in support of the [2009 Smart Gear Competition](#), which awards prizes for innovative gear designs that reduce fisheries [bycatch](#). Bycatch occurs when fishermen catch unwanted fish species or wildlife along with their intended catch. Adaptations to fishing gear can reduce bycatch by allowing non-target species to escape from gear or avoid being captured. Fishermen who observe bycatch problems first-hand have developed some of the most effective methods to selectively target commercial species.

"The Smart Gear Competition is a model for cross-sector collaboration among government, conservation organizations, industry groups, fishermen and the scientific community," said James Balsiger, NOAA's acting assistant administrator for fisheries. "All parties involved are working together to find solutions."

The two-year NOAA grant to WWF will support the competition, plus extensive testing to further develop the winning designs. Launched in 2004, the competition has received entries from fishermen, chemists, engineers and inventors in previous years, resulting in hundreds of proposals from dozens of countries.

WWF plans to award a total of four prizes for the most promising technological developments: one grand prize of \$30,000; two runner-up prizes of \$10,000; and one special East African regional prize of \$7,500. The competition is accepting entries until June 30.

"WWF views the International Smart Gear Competition as an important tool in helping to identify simple, powerful change within fisheries around the world," said Mike Osmond, senior program officer for the WWF fisheries program. "Fishermen themselves are often the greatest innovators when it comes to effective ideas for reducing bycatch, and this competition seeks to identify those ideas with the greatest potential and reward them with cash prizes, as well as helping to advance the idea towards commercial adoption."

Previous Smart Gear Competitions have resulted in gear that minimizes bycatch of cod and flounder in the Northeast, juvenile red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, and seabird and harbor porpoise in fisheries around the world. NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. For more information or to submit a gear design entry, visit the [Smart Gear](#) Web site.

NOAA and Partners Launch FOCUS

On June 11, in celebration of World Ocean Day (June 8) and National Get Outdoors Day (June 13), NOAA, marine artist Wyland, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Aquarium launched FOCUS (*Forests, Ocean, Climate – and Us*), a national environmental art and education campaign. The purpose of FOCUS is to inspire people of all ages to become better stewards of our natural resources by showing how forests and oceans are inextricably linked and hold the key to our future water supply, climate, and global health. At the kick-off event on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Wyland painted, together with local elementary and middle-school students, a series of murals exploring watersheds and climate change. The public was also able to paint with the group. For more information, contact [Kristen Tronvig](#).

NOS Announces Fiscal Year 2009 CELCP Projects

NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) competition recently concluded with the selection of fiscal year 2009 projects to be funded, pending review and approval of final grant applications. Project applicants are now being notified of these selections. New authorization language for the CELCP was signed into law on March 30 as part of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009. The Act contains new provisions that NOAA needed to consider for final funding selections, including a requirement to make some program funds available to benefit National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs). Two projects that directly benefit NERRs were elevated in the selection process to satisfy the new requirement. NOAA maintains a contingency list in case a selected project falls through or additional funds become available. For more information, contact [Elaine Vaudreuil](#).

In the Gulf States

ADEM Hosts Groundwater Conference

MONTGOMERY – Approximately 1.5 million Alabamians depend on groundwater resources as their source of drinking water. Ensuring a clean, safe supply of this precious commodity is a priority for the Alabama Department of Environmental Management, along with helping drinking water systems operate at maximum efficiency. Each year, ADEM hosts a Groundwater Conference for public drinking water utilities, municipal officials, government agencies, and environmental consultants to meet and discuss issues of importance related to groundwater availability, impacts to groundwater resources, and changing regulatory requirements.

More than 200 professionals who work to manage and protect groundwater resources attended the June 10 conference in Montgomery where they heard presentations on a variety of topics including real-time monitoring of stream conditions, recent trends in quantifying groundwater recharge, water level surveys, and the incorporation of modeling in the assessment of underground plumes.

This year's conference also provided information about regulatory requirements placed on drinking water systems as part of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and updates regarding groundwater levels following drought conditions for portions of 2008 and 2009.

The Department also took advantage of the conference to encourage drinking water systems to prepare for storm events and to take security measures to address circumstances that could possibly disrupt, or compromise, the safety and reliability of Alabama's drinking water supplies.

Mobile Manatees—Please Report Your Sightings!

June 12, 2009

Warm weather has arrived and with it has come this area's regular seasonal residents, the West Indian manatee. The Mobile Manatees Sighting Network (MMSN), based at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), needs your help to conduct vital research on these endangered mammals.

You can help by reporting any and all manatee sightings to the DISL research team. There are three methods by which to report your sighting information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: phone (1-866-93-5803), email (manatee@disl.org), or online sighting form (manatee.disl.org). The MMSN encourages

manatee spotters to report their sightings as soon as possible and to contact them with any questions or for additional information.

DISL researchers remained busy throughout winter 2009, with manatee sightings in Mobile Bay and Steele Creek in Satsuma, but this spring has been quiet, with fewer than expected reports. As bay waters warm up, we expect to see more manatees in Mobile Bay and nearby waters.

“Our primary goal this time of year is to remind people that manatees are here and that the sighting network is active. We really depend on the public to report every sighting, any time, as soon as possible,” states DISL Senior Marine Scientist Dr. Ruth Carmichael.

What you can do to assist our research and help protect manatees in Alabama & surrounding waters:

- Report any manatee sightings to Mobile Manatees via our website <http://manatee.disl.org>, toll free number, 1-866-493-5803, or email, manatee@disl.org
- Spread the word. Tell your friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues to report manatee sightings to Mobile Manatees.
- Give manatees space. Do not do anything to alter manatees' natural behavior. Do not entice, chase, feed, or touch them. The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees. According to federal law any activity that changes manatees' natural behavior is harassment and is illegal.
- Boat with caution. Boat strikes are the leading cause of human-related mortality among manatees.
- Purchase a Mobile Manatees Distinctive License Plate. Ask for it at your local DMV or contact MMSN to pre-commit to purchase a plate. The cost is tax deductible and proceeds benefit the Mobile Manatees research program.
- Purchase a Manatee-shirt. Contact the DISL Estuarium gift shop to buy a Mobile Manatee shirt. All proceeds go to support Mobile Manatees outreach program.

The Mobile Manatees program focuses on defining where manatees live and what they eat while visiting Mobile Bay and surrounding waters. The program is also dedicated to sharing data with other researchers, managers, and the public.

In 2007, DISL and Wildlife Trust (WT) in Florida started the MMSN, the first formal network to receive and track manatee sightings in AL waters. The program successfully processed more than 100 sightings in both 2007 and 2008 (in contrast, only 159 sightings were recorded for the area in the entire 20 years prior). Additionally, the program has serendipitously served as a contact for sightings from other states such as MS, FL, NC, and GA.

Loss of Coastal Seagrass Habitat Accelerating Globally

First comprehensive analysis shows 58% of seagrass meadows in decline
June 30, 2009

An international team of scientists warns that accelerating losses of seagrasses across the globe threaten the immediate health and long-term sustainability of coastal ecosystems. The team has compiled and analyzed the first comprehensive global assessment of seagrass observations and found that 58 percent of world's seagrass meadows are currently declining.

The assessment, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, shows an acceleration of annual seagrass loss from less than 1 percent per year before 1940 to 7 percent per year since 1990. Based on more than 215 studies and 1,800 observations dating back to 1879, the assessment shows that seagrasses are disappearing at rates similar to coral reefs and tropical rainforests.

The team estimates that seagrasses have been disappearing at the rate of 110 square-kilometers (42.4 square-miles) per year since 1980 and cites two primary causes for the decline: direct impacts from coastal development and dredging activities, and indirect impacts of declining water quality.

“A recurring case of ‘coastal syndrome’ is causing the loss of seagrasses worldwide,” said co-author Dr. William Dennison of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

“The combination of growing urban centers, artificially hardened shorelines and declining natural resources has pushed coastal ecosystems out of balance. Globally, we lose a seagrass meadow the size of a soccer field every thirty minutes.”

“While the loss of seagrasses in coastal ecosystems is daunting, the rate of this loss is even more so,” said co-author Dr. Robert Orth of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary. “With the loss of each meadow, we also lose the ecosystem services they provide to the fish and shellfish relying on these areas for nursery habitat. The consequences of continuing losses also extend far beyond the areas where seagrasses grow, as they export energy in the form of biomass and animals to other ecosystems including marshes and coral reefs.”

“With 45 percent of the world’s population living on the 5 percent of land adjacent to the coast, pressures on remaining coastal seagrass meadows are extremely intense,” said co-author Dr. Ken Heck, Senior Marine Scientist, Dauphin Island Sea Lab. “As more and more people move to coastal areas, conditions only get tougher for seagrass meadows that remain.”

Seagrasses profoundly influence the physical, chemical and biological environments of coastal waters. A unique group of submerged flowering plants, seagrasses provide critical habitat for aquatic life, alter water flow and can help mitigate the impact of nutrient and sediment pollution.

The article “Accelerating loss of seagrasses across the globe threatens coastal ecosystems,” appears in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Early Edition* on June 29. The article was authored by 14 scientists from the United States, Australia and Spain, including Drs. Michelle Waycott (lead author), Carlos Duarte, Tim Carruthers, Bob Orth, Bill Dennison, Suzanne Olyarnik, Ainsley Calladine, Jim Fourqurean, Ken Heck, Randall Hughes, Gary Kendrick, Jud Kenworthy, Fred Short, and Susan Williams.

The assessment was conducted as a part of the Global Seagrass Trajectories Working Group, supported by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) in Santa Barbara, California, through the National Science Foundation. For more information, contact Dr. Ken Heck, kheck@disl.org.

Nature Conservancy Project Receives Economic Stimulus Funding to Restore Coastal Habitat in Mobile County, AL

NOAA Funding Will Create 35 to 40 Jobs in coastal Alabama, including Bayou La Batre
June 30, 2009

MOBILE, AL — Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that [The Nature Conservancy](#)’s Mobile Bay Oyster Reef Restoration project will receive support from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to create 35 to 40 jobs and restore coastal habitats in south Mobile County, Alabama.

“The immediate impact of this funding will be the creation of 35 to 40 new jobs, primarily construction jobs, in Bayou La Batre,” said Mary Austill Lott, coastal program director for The Nature Conservancy in Alabama. “These jobs will make it possible to enhance fisheries—and, in turn, local communities—that have been hard hit by Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina, as well as by drought and economic strife.”

In collaboration with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the University of South Alabama, and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Lands Division, the Conservancy will use the funding to create a “living shoreline” oyster project along two stretches of eroding shoreline, totaling nearly two miles in Mobile Bay and Portersville Bay.

Using natural methods to promote the growth of oyster reefs, this project will create an estimated 1,500 meters of submerged breakwater reefs. These reefs will absorb the impact of wave energy from storms and boat activity, thereby protecting the shoreline from erosion while enhancing habitat for fish, birds and invertebrates. Submerged oysters also filter impurities from water, helping to improve water quality and enhancing the viability of seagrass meadows and salt marshes, essential habitats for juvenile fish and invertebrates.

In addition to the Alabama project, the Conservancy received funding for seven other coastal restoration projects across the U.S. to restore and protect coral reefs, oyster reefs, seagrass beds, salt marshes, salmon streams, and floodplains. Marine habitats such as these provide people and nature with a variety of essential services such as water filtration, protection from the effects of natural disasters and storm surges, fisheries, as well as economic and recreational opportunities.

“During the selection process, NOAA received over 800 proposals totaling more than \$3 billion in requests for restoration funding, yet only \$160 million in NOAA funding was available,” said Lynne Hale, Director of the Global Marine Program at The Nature Conservancy. “This overwhelming response demonstrates the profound need for increased restoration and the stewardship of our oceans and coasts,” added Hale.

For nearly 10 years, the Conservancy and NOAA have worked in partnership to implement community-based restoration projects at sites across the United States. The projects selected under ARRA will employ nearly 450 people who will devote more than 500,000 hours of labor to the engineering, project management, contracting, planting, and monitoring associated with completing these eight projects over the next two to two and a half years. The Conservancy will begin work immediately in Alaska, Alabama, California, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, US Virgin Islands, Virginia and Washington.

For more information about the Conservancy’s marine work, visit: www.nature.org/marine. The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 18 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 117 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org. Media Contact: Christine Griffiths cgriffiths@tnc.org, The Nature Conservancy in Alabama.

Secretary Salazar Announces \$8 Million Award for Alabama Gulf State Park Pier

Grant will support coastal conservation activities in Gulf Shores, Alabama

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the Department has awarded an \$8 million grant to the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a conservation education initiative that will restore part of the historic Gulf State Park Pier.

“Having the Interior Department partner with Alabama on valuable conservation projects demonstrates our commitment to protecting natural resources and promoting environmental education,” said Secretary Salazar. “Helping gulf coast states recover and enhance their natural resources damaged through hurricanes is extremely important to Interior.”

The original Gulf State Park Pier, located in Gulf Shores, Alabama, in coastal Baldwin County, was destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. The grant will be used for reconstructing a portion of the wooden boardwalk and its supports and 25 conservation education exhibits along the boardwalk. The award was issued by Interior's Minerals Management Service through the Coastal Impact Assistance Program. This is the first CIAP grant to be awarded since the state's overall plan was approved in April 2009.

The CIAP was created by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Through the program, MMS will provide \$250 million in grants annually, from 2007-2010, to six eligible Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas producing states – Alabama, Alaska, California, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

The allotted funding to Alabama under the CIAP includes \$25.5 million for each of the fiscal years 2007 and 2008, and \$19.7 million for each of the fiscal years 2009 and 2010. Two coastal counties share in the funding of projects outlined in the state's approved plan. The grants could not be awarded until the state had completed its overall plan for use of CIAP funding.

Florida Coral Reef Protection Act to Go Into Effect July 1, 2009

~Act raises awareness to help protect one of Florida's most valuable and endangered natural resources~



TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is alerting boaters, divers and anglers that the Coral Reef Protection Act goes into effect on July 1, 2009. The law, the result of House Bill 1423 passed during the recent legislative session, will increase the protection of Florida's endangered coral reefs by helping raise awareness of the damages associated with vessel groundings and anchoring on coral reefs off the coasts of Broward, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Palm Beach counties. The law also authorizes penalties for the destruction of reef resources and provides for efficient repair and mitigation of reef injuries.

“The Coral Reef Protection Act will allow us to work with local and state governments to increase public awareness about coral reef protection and the likelihood that responsible parties who damage reefs are held accountable for their actions,” said Lee Edmiston, Director of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). “The new law will also allow us to bring together experts to address reef damage in the most appropriate way.”

Fishing, diving and other boating-related activities on Florida's coral reefs generate approximately \$6 billion dollars in sales and income for Florida's citizens and sustain more than 60,000 jobs annually according to report conducted by Hazen and Sawyer in association with Florida State University and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. In the new law, the Florida Legislature identifies coral reefs as an extraordinary biological, geological and economic resource, and states that protecting coral reefs and enacting monetary damage restitution to the state are in Florida's best interest.

The new law will allow DEP to restore coral reefs by ensuring that those responsible for damaging coral reefs can face fines and penalties to help restore the damage. The law also allows the state to issue “first time” warnings in lieu of a fine to recreational boaters in certain instances, and specifies higher penalties for repeat offenders and for injuries which occur within a state park or aquatic preserve.

In keeping with the multi-disciplinary, multi-agency efforts necessary to protect this public resource, the law allows DEP to delegate authority through agreements with the Florida Fish and Wildlife

Conservation Commission, coastal counties and other local governments to investigate reef damages, recover costs, provide restoration and seek compensatory mitigation.

The law clarifies and streamlines current DEP authorities and processes, while implementing many of the recommendations taken from a two-day public workshop held by DEP in Ft. Lauderdale in 2006. The workshop, part of a Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative local action strategy, compiled information on existing emergency response processes, identified deficiencies and developed consensus-based solutions among government marine industry representatives and other stakeholders to improve response to, and restoration of, coral reef injuries in southeast Florida.

CAMA manages three National Estuarine Research Reserves in the state, 41 aquatic preserves, the Coral Reef Conservation Program and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. CAMA's programs and activities are designed to help Floridians better understand and conserve the state's resources through research, education and preservation. For more information on DEP's Coral Reef Conservation Program, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/programs/coral/>.

For more information on DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal>.

Louisiana Receives \$435,200 in Economic Recovery Funds to Improve Water Quality, Create Jobs

U.S. EPA: Funds keep and create jobs to help prevent water pollution and protect human health and the environment

Release date: 06/08/2009

(Dallas, Texas – June 8, 2009) In an effort to improve water quality and create jobs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded \$435,200 to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. A total of \$39 million will be awarded nationally to states for Water Quality Management Planning (WQMP) grants, which will keep and create jobs to help prevent water pollution and protect human health and the environment.

"The Recovery Act investments are meeting urgent needs for economic growth and protecting human health and the environment," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "Communities across the nation can count on green jobs to help pull them out of this downturn and ensure the long-term strength of our economy and our environment."

"The Recovery Act presents a tremendous opportunity to invest in a cleaner, healthier environment while helping our nation get back on track," said EPA Acting Regional Administrator Lawrence E. Starfield. "This infusion of Recovery Act funding will provide Louisiana with more resources for high priority projects, promote green practices, and create and save jobs."

Planning is an important step in EPA's goal to improve water quality in America's lakes, rivers and streams. WQMP grants support a broad range of activities, such as setting standards, monitoring the quality of the water, developing plans to restore polluted waters, and identifying ways to protect healthy waters from becoming polluted. States are also encouraged to use these funds for more innovative planning activities like developing plans to adapt to climate change, analyzing trends in water availability and use, and creating low-impact development programs. Grants are awarded to state agencies and some of the funds can be awarded to regional and interstate planning organizations.

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on February 17, 2009,

and has directed that the Recovery Act be implemented with unprecedented transparency and accountability. To that end, the American people can see how every dollar is being invested at www.Recovery.gov. For information on EPA's implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, visit <http://www.epa.gov/recovery/>

Ducks Unlimited and Partners Restore Coastal Marsh

LAFAYETTE, La. June 22, 2009 - Nearly 600 acres of coastal marsh in Cameron Parish are being restored through the combined efforts of Ducks Unlimited, NOAA, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. Ducks Unlimited is constructing approximately 50,000 linear feet of marsh terraces on Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge and Miami Corporation property in Cameron Parish to restore 570 acres of coastal marsh.

"This project was made possible because of the strong group of partners," DU Manager of Conservation Programs Bob Dew said. "We had a short window of opportunity to make this happen, and everyone pitched in to make it a reality."

The work on Cameron Prairie NWR is being funded by a \$150,000 grant from NOAA. CPRA helped by contributing \$2 million towards the Black Lake Terracing project near Hackberry, Louisiana, a portion of which was used as match to secure the NOAA grant. The remaining funds from CPRA will be used as match to secure an additional \$1 million of NAWCA funds in the future.

"This project is a wonderful collaboration of private and public groups coming together to implement meaningful wetland restoration in an area still very much recovering from the ravages of past hurricanes. The NOAA Community-based Restoration Program believes in helping groups like Ducks Unlimited be a vehicle for restoration within the local community," NOAA Restoration Center's Marine Habitat Resource Specialist Cheryl Brodnax said.

Marsh terraces - long, narrow ridges of soil built in areas of marsh loss - offset impacts of saltwater intrusion, reduce wave action that can cause additional coastal erosion, improve water quality, and spur plant growth.

The project restores and protects the natural habitat for the nation's waterfowl that migrate to Louisiana each winter and will provide over 19 miles of marsh edge that is beneficial to coastal fisheries. Louisiana's coastal marshes host up to 10 million of the nation's wintering waterfowl every year. Unfortunately, despite efforts by conservation organizations and governmental agencies, 25-30 square miles of marsh continue to be lost each year.

"The State of Louisiana is not just aiming to restore wetlands to protect communities and infrastructure, but also to preserve and protect the cultural heritage and wildlife that make our coast so important and unique," said CPRA Chairman Garret Graves. "A project like this one, in which the state works with a conservation organization like Ducks Unlimited to provide better protection, better habitat for waterfowl, and to preserve the resources that make our state such a tremendous place to hunt and fish, is extremely valuable and a large part of our overall coastal restoration effort."

With more than a million supporters, Ducks Unlimited is the world's largest and most effective wetland and waterfowl conservation organization with more than 12 million acres conserved. In Louisiana alone, one million acres of coastal marsh have disappeared in the last half-century, and an additional 500,000 acres are projected to be lost by 2050.

Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Partners with Corps to Provide Greater Efficiency in Permitting Work

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are partnering to provide more efficient coastal use permitting by sharing space in DNR's Baton Rouge office. Through an agreement between the state and federal agencies, a Corps of Engineers representative is sharing space with DNR's Office of Coastal Restoration and Management in Baton Rouge.

"With our shared responsibility of protection and restoration of Louisiana's coast and wetlands, it is appropriate that DNR's coastal staff and the Corps of Engineers have the ability to work together directly on a day-to-day basis," said Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Angelle. "We at DNR are always seeking new ways to improve efficiency in our work while maintaining our regulatory standards and protection for our state."

Having DNR's coastal staff and a member of the Corps of Engineers' team sharing space will mean better communication between the agencies and more efficiency in the regulatory review process. "This is a great chance for the Corps to collaborate more thoroughly and effectively than ever before with DNR," said Col. Alvin Lee, New Orleans District Commander. "This opportunity of being co-located allows us to discuss any issues at the earliest possible time and to resolve any concerns either organization has."

The arrangement provides opportunities to cut the time needed for resolving differences in state and federal regulatory requirements for coastal activity permits, and the overall application processing time, without sacrificing either agency's responsibilities for regulatory protection of the coast and wetlands.

"Both DNR and the Corps of Engineers have detailed processes in place to protect coastal wetlands, but we also want to ensure that people and businesses are able to make responsible use of our natural resources," said DNR Assistant Secretary Louis Buatt for coastal affairs. "This change will mean a quicker, more simplified process for permit applicants, with both agencies having better access to information from one another."

Applicants will not only have the added convenience and speed that come with having access to both DNR and the Corps of Engineers in the same centrally located office, but DNR staff will also have improved ability to train with the Corps of Engineers on the latest federal requirements for applications and mitigation – meaning greater coordination in assessing and processing coastal use permits. The co-location will also mean greater coordination in handling emergency use requests in times of major disaster, as well as establishing an alternative for the Corps, should its New Orleans office be damaged or otherwise made unusable following a hurricane.

New Fisheries Research Lab Opens on Grand Isle

July 1, 2009

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries officially opened the \$23 million, state-of-the-art Fisheries Research Lab on Grand Isle today. Secretary Robert Barham and Assistant Secretary Randy Pausina were joined by area legislators, local officials and the community of Grand Isle for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Governor Bobby Jindal said, "The Fisheries Research Lab will go a long way to help protect our state's aquatic resources. Indeed, the new lab will help LDWF better manage and monitor fisheries resources across the state which will benefit our fishermen, the tourism industry and our coastal communities."

The 35,000 square foot Fisheries Research Lab complex is located on a seven acre site that fronts on Caminada Bay on the north shore of Grand Isle. The site is part of a 30-acre parcel of land owned by the Grand Isle Port Commission.

“This project is one of my proudest accomplishments in my tenure at Wildlife and Fisheries,” said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. “This is one of the finest research facilities in the United States and will help Louisiana maintain its dominance and prestige as one of the greatest seafood producers in the world. I welcome all Louisianians to visit the Fisheries Research Lab in the months and years to come as we continue to fulfill our mission of monitoring, managing and protecting the living aquatic resources for all.”

The new lab will support resource sampling and research work performed by Office of Fisheries staff, which drives the decision making process for management of the resources within the entire state. Biologists based in Grand Isle study a variety of marine species including finfish, crab, shrimp and oysters and their associated habitat, which are all vital to the economy of Louisiana. The Sport Fish Restoration Program and the Artificial Reef Program for the state will also be based at the new lab. These programs help provide boating and fishing access opportunities for the recreational and commercial fishers of Louisiana.

The following measures were taken to ensure that the facility is hurricane and flood proof:

- Dredged material from construction of the marina was used to build the site up to 6 feet above sea level
- The buildings are raised to 12 feet above the new grade which results in the finished floors being 18 feet above sea level
- All elements at grade are designed to “wash out” during a high flood event
- The buildings are constructed of concrete columns, beams, floors and walls to withstand 150+ MPH winds

Additionally, the lab will provide a base of operation for the rehabilitation of stranded and out-of-habitat marine species such as manatees, dolphins and sea turtles. The new facility will allow LDWF to continue to build on the cooperative working relationships with the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, the Louisiana Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Rescue Program.

Facility space is available in the visitors’ lab to accommodate the research needs of any public group or visiting scientist and can provide meeting space for up to 100 people. Activities the lab can accommodate include but are not limited to law enforcement training, educational high school programs such as 4-H and graduate-level study programs with Louisiana State University, Southeastern Louisiana University and Nicholls State University, among others.

Research Awards for Coastal Restoration Science

June 10, 2009

Coastal Restoration and Enhancement through Science and Technology (CREST) is a program for academic research related to meeting the science background for restoration in coastal Louisiana and Mississippi. The program is funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through its Office of Response and Restoration. LUMCON administers the CREST program, which just awarded research grants in its 2009 competition.

The awards are: Quantifying Ecosystem Services in Coastal Louisiana: A Pilot Study of the Economic Benefits of Wave and Surge Attenuation (University of New Orleans) Development of New Geospatial Technology/Traditional Ecological Knowledge-Derived Information Tools for Enhancement of Current Coastal Restoration Decision Support Processes (University of New Orleans) The Effect of Diverted

Mississippi River Nitrate on Marsh Soil Resilience (Louisiana State University) Evaluating Prescribed Fire Effects in Hurricane-Influenced Coastal Habitats along the Northern Gulf of Mexico (Louisiana State University) Long-term Field Experiments in Freshwater Coastal Marshes (Louisiana State University) Modeling Land Subsidence in Coastal Louisiana Due to the Growth of the Mississippi Delta (Tulane University) The need for the program is verified with a record number of pre-proposals (43) received for this year's competition, and 24 selected for full proposals. Yet, funding is endangered for FY2010. Letters have been provided for submission to NOAA from the Mississippi and Louisiana Legislatures for support of the critical role this research program plays in coastal restoration. For more information concerning the program and the research completed and underway, visit <http://www.gulfcrest.org>.

New StormSmart Coasts Network Site in Louisiana

[Louisiana](#) joins [Massachusetts](#) and [Mississippi](#) as host states for the **StormSmart Coasts Network**. The StormSmart Coasts Network is a web resource dedicated to helping decision makers in coastal communities address the challenges of storms, flooding, sea level rise, and climate change. More than just a website, this network of state and local sites gives coastal decision makers a definitive place to find and share the best resilience-related resources available, and provides tools for collaboration. For more information visit, [StormSmart Coasts Network national blog](#) (us.stormsmartcoasts.org).

Hurricane Hardware

Scientists are developing a new device to make homes safer during storms

Catastrophic losses due to hurricanes are the largest and most pervasive risk faced by Gulf of Mexico coastal communities. Because residential structures are a predominant casualty of hurricanes, the four Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant college programs are funding a project to improve home construction techniques so homes can withstand Category 4 hurricane conditions.

The project strengthens the connections between a building's roofs, walls and foundations. Arindam Chowdhury, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Florida International University, is leading the research project, assisted by Emil Simiu and Amir Mirmiran, also of Florida International University, and Steve Cai of Louisiana State University.

"Residential buildings often fail under hurricane stress due to weak or inadequate connections that prevent the load from being spread across the structure, leading to disintegration," said Chowdhury.

In their quest to develop a novel residential connection device, the researchers constructed a unique, full-scale testing facility capable of producing winds of up to 140 miles per hour, called the Wall of Wind (WoW). Using a series of fans, diffusers and grids to simulate wind-driven rain, the WoW facility mimics real hurricane conditions, meeting one of the main objectives of the research.

The other main objective of the research is developing a non-intrusive residential connection system able to withstand hurricane conditions. According to hurricane damage reports by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, poor performance of residential buildings has been observed when structures did not respond as units due to discontinuous load paths. Chowdhury and his associates are designing a connection system that will distribute the windforce along a continuous path using connections between the roof, walls and foundations.

Small-scale component testing of a Fiber Reinforced Polymer (FRP) connection system has shown promise regarding its effectiveness. Fiber composite connections, once used only in aerospace engineering, have considerable civil engineering application in coastal areas due to their strength, light weight, non-corrosiveness and long-term durability. After determining the most suitable connection

design using the small-scale tests, the next step will be to test the connections at full-scale under simulated hurricane conditions in the WoW.

If the connection system performs as well in the full-scale tests, the application of this system to existing residential structures could be a significant step toward increasing the resilience of coastal communities. According to Chowdhury, although Sheetrock repairs would be necessary, retrofitting an existing home with FRP requires much less strain to the structure compared to retrofitting with traditional hurricane clips and toe nails which require penetration of the structural members.

“In older homes, the biggest advantage of the FRP connection system is that the already weakened wood members from earlier nail/screw penetration do not have to be weakened further by more nails, but can be retrofitted by the FRP and epoxy,” said Chowdhury. The preliminary cost analysis indicates that retrofitting with FRP is approximately equal to retrofitting with existing hurricane hardware.

Potential users in the construction and insurance industries have been brought into the planning, funding and execution of the project. Carl Schneider, of Schneider Insurance Agency, Inc., in Mobile, Ala., said that science and engineering is the answer to reducing loss exposure on the coast. In fact, Alabama just passed legislation that requires insurance carriers to offer discounts for fortified or mitigated structures. As a result, the industry will be very interested to see and discuss the outcome of the final testing of this innovative connection system.

The Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant programs include Florida Sea Grant, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Louisiana Sea Grant and Texas Sea Grant.

2009 MS Shrimp Season Opens South of Intracoastal Waterway

BILOXI, Miss. – The 2009 shrimp season officially opened in Mississippi territorial waters south of the Intracoastal Waterway at 6 a.m. June 25, with reports of small to average-size shrimp and low catch volumes. The Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Marine Fisheries staff was on the water conducting interviews and surveying shrimp boats the morning of opening day. A flyover was conducted to determine the number of shrimp boats on the water. About 230 commercial and recreational shrimp boats came out to work the partial opening.



A shrimp vessel heads out June 25, opening day of the 2009 Mississippi shrimp season. About 230 recreational and commercial boats worked on the first day of the partial opening.

The majority of boats were congregated on the inside west tip of Horn Island south of the Intracoastal Waterway, where they were catching low numbers of 60/70-count brown shrimp. DMR will continue sampling to determine the opening date for waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway. As of June 25, the number of commercial resident shrimp licenses sold was 372. The number of out-of-state commercial shrimp licenses sold was 163.

“The numbers of shrimp landed today were very few,” said DMR’s Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director Traci Floyd. “Most shrimping vessels will anchor or return to port and try their luck again tonight as catches tend to be better for brown shrimp at night. Others will wait until inside waters, where somewhat better shrimp abundance has been

indicated, are open and the fuel investment won’t be as high.”

The DMR's Marine Patrol was out in full force starting at 6 p.m. June 24 and worked around the clock to ensure a smooth shrimp season opening. This included 26 officers, two reserve officers and three dispatchers. Marine Patrol officers conducted patrols from 12 patrol boats throughout the Mississippi Sound.

"Even with the partial opening, compliance rates were high," said Lt. Col. Claude Pittman, assistant chief of the DMR's Marine Patrol. "Like last year, we are thankful for the good weather we had during the opening. As of 3:15 p.m. (June 25) we've received no calls of boaters in distress."

The legal minimum size for shrimp in Mississippi is 68 shrimp per pound. This minimum average size is used as a standard for determining the opening date. Certain areas may be closed to shrimping activity if sampling indicates that a large number of small shrimp have moved into a particular area. All regulations set by the DMR are to be in full force and effect, and all boats engaged in catching or transporting shrimp in or from the waters of Mississippi must be legally licensed. For the latest updates on the Mississippi shrimp fishery, call the toll-free Shrimp Information Hotline 1-866-We Trawl (866-938-7295).

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 dmr.ms.gov.

GLO Awarded More Than \$5 Million for Coastal Habitat Recovery

Project will restore hundreds of acres of wetland habitat in West Galveston Bay

AUSTIN —The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced today they have awarded the Texas General Land Office a grant of \$5.15 million to restore valuable wildlife habitat along the Texas coast. The grant process was highly competitive, with applicants required to show that their "shovel ready" projects and would bring significant economic and ecological benefits to the area.

"Preserving the rich wildlife of the Texas coast is one of my top priorities," said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson. "I am confident this grant will greatly benefit the ecosystem — and the economy — of West Galveston Bay."

The General Land Office will partner with Texas Parks and Wildlife to restore more than 300 acres of intertidal wetlands in Galveston Island State Park and Jumbile Cove. These wetlands are nursery grounds for over 95 percent of the recreational and commercial fish species found in the Gulf of Mexico, from brown and white shrimp to blue crab and red drum. Numerous birds, including the endangered brown pelican, the reddish egret and the white-faced ibis call this area home, but have been threatened by the loss of wetland and seagrass habitat.

In addition to the \$5.15 million from NOAA, the GLO is contributing more than \$600,000 and the Texas energy company NRG Power LLC is awarding an in-kind plant donation of \$250,000, for a total of more than \$6 million. The projects are expected to open 100 jobs in the area.

The GLO plans to have a final project design by September of this year and begin construction by November. October 2010 is the projected completion date for both Galveston Island State Park and Jumbile Cove. For more information about the Texas General Land Office, 1-800-998-4GLO or visit our Web site at www.glo.state.tx.us.

Showcase Presentation on the Results of the Ecosystem Based Management Tools Project

The Mission-Aransas NERR and its partners showcased the final results of their Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Decision Support Tools project at the Rockport City Hall on Tuesday, June 30th, 2009 at 6:00 PM. The presentation was the culmination of a year and a half-long effort to increase understanding of the linkages between land use strategies and their effects on coastal-marine ecosystems by using three decision support tools in an integrated manner. The tools were used to evaluate the ecological, social, and economic effects of current and future development scenarios on terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. The purpose of the event was to present the final results of the project and to demonstrate how this integrated land-sea planning approach could benefit future planning and decision-making for Live Oak and Lamar Peninsulas. Interested participants also had the opportunity to view a live demonstration of the decision-support tools and gain a better understanding of how these tools can be used in an integrated planning approach. A total of 27 individuals attended the event and included representatives from city and county governments, United States (US) Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geologic Survey, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Aransas First, and local consulting/engineering companies. Click [here](#) for more information on this project.

TCEQ and TSSWCB Release Annual Report on Water Quality in Texas

An erosion control project used composted manure from dairies in the North Bosque and Leon River watersheds to aid in reclamation of a quarry reducing the nutrient load downstream and reducing runoff where it was applied by 98 percent over a two year period. The City of Denton developed a watershed protection plan that will reduce sediment into Hickory Creek by an estimated 61 tons per year. Because of improvements to the City of Fort Worth's household hazardous waste facility, along with other activities, people can now eat fish from Lake Como. These are just a few of the highlights from Managing Nonpoint Source Pollution in Texas 2008 Annual Report, released today by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board.

The full report, available on the Web at www.tceq.state.tx.us/compliance/monitoring/nps/mgmt-plan/annual-reports.html, is published by the TCEQ and the TSSWCB, who jointly administer the federally funded program. The report summarizes the state's activities to collect data, assess water quality, implement projects that reduce or prevent NPS pollution, and educate and involve the public in maintaining the quality of water resources for current and future generations. The TSSWCB is the lead agency for preventing and abating agricultural and silvicultural nonpoint source water pollution. The TCEQ is responsible for preventing all other nonpoint source pollution

Galveston Island State Park Reopens Beach Camping July 2

GALVESTON, Texas — [Galveston Island State Park](#), whose facilities were devastated by Hurricane Ike last September, has made a remarkable comeback and will once again offer beachside camping in time for the busy Fourth of July weekend. Beginning July 2, visitors will be able to choose from 36 beachside campsites situated on three loops.

Two camping loops will accommodate tents or recreational vehicles and have restrooms and showers. Each \$15 campsite will have water, a shade shelter, fire ring and picnic table. The third camping loop is wired for 50 amp electric service and will be for RVs only. Those sites will cost \$25 per night. All beachside camping sites will provide foot traffic access to the Gulf of Mexico.

The popular state park, which was closed for six months and has been reopening in stages since last spring, only recently returned to a seven-day schedule and began allowing daytime access to a little more than a mile of beachfront. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has spent approximately \$225,000 to rebuild the campsites and operate the park this fiscal year that ends Aug. 31.

Galveston Island State Park hours are from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The park office will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Up until June 18, only the bay side of the 2,000-acre park had been open for day use since last March. It had been experiencing growing visitation. The bay side camping area features 10 water-only campsites for \$15 per night and 20 water-and-electric sites for \$20. A \$5 per-person entry fee for individuals 13 and older has been reinstated. Children 12 and younger receive free park entry.

"During Memorial Day weekend, we had over 500 visitors to the bay side part of the park fishing, kayaking, bird watching and hiking," said Justin Rhodes, regional director of state parks in southeast Texas. "The debris has been cleaned up and the park is coming back together. It's beautiful right now."

Rhodes said having the park open seven days a week and offering limited camping and day use facilities on the beach side are interim steps until a master plan is developed, an environmental assessment can be done and permanent facilities rebuilt. To facilitate the reopening of the beach side, electrical power and water were restored, and a structure was moved in to serve as temporary headquarters. The original headquarters building and all other beachside facilities were destroyed by Hurricane Ike.

During its recent session, the Texas Legislature allocated a portion of the state's Hurricane Ike recovery funds to the TPWD to hire an architectural design firm to develop a master plan to rebuild the state park.

Over the ensuing months, hundreds of volunteers pitched in to clean up storm damage and remove considerable debris on the bay side and to convert the Nature Center into a Welcome Center. The Galveston Island State Park Friends Group played a major role in operating the park and staffing the Welcome Center.

The Texas Department of Transportation, operating under a directive from Governor Rick Perry to assist hurricane-impacted governmental entities, led efforts to demolish structures and remove debris on the gulf side of the park. TxDOT's assistance is estimated to have saved the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department about \$2.3 million it didn't have budgeted, according to TPWD regional project manager Tony Bettis. So far, he said, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has begun to reimburse TxDOT for the Galveston Island cleanup.

Galveston Island State Park occupies a sliver of land at the midway point of the barrier island about six miles southwest of the western tip of the popular sea wall. The bay side provides public access to about 600 acres of grasslands with coastal scrub and scattered oak mottes, as well as hundreds of additional acres of saltwater sloughs, wildlife-rich wetlands and tidal bayous.

Visitors can reach Galveston Island State Park from FM 3005 (Seawall Boulevard). For more information, call the park at (409) 737-1222.

On the Net:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/galveston/>

Other News

FEMA Releases 2010 Hazard Mitigation Unified Guidance

Need to know how to apply to the [Hazard Mitigation Grants Program \(HGMP\)](#)? Or for [Pre-Disaster Mitigation \(PDM\)](#), [Flood Mitigation Assistance \(FMA\)](#), [Repetitive Flood Claims \(RFC\)](#), or [Severe Repetitive Loss Pilot \(SRL\)](#) grants?

If so, you're in luck: FEMA's just released the extensive (188-page) [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance](#) handbook applicable to HMGP funds available for disasters declared on or after June 1, 2009 (HGMP funds are only released after a Presidential disaster declaration), as well as for for Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10) cycle of the PDM, FMA, RFC, and SRL programs.

While (let's face it) this probably isn't the type of document you can't wait to get into, it does contain some great information key to tapping into the \$200 million+ covered by these programs.

For other funding ideas, don't forget to check out the [funding section of this site](#).
[Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance](#)

Grant Opportunities

Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership Request for Preproposals

(Submittal Deadline: August 3, 2009)

The Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP) invites preproposals for its citizen-driven habitat restoration projects. The partnership is seeking to fund on-the-ground activities throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Territories of the Caribbean which restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats benefiting living marine resources and provide educational and social benefits by significantly involving the community.

The GCRP is a multi-year, regional partnership between the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program (CRP), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Gulf of Mexico Program - Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Initiative, and the Gulf States and Caribbean territories. The purpose of this partnership is to strengthen the conservation efforts of the CRP and GEMS by supporting on-the-ground restoration activities and fostering local stewardship of ecologically significant areas.

Project Specifications:

Preproposals will be accepted for projects that involve restoration, creation, or enhancement of coastal habitats. Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico proposals will be evaluated separately. For Gulf of Mexico projects, priority will be given to projects which are located within GEMS sites ([Appendix A](#)). For Caribbean projects, priority will be given to projects which are located within Special Planning Areas (Puerto Rico) or Areas of Particular Concern (Virgin Islands) ([Appendix B](#)).

All projects must:

- Result in on-the-ground habitat restoration;

- Provide significant, long-term benefit to “NOAA Trust Resources” (please see the following section);
- Involve the local community through an educational or volunteer component tied to the restoration activities;
- Provide a minimum of 1:1 nonfederal match to the partnership cash contribution (please see the “Funding” section); and
- Include a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the success/failure of the project (please see the “Minimum Monitoring/Evaluation Requirements” Section).

The preferred project duration is one year, with projects beginning January 1, 2010. However, projects of shorter duration and projects taking up to 18 months for completion, but only requiring one year of funding, will also be considered.

On-the-ground restoration projects will be given priority. Recognizing that restoration is a multi-faceted effort, funding for on-the-ground projects that include other related activities will also be considered. These related activities could include limited pre-implementation activities, such as engineering and design and short-term baseline studies, or elements such as Gulf of Mexico Foundation Request for Preproposals as studies or workshops that directly support the restoration activities and/or public education about the project. Deliverables for engineering and design projects are to include, but are not limited to, engineering designs/plans, reports summarizing the biological and hydrologic data collected in the construction area, a draft of completed permit applications, and synthesized comments from those who review the engineering design.

Preproposals emphasizing a single component, such as only outreach or program coordination are discouraged, as are applications that propose to expand an organization’s day-to-day activities, or that primarily seek support for administration, salaries, overhead, and/or travel.

NOAA Trust Resources:

NOAA trust resources and the habitats that support them serve as the focus of this partnership. Applicants must demonstrate that habitat restoration will result in a benefit to NOAA trust resources. These include living marine resources and their habitats such as:

- Commercial and recreational fishery resources (marine fish and shellfish and their habitats);
- Anadromous species (fish, such as sturgeon, that spawn in freshwater and then migrate to the sea);
- Endangered and threatened marine species and their habitats;
- Marine mammals, turtles, and their habitats;
- Marshes, mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats; and
- Resources associated with National Marine Sanctuaries and National Estuarine Research Reserves.

Funding:

Preproposals will be evaluated and selected by the GCRP steering committee, which consists of Gulf of Mexico Foundation staff, NOAA, US EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and natural resource agency technical staff from each of the Gulf States and Caribbean territories. Subject to available funding, approximately \$310,000 is available for Year 2010 projects. Project funding levels will typically fall within the range of \$20,000 - \$50,000. The Partnership seeks to provide approximately \$45,000 to each state or territory assuming projects meeting the selection criteria are identified.

All projects must provide a 1:1 match of the grant amount. Matching funds cannot be federal dollars. Matching funds can be cash and/or in-kind, including one or more of the following:

- In-kind donations, such as materials and earthmoving equipment;
- Technical assistance for restoration site selection, design, and evaluation;
- Land (purchased or put under easement during the project period);

- Workforce support or other in-kind services, especially those that promote citizens' hands-on involvement through volunteering;
- Local stewardship and monitoring to sustain and evaluate the success of the restoration over time.

Additional federal funding or other contributions may be included in the project description to demonstrate that the project is part of a larger restoration effort. However, such federal contributions may not serve as matching contributions to the GCRP funds.

Preproposal Requirements:

Preproposals must be received by **August 3, 2009** and should be no more than two (2) pages in length. Preproposals must include all of the information requested and be formatted as shown in the [Request for Preproposals](#). Projects that meet minimum partnership requirements and that are selected to submit full proposals will need to complete a detailed application which more fully describes the activities to be accomplished, including a specific timeline, monitoring plan, and detailed budget (approximate submittal date: September 30, 2009). Applicants invited to submit full proposals may be required to include a letter of support from an appropriate organization. Final projects will be selected for funding following review by the GCRP Steering Committee.

For more information contact Ryan Fikes, Gulf of Mexico Foundation Program Manager at ryan@gulfmex.org.

Conferences and Workshops

DMR, Partners to Hold Harmful Algal Bloom Seminar

July 31 at MSU Extension Center

BILOXI, Miss. – On Friday, July 31, 2009, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and partners will hold the next in a series of seminars aimed at enhancing familiarity between interested groups and increasing awareness of the programs, needs and opportunities that are relevant to marine research of Mississippi waters. Harmful algal bloom will be the subject of the seminar, to be held from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center, 1815 Popp's Ferry Road, Biloxi (exit 44 off of Interstate 10).

Keynote speaker Vincent Lovko of the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) at Stennis Space Center will talk on "Optical Detection and Assessment of Harmful Algal Bloom."

Additional supporting talks scheduled are:

- "Vibrio Relationships with Plankton and Sediment" — Adrienne Flowers, USM Gulf Coast Research Laboratory (GCRL)
- "Remote Sensing in the Detection and Prediction of Harmful Algal Bloom" — Dan Holiday, USM-Gulf Coast Geospatial Center
- "Marine Biotoxin Contingency Plan" — Kristina Broussard, DMR Office of Fisheries

All interested parties are welcome to attend. For more information, contact DMR Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director Traci Floyd at (228) 374-5000. 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.

Governors' Action Plan II Implementation and Integration Workshop **August 4-6, 2009**

The Battle House Renaissance Hotel
26 North Royal Street
Mobile, Alabama

Logistical Information

[Cutoff Date for hotel extended to July 13! \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 33K, [about PDF](#))

Registration Form (No charge for registering)

[Registration Form](#) - fill and submit

[Registration Form \(PDF\)](#) (3 pp, 699K, [about PDF](#)) - fill and print

Schedule of Events

[Schedule of Events for August 4-6, 2008 \(PDF\)](#) (2 pp, 635K, [about PDF](#))

Agendas

[Plenary Sessions - Draft Agenda \(PDF\)](#) (1 pg, 49K, [about PDF](#)) (August 5-6)

[Priority Issue Team Agendas](#)

[Celebrate Our Successes Reception \(August 5\)](#)

[NOAA Stakeholder Forum \(August 6\)](#)

Please contact [Ms. Terry Teague](#) at 228-688-1172 or teague.terry@epa.gov for assistance.

Wetlands and Water Quality: Regulating Construction Impacts in Coastal Areas

Presented by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Bureau of Wetlands Permitting, Coastal Preserves Program, and the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This workshop will be presented August 4-6, 2009 in Jackson, Harrison, and Hancock Counties at the following locations:

August 4, 2009

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
Estuarine Learning Center (Gautier)
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

August 5, 2009

University of Southern Mississippi
Gulf Park Campus (Long Beach)
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

August 6, 2009

Diamondhead Country Club
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

This FREE workshop is designed to inform participants about state and federal environmental regulations that affect development in coastal areas. Attendees should expect to learn how construction activities affect wetlands and water quality as well as why and how government agencies regulate these impacts. By the end of the workshop, participants should be better able to assist homeowners and businesses with development decisions, direct the public to the appropriate agencies for assistance with permits, and hopefully reduce the occurrence of wetland and water quality violations.

To register for this workshop, please contact Marian Hanisko at 228-475-7047 or marian.dicas@dmr.ms.gov to request a registration form. The deadline for registration is **Friday July 24, 2009**.

Visions of a Sustainable Mississippi River Conference

Visions of a Sustainable Mississippi River: Merging Ecological, Economic, and Cultural Values

Organized by The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) and The Nature Conservancy.

Join a diverse group of participants with interest in our nation's largest river, including stakeholders in the recreational, navigation, and agricultural sectors, researchers, and natural resource professionals. Through conference presentations, panel discussions, and workshops, attendees will formulate policy recommendations on four issues critical to the sustainable management of the Mississippi River and the human communities that depend on it. The conference will culminate with a special Policy Forum where recommendations will be delivered directly to key elected officials and decision makers.

(<http://www.conferences.uiuc.edu/mississippiriver/schedule.html>)



NGRREC

Early Registration Deadline: July 10

Reservations at DoubleTree Hotel must be made by July 10 to ensure the conference rate (\$79).

For questions about program content, contact:

Dr. John Chick at chick@inhs.uiuc.edu

For other questions, contact:

Vera Bojic at vbojic@lc.edu

Or visit the conference Web site at www.conferences.uiuc.edu/mississippiriver/.

Oceans 2009



Marine Technology for our Future: Global and Local Challenges

MTS/IEEE Biloxi, Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center

October 26-29, 2009

Attendee Registration: [Click Here](#)

Exhibitor Registration: [Click Here](#)

[Draft Schedule of Events](#)

The conference theme “Marine Technology for our Future: Global and Local Challenges” reflects the focus of the oceans community acting locally to help globally. For this year’s event, your Local OCEANS Committee has selected four local topics of global interest. Sessions on Operational Oceanography, Coastal Restoration, Ocean Observing Systems and Lessons Learned from Recent Hurricanes will join our traditional topic areas to highlight recent issues, concerns, and solutions that extend around the globe.

SETAC North America 30th Annual Meeting

November 19-23, 2009

The SETAC North America Annual Meetings serve as a platform for representatives from government, business and academia to exchange ideas, observe current trends, and present research in their areas of expertise. They provide an opportunity for you to meet the leadership of SETAC and provide feedback about your Society. Professional Development Courses and Seminars expand your technical expertise on a wide variety of topics in full- and half-day intervals. SETAC's Career Center fosters fruitful, face-to-face connections between employers in search of talent and professionals in search of rewarding employment. The Tradeshow in the Exhibition Hall is an arena for you to personally meet with representatives from a large number of consulting firms, manufacturers, publishers and more. Sound science and close camaraderie make a SETAC meeting an extraordinary experience.

The SETAC North America 30th Annual Meeting will be held in New Orleans and will provide scientists and environmental managers from around the Gulf of Mexico with an excellent venue to discuss environmental issues relevant to the area.

Early Registration Deadline: August 15, 2009

Home Page URL: <http://neworleans.setac.org/>

Did you find this edition useful? Please send suggestions, comments, and new items for publication to



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