



GULF OF MEXICO NEWS

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June 2011



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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Steps Up Effort to Address Sea Turtle Mortality, Seeks Public Input

June 24, 2011

As part of stepped-up efforts to address an increase in sea turtle strandings in the Gulf of Mexico, NOAA announced today it will explore new rules to reduce unintended catch and mortality of sea turtles in the southeastern shrimp fishery, as it continues to enforce vigorously existing regulations meant to protect sea turtle populations.

NOAA has documented an increase in sea turtle strandings in the northern Gulf since early 2010, particularly throughout the Mississippi Sound area. A total of 342 sea turtles have been reported stranded in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana from January 1, 2011 through June 2, 2011. NOAA leads the National Stranding Network, which monitors sea turtle strandings, and actively reviews trends and investigates the causes of sea turtle deaths.

Results of necropsies done on the stranded sea turtles indicate that many of the turtles likely drowned. The exact cause of all the drownings has yet to be determined.

NOAA has scheduled a series of public scoping meetings in mid-July in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and North Carolina, to solicit public comments to assist the agency in identifying issues and options for evaluation in a draft Environmental Impact Statement assessing the environmental impacts of potential regulatory approaches to reduce sea turtle mortality.

Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), required in most shrimp fisheries, are effective at reducing sea turtle drowning when properly installed and maintained. However, one type of gear, shrimp skimmer trawls, is currently allowed to operate without TEDs, and is instead regulated using tow time limits. The focus of this scoping process is to assess options to reduce sea turtle bycatch in the southeastern shrimp fishery.

In other efforts to increase compliance, NOAA's Fisheries Service gear experts and enforcement personnel have hosted several turtle excluder device workshops throughout the Gulf states to provide information and assistance to fishermen on federal requirements and proper installation of the devices. They have conducted numerous courtesy inspections on the docks and at-sea to improve compliance within the Gulf shrimp fishery.

NOAA is also actively working to improve compliance by conducting numerous enforcement patrols throughout the Gulf, and bringing more vigorous enforcement actions. "Where violations of turtle excluder device requirements are documented, NOAA is taking enforcement action, including warnings and notices of violation," said Alan Risenhoover, acting director of NOAA Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement. Earlier this year, for example, NOAA brought enforcement actions against three vessels that allegedly went fishing with no turtle excluder devices in their nets, seeking penalties of \$17,000 per vessel. "These actions, combined with increased visibility on the water and outreach on the docks, will help ensure increased compliance."

The shrimping industry has also directly reached out to its members to provide information about turtle excluder device compliance. The Southern Shrimp Alliance scheduled more than a dozen meetings to inform their members that turtle excluder device compliance is a serious issue, stressing the importance of proper installation and maintenance.

Today's announcement is another step to address a problem that has also been recognized by fishing industry leaders. As NOAA continues to assess the situation involving sea turtle deaths, NOAA scientists and managers will continue to work closely with the fishing community and the states to improve compliance, and enhance use of fishing gear and techniques to prevent sea turtles from being caught in fishing nets.

As NOAA continues to assess the situation involving sea turtle deaths, NOAA scientists and managers will continue to work closely with the fishing community and the states to improve compliance, fishing gear and techniques to prevent sea turtles from being caught in fishing nets.

In responding to the increased number of sea turtle deaths in the Gulf region, NOAA is also assessing potential impacts to sea turtles resulting from the Deepwater Horizon spill. Those injury assessment efforts are ongoing.

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NOAA and Partners Launch New Community-based Lightning Awareness and Safety Program

Annual Lightning Safety Awareness Week runs June 19-25

June 20, 2011



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

Summer is time for backyard barbeques, trips to the beach and lots of outdoor fun, but it's also a time when dangerous thunderstorms become more frequent. Hundreds of people are struck by lightning each year, causing countless debilitating injuries and 55 deaths on average. NOAA and its lightning safety partners are working to reduce this number by urging the public, "[When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!](#)"

[NOAA's National Weather Service](#) recently unveiled a [new community-based volunteer preparedness program](#) to increase awareness about the danger of lightning at outdoor recreation venues, like parks, concert arenas, and golf courses as well as open water locations such

as swimming pools and beaches. The agency created lightning safety awareness signs that local communities can install at these public places to encourage people to go indoors when they hear thunder.

This year, five people have tragically lost their lives so far from being struck by lightning, including a first responder who was helping tornado rescue efforts in Joplin, Mo.

"People understand the danger with lightning, but thunder needs to be recognized as the early warning for lightning – many still take risks that aren't worth losing their life over," said Donna Franklin, lightning safety program leader with the National Weather Service. "Nearly eighty-five percent of lightning victims are male, and this has been true since we began keeping records in 1959 – so it's especially important that

we teach young men to make wise decisions during thunderstorms. When people hear thunder, they need to immediately stop what they are doing and go inside.”

The National Weather Service was joined by Texas State Fire Marshal Paul Maldonado to kick off Lightning Safety Awareness Week at a press conference in Austin on Friday, June 17. Texas Gov. Rick Perry issued a [proclamation](#) stating, “The greatest threat from lightning is to those who are outdoors during a storm. The majority of injuries and deaths from lightning strikes could be prevented if people followed this simple rule: When thunder roars, go indoors.”

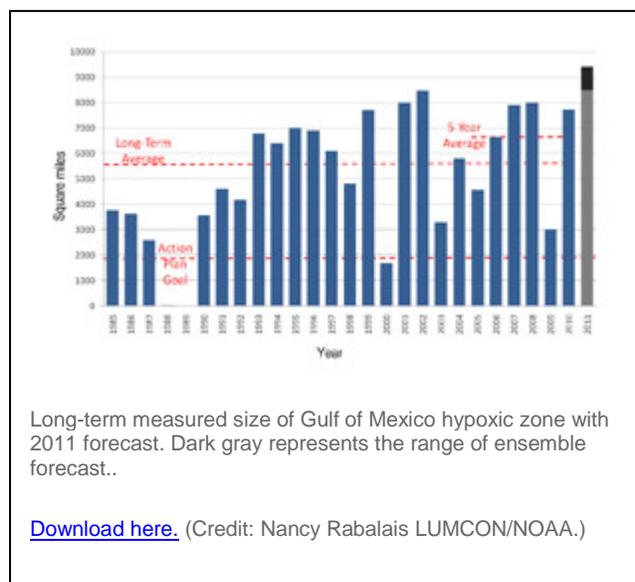
To avoid being struck by lightning, the National Weather Service recommends that you:

- 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; unplugged cell phones are safe to use indoors;
- Keep away from plumbing, electrical equipment and wiring during a thunderstorm.

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Major Flooding on the Mississippi River Predicted to Cause Largest Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone Ever Recorded

June 14, 2011



The Gulf of Mexico’s hypoxic zone is predicted to be the largest ever recorded due to extreme flooding of the Mississippi River this spring, according to an annual forecast by a team of NOAA-supported scientists from the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, Louisiana State University and the University of Michigan. The forecast is based on Mississippi River nutrient inputs compiled annually by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

Scientists are predicting the area could measure between 8,500 and 9,421 square miles, or an area roughly the size of New Hampshire. If it does reach those levels it will be the largest since mapping of the Gulf “dead zone” began in 1985. The largest hypoxic zone measured to date occurred in 2002 and encompassed more than

8,400 square miles.

The average over the past five years is approximately 6,000 square miles of impacted waters, much larger than the 1,900 square miles which is the target goal set by the Gulf of Mexico/Mississippi River

Watershed Nutrient Task Force. This collaboration between NOAA, USGS and university scientists facilitates understanding links between activities in the Mississippi River watershed and downstream impacts to the northern Gulf of Mexico. Long-term data sets on nutrient loads and the extent of the hypoxic zone have improved forecast models used by management agencies to understand the nutrient reductions required to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone.

Hypoxia is caused by excessive nutrient pollution, often from human activities such as agriculture that results in too little oxygen to support most marine life in bottom and near-bottom water. The hypoxic zone off the coast of Louisiana and Texas forms each summer and threatens valuable commercial and recreational Gulf fisheries. In 2009, the dockside value of commercial fisheries in the Gulf was \$629 million. Nearly three million recreational fishers further contributed more than \$1 billion to the Gulf economy taking 22 million fishing trips.

“This ecological forecast is a good example of NOAA applied science,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “While there is some uncertainty regarding the size, position and timing of this year’s hypoxic zone in the Gulf, the forecast models are in overall agreement that hypoxia will be larger than we have typically seen in recent years.” During May 2011 stream-flow rates in the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers were nearly twice that of normal conditions. This significantly increased the amount of nitrogen transported by the rivers into the Gulf. According to USGS estimates, 164,000 metric tons of nitrogen (in the form of nitrite plus nitrate) were transported by the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers to the northern Gulf. The amount of nitrogen transported to the Gulf in May 2011 was 35 percent higher than average May nitrogen loads estimated in the last 32 years.

“The USGS monitoring network and modeling activities for water quantity and quality helps us ‘connect the dots’ to see how increased nutrient run-off in the Mississippi watershed during a historic spring flood event impacts the health of the ocean many hundreds of miles away,” said Marcia McNutt, Ph.D., USGS director. “This work on Gulf hypoxia is a great example of interagency teamwork between NOAA and USGS to work across the land-sea boundary.”

Coastal and water resource managers nationwide require new and better integrated information and services to adapt to the uncertainty of future climate and land-use changes, an aging water delivery infrastructure, and an increasing demand on limited resources. NOAA and USGS, as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, have signed an agreement that will further facilitate collaboration in the future. These agencies, with complementary missions in water science, observation, prediction and management, have formed this partnership to unify their commitment to address the nation’s water resources information and management needs.

This year’s forecast is just one example of NOAA’s growing ecological forecasting capabilities, supported by both NOAA and USGS science, which allow for the protection of valuable resources using scientific, ecosystem-based approaches. The actual size of the 2011 hypoxic zone will be released following a NOAA-supported monitoring survey led by the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium between July 25 and August 6. Collecting these data is an annual requirement of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force Action Plan.

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.

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Commerce and NOAA Release National Aquaculture Policies to Increase Domestic Seafood Production, Create Sustainable Jobs, and Restore Marine Habitats

June 9, 2011



Shellfish aquaculture currently makes up about two-third of U.S. marine aquaculture. Pictured here is oyster aquaculture in Tomales, California.

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

The Department of Commerce and NOAA today released national sustainable marine aquaculture [policies](#) to meet the growing demand for healthy seafood, to create jobs in coastal communities, and restore vital ecosystems. Foreign aquaculture accounts for about half of the 84 percent of seafood imported by the U.S., contributing to the \$9 billion trade deficit in seafood.

“Our current trade deficit in seafood is approximately \$9 billion,” Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said. “Encouraging and developing the U.S. aquaculture industry will result in economic growth and create jobs at home, support exports to global markets, and spur new innovations in technology to support the industry.”

“Sustainable domestic aquaculture can help us meet the increasing demand for seafood and create jobs in our coastal communities,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Our vision is that domestic aquaculture will provide an additional source of healthy seafood to complement wild fisheries, while supporting healthy ecosystems and coastal economies.”

The new aquaculture policies, which reflect the public comments received after draft policies were released on February 9, focus on:

- encouraging and fostering sustainable aquaculture that increases the value of domestic aquaculture production and creates American business, jobs, and trade opportunities;
- making timely management decisions based on the best scientific information available;
- advancing sustainable aquaculture science;
- ensuring aquaculture decisions protect wild species and healthy coastal and ocean ecosystems;
- developing sustainable aquaculture compatible with other uses;
- working with partners domestically and internationally; and,
- promoting a level playing field for U.S. aquaculture businesses engaged in international trade, working to remove foreign trade barriers, and enforcing our rights under U.S. trade agreements.

Along with its new policy, the Department and NOAA announced additional steps in the future to support the development of the aquaculture industry through:

- Developing a National Shellfish Initiative in partnership with the shellfish industry to increase commercial production of shellfish, which would create jobs, provide locally-produced food, restore shellfish populations and habitats, and improve water quality.

- Implementing the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan for Aquaculture, which includes the regulatory infrastructure needed for offshore aquaculture development in the Gulf.

The domestic aquaculture industry (both freshwater and marine) currently supplies about five percent of the seafood consumed in the U.S. The cultivation of shellfish, such as oysters, clams, and mussels, comprises about two-thirds of U.S. marine aquaculture production. Salmon and shrimp aquaculture contribute about 25 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Current production takes place mainly on land, in ponds, and in states' coastal waters.

“This new focus on helping us develop and expand sustainable aquaculture is welcomed,” said Bill Dewey, a shellfish biologist and Shelton, Wash.-based clam farmer of more than 27 years. “When done right, aquaculture can improve the environment, provide jobs and reclaim American dollars that are being spent on imported aquaculture products.”

The Commerce and NOAA policies build on priorities of President Obama’s National Ocean Policy, including the emphasis on protecting, maintaining and restoring healthy and diverse ecosystems; supporting sustainable uses of the ocean; and increasing scientific understanding and applying that knowledge to make better decisions. NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Find us on [Facebook](#).

The Sentinels of the Coast: an upgrade to the Texas Coastal Ocean Observation Network



In February 2011, the Conrad Blucher Institute for Surveying and Science (CBI), Division of Nearshore Research (DNR), at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, through a partnership with the NOAA’s Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) completed the installation of two (2) Sentinels of the Coast water level stations in Texas that will become part of the Texas Coastal Ocean Observation Network (TCOON). The Sentinels, installed at Texas Point and the Galveston Entrance Channel North Jetty, were funded by the US Army Corps of Engineers due to the destruction of existing monitoring stations by Hurricane Ike in 2008.

After the passage of Ike, the US Army Corps of Engineers initiated a requirement for the installation of stations that would withstand the forces of storm surge along the Texas coast, and the CO-OPS designed Sentinel was the answer. Through an active partnership between DNR, the US Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District, and CO-OPS, the Sentinel design was provided and approved for installation. CO-OPS provided site specific Sentinel designs to DNR along with onsite technical representation during the construction and installation of the Texas Sentinels so that each structure met the CO-OPS standards. The DNR is in the process of upgrading all TCOON stations with instrumentation that meets CO-OPS National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON) operational standards. For this reason, CO-OPS provided instrumentation for the two new locations with the goal of identifying them as NWLON stations in the future.

The installation of instrumentation at the Texas Point and Galveston Entrance Channel North Jetty Sentinel stations should be completed by May 2011. Both stations will be operational before the 2011 hurricane season. DNR currently provides operational support for all TCOON stations, and for all

NWLON stations in Texas (under contract with CO-OPS). For further information on the TCOON and CO-OPS water level observation networks, see the following links:

- <http://lighthouse.tamucc.edu/TCOON/HomePage>
- <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/index.shtml>

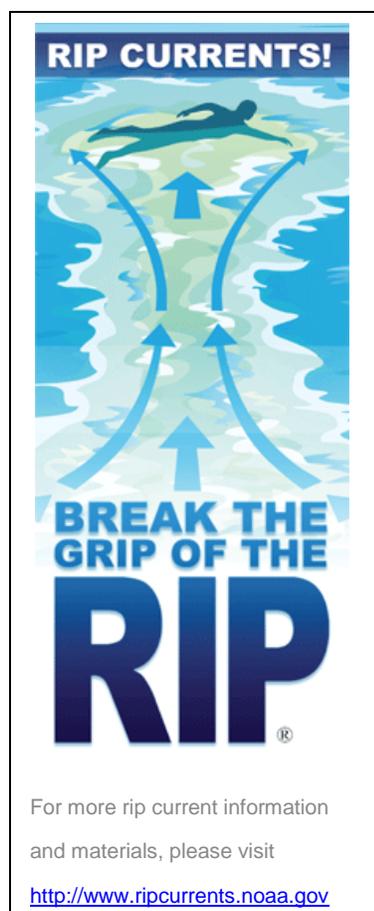
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 Texas A&M University Corpus Christi
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NOAA Urges Beach-goers to Break the Grip of the Rip®

June 5-11 is National Rip Current Awareness Week

June 6, 2011



With vacation season on the horizon, NOAA and partners are alerting beach-goers to the threat of [rip currents](#) and how to prevent drowning from their strong and potentially fatal grip.

The National Weather Service issues rip current outlooks for different coastal areas, called "[surf zone forecasts](#)," so be sure to check out the rip current outlook before heading to the beach this summer.

Rip currents claim more than 100 lives per year nationally. For that reason, NOAA has teamed up with the [United States Lifesaving Association](#) and the [National Park Service](#) to sponsor this summer's Rip Current Awareness Campaign, which starts June 5, with the theme *Break the Grip of the Rip®*.

According to the United States Lifesaving Association, each year America's beach lifeguards rescue more than 50,000 swimmers from rip currents and swimming at a guarded beach can greatly reduce the chance of drowning.

Rip currents are narrow channels of water moving swiftly away from the shore, and they can pull people far out into the ocean. Rip currents are surprisingly strong. They occur just above the ocean floor and can knock people off their feet. Rip currents often occur with strong onshore winds, in cuts or breaks of a sandbar along the edge of the breaking waves, and near man-made objects such as piers or jetties. But they can occur anywhere there are breaking waves including the Great Lakes.

Rip Current Safety Tips

Before you go:

- [Check surf zone forecasts](#)
- Study how rip currents work and how to escape them.
- Swim at a beach with lifeguard protection and talk with the lifeguard about the safest places to swim.
- Observe and obey signs and flags posted to warn about rip currents.
- Never swim near jetties, piers, or groins where there are fixed rip currents.
- Don't swim in a large body of water that is subject to changing wind, waves and currents unless you are a strong swimmer.
- Swim with a buddy, never alone.
- Rip currents are strongest at low tide.

If you get caught in the grip of a rip current:

- Yell for help immediately.
- Don't swim against a rip current – it will just tire you out.
- Escape the rip current by swimming parallel to the beach until you are free.
- If you are unable to swim out of the rip current, float or calmly tread water.
- When out of the current, swim toward the shore.

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Note: Break the Grip of the Rip is a registered trademark of NOAA.

National Ocean Council and NOAA Celebrate National Ocean Month

June 2, 2011

Today, the Obama Administration proclaimed June as National Ocean Month, recognizing that healthy oceans matter to all Americans. The National Ocean Council will conduct a series of public listening sessions across the nation as it develops action plans to grow the economy and health of America's coastal communities.

In addition to sponsoring four of these sessions, NOAA will celebrate Ocean Month at the annual Capitol Hill Oceans Week next week, where Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere, and NOAA Administrator will deliver this year's keynote address about the critical role of oceans for our national security and prosperity.

As the nation's ocean agency, NOAA is taking a lead role in the implementation of the policy. NOAA's expertise in mapping and charting, ocean observing, weather forecasting and environmental monitoring ensures the best science is available to inform decisions. Throughout the month, Lubchenco will participate in a number of important ocean-focused events:

- **June 7** - Administrator Lubchenco delivers keynote at Capitol Hill Oceans Week, Washington, D.C.
- **June 9** - Administrator Lubchenco attends Sustainable Seafood Festival at the National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.

- **June 10** - Administrator Lubchenco attends East Coast Tsunami Conference, Washington, D.C.
- **June 29-30** - Administrator Lubchenco attends Western Governors Association meeting, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Starting next week, the National Ocean Council will host a series of 12 public listening sessions across the country. NOAA will be hosting four listening sessions in Hawaii and along the West Coast. Building from the Executive Order issued by President Obama last July that established the National Ocean Policy and the Council charged with implementing the policy, these public engagement sessions mark the latest milestone in implementing an ocean policy that addresses the most critical issues facing our oceans. In addition, the National Ocean Council has launched a month-long online public review period for strategic action plan outlines. These strategic actions plans, which will be developed over the summer, will propose attainable goals and specific, measureable actions the federal government can implement to address key challenges facing our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

These outlines and their corresponding action plans were drafted with input from a wide range of stakeholders. To participate in providing feedback for the strategic action plans outlines or to get more information on listening sessions please visit [National Ocean Council](#).

- *To provide comment on the nine strategic action plans, please visit [National Ocean Council](#).*
- *To find a [National Ocean Council regional listening session near you](#).*
- *To learn more about [Capitol Hill Oceans Week](#).*

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Commerce Announces 2011 Regional Fishery Council Appointments

June 2, 2011

The Commerce Department today announced the appointment of 21 new and returning members to the eight regional fishery management councils – important partners with NOAA's Fisheries Service in determining how ocean fisheries are managed.

The councils, established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, prepare fishery management plans for marine fish stocks in their regions. The councils fulfill the act's charge to end and prevent overfishing and rebuild fish stocks to ensure sustainable fisheries. NOAA's Fisheries Service works closely with the councils during plan development and also reviews, approves and implements the management plans developed by the councils.

“Since Magnuson-Stevens was put in place 35 years ago, the councils have been key partners with NOAA Fisheries Service in the regional, science-based and transparent fishery management process which exists in the U.S. Today I'm pleased to announce our newest members to the councils,” said Eric Schwaab, assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. “The individuals selected for the councils are uniquely qualified for these important positions. They are the experts—fishermen and scientists, leaders in their regions—who will help us achieve sustainable fisheries and maintain vibrant fishing communities.”

Council members represent diverse constituents including commercial and recreational fisheries, environmental interests and academia. Each year, the Secretary of Commerce selects approximately one-third of the total of 72 appointed members to the eight regional councils. Twenty-one are being named or reappointed for the next term, which begins on August 11.

NOAA's Fisheries Service annually solicits nominations from the governors of fishing states and oversees the annual appointment process. The Secretary must select council members from the list of nominees provided by the governors to fill obligatory and at-large seats that have become available due to an expiring term, a resignation or other reasons. Obligatory seats are state-specific, while at-large seats can be filled by a person from any of the states in the region. Council members serve three-year terms, and may be reappointed to serve up to three consecutive terms. The 2011 appointments are listed below, by Council. An asterisk (*) indicates a reappointment.

Gulf Council

The Gulf Council includes members from the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. The appointees for 2011 fill three at-large seats.

At-large seats:

Pamela J. Dana (Florida)

Patrick F. Riley (Texas)

*Robert L. Shipp (Alabama)

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Endangered Species Listing for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Not Warranted

Agency remains concerned; will revisit decision with new science

May 27, 2011



School of bluefin tuna. [High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA Fisheries Service)

After an extensive scientific review, NOAA announced today that Atlantic bluefin tuna currently do not warrant species protection under the Endangered Species Act.

NOAA has committed to revisit this decision by early 2013, when more information will be available about the effects of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill, as well as a new stock assessment from the scientific arm of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the international body charged with the fish's management and conservation.

NOAA is formally designating both the western Atlantic and eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean stocks of bluefin tuna as "species of concern" under the Endangered Species Act. This places the species on a watchlist for concerns about its status and threats to the species.

“NOAA is concerned about the status of bluefin tuna, including the potential effects of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill on the western stock of Atlantic bluefin, which spawns in the Gulf of Mexico,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “We will revisit the status of the species in early 2013 when we will have a new stock assessment and information from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment of the oil spill. We will also take action in the interim if new information indicates the need for greater protection.”

NOAA’s status review, released with today’s decision and peer-reviewed by The Center for Independent Experts, indicates that based on the best available information and assuming countries comply with the bluefin tuna fishing quotas established by ICCAT, both the western and eastern Atlantic stocks are not likely to become extinct.

The status review team also looked at the best available information on the potential effects of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill on the future abundance of the western stock of bluefin tuna and found that it did not substantially alter the results of the extinction risk analysis. While the NOAA team found that the presently available information did not favor listing, it also recognized the need to continue to monitor the potential long-term effects of the spill on bluefin tuna and the overall ecosystem. New scientific information is expected in a 2012 bluefin tuna stock assessment and as part of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment of the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill.

“Based on careful scientific review, we have decided the best way to ensure the long-term sustainability of bluefin tuna is through international cooperation and strong domestic fishery management,” said Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service. “The United States will continue to be a leader in advocating science-based quotas at ICCAT, full compliance with these quotas and other management measures to ensure the long-term viability of this and other important fish stocks.”

NOAA conducted the status review of Atlantic bluefin after determining on Sept. 21, 2010, that a petition for listing under the ESA from a national environmental organization warranted a scientific status review.

To read the status review report on Atlantic bluefin tuna, the federal register notice and other information on bluefin tuna, please go to: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2011/05/bluefin_tuna.html

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BOEMRE and NOAA to Increase Coordination, Collaboration on Offshore Energy Development and Environmental Stewardship

May 23, 2011

As the International Oil Spill Conference kicks off in Portland, Ore. today, co-sponsors the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that they have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase their coordination and collaboration to ensure the environmentally sound offshore energy development.

“BOEMRE and NOAA have enjoyed a long and productive relationship, but there is room for improvement. We can and will broaden and enhance the communication, cooperation and collaboration between our agencies,” said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich. “This MOU creates new mechanisms to ensure the early and close coordination of BOEMRE and NOAA science and agency

priorities to promote stronger environmental stewardship and stimulate greater efficiency in developing and implementing Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) energy policy and conservation.”

“This agreement improves how we coordinate and collaborate to ensure energy resources are developed in an environmentally sound manner that protects marine life and ecosystems under our respective authorities,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “We look forward to continuing to work with BOEMRE to ensure NOAA science informs offshore energy development and oil spill response.”

This MOU, which is consistent with recommendations from the National Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, specifies how BOEMRE and NOAA will cooperate and coordinate by:

- Defining specific processes to ensure effective and timely communication of agency priorities and upcoming activities;
- Identifying and undertaking critical environmental studies and analyses;
- Collaborating on scientific, environmental and technical issues related to the development and deployment of environmentally sound and sustainable offshore renewable energy technologies; and
- Increasing coordination and collaboration on decisions related to OCS activities, including with respect to research and scientific priorities.

Other key elements of the MOU include meeting regularly to develop potential ways to appropriately align regulatory and decision-making processes and identify the best available science to support future regulatory decisions; increased collaboration on oil spill exercises and response issues; and annually evaluating activities and progress related to National Ocean Policy objectives.

BOEMRE and NOAA have a history of nearly 40 years of successful scientific collaboration. These collaborative efforts encompass all OCS planning areas, from the highly successful Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program in Alaska to ongoing joint funding of the environmental monitoring at the Flower Gardens National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico. These and other collaborations cover all technical disciplines from marine mammals and physical oceanography to the joint development of environmental documents in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

BOEMRE and NOAA have had many significant and successful partnerships, including those conducted under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program. This has enabled both agencies to leverage their research capabilities to significantly increase the body of knowledge about our nation’s marine environment.

The MOU is available for viewing at

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2011/pdfs/05232011_NOAA-BOEMRE-MOU.pdf

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NOAA Hurricane Outlook Indicates an Above-normal Atlantic Season

May 19, 2011

The Atlantic basin is expected to see an above-normal hurricane season this year, according to the seasonal [outlook](#) issued by [NOAA's Climate Prediction Center](#) – a division of the [National Weather Service](#).

Across the entire Atlantic Basin for the six-month season, which begins June 1, NOAA is predicting the following ranges this year:

- 12 to 18 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which:
- 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including:
- 3 to 6 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher)



Hurricanes Karl, Igor and Julia (from left to right on Sept. 16) were part of the onslaught of Atlantic storms last hurricane season (2010).

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

Each of these ranges has a 70 percent likelihood, and indicate that activity will exceed the seasonal average of 11 named storms, six hurricanes and two major hurricanes.

“The United States was fortunate last year. Winds steered most of the season’s tropical storms and all hurricanes away from our coastlines,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “However we can’t count on luck to get us through this season. We need to be prepared, especially with this above-normal outlook.”

Climate factors considered for this outlook are:

- The continuing high activity era. Since 1995, the tropical multi-decadal signal has brought ocean and atmospheric conditions conducive for development in sync, leading to more active Atlantic hurricane seasons.
- Warm Atlantic Ocean water. Sea surface temperatures where storms often develop and move across the Atlantic are up to two degrees Fahrenheit warmer-than-average.
- La Niña, which continues to weaken in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, is expected to dissipate later this month or in June, but its impacts such as reduced wind shear are expected to continue into the hurricane season.

“In addition to multiple climate factors, seasonal climate models also indicate an above-normal season is likely, and even suggest we could see activity comparable to some of the active seasons since 1995,” said Gerry Bell, Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center.

NOAA’s seasonal hurricane outlook does not predict where and when any of these storms may hit. Landfall is dictated by weather patterns in place at the time the storm approaches. For each storm, [NOAA’s National Hurricane Center](#) forecasts how these weather patterns affect the storm track, intensity and landfall potential.

“The tornadoes that devastated the South and the large amount of flooding we’ve seen this spring should serve as a reminder that disasters can happen anytime and anywhere. As we move into this hurricane

season it's important to remember that FEMA is just part of an emergency management team that includes the entire federal family, state, local and tribal governments, the private sector and most importantly the public," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate.

"Now is the time, if you haven't already, to get your plan together for what you and your family would do if disaster strikes. Visit ready.gov to learn more. And if you're a small business owner, visit www.ready.gov/business to ensure that your business is prepared for a disaster," added Fugate.

Hurricane impacts are not limited to the coastline; strong winds and flooding rainfall often pose a threat across inland areas along with the risk for tornadoes.

Next week, May 22-28, is national [Hurricane Preparedness Week](http://www.hurricanes.gov/prepare). To help prepare residents of hurricane-prone areas, NOAA is unveiling a new set of video and audio public service announcements featuring NOAA hurricane experts and the FEMA administrator that are available in both English and Spanish. These are available at <http://www.hurricanes.gov/prepare>.

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

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NOAA Administrator Welcomes New Climate Science Report

May 18, 2011

On May 17, 2011, NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco issued the following statement about the National Research Council's release of its fifth and final report as part of the [America's Climate Choices](#) series:

In 2008, the U.S. Congress called for NOAA to execute an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to establish a committee that would "investigate and study the serious and sweeping issues relating to global climate change and make recommendations regarding what steps must be taken and what strategies must be adopted in response to global climate change, including the science and technology challenges thereof."

As the funding agency and a contributor of scientific expertise for this study, NOAA commends the members of the Committee on America's Climate Choices for their diligent work over the last three years and their valuable contributions to this monumental effort.

This final report, from the nation's most esteemed scientific body, is another independent, peer reviewed scientific report that adds to the growing body of scientific information telling us that climate change is occurring and poses significant risks to America's economy, communities and natural resources.

This report not only re-affirms the broad international scientific consensus about the causes and consequences of climate change, but makes clear that comprehensive, sustained efforts must begin today to deal with those consequences. As the report states, the question is no longer if the climate is changing,

but rather what are the options for dealing with it. Specifically, what are the tools and information that communities need to 1) understand the risks, 2) prepare for and deal with impact already occurring and 3) understand what actions they can take to limit future emissions and the magnitude of future impacts.

A key message from this report is that the sooner we act, the more economically and socially resilient our communities will be and the more flexibility they will have to address and adapt to climate change impacts. The actions needed to reduce emissions and adapt a changing climate also present significant opportunities for technological innovation and job creation. The report advocates a new, iterative decision-making framework in which actions can be revised as new knowledge about climate change emerges.

NOAA will continue to build its capacity to advance climate science and deliver climate information and services. Our goal is to provide the most reliable and relevant climate information to communities, businesses and governments – information that will also speed development of the emerging private sector climate services industry. This is an important step in helping Americans understand and make informed decisions with consequences for all of society from national security and infrastructure, to farming, energy and transportation, and disaster preparedness.

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NOAA, USACE, and USGS Partner to Support Water Resources Management

WASHINGTON – The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to form an innovative partnership of federal agencies to address America's growing water resources challenges.

Water resources decision makers nationwide require new and more integrated information and services to adapt to the uncertainty of future climate, land-use changes, an aging water delivery infrastructure, and an increasing demand on limited resources. These agencies, with complementary missions in water science, observation, prediction and management, have formed this partnership to unify their commitment to address the nation's water resources information and management needs.

To meet this demand for information, the Collaborative Science, Services and Tools to Support Integrated and Adaptive Water Resources Management MOU signed today will facilitate addressing water information needs including the creation of high-resolution forecasts of water resources showing where water for drinking, industry and ecosystems will be available. In addition, integrated water information will provide one-stop shopping through a database portal to support stakeholders in managing water resources.

The MOU also sets the foundation for other federal agencies and partners to elect to join the collaborative partnership in the future.

The Honorable Terrence (Rock) Salt, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA administrator, and Dr. Marcia McNutt, director of the U.S. Geological Survey signed the MOU during a ceremony at Georgetown Waterfront Park, near the Potomac River streamgauge in Washington, D.C.

“Water resources management will be one of the most significant challenges facing the nation in the 21st century,” said The Honorable Terrence (Rock) Salt, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Civil Works. “This Memorandum of Understanding is a commitment by our agencies to work together and closely coordinate our efforts in water management to provide the nation with critically needed water resources information and support for better and NOAA, USACE, and USGS Partner to Support Water Resources Management/2-2-2 smarter water planning and management. The agreement achieves one of our objectives to build a federal partnership to align programs and capabilities to support the states and stakeholders in smart, collaborative efforts.”

“This initiative will leverage each agency's expertise to improve water resource forecasts and facilitate informed decisions, all utilizing the best available science,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “This marks a step forward in providing tailored, easily accessible and usable water information services to the people who need it.”

“This partnership is a great example of how forward-thinking government agencies can enhance their complementary resources while providing great service to the nation on issues of critical importance,” said USGS director Marcia McNutt. “We built upon a successful collaboration developed during times of extreme events, and we are extending it to a stronger, enduring relationship through the MOU.”

The MOU will serve as an umbrella agreement that will allow the participating agencies to coordinate and cooperate in activities to improve water resource services. Cooperative activities in these fields may include, but are not limited to, project plan development; exchange of technical information, tools and services; joint studies; research and development activities of mutual interest; joint educational and communications activities to advance the understanding of water resources planning and management; and exchange visits and work details of individuals sponsored by all agencies who are engaged in water resources projects of mutual interest.

The MOU is designed to facilitate the ability of agency scientists, engineers, and managers to work together; achieve mutual goals and leverage resources for sharing information; and plan, develop, and implement initiatives in support of integrative and adaptive water resources management.

NOAA, USACE and USGS have a long history of working with one another and information sharing. For example, for more than 100 years, the USGS, in collaboration with the USACE and 850 other cooperators, has operated a nationwide streamgage network that monitors the water level and flow of the nation's rivers and streams. The National Weather Service, under NOAA, forecasts flooding using this streamgage data to reduce losses from flood damages.

The new agreement will further facilitate earlier and more accurate flood predictions and allow these government agencies to expand river and flood maps showing forecasted spatial extent and depth of flooding, which is only one example of the activities that will support the intent of the agreement.

The partnership will address the goals of the Integrated Water Resources Science and Services (IWRSS) initiative and the objective of the Building Strong Collaborative Relationships for a Sustainable Water Resources Future initiative to build a Federal Support Toolbox for Integrated Water Resources Management.

About U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The mission of the USACE is to provide vital public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen our Nation's security, energize the economy, and reduce risks from disasters. These engineering services include water resource planning, development and management activities involving flood risk management, navigation, ecosystem restoration, emergency preparedness and response, multi-purpose water resources, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship.

About U.S. Geological Survey

The mission of the USGS is to provide the Nation with reliable, impartial information to describe and understand the Earth. This information is used to minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters; manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources; enhance and protect the quality of life; and contribute to wise economic and physical development.

About National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The mission of NOAA is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. Critical elements of this mission include monitoring and analyzing our water resources and issuing predictions and warnings for all hydrologic conditions from floods to droughts.

NOAA Releases Aerial Imagery of Tuscaloosa, Ala. Tornado Damage

April 30, 2011



[NOAA's National Geodetic Survey](#) dispatched the [NOAA King Air 350CER](#) aircraft, equipped with specialized remote sensing equipment, on a mission to collect aerial photography at 5,000 feet from Tuscaloosa to Birmingham, Ala.

These "before and after" shots (pdf to right), taken yesterday afternoon, show damage caused by last week's tornado near 15th Street and McFarland Boulevard in Tuscaloosa.

Photos will be used to assist federal and local officials in response and recovery efforts.

UPDATE: All images from NOAA flights are being posted on this public [website](#).

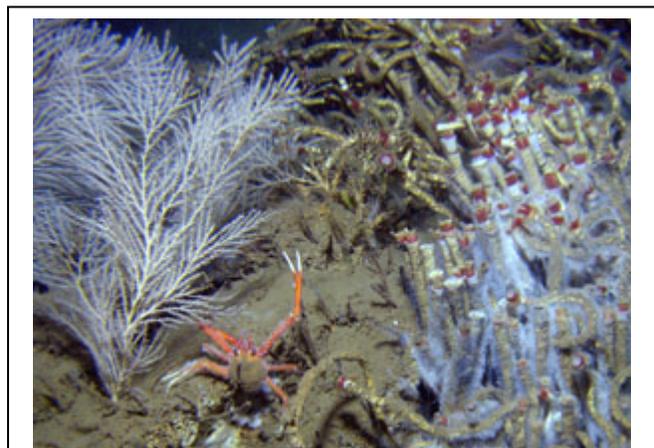
Hi-Res images available [online](#).

For more information, contact: John Ewald, john.ewald@noaa.gov, 240-429-6127.

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NOAA-supported Ocean Explorations: A foundation for education and for understanding oil spill-related changes in the Gulf of Mexico

April 28, 2011



Mississippi Canyon 751 site, where coral and cold seep habitats intersect. On the left, the gorgonian coral *Callogorgia americana*. On the right is the seep tubeworm.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: Image courtesy of Lophelia II Team 2009, NOAA-OER.)

NOAA and partners conducted 11 ocean explorations in the Gulf of Mexico during the past ten years, providing a foundation of information against which to measure change to the region's ecosystems — changes that may relate to the Deepwater Horizon event that took place a year ago. With this foundation, as well as emerging information about the oil spill and the response to the spill, [NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research](#) created The [Gulf of Mexico Deep-Sea Ecosystem Education Materials Collection](#), which includes an educator's guide and 16 associated lesson plans.

With titles such as, "Entering the Twilight Zone," "What's in that Cake?," and "Through Robot Eyes," lesson plans are hands-on, inquiry-based offerings that align with NOAA ocean expeditions, National Science Standards, and Ocean Literacy Essential Principles and Fundamental Concepts.

"We believe our record of exploration in the Gulf may be important to understanding deep-sea ecosystems prior to and after the event," said Paula Keener, director of education for NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research. "The data we have collected over the last ten years may advance not only science, but education and ocean literacy. That's why we developed these inquiry-based education materials."

Between 2001 and 2009, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research sponsored the expeditions — many in partnership with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement — to explore deep-sea ecosystems in the Gulf of Mexico. Some of these sites are within a few miles of the Deepwater Horizon spill site. Each expedition was documented with an extensive webpage on oceanexplorer.noaa.gov that includes lesson plans for educators at grade levels five through 12.

The Education Materials [Collection](#) includes a selection of these lesson plans together with new lessons and additional background information about the Deepwater Horizon event. The collection provides a foundation for student inquiries into deep-sea ecosystems and builds capabilities for comparing data from NOAA ocean exploration expeditions with post-event information as the latter information becomes available.

Additional lessons and activity guides will be added to the collection as more information is produced from ongoing exploration and research activities in the Gulf of Mexico. Lessons included in this collection touch on a wide variety of topics related to physical science, life science, Earth science, technology, engineering and mathematics, as well as offer opportunities for cross-curriculum activities involving social studies, language arts, and fine arts.

In addition to the collection, most of the Gulf of Mexico expeditions on oceanexplorer.noaa.gov include formal lesson plans and a variety of background essays in addition to photo and video collections. These materials may be used beyond the collection in a variety of ways to enhance class discussions and student research.

Commemorating 10 years of ocean exploration, NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research uses state-of-the-art technologies to explore the Earth's largely unknown ocean in all its dimensions for the purpose of discovery and the advancement of knowledge.

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A close-up of the scleractinian coral *Lophelia pertusa* from the Mississippi Canyon 751 site at approximately 450 m depth. This image was taken with the SeaEye Falcon DR ROV during the first cruise of this program in September 2008. [High resolution](#) (Credit: Image courtesy of Lophelia II 2009: Deepwater Coral Expedition: Reefs, Rigs, and Wrecks.)

In the Wake of a Wind Turbine

NOAA scientists, colleagues study the wake effect of wind turbines for improved efficiency, reduced damage

April 26, 2011



A turbine at the National Wind Technology Center south of Boulder, Colo.

[High Resolution](#) (Credit: CIRES)

To improve energy production by wind farms, NOAA researchers and colleagues are launching a study this month to make visible the invisible "wakes" produced behind wind turbines. Ripples, waves and other disturbances form in the atmosphere downstream of turbines, similar to the watery wakes behind boats.

"This turbulence can damage turbines downstream, and harm productivity," said Bob Banta, an atmospheric scientist with NOAA's [Earth System Research Laboratory](#) (ESRL) in Boulder.

Banta and colleagues from ESRL, the [University of Colorado](#) (CU) at Boulder, Colo., the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory ([NREL](#)), and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory have set up an experiment south

of Boulder, Colo., to create three-dimensional portraits of wind speeds and directions in turbine wakes.

Wind turbines—some taller than a 40-story building—stand ready to harness some of the wind energy at NREL's [National Wind Technology Center](#). The prevailing winds sweep east over the mountains and are funneled through Boulder's Eldorado Canyon, right to the wind technology center.

“The wake effect has been modeled in wind tunnel studies and numerical models,” Banta said, “but the atmosphere is different, it’s more variable and complicated.”

Banta spent the last several years using a [high-resolution, scanning Doppler lidar](#) to make detailed profiles of the atmosphere. For the turbine project, he hopes to capture turbulence and other wake effects in a broad wedge of air up to 7 km (4.3 miles) long and 1 km (3,280 feet) high.

The team will use the scanning lidar to take a detailed look at the atmosphere in front of and behind one of the large turbines on the NREL site: a 2.3-megawatt graceful giant that stretches 100 meters (328 feet) to the central hub, with three 45-meter (148-foot) blades.

The researchers hope to capture the effects of ramp up and ramp down events, when winds suddenly gust high or die down. They also will gather data on what happens downstream when winds shift direction quickly. Many other instruments support the project, from the “CU Windcube lidar” that also measures wind speeds, directions, and turbulence in the lower atmosphere, to meteorological instruments on towers downwind.

“Current-generation wind turbines stretch up into a complicated part of the atmosphere,” said Julie Lundquist, project leader, professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences at CU-Boulder and a joint appointee at NREL. “If we can understand how gusts and rapid changes in wind direction affect turbine operations and how turbine wakes behave, we can improve design standards, increase efficiency, and reduce the cost of energy.”

By the end of 2010, wind power provided 2.3 percent of U.S. electricity, up from 1.8 percent the previous year. To facilitate increased electricity production from wind, the turbulent lower atmosphere and its effects on turbines and turbine arrays must be better understood.

The wind wake study, dubbed the Turbine Wake and Inflow Characterization Study, fits under a Memorandum of Understanding on “Weather-dependent and Oceanic Renewable Energy Resources” signed by NOAA and the Department of Energy (DOE) in January 2011. The agreement sets up a framework for NOAA and DOE to work together on enhancing the accuracy and completeness of resource information for the effective and sustainable deployment, operation and maintenance, and the efficient use of weather-dependent and oceanic renewable energy technologies and infrastructure. The wind wake study was primarily funded by DOE, NOAA and CU-Boulder and involves many collaborators, led by:

- Robert Banta and Alan Brewer, Chemical Sciences Division, ESRL
- Yelena Pichugina, Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences
- Julie Lundquist, CU-Boulder, NREL National Wind Technology Center
- Neil Kelley, National Renewable Energy Laboratory National Wind Technology Center
- Jeff Mirocha, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

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Normally invisible, wind wakes take shape in the clouds behind the Horns Rev offshore wind farm west of Denmark.

[High Resolution](#) (Credit: Vattenfall)

Commerce Department Appoints Marine Fisheries Advisors to National Committee

New Members from American Samoa, Florida, and Georgia

April 21, 2011



Jim Cook, a longline fishing boat owner and the vice president of Pacific Ocean Producers, leads an early morning tour for MAFAC members and NOAA Fisheries staff at the Honolulu Fish Auction.

[High Resolution](#) (Credit: Heidi Lovett / NOAA Fisheries Service)

The Department of Commerce today announced the appointment of three new public advisors charged with counseling the Secretary of Commerce and NOAA on national saltwater fishery management and laws that protect marine mammals, sea turtles and other ocean life.

The three new members are part of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, or MAFAC, the only federal advisory panel charged with making recommendations to NOAA and the Secretary of Commerce on the department's living marine resource responsibilities.

MAFAC members draw on their expertise to evaluate and assess national programs, recommend priorities, and provide their views on issues concerning the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, aquaculture, recreational fishing, and ocean governance.

Established in 1971, MAFAC consists of 15 to 21 individuals who are selected through a comprehensive public recruitment process. MAFAC members represent commercial and recreational fisheries interests, environmental organizations, academic institutions, tribes, and consumer groups from a balance of U.S. geographical regions. Member terms are three years, and members may serve two consecutive terms. MAFAC meets twice a year with supplementary subcommittee meetings as determined necessary by the chair. The three new members are:

- **Phillip Dyskow**, Canton, Ga.; Senior Advisor to the President and former President of the Yamaha Marine Group; board member of the National Marine Manufacturers Association and the Center for Coastal Conservation
- **Julie Morris**, Sarasota, Fla.; Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, New College of Florida; former co-director of the New College Environmental Studies Program; representative to the Florida State University System's Oil Spill Academic Task Force; former Member and Chair, Gulf of Mexico Regional Fishery Management Council (three terms)
- **Va'amua Henry Seseapasara**, Pago Pago, American Samoa; Member, American Samoa House of Representatives; Vice-Chairman of the House Agricultural and Fishery Committee; former Director, Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources, American Samoa; former Member, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

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NRDA Trustees Announce \$1 billion Agreement to Fund Early Gulf Coast Restoration Projects

April 21, 2011

Washington, DC – Under an unprecedented agreement announced today by the Natural Resource Trustees for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (Trustees), BP has agreed to provide \$1 billion toward early restoration projects in the Gulf of Mexico to address injuries to natural resources caused by the spill. The Trustees involved are: Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, the Department of the Interior (DOI), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Department of Justice provided assistance in reaching the agreement.

This early restoration agreement, the largest of its kind ever reached, represents a first step toward fulfilling BP's obligation to fund the complete restoration of injured public resources, including the loss of use of those resources by the people living, working and visiting the area. The Trustees will use the money to fund projects such as the rebuilding of coastal marshes, replenishment of damaged beaches, conservation of sensitive areas for ocean habitat for injured wildlife, and restoration of barrier islands and wetlands that provide natural protection from storms.

The agreement in no way affects the ultimate liability of BP or any other entity for natural resource damages or other liabilities, but provides an opportunity to help restoration get started sooner. The selection of early restoration projects will follow a public process, and will be overseen by the Trustees.

The full natural resource damage assessment process will continue until the Trustees have determined the full extent of damages caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. At the end of the damage assessment process, the Trustees will take into account any benefits that were realized from these early restoration projects. In addition to funding early restoration projects, BP will continue to fund the damage assessment and, together with the other responsible parties, will ultimately be obligated to compensate the public for the entire injury. BP is providing the early restoration funds voluntarily, and is not required to do so at this stage of the damage assessment process. The agreement will speed needed resources to the Gulf in advance of the completion of the assessment process.

To read the agreement, [click here](#).

"This milestone agreement will allow us to jump-start restoration projects that will bring Gulf Coast marshes, wetlands, and wildlife habitat back to health after the damage they suffered as a result of the Deepwater Horizon spill," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "This agreement accelerates our work on Gulf Coast restoration and in no way limits the ability of all the Natural Resource Trustees from seeking full damages from those who are responsible as the NRDA process moves forward."

"One year after the largest oil spill in our history, we take a major step forward in the recovery of the Gulf of Mexico, for the environment and the people who depend on it for their livelihood and enjoyment. Today's agreement is a down payment on our promise to protect and restore the Gulf," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

"This agreement is a great first step toward restoring our natural resources destroyed by the BP oil spill," said Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal. "We are eager to continue working with public, state and federal co-trustees and BP to quickly convert this downpayment into projects to restore our damaged coast and replace our lost wildlife. We encourage BP to continue to address the damages from this spill through early restoration efforts."

“Alabama’s natural resources are environmentally diverse and an economic engine for our state and nation. Ecosystem restoration is vital to the economic vitality of the Alabama Gulf Coast,” said Governor Bentley. “Obtaining funding for these restoration projects is a major step forward in addressing the oil spill’s damage to our precious natural resources. I have the utmost confidence that the Alabama trustees will consider and identify projects and use these funds toward restoring our natural resources.”

"Since the day of the oil spill, our goals have been to make Mississippi whole and to assure that our coastal areas completely recover. Today's unprecedented agreement is an important first step but it is only the first step. Mississippi will continue this work and will count on our many interested citizens to contribute their ideas and input as we all work to define the scope of these early projects and develop other restoration projects. Our goals have not changed. We will remain actively engaged in these and other projects until the Gulf is restored and our state is made whole," said Trudy D. Fisher, Mississippi Trustee, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

“I’m pleased that after a year of uncertainty and concerns about environmental damages which occurred as a result of the Deepwater Horizon explosion, Florida will be able to use this early restoration money to initiate greatly needed environmental restoration projects,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel Vinyard. “Because we have worked diligently to assess the environmental damage resulting from the spill, we are well positioned to be able to quickly begin performing important restoration projects and use Florida’s share of the early restoration funds to assist our coastal communities with their continued recovery from the spill.”

“While the Texas coast was not as visibly impacted by this spill, our wetlands, bays, beaches and coastal waters were affected, and it makes sense to invest in places that can help jumpstart and maximize recovery of the entire Gulf,” said Carter Smith, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department executive director. “There will be a public process in Texas and throughout the Gulf to consider and identify projects that make the best use of these funds for our coastal habitats and the fish, wildlife and people who depend upon them.”

The \$1 billion in early restoration projects will be selected and implemented as follows:

- Each state – Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas - will select and implement \$100 million in projects;
- The Federal Resource Trustees, NOAA and DOI, will each select and implement \$100 million in projects;
- The remaining \$300 million will be used for projects selected by NOAA and DOI from proposals submitted by the State Trustees. All projects must meet the other requirements of the Framework Agreement and be approved by the Trustee Council comprised of all the natural resource trustees.

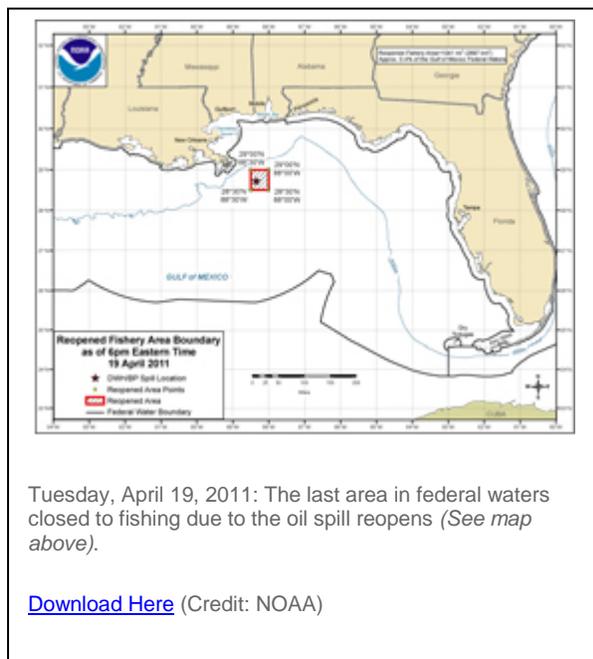
To read the allocation agreement, [click here](#).



All Federal Waters of the Gulf Once Closed to Fishing Due to Spill Now Open

More than 1,000 square miles opened today

April 19, 2011



NOAA today reopened to commercial and recreational fishing 1,041 square miles of Gulf waters immediately surrounding the Deepwater Horizon wellhead, just east of Louisiana. This is the twelfth and final reopening in federal waters since July 22, and opens all of the areas in Federal waters formerly closed to fishing due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

This reopening was announced after consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and under a [reopening protocol](#) agreed to by NOAA, the FDA, and the Gulf states.

“I am pleased to announce that all federal waters affected by the spill are now open to all fishing,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. “I thank fishermen and the public for their patience and FDA for its support and

cooperation throughout this process while we worked diligently to ensure the integrity of Gulf seafood.”

NOAA sampled this area between November 11 and November 14, 2010, March 12 and March 16, 2011, and March 28 and April 1, 2011, for potentially affected finfish, including tuna, swordfish, and escolar. Sensory analyses of 86 finfish samples and chemical analyses of 112 finfish samples in eight composites followed the methodology and procedures in the reopening protocol, with sensory analysis finding no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and results of chemical analysis for oil-related compounds and dispersants well below the levels of concern. All [test results](#) are publicly available.

As announced on October 29, NOAA and FDA developed and implemented a chemical test to detect the presence of dispersants in fish, oysters, crabs and shrimp. The level of concern for dispersants is 100 parts per million for finfish and 500 parts per million for shrimp. The test can reliably detect Dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate (DOSS) at levels of 2000 times below the lowest level of concern. The results of chemical testing showed that 99 percent of samples contained no detectable dispersant residues, and the few samples that did contain dispersant residues showed levels more than 1000 times lower than FDA levels of concern.

“Throughout this process, public health and safety has been our primary goal,” said FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D. “This has been an extraordinary team effort and the reopening of these federal waters serves as a dramatic example of what cooperation between federal agencies can accomplish.”

NOAA continues to work closely with the FDA and the Gulf states to ensure seafood safety. Thousands of test [results](#), all publicly available, prove Gulf seafood is safe from oil and dispersant contamination.

The total area reopened today is about 0.4 percent of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and 100 percent of the formerly closed area, as last modified on February 2, 2011. No oil or sheen has been documented in the area since August 4. At its peak, the closed area was 88,522 square miles, or 37 percent of Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

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

Florida Wetlands Restoration Creates Habitat and Supports Local Jobs

April 16, 2011



Aerial view of the site after much of the freshwater marsh and pond regrading is completed (right). The abandoned aquaculture ponds are visible (center) and will be regraded to create salt marsh.

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

NOAA, the Ecosphere Restoration Institute, state and local partners celebrated the restoration of nearly 70 acres of wetlands that feed into Tampa Bay today in Ruskin, Fla.

"This project restores fish and wildlife habitat lost in the 1950s when the wetlands were filled for development," said Dr. Larry Robinson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere for NOAA. "The restoration work has helped support jobs for the community and improve important nursery habitat for fish, which is so vital to local recreational and commercial fisheries."

Ecosphere Restoration Institute hired local contractors to remove invasive tree species like Brazilian pepper, transform stagnant and abandoned ponds into thriving wetlands, and reconnect those wetlands to the waters of Tampa Bay.

NOAA provided \$750,000 in American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funding to Ecosphere Restoration Institute for the project. Hillsborough County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District also contributed funding for the restoration.

"Without the NOAA Recovery Act funding, this project would have taken many years to complete since it would have required piecemeal implementation as funding became available," said Thomas Ries, President, Ecosphere Restoration Institute. "Instead we've been able to construct it in a short amount of time and with significant cost savings."

This project expands upon a 17-year restoration effort of the adjacent Cockroach Bay Aquatic Preserve, which is nearing its final stage of completion. The restored wetlands provide important nursery and foraging habitat for numerous fish, wading birds, and frogs.

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. This project is one of four habitat restoration projects in Florida, out of 50 total projects selected by NOAA for this funding.

Most of the 50 projects will be completed within the next year. These projects are supporting thousands of short- and long-term jobs. When complete, these projects will have restored 8,700 acres of habitat and opened access to 700 stream miles for fish passage that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reefs.

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Freshwater pond after planting.
[High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

New Fishing Hooks Protect Bluefin Tuna in Gulf of Mexico But Allow Catch of Yellowfin Tuna and Swordfish

April 1, 2011



James Barbour, NOAA fishing gear researcher, holds a swordfish. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA's Fisheries Service will require commercial fishermen who fish for yellowfin tuna, swordfish and other species with longlines in the Gulf of Mexico to use a new type of hook, called a weak hook, designed to reduce the incidental catch of Atlantic bluefin tuna. The hooks will be required starting May 5, 2011.

Directed fishing for bluefin tuna in the Gulf has been prohibited since the early 1980s, however bluefin are caught incidentally by longline fishermen who target other species. The Gulf of Mexico is the only known spawning area for the western stock of Atlantic bluefin tuna, a historically overfished species. Many bluefin die from the stress endured in this incidental capture in warm water even if fishermen release them.

"NOAA worked with longline fishermen from the Gulf to test the weak hook carefully over the last three years," said Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "Our cooperative scientific research with fishermen is showing that this new technology can protect bluefin tuna in the Gulf while still

allowing fishermen to target yellowfin tuna and swordfish."

The weak hook is a circular hook constructed of thin gauge wire, and is designed to straighten when a large fish, such as bluefin tuna, is hooked, releasing it but holding on to smaller fish. The average size of bluefin tuna landed in the Gulf of Mexico longline fishery is 485 pounds, while the average for yellowfin tuna is about 86 pounds.

Yellowfin tuna and swordfish are valuable commercial fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, supporting fishing jobs on approximately 50 vessels as well as jobs on shore. The two species bring longline fishermen annual dockside earnings of \$7 million. Research showed that the weak hook could result in some

reductions in target catch while some longline fishermen have reported weak hooks did not hurt their businesses.

“During our tests, we used regular hooks for half our hooks and half were the new weak hooks,” said Capt. Mike Carden, a longline fisherman from Panama City, Fla. who took part in the cooperative research. “We were so happy with the weak hooks we quit using the heavy hooks. The weak hook releases fish we don’t want to catch. Because it’s smaller and lighter, we catch more yellowfin tuna on the weak hook. There’s several of us who have gone to the weak hook.”

By putting the weak hook rule into effect during the spring 2011 bluefin tuna spawning season, NOAA is also following a recommendation by the scientific committee for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. ICCAT, to which the U.S. is a member, manages Atlantic bluefin tuna. The scientific committee advised ICCAT to protect the western Atlantic bluefin tuna that were spawned in 2003 and will soon be reaching maturity and beginning to spawn themselves. Scientific data indicates that this is the largest year’s class of bluefin since 1974, and early estimates are that the number of fish born in subsequent years have been quite low. Protecting these fish during spawning can help the long-term rebuilding of the depleted bluefin tuna population.

April 2011 Coastal Management News

The April 2011 edition of Coastal Management News is now available. Coastal Management News is a quarterly newsletter highlighting activities from state and territory coastal management programs. Check out the newsletter online at <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/news/docs/czmnewsapr11.pdf>. Inside you'll find the following stories:

- Oregon Inventorying Dikes, Levees, to Aid Climate Change Planning
- New Hampshire Holds Climate Change Workshops
- Summary of FY2010 CZM Funding
- Program Managers' Meeting Wrap-Up
- Ecological Study Informs Offshore Wind Siting in New Jersey
- Connecticut and New York Partners on Benthic Mapping
- New OCRM Webpage Tracks Coastal Investments, Successes
- Minnesota City Puts New Development Chapter into Effect
- CELCP Updates
- NOAA Spotlight: NOAA’s Navigation Services Provide Useful Data and Products for Coastal Management

CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Update

New CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Updates are now available [online](#). The Coastal Programs Division of NOAA’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management distributes the CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Update to keep state and territory coastal program managers and climate change/coastal hazards staff informed about climate change (as it pertains to coastal hazards) and coastal hazards activities. If you would like to receive the CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Update by e-mail, please contact christa.rabenold@noaa.gov.

In the Gulf States

ADEM Announces Construction General Permit

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Environmental Management has completed the process for developing its Construction General Permit which became effective on April 1, 2011. The permit is designed to protect water quality from the negative impacts associated with construction activities that result in an area of land disturbance exceeding one acre in size.

The Construction General Permit will, overtime, take the place of a permit-by-rule program that has been implemented by ADEM for almost ten years. Efforts under the new Construction General Permit will result in increased efficiencies for the ADEM staff, which is crucial due to budget constraints in all areas of state government.

New construction sites, as well as existing construction sites that have not renewed their expired registration notices, are subject to the new Construction General Permit and must submit a Notice of Intent to obtain permit coverage. The new Construction General Permit and all associated forms will be available on the ADEM website at www.adem.alabama.gov.

“It is imperative that ADEM maximize our operational efficiencies during these difficult budget times and this new Construction General Permit will allow us to achieve that goal,” said ADEM Director Lance LeFleur. “However, we will not sacrifice any of our capabilities to be protective of Alabama’s water resources as a result of this change.”

Dauphin Island Sea Lab Announces New Executive Director

June 11, 2011

Dr. John Valentine has been appointed executive director of Alabama’s Dauphin Island Sea Lab by the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium board of directors. Valentine, a University of South Alabama marine sciences professor who currently serves as associate director for university programs at the DISL, will assume the position Oct. 1, following the retirement of longtime executive director Dr. George Crozier.

Located on the eastern tip of Dauphin Island, Ala., the DISL is a center for research, education and service in the marine sciences. The laboratory is operated by the MESC, a nonprofit institution composed of 22 colleges and universities in Alabama.

“Dr. Valentine’s long experience with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab makes him a natural choice to lead the laboratory and consortium as they continue their important work in helping us to understand, protect and preserve our valuable marine resources, as well as teaching future generations to appreciate them,” said USA President Gordon Moulton, who serves as chairman of the board of directors of the MESC.

“The board also extends its deepest appreciation to Dr. George Crozier for his dedication and service to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, which spans nearly four decades.”

Valentine, a native of Burlington, N.C., received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas at Dallas and his doctorate in marine benthic ecology from the University of Alabama. He has been at the DISL since 1988, having completed his doctoral research there. Valentine was instrumental in preparing the nomination of Mobile Bay to the National Estuary Program and has led the work on the role of the

Mobile-Tensaw Delta as it relates to the Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Most recently, he managed the distribution of the \$5 million grant from BP to the consortium for rapid response examination of impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

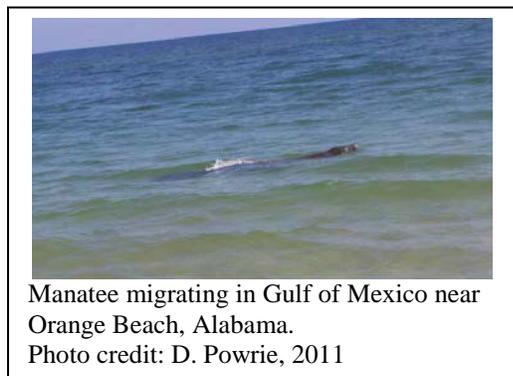
“I look forward to continuing the role Dr. Crozier has forged of offering the finest marine science courses to our Alabama students, as well as having a world-class staff of research scientists,” Valentine said. “We have our challenges, economic and environmental, but we also have some of the brightest minds and hardest working individuals around. I am honored by the board’s appointment.”

As current chair of university programs, Valentine is the chief academic officer at the laboratory and responsible for the statewide curriculum of courses offered for the member institutions by resident faculty. He also oversees the graduate programs of some 50 graduate students pursuing advanced degrees through several of the member schools. Valentine has authored more than 50 papers published in highly visible and widely respected marine journals and served on 32 graduate student research committees at the University of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Auburn University, and USA since joining the faculty at DISL.

Among his many professional accomplishments, Valentine has secured more than \$5 million in competitive extramural research and contract funding through 44 proposals to a variety of federal and state sources. Additionally, Valentine serves as the past-president of the Benthic Ecology Society, which he helped found. The society was incorporated this year at the annual meeting in Mobile. This is the second time that the society has met in Mobile, bringing several hundred international scientists to the Port City.

Manatee Migration Season Begins; Increased Reports of Manatees in Mississippi

May 18, 2011



Manatee migrating in Gulf of Mexico near Orange Beach, Alabama.
Photo credit: D. Powrie, 2011

Manatee migration season has begun with reports last week by two fishermen of hooked manatees near the Katrina Reef/Deer Island area of Biloxi Bay.

“We have 2-5 times more sightings reported in Mississippi than we have had in the past several years, including one of our tagged animals at the Louisiana-Mississippi border,” said Dr. Ruth Carmichael, Senior Marine Scientist, DISL, and Director of the Sea Lab’s Marine Sighting Network (MSN). “Something is going on that we do not fully understand, perhaps due to early warmer temperatures and the greater freshwater inputs to the west, but we are

definitely looking at evidence of more animals further west earlier in the year this year than we have seen before.”

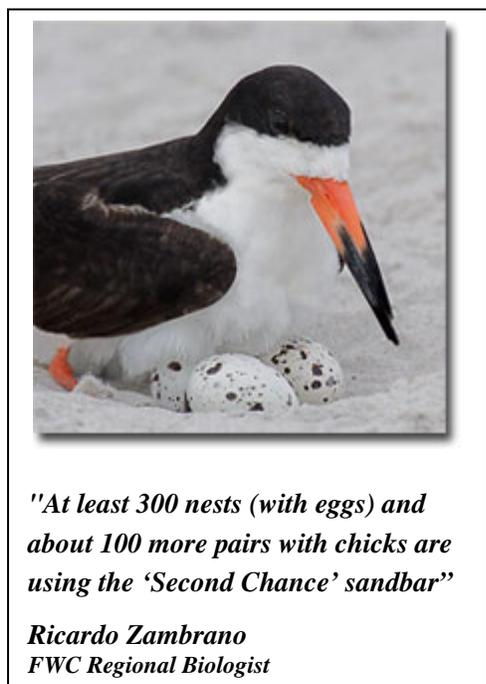
With the onset of warmer weather, manatees have begun their migration season to our local waters. MSN is encouraging the public to report their sightings and to educate themselves on what to do when encountering these gentle giants. “We really depend on the public to report every sighting, any time, as soon as possible,” urges Dr. Carmichael. In fact, Zewie, the third manatee captured and tagged by MSN at Dog River last summer, has already been tracked from his home in Crystal River, Florida, to a return to Mobile Bay last month. After a brief stay, he headed to Louisiana, and researchers continue to track his movements along the Gulf Coast (follow Zewie’s movements on MSN’s website).

Report any manatee sightings to MSN via our website <http://manatee.disl.org>, toll free number, 1-866-493-5803, or email, manatee@disl.org. The website offers much more information on how you can help and volunteer.

Since 2007, MSN has processed over 600 manatee sighting reports. Many come from boaters, who are advised caution in the waters when near a manatee. Ph.D student Allen Aven states, "Manatees need space and people who spot them should not alter their natural behavior. The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees since they are federally protected and report any sightings as soon as possible."

DEP and FWC Report Significant Numbers of Threatened Beach-Nesting Birds on Collier County Sandbar

~South Florida's largest least tern colony lands on Rookery Bay Reserve sand bar~



NAPLES – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) today announced a record number of least terns, a threatened species, nesting on an isolated sandbar near Marco Island in Collier County.

Each spring, migratory least terns (*Sterna antillarum*) scout local coastal areas and select a location that best meets the nesting needs of the colonial birds returning from wintering grounds in Central or South America. Over the past few years, tides and currents have been suitable for the re-formation of an emergent sandbar within DEP's Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. This sandbar, also known as "Second Chance," now serves as habitat for the largest beach-nesting least tern colony in south Florida.

"At least 300 nests (with eggs) and about 100 more pairs with chicks are using the 'Second Chance' sandbar," said FWC regional biologist Ricardo Zambrano. "About 800 birds (400 breeding pairs) is roughly the same number of birds that had used the sandbar the last time it was this large, nearly a decade

ago."

Least terns lay their well-camouflaged eggs directly on the sand, and young are mobile within a few hours of hatching. Parent birds are the eggs' and young's only protection against the elements and predators.

A few acres in size, the elevated sandbar is located at the western edge of the Ten Thousand Islands. It has low vegetation to provide some shade for chicks and is free of land-based predators. The sand bar is monitored weekly by Reserve staff and volunteers and staff has posted with signs and string alerting boaters of the birds' presence.

"The sandbar provides ideal nesting conditions for least terns," said Gary Lytton, Rookery Bay Reserve manager. "Acting like a magnet, it is attracting birds from other locations and providing the greatest chance for nesting success in the region."

Because it is isolated from the mainland the sandbar receives minimal human disturbance, which is crucial for the success of this species. Nesting least terns are easily disturbed by people (on foot or aboard

approaching vessels) as well as dogs and other animals that may be perceived as predators. Boaters, anglers and wildlife enthusiasts are urged to avoid accessing, or even approaching, this important habitat until nesting season comes to a close, around mid-August.

Whenever you visit the beach, and especially during summer nesting season, do your part to share the shore with wildlife:

- Keep your distance from resting birds
- Use a high-powered spotting scope to get the best view from a reasonable distance
- Do not force birds to fly
- Respect posted areas o Keep pets on a leash, on your boat, or leave them at home
- Don't leave any litter behind
- Never deploy fireworks at or near an active nesting beach

Designated over 30 years ago, DEP's Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is located in Naples on the Southwest coast of Florida. The Reserve manages 110,000 acres and is engaged in education, research, training, and stewardship. The Environmental Learning Center serves as a regional education, research and training center with a 150-seat auditorium, classrooms, research labs and state-of-the-art visitor center with aquaria and interactive exhibits. For more information on Reserve, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/sites/rookery/>.

DEP Celebrates National Marina Day

~Clean Marinas statewide highlight clean boating and family fun on the water~

TALLAHASSEE – Recognizing the importance of marinas statewide, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Clean Marina Program and the Association of Marina Industries are celebrating National Marina Day today, June 11, 2011. Florida Governor Rick Scott recently signed a proclamation honoring Marina Day in Florida encouraging marinas across the state to open their doors to the public today.

“With more than 1,350 miles of coastline and 50,000 miles of inland and coastal rivers supporting a \$16 billion marine industry and 200,000 jobs, Florida's water resources are crucial to the state's economy and our environment,” said DEP Director of Sustainable Initiatives Brad Stombeck. “Celebrating National Marina Day brings attention to the importance of protecting Florida's waterways and allows our Clean Marinas to be recognized for their commitment to protecting our state's natural and economic resources.”

Celebrated since 2001, National Marina Day emphasizes the significance of marinas as family-friendly gateways to rivers, lakes and oceans, and highlights the importance of their roles as environmental stewards. Boaters are reminded to practice clean safe boating while enjoying Florida's waterways and oceans. Recognizing the importance of waterways, designated Clean Marinas throughout the state will provide clean boating outreach and information along with events and activities.

With more than one million registered motorized vessels in Florida, environmental education within marine industries is the first step toward safeguarding the state's natural resources. By providing green education and alternatives, the Florida Clean Marina Program helps ensure a sustainable future for the environment and an economically important industry.

About the Florida Clean Marina Program

The Florida Clean Marina Program is a voluntary designation program with a proactive approach to environmental stewardship. To become designated as a Clean Marina, facilities must implement a set of environmental measures designed to protect Florida's waterways. These measures address critical

environmental issues such as sensitive habitat, waste management, stormwater control, spill prevention and emergency preparedness. For more information about the Florida Clean Marina program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/cleanmarina.

Read [Governor Rick Scott's proclamation](#) on National Marina Day or view a complete list of [National Marina Day events](#).

DEP, Lee County and Cape Coral to Conduct Dye Study in Cape Coral Waters

~Test needed to confirm water flow patterns~

CAPE CORAL – On Tuesday, April 19, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in coordination with Lee County and the City of Cape Coral, will conduct a dye study of local waters in Cape Coral. Dye will be released the morning of April 19 downstream of the Gator Slough Weir at Burnt Store Road. The dye will be transported with currents on an outgoing tide and will be tracked by DEP staff stationed throughout the North Spreader Canals.

Residents are advised that canals within the North Spreader system west of Burnt Store Road and northern Matlacha Pass may appear discolored during the day of testing. The dye will become diluted within several hours and is expected to be unnoticeable by the end of the day. Dye should not persist longer than 24 hours.

The dye poses no risk to human health or the environment. This is not a biological algae bloom.

The objective of the dye study is to assess hydrologic conditions within the North Spreader Canal system. The movement of dyed water will provide scientists and resources managers with information on how water flows within the North Spreader Canal system. “This effort will test scientific modeling efforts in the area that will provide information for water quality improvements,” said Jon Iglehart, Director of District Management for DEP’s South District.

For questions or concerns about this study effort, please call the DEP South District Office at (239) 344-5600.

Louisiana Coast-it Notes

May 18, 2011

Greetings from Department of Natural Resources Assistant Secretary Lou Buatt. Coast-it Notes is a publication of the Office of Coastal Management to inform permit applicants, the public and others of events and items that may impact them or their interaction with our office. This e-document is intended to improve customer service and awareness of OCM works and functions and includes announcements from all OCM divisions as issues arise. If you wish to be removed from this list or have been forwarded this email and wish to be added to the list, please contact Christine Charrier at christine.charrier@la.gov.

Permit/Mitigation Section Updates

The Office of Coastal Management (OCM) continues to review its procedures to improve transparency, efficiency and service to the public. Based upon comments and suggestions requested in a previous Coastit Note regarding proposed improvements to our public notice and distribution procedures, OCM will implement technological improvements including: 1) distribution of our coastal use permit public

notices and project plats to interested parties via email and 2) posting public notices on the OCM web page. We will continue to offer hard copy mail outs only to those who request continuation of that service. In addition, public notices of all apparently complete applications for Coastal Use Permits will continue to be published in the Official Journals of the State and/or Parish as appropriate. Notices to adjacent land owners will continue to be mailed in accordance with our partnership with the Corps of Engineers regulatory branch.

The web address to view the OCM public notices and plats is <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=591>. This has already been implemented, so please check it out. Those who wish to receive email distribution of the coastal use permit public notices and project plats should send an email to OCMINFO@la.gov and include the following information: your name, organization, phone number, and the email address where you would like our office to send the notices. If you have any questions, please contact Regina Staten at 225-342-7942 or Sara Krupa at 225-342-8917.

Ascension Becomes 20th Coastal Parish

As a result of a resolution passed without objection at the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority meeting held in Baton Rouge Tuesday, May 17th, Ascension Parish joined the Coastal Zone of Louisiana. The resolution accepted a report prepared by the Office of Coastal Management for the CPRA at the request of the Louisiana Legislature in Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 60 passed in 2009, requesting that a study be conducted to evaluate the adequacy of Louisiana's current coastal zone inland boundary after more than thirty years of coastal management. Titled "Defining Louisiana's Coastal Zone: A Science-based Evaluation of the Louisiana Coastal Zone Inland Boundary," the report analyzed the adequacy of the boundary based on science and factoring in socioeconomic considerations. One outcome of the study was that a portion of Ascension Parish was found to have a high affinity for coastal processes and was recommended to be added to the coastal zone. The Louisiana Legislature having considered this potential outcome, passed Act 956 in 2010 which provided for the immediate addition of that part of Ascension Parish to the coastal zone which might be recommended by the report upon its approval by the CPRA.

There will be no immediate changes, however, in the permitting structure of the parish. The area added includes a relatively small percentage of low lying and wetland area that is currently primarily undeveloped. This area will become subject to the coastal use permitting process once full implementation of the addition becomes effective, probably around January 1, 2012.

Between now and that time the Office of Coastal Management and Ascension Parish will be coordinating with each other, the Corps of Engineers, and other state and federal agencies to create a seamless transition to inclusion into the coastal zone regulatory process. Because the area of Ascension Parish to be added to the coastal zone will soon be eligible for permit processing under the Corps' "Programmatic General Permit" the permitting process in the affected area may become simpler and faster when the addition is fully implemented. Additionally, the parish may elect to establish a "Local Coastal Program" in which case many smaller projects of only local concern would be handled solely by the parish rather than the state or Corps.

To view the entire report, including maps and related documents, please visit the Coastal Zone Boundary Page on the Office of Coastal Management Website at <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=88>.

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LDWF, LSU Begin Initial Phase of Oyster Reef Rehabilitation

June 2, 2011

Today, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologists along with Louisiana Sea Grant scientists, deployed more than 100 million oyster larvae and 500,000 oyster spat (or oyster larvae larger than one-quarter inch). This joint effort between LDWF and LSG, is part of a \$500,000 grant provided to Louisiana State University to help rehabilitate vital oyster grounds impacted by hurricanes in the last six years.

The oyster larvae and spat were released in the Hackberry Bay Public Oyster Seed Reservation, located in north Barataria Bay. The specimens were deployed on test plots of reef to enable biologists to track progress.

This effort is the first of many ventures to help rehabilitate Louisiana's oyster grounds. The state plans to institute similar deployments of larvae and spat on other public grounds and private leases.

Prior to the Deepwater Horizon incident in 2009 data indicates that Louisiana produces approximately one-third of all oysters harvested in the US and 50 percent of oysters harvested in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is charged with managing and protecting Louisiana's abundant natural resources. For more information, visit us at www.wlf.louisiana.gov, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ldwffb, or follow us on Twitter @LDWF.

Since its establishment in 1968, Louisiana Sea Grant has worked to promote stewardship of the state's coastal resources through a combination of research, education and outreach programs critical to the cultural, economic and environmental health of Louisiana's coastal zone. Louisiana Sea Grant, based at LSU, is part of the National Sea Grant College Program, a network of 32 university-based programs in each of the U.S. coastal and Great Lakes states and Puerto Rico.

How are Louisiana Wetlands Changing?

New Map Shows Losses and Gains Since 1932

Coastal Louisiana has lost a wetland area the size of Delaware, equaling 1,883 square miles, over the past 78 years, according to a new U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center study.

Twenty-five percent of the wetland area present in 1932 was lost by 2010. If this trend were to continue, Louisiana would lose a wetland area larger than the size of the island of Manhattan every year. The USGS National Wetlands Research Center has developed a new map that illustrates wetland losses and gains on the Louisiana coastline from 1932-2010. This product provides opportunities to better understand the timing and causes of wetland loss, which are critical for forecasting landscape changes in the future. This color-coded map can be found online.

"This issue is vital to the citizens of southern Louisiana, and Terrebonne Parish in particular," said Louisiana Representative and Chair of the House Natural Resources and Environment committee, Gordon Dove. "Products like the USGS wetlands change map are essential for the protection and restoration of our coastal areas."

“By understanding land change on the Louisiana coast, decision makers can make informed choices about how to actively manage the land to help reduce future loss,” said Phil Turnipseed, Director of the USGS National Wetlands Research Center. “We can’t manage what we don’t measure.”

Louisiana currently experiences about 90 percent of the total coastal marsh loss in the contiguous United States. Land loss rates on the Louisiana coast have slowed from an average of more than 30 square miles per year between 1956 and 1978, to an estimated 11.76 square miles per year from 1985 to 2004. When the hurricanes of 2005 and 2008 are factored in, the trend increased the amount of land lost to 16.57 square miles per year from 1985 to 2010. If this loss were to occur at a constant rate, it would equate to losing more than a football field every hour. The combined loss from the storms of 2005 and 2008 equal a land area the size of Chicago.

The areas undergoing the greatest wetland loss include the Breton Sound, Barataria and Terrebonne basins, south of New Orleans. Communities in that vicinity include New Orleans, Thibodaux, Houma, Golden Meadow and Grand Isle. The impacts on human populations, the oil and gas infrastructure, fisheries and wildlife will be considerable if coastal wetlands continue to disappear.

There are many causes of wetland loss, but one of the primary causes is sediment deprivation caused by the dams, levees, and channels erected along the Mississippi River and its tributaries. These projects, including the Louisiana facilities initiated in response to the flood of 1927, have resulted in a 50 percent decrease in sediment delivered to the Louisiana coast.

In areas where sediment has been allowed to reach coastal wetlands, land gain has been observed. The Wax Lake and Atchafalaya Deltas receive regular sediment deliveries and have steadily gained land from the 1970s to present.

The current land area decrease estimate of 1,883 square miles is slightly less than some previous measurements of loss. Previous studies had estimated total loss of 1900 square miles, which does not include the effects of hurricanes in 2005 and 2008. Improved methodologies and techniques have enabled the USGS to quantify coastal land and water changes more accurately. Scientists can now distinguish these changes from normal environmental variability, such as wind and tide driven changes, which can affect the aerial photography and satellite imagery on which the current estimate is based.

Coastal Louisiana wetlands support the largest commercial fishery in the lower 48 states and provide critical habitat to many threatened and endangered species. The delta is the seventh largest on Earth and the wetlands help to buffer populations and property from hurricanes and other storms. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that about half of Louisiana’s 4.5 million people live in coastal parishes.

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2011 Mississippi Shrimp Season Opens To Good-Size Shrimp, Rough Seas



Photo Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. The waters and the winds were rough on the opening day of the 2011 Mississippi shrimp season as this boat makes it way out to harvest shrimp.

BILOXI, Miss.— Mississippi’s shrimp season opened to windy conditions and choppy waters at 6 a.m., May 25, 2011, the earliest shrimp season on record. Shrimp season opens in Mississippi territorial waters when sampling shows shrimp have reached the 68

-count- per- pound

statute requirement. According to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Shrimp and Crab Bureau’s aerial count, 162 shrimp boats were observed in Mississippi waters. There were 48 boats located north of Horn Island, 25 located south of Horn Island and 28 along Belle Fontaine.

Reports of shrimp caught throughout the morning were predominantly 40/50

-count

brown shrimp with nice large white shrimp mixed in. Some shrimpers will wait until nightfall when brown shrimp catches tend to be better.

“Salinity levels are dropping in the western sound as a result of the Bonnet Carre spillway openings to relieve Mississippi River flooding. The few shrimpers who worked the far western state waters today reported small catches of 70/80 count shrimp,” says Traci Floyd, director of the DMR’s Shrimp and Crab Bureau.

The DMR’s Marine Patrol was out on the waters starting at 6 a.m. on May 25 with six boats, 12 officers, and two dispatchers. “Shrimp season started slow and the weather could have been better but we didn’t experience any calls for rescue; everything went pretty smooth,” said Col. Walter Chataginer, Chief of the DMR’s Marine Patrol. “All shrimp boats checked were in compliance.”

As of May 25, 2011, the number of resident commercial shrimp licenses sold was 423 and the number for out of state was 162. Recreational and commercial shrimp season will close at midnight, Dec. 31, 2011, north of the Intracoastal Waterway, and at midnight, April 30, 2012, south of the Intracoastal Waterway. Live bait shrimping is open year round.

For the latest updates on the Mississippi shrimp fishery, call the toll free Shrimp Information Hotline 1-866-We Trawl (866-938-7295). For further information contact the DMR at (228) 374-5000, or write to the Department of Marine Resources, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530.

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.

Volunteers Help Create Habitat on Deer Island

June 10, 2011



Volunteers with the Mississippi Master Naturalist and Master Gardener programs recently took part in a two-day planting of dune grasses on Deer Island. Volunteers were assisted by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources Coastal Preserves Program, Mississippi State University, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and Dune Doctors.

Re-establishment of dune plants is a practical step in ecosystems restoration.

“The opportunity to volunteer for this project appealed to me because of my interest in fishing and coastal ecosystems,” Jack Kelly, a Master Gardener from Ocean

Springs.

In the “Community Grass Gardens” restoration project, volunteers planted a total of 2,300 dune plants covering more than 10,600 square feet or just under a quarter of an acre of crucial habitat on East Deer Island. They planted sea oats, panic grass, red morning glory, white morning glory, beach elder, sea purslane and sea golden rods.

“I see the preservation and restoration of our natural resources as critical, our responsibility,” said Harrison County Master Gardener Margaret McCrary of Gulfport. “Our coastal areas are a unique environment which provide habitat for rare and sometimes endangered wildlife and organisms but also buffers us from weather extremes. At the same time, healthy coastlines provide seafood for us to eat, many sporting opportunities for our pleasure and natural beauty beyond our imagination.”

“We appreciate the assistance from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network who provided the funding for this project,” said Chris Boyd, Master Naturalist coordinator with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and Mississippi State University. “Community Grass Garden projects, such as this one, provide opportunities for communities to restore natural habitat while increasing their knowledge of local ecosystems.”

Deer Island’s proximity to the mainland makes it a popular recreation area for locals and tourists and provides an accessible but isolated outdoor classroom for naturalists, according to Ali Leggett, Coastal Resource Manager with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources’ Coastal Preserves Bureau.

“Many restoration projects are under way to help preserve the ecological functions that this island system provides,” she said. “This community-based project will provide important dune habitat for wildlife species in addition to providing erosion control and scenic beauty.”

Texas Coastal Expo Comes to Moody Gardens

GLO's celebration of the Texas coast packed with hands-on activities for all

Jun 14, 2011

AUSTIN — The Texas Coastal Expo is coming to Galveston's Moody Gardens from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 18. This free and family-friendly celebration of the Texas Coast - brought to you by the Texas General Land Office - is the biggest coastal expo in Texas.

"Bring the kids, we'll have touch tanks full of live sea creatures, a floating classroom in the Bay, professional sand castle building, a surf simulator and more," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "The Texas Coastal Expo is an action-packed day that's fun for all."

Patterson said the idea behind Texas Coastal Expo is nothing less than improving how Texans understand and care for their coast. "The more Texans know about the coast, the more they'll help to protect it," he said.

The Texas Coastal Expo will feature exhibits that explain and demonstrate coastal conservation efforts and wind power. There will also be treasure hunts, Texas shrimp cooking demonstrations and lots of free goodies and giveaways.

Texas Coastal Expo is sponsored by America's Wetlands, Coastal Conservation Association Texas, Crowder Gulf, The Shaw Group, Apollo Environmental, Coastal Bend Bays & Estuaries Program and HNTB.

For more information on Texas Coastal Expo, go to www.texascoastalexp.org or find Texas Coastal Expo on Facebook.

More Than 7,000 Volunteers Haul 123 Tons of Trash off Texas Beaches

25th Annual Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup a success

May 03, 2011

AUSTIN — The 25th Annual Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup drew more than 7,000 volunteers to the Texas coast Saturday.

"No one can top our Adopt-A-Beach volunteers," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the General Land Office. "In one day, they swarmed over 150 miles of beach and removed more than 123 tons of trash - that's an enormous effort."

Most of the trash found consisted of typical items left by beachgoers: cigarette butts, soda cans, beer bottles and beach toys. This mix of trash has changed over the years that Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have walked the beaches.

Among the more interesting items volunteers found were a bottle of tattoo ink in Kleberg County; a surfboard and a pair of dentures in Galveston; political campaign signs, drug paraphernalia and "Don't Mess With Texas" plastic cups in Harris County; a frying pan with eggs still in it in Boca Chica; a vial of morphine in Port Aransas; and numerous toilet seats and pairs of underwear at beaches across the state.

When the program started in 1986, the bulk of trash on Texas beaches washed ashore from international ships that simply dumped it overboard. Since then, data collected by Adopt-A-Beach volunteers has

helped to pass an international shipping treaty that bans such sloppy practices and requires all oceangoing vessels to dispose of their trash responsibly while in port.

The Adopt-A-Beach program is one of the most successful all-volunteer efforts in the nation. In the past 25 years, 413,000 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers have picked up more than 8,000 tons of trash from the Texas Gulf Coast. And thanks to a generous \$50,000 donation by Shell Oil Company and Motiva Enterprises LLC, Adopt-A-Beach will celebrate its 25th anniversary by reaching out to even more beach lovers.

Shell Oil Company and Motiva Enterprises LLC are the lead sponsors for the 25th Anniversary celebration of Adopt-A-Beach. Other sponsors include HNTB Corporation, AkzoNobel Surface Chemistry LLC, Flint Hills Resources Community Action Council, the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, the Newfield Foundation and Keep Texas Beautiful.

To learn more about items collected at the cleanup, and for information on the health of the Texas coast, visit the Adopt-A-Beach program website at www.texasadoptabeach.org, or contact the Texas General Land Office at 1-877-TXCOAST (1-877-892-6278).

Patterson Defends Open Beaches Tuesday

Texas tradition at stake in rare rehearing before the Supreme Court

Apr 18, 2011

AUSTIN — A California attorney's assault on the Texas Open Beaches Act will face a stiff defense Tuesday from Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

In a rare rehearing, the Texas Supreme Court will hear arguments for and against the Texas tradition of public beach access at 9 a.m. Following the conclusion of oral arguments, Patterson will be available to the news media at noon on the steps of the Supreme Court Building to take questions.

"Texas beaches have been open to the public since Texas was an independent Republic, and I'm not about to let any lawyer from California take that away from them," Patterson said. "I hope our Supreme Court won't either."

The case in question involves several houses on the beach that California divorce lawyer Carole Severance purchased in Galveston in 2005. After Hurricane Rita hit that summer, the General Land Office sent Severance a letter stating that her property was on the public beach and subject to removal under the Open Beaches Act. She was later offered up to \$50,000 in public money to move each house off the beach. Instead, Severance sued, claiming the public's right to access the beach violated her constitutional rights. Several of her beach houses have since been purchased with taxpayer money by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but the case continues.

In November, the Supreme Court issued an opinion in the case that called into question the definition of the public beach easement, a key provision of the Texas Open Beaches Act. The Court ruled there is no longer a public beach easement on West Galveston Island.

The opinion also triggered a robust response from Texans defending the Open Beaches Act. Patterson filed a motion for rehearing and more than 20 briefs were filed supporting Patterson's motion from a diverse group of private citizens, coastal advocacy groups, chambers of commerce and coastal cities and counties. Only one brief was filed on Severance's behalf.

"Texans passed the Open Beaches Act more than 40 years ago, and voted overwhelmingly to put that right in our constitution in 2009," Patterson said. "Texans just don't give up the rights we have fought to earn."

Texas Coastal Management Program Grant Cycle 17 Open

The Texas Coastal Management Program (CMP) helps ensure the long-term environmental and economic health of the Texas coast through management of the state's coastal natural resource areas. The program is managed by the Coastal Coordination Council (CCC), a public/private council chaired by Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson. Texas is one of the few coastal states that pass substantial amounts of federal Coastal Zone Management Act funds through to coastal communities for projects in the coastal zone.

In February 2011, Commissioner Patterson announced \$1.7 million of Cycle 16 grant funding for 16 Texas coastal projects selected by a competitive grant process. The projects include habitat and marsh restoration, improving public access to the beach and rebuilding oyster beds with recycled shells, just to name a few. A list of the selected projects is available at the Land Office website at <http://www.glo.texas.gov>.

"These projects will get a lot of bang for the buck," said Commissioner Patterson after grant funding was approved by the CCC, which oversees the CMP. As the Land Office follows the successful implementation of the Cycle 16 projects, the agency again held planning workshops to help potential Grant Cycle 17 applicants through the grant application process.

Workshops were held in Port Lavaca, Port Arthur, Corpus Christi, Port Isabel and Galveston. Commissioner Patterson, as chairman of the CCC, expects \$1.8 million will be available for coastal projects during Grant Cycle 17.

CMP Grant Cycle 17: Final applications are due October 12, 2011

In the past, the Council has used the §306/§306A coastal management grant funds to fund small-scale projects. While the Council will continue to fund individual small-scale projects up to \$100,000, the Council will also consider funding individual large-scale §306A projects up to \$400,000 for on-the-ground habitat protection/restoration and land acquisition projects.

The Council plans to award up to \$800,000 in CMP funding for large-scale §306A projects and \$1,000,000 in small-scale projects.

§306	small-scale	\$800,000
§306A*	small-scale	\$200,000
§306A*	large-scale	\$800,000
Approximate Amount Available		\$1,800,000

* *The Coastal Zone Management Act limits funding for §306A projects to \$1 million.*

While the Council prefers to fund on-the-ground projects, it recognizes the need for applied research and technology development to help fulfill the goals of the CMP and other coastal programs ((e.g., Galveston Bay Estuary Program (GBEP), Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program (CBBEP), Coastal Erosion Planning and Protection Act Program (CEPRA) and Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP.))

Therefore, the Council is interested in funding specific types of research and technical projects, with a proactive outreach component, that have a tangible benefit to local, state and federal entities.

- [Cycle 17 Grant Application](#)
- [CMP Cycle 17 Grant Application Instructions](#)
- [Cycle 17 Grant Guidance Document](#)

★[Register to submit your Application](#)

★[Upload your completed Application](#)

TCEQ and Tamaulipas Secretariat of Environment and Urban Development Sign Memorandum of Cooperation

May 4, 2011



Top Row: Undersecretary of Environment Heberto Cavazos Lliteras, TCEQ Chairman Bryan W. Shaw, Ph.D, TCEQ Commissioner Carlos Rubinstein. Front row: Tamaulipas Environment and Urban Development Secretary Homero de la Garza, TCEQ Commissioner Buddy Garcia

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) today reaffirmed its commitment to international cooperation at the state level by signing a memorandum of cooperation between the TCEQ and its Tamaulipas counterpart, Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente (SEDUMA).

TCEQ Commissioner Buddy Garcia and Tamaulipas Environment and Urban Development Secretary Homero de la Garza met at the TCEQ's annual Environmental Trade Fair, held through May 4, to celebrate the historic event.

“With the increases in industrial and population growth that we see in Texas and Tamaulipas, we need to work together cooperatively to protect our shared environment,” said Commissioner Garcia. “This partnership allows us to work jointly to efficiently solve environmental problems we both

face.”

“SEDUMA and TCEQ are committing to this important partnership,” said Secretary de la Garza. “Given our long border and shared environment, this memorandum of cooperation, which also addresses water, is significant for both agencies.”

The TCEQ and SEDUMA have partnered since 1999 on cooperative environmental agreements, resulting in exchanges of technical data and air monitoring training.

TCEQ Restricts Junior Water Rights

May 18, 2011

Drought conditions continue to be widespread across the state. As a result, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality informed water-rights holders on April 11, 2011 that there may be a need to administer water rights on a priority basis. On April 18, 2011, TCEQ received a senior priority call in the Brazos River Basin.

In response, the executive director of the TCEQ notified certain Brazos River Basin junior water-right holders that their right to divert water is immediately suspended. Suspended water rights include those with a priority date of 1980 or later, term, and temporary water-right permits in the mid- and lower-Brazos River Basin.

In order to protect public health and welfare, water rights with municipal uses or for power generation have not been suspended. Land owners with property adjacent to the Brazos River may also continue to divert water for domestic and livestock use as part of their inherent riparian rights.

These actions are guided by the priority doctrine in Texas law. The most senior water rights are served first during times of drought with domestic and livestock uses superior to any appropriated rights. Water rights are suspended or curtailed by priority date, with the most recently issued—or “junior”—priority users suspended before senior water rights in the area.

The TCEQ has asked that all Brazos River water-right holders take steps to conserve water, implement their drought contingency plans, and prepare for additional suspensions or curtailments should drought conditions persist.

Water is a precious resource—all Texans are encouraged to conserve, especially during times of drought.

Other News

EPA Chief, DOI Secretary, CEQ Chair Lead Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Public Meeting

06/27/2011

WASHINGTON — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, joined by U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, convened an official meeting of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force on Monday in Galveston, TX. This was the fifth public meeting of the task force, which was created by President Obama by executive order to develop a comprehensive restoration strategy for the Gulf of Mexico. The meeting was followed by public listening sessions. Jackson, Salazar and Sutley spoke to attendees about the ongoing Administration-wide effort to address critical recovery issues in the Gulf.

During the public meeting, the task force discussed the strategy under development to support the conservation and restoration of resilient and healthy ecosystems in the Gulf. They also discussed how to gauge the progress of restoration efforts, and addressed ongoing public engagement efforts and international coordination.

“The meetings of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force allow us to bring the communities together and talk about restoring and protecting the waters that affect the health of the people, the vitality of the economy and the way of life for millions of coastal residents. This Task Force is an opportunity for us to come together and harness all of the work, thinking and studying that has been done to address the challenges facing these waters.” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “We want to hear from the people who know this area best and talk about how we rebuild the ecosystem, support the local economy and ensure a cleaner Gulf for our children and grandchildren.”

"Through the Taskforce we want to ensure that the priorities of coastal communities guide Gulf Coast restoration every step of the way," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "With our shared goal of healthier coastlines, wetlands, wildlife, and other natural resources, we can develop a long-term ecosystem restoration strategy that will benefit future generations to come.

"Through collaboration among Federal, State and local partners, we are enlisting the input of Gulf Coast residents to restore the health this region's ecosystem which is essential to the strength and vitality of the Gulf Coast and our nation's culture, environment and economy," said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

Jackson, a native of New Orleans, chairs the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force which is comprised of lead officials from the five Gulf states appointed by the President at the recommendation of each Governor, and 11 Federal agencies and White House offices.

The President created the task force on October 5, 2010 and charged it with development of an ecosystem restoration strategy that furthers the administration's ongoing commitment to the Gulf region.

Recent events such as hurricanes and the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill have added to the ecological decline of the area, making communities, infrastructure, ports and other resources vulnerable. Gulf-wide ecosystem restoration is imperative to address longstanding concerns and move toward a more resilient Gulf Coast ecosystem.

The task force works to integrate federal restoration efforts with those of local stakeholders and state and tribal governments, and to facilitate accountability and support throughout the restoration process. View the President's executive order: www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/05/executive-order-gulf-coast-ecosystem-restoration-task-force.

More information on the task force: <http://www.epa.gov/gulfcoasttaskforce>

To receive automatic updates, email the task force at GulfCoastTaskForce@epa.gov

Gulf Alliance Offers “Dead Zone” Information

Biloxi, MS-June 14, 2011- Recent record flooding on the Mississippi River has devastated dozens of communities by destroying homes, businesses, and farm land. Scientists are now concerned that this additional water from acres of flooded, fertilized farm land will have negative impacts on the Gulf of Mexico. Water that runs off of farm lands contains excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) from a number of sources which contribute to the creation of the “Dead Zone”, an annual phenomenon in the Gulf.

Every summer, this Dead Zone occurs in the Gulf when the oxygen in the water gets so low that fish and other marine life either swim away or die. Low oxygen, or hypoxia, happens as nutrient-rich freshwater from the Mississippi and the Atchafalaya rivers flow into the Gulf at the same time as the surface waters of the Gulf become very warm. The Gulf Dead Zone is the largest hypoxic area in the United States. Even

without record-setting floods, the Dead Zone has been measured by scientists to be larger than the size of New Jersey in recent years. A larger than average Dead Zone threatens valuable commercial and recreational Gulf fisheries.

Healthy and productive Gulf fisheries support strong communities and a regional economy. That's why the Gulf of Mexico Alliance and its partners created THE PRIMER ON GULF OF MEXICO HYPOXIA (http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/pdfs/Primer_on_Hypoxia_in_the_Gulf_of_Mexico.pdf). The Alliance is committed to developing and implementing strategies that reduce nutrient inputs and hypoxia. The Primer was published in conjunction with Alliance partners including the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, and the Mississippi River Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force. The publication includes common questions and answers about hypoxia, such as what it is, what causes it, and what can be done about it.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance recognizes the economy and quality of life for citizens of the Gulf are linked to its ecological health. As the result of a shared vision for a healthy and resilient Gulf of Mexico region, the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas formalized the Alliance in 2004. A not-for-profit organization, the Alliance's mission is to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf region by encouraging collaboration among government agencies, businesses, educators and non-governmental organizations. Priority issues addressed by the Alliance include water quality, habitat conservation, ecosystem assessment, nutrient impacts, community resilience and environmental education. To learn more about the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, visit <http://www.gulfofmexicoalliance.org/>.

Task Force Mobile Meeting Strategy Background Document

The Task Force will continue engaging with local governments, tribes and the public to seek input into the development of the restoration strategy. The Task Force invites response to five key questions:

- Are these the right goals?
- What are the critical actions or major outcomes that need to be accomplished as part of this strategy in order to achieve the overarching goals?
- What new programs and actions (state, federal and private) are needed?
- What key policy changes will improve the processes necessary to support restoration?
- What would "success" look like, and how should it be measured and reported?

Read the full [Strategy Background Document \(PDF\)](#) (3pp, 165K, [About PDF](#)). Please sign up to receive automatic updates on the listening sessions and other task force activities, please email gulfcoasttaskforce@epa.gov to join the listserv.

Gulf of Mexico Citizen Advisory Committee; Request for Nominations to the Gulf of Mexico Citizen Advisory Committee

May 19, 2011.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), invites nominations from a diverse range of qualified candidates to be considered for appointment to the Gulf of Mexico Citizen Advisory Committee (GMCAC). Vacancies are anticipated to be filled by August 30, 2011. Sources in addition to this Federal Register Notice may also be utilized in soliciting nominees.

Background: The GMCAC is a Federal advisory committee chartered under the

Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), Public Law 920463 5 U.S.C. App.2. EPA is establishing the Gulf of Mexico Citizen Advisory Committee (GMCAC) to provide independent citizen advice to the EPA Administrator on a broad range of environmental issues affecting the five Gulf of Mexico Coastal States. Members serve as representatives of citizens and citizen groups. Members are appointed by the EPA Administrator for a two or three year term with a possibility of reappointment to a second term. The GMCAC usually is expected to meet as needed, but at least quarterly, and the average workload for the members is approximately 3 to 5 hours per month.

EPA may provide reimbursement for travel and other incidental expenses associated with official government business. EPA is seeking nominations of citizens from the five Gulf Coastal States of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. EPA values and welcomes diversity. In an effort to obtain nominations of diverse candidates, EPA encourages nominations of women and men of all racial and ethnic groups. Nominations will be evaluated on the basis of several criteria, including:

- The background and experiences that would help members contribute to the diversity of perspectives on the committee (e.g., geographic, economic, social, cultural, educational, and other considerations).
- Interpersonal, oral and written communications, and consensus building skills,
- Ability to volunteer time to attend meetings, participate in teleconference meetings, attend listening sessions with the Administrator or other senior level officials, develop policy recommendations to the Administrator, and prepare reports and advice letters.

Nominations should include a resume and a short biography describing how the nominee meets the above criteria and other information that may be helpful in evaluating the nomination, as well as the nominee's current business address, e-mail address, and daytime telephone number. Interested candidates may self-nominate.

ADDRESSES: Submit nominations to Gloria D. Car, Designated Federal Officer, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Gulf of Mexico Program Office, Mail Code EPA/GMPO, Building 1100, Room 232, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529. You may also e-mail nominations with subject line COMMITTEERESUME2011 to car.gloria@epa.gov.

Gulf of Mexico Alliance Resilience Index - Facilitators Training

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance invites you to a training of facilitators for the Resilience Index. The Index is a simple self-assessment tool communities can use to examine their preparedness for tropical events. Trained facilitators will lead community leaders through the Index and guide valuable discussions about preparedness and resilience.

When: July 27-28, 2011 (ending Thursday by 1 pm)

Where: Estuarine Habitats and Coastal Fisheries Center, Lafayette, Louisiana
646 Cajun Dome Blvd Suite 127

Who: Sea Grant agents, Extension agents, NERRs, NEPs, and other organizations

Why: In addition to providing key resources to the communities you serve, participation in the implantation of the Index may satisfy strategic planning tasks related to community resiliency in your organization

Registration: FREE

Travel funds are available. Please contact us if you require travel funding to participate.

To register for this workshop, contact Jody Thompson (jody.thompson@auburn.edu) by Wednesday, July 13, 2011. For more information about the Index, visit www.masgc.org/ri

This workshop is made possible by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Gulf of Mexico Program, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Gulf Sea Grant, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center.

Many thanks to Louisiana Sea Grant, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Texas Sea Grant, Gulf Coast Services Center, National Estuarine Research Reserves Coastal Training Program, University of Florida College of Law, Florida Sea Grant, Louisiana Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration, and Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Joint Gulf of Mexico Alliance-Hypoxia Task Force Meeting



[Register Here](#)



August 2-4, 2011
The Westin Canal Place
New Orleans, LA

Click [here](#) for the SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Please register and make your reservations as soon as possible! The event rate (\$98/night) at The Westin is only good for reservations made by July 15. Click [here](#) for sponsorship opportunities.

State of the Gulf of Mexico - Summit II

Hosted by the Harte Research Institute (HRI)
December 4-8, 2011
Omni Galleria Hotel, Houston, Texas
Visit the conference website (click below)
<http://www.sgmsummit.org/>

2011 State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit Overview

The Harte Research Institute, an endowed research component of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi dedicated to sustainable use and conservation of the Gulf of Mexico, hosted the first State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit in 2005 in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in spring 2010 has brought new urgency to reconvening the Summit in 2011. The diversity of public and private actors working on conservation and recovery in the Gulf and the very broad range of issues involved (including loss of wetlands, hypoxia, coastal resiliency, ecosystem health, marine protected areas, international cooperation, oil spill recovery, and social and economic recovery) suggests a strong need for a platform to develop a shared vision of a healthy Gulf. The 2011 State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit will provide this platform, allowing

government, NGO and academic experts to share knowledge and lessons learned and to formulate a roadmap for restoring the Gulf.

The Summit will be preceded by a number of events and processes that will inform the Summit on the most current authoritative technical and scientific on key Gulf topics, including in July 2011 at the one-year anniversary of the capping of the Deepwater Horizon well.

Other Sources of Information for the Gulf of Mexico Region

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

[Restore the Gulf](#)

RestoretheGulf.gov is the official federal portal for the Deepwater BP oil spill response and recovery. This site provides the public with information on the response, current operations, news and updates, how to file a claim and obtain other assistance, and links to federal, state and local partners.

[Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force](#)

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force was created by President Obama through an [Executive Order](#) (PDF) (5pp, 69K, [About PDF](#)) on October 5, 2010, and is the result of a recommendation made in [Secretary Mabus' report](#) (PDF) (122pp, 9MB, [About PDF](#)) on long term recovery following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. By October 5, 2011, the Task Force is charged with development of a restoration strategy that proposes a Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration agenda. The task force is directed to:

- Define ecosystem restoration goals and describe milestones towards reaching those goals;
- Consider existing research and ecosystem restoration planning efforts;
- Identify major policy areas where coordinated actions between government agencies is needed; and
- Evaluate existing research and monitoring programs and gaps in data collection

The Task Force is an advisory body comprised of lead officials from the five Gulf states appointed by the President upon recommendation of each Governor, and 11 Federal agencies and White House offices. The Environmental Protection Agency's [Administrator, Lisa P. Jackson](#), serves as Chair of the Task Force and the Chair of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana, [Garret Graves](#), serves as Vice-chair. [John Hankinson](#) serves as Executive Director.

[Gulf of Mexico Alliance](#)

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

Other Gulf of Mexico Alliance Related Links

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

[Alliance Environmental Education Network Website](#)

[Support the Gulf](#)

[Alliance Diversity Website](#)

[Alliance Environmental Education Network digital library](#)

[Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative](#)

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

[Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training](#)

Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training is a unique collaboration between the five Gulf Coast National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Programs. Through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are now working together to address priority issues affecting the entire Gulf of Mexico region. Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training is educating professional audiences and coastal communities across each of the five Gulf States using shared information and technology. From coastal community resilience to habitat conservation, topics covered in Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training workshops address priority issues and promote activities that improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico.

Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training hosts regular workshops that cover one or more Gulf of Mexico Alliance priority issues. [You can view and sort through upcoming and past workshops on the Workshops page.](#)

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



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<http://www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/>

<http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/news/gomexnews.html>