



GULF OF MEXICO NEWS

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October/November 2010



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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Audubon Nature Institute Return Sea Turtles to Gulf Waters

October 21, 2010



Dr. Brian Stacy, NOAA Fisheries veterinarian, prepares to release a sea turtle in federal waters off Louisiana.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: U.S. Coast Guard)

Scientists from NOAA, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Audubon Nature Institute joined with Coast Guard Rear Admiral Roy A. Nash today to return 32 sea turtles to Gulf of Mexico waters offshore of Louisiana. This is the first release of rehabilitated sea turtles to the waters near where they were rescued from oil more than three months ago — after extensive analysis to determine that the area is clean and a safe habitat for the turtles.

“Today’s release would not have been possible if all the partners had not worked tirelessly during the oil spill to search for, rescue and rehabilitate the sea turtles,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “We are able to release these turtles because they’re now healthy and we’re seeing recovery in the surface

habitats of the Gulf of Mexico. They are being released within federal waters off the coast of Louisiana that earlier this month, NOAA reopened to fishing. This was another important sign of improvement in the health of the Gulf of Mexico.”

Scientists selected the release location, approximately 40 miles southwest of Grand Isle, La., after conducting thorough aerial and shipboard surveys earlier this week to locate clean sargassum algae habitat for the sea turtles. Young sea turtles, such as those released today, spend the early years of their lives swimming and feeding in large floating sargassum algae mats that form in convergence zones where currents meet. Sargassum mats provide protection for turtles from predators as well as a variety of prey for food, including small crabs, snails and other creatures.

“I am excited to see these turtles returned to the waters from which they had been rescued during the spill – they’re going home today,” said Rear Adm. Nash, deputy federal on-scene coordinator for the ongoing clean-up operations. “Today’s release is possible because of the efforts of many to rehabilitate the turtles, and to ensure the Gulf waters are ready for their return. This is an encouraging sign that the Gulf of Mexico is recovering.”

The 32 turtles released today included species of green, Kemp's ridley, hawksbill and loggerhead sea turtles. Green, Kemp's ridley and hawksbill sea turtles are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Loggerheads are currently listed as threatened.

"For our staff, today has been long-awaited. Returning sea turtles to waters off the Louisiana coast is evidence of the incredible partnership between our biologists and enforcement agents, and our partnerships with local and federal agencies. Not only did our staff dedicate long days for months on end to the search, rescue and recovery of sea turtles and mammals, but they were committed even when the required tasks went above and beyond their jobs," said Randy Pausina, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries assistant secretary for the state's Office of Fisheries. "Returning this group of sea turtles to their home waters is more than a great achievement for all of our dedicated staff, it is a sign that Louisiana is on the path towards recovery."

The turtles released today were rescued by teams from NOAA, LDWF, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Riverhead Foundation and the In-Water Research Group. The turtles received extensive treatment and care, including cleaning and de-oiling, at the Audubon Nature Institute outside New Orleans.

"Six months ago, it was nearly impossible to imagine this day would ever come," said Ron Forman, president and CEO of the Audubon Nature Institute. "Audubon is privileged to have played a key role in this remarkable recovery. Words can't begin to describe how proud I am of our team and their incredible effort in rehabilitating nearly 200 turtles."



Dr. Cara Fields, an Audubon Wildlife Institute veterinarian, and Matt Boasso, a biologist with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, prepare to release a rehabilitated sea turtle into the Gulf of Mexico.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: U.S. Coast Guard)



VIDEO: 32 sea turtles returned to the Gulf of Mexico.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: U.S. Coast Guard)

More than 500 live turtles were rescued during the Gulf oil spill and about 400 heavily or moderately oiled turtles were placed in rehabilitation. Those not placed in rehabilitation were immediately released in healthy surface habitats because they were lightly oiled and did not require rehabilitation. Today's release brings to 270 the number of rehabilitated turtles that have been returned to the Gulf of Mexico. The turtles remaining in rehabilitation facilities will be released as they are given clean bills of health.

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 at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.

Six Months After the Spill: A Progress Report

October 20, 2010

It's been six months since the explosion on the oil rig that led to the loss of 11 lives and the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico. When oil began to leak into the Gulf, NOAA immediately got to work monitoring the oil's trajectory and collecting samples of water and soil before the oil hit the coastline.

Within a month, we – along with our [co-trustees](#) – had formed more than a dozen **technical working groups** to assess the [impacts of the oil](#) on natural resources including wetlands, fish, and birds.



Since then, we have engaged an **unprecedented response** to the spill. There are nearly 800 NOAA staff and contractors involved in the [Natural Resource Damage Assessment \(NRDA\)](#) effort for the Gulf spill. We have been busy doing further sampling and assessments, organizing [public meetings](#), and planning potential restoration activities.

In most large oil spill cases, NRDA teams collect several hundred samples in the field. To date, Gulf spill NRDA teams have launched more than **70 offshore research cruises** to gather data and collected **nearly 25,000 environmental samples** for analysis. The samples are being analyzed and validated by our labs, and results are being [made available to the public](#). The samples include more than 10,000 water, nearly 3,000 sediment, almost 3,000 tissue samples.

About 2,000 linear miles of shoreline have been surveyed by the NRDA teams, which have **documented oil on more than 950 miles of shoreline**, including salt marshes, sandy beaches, mudflats, and mangroves. Our teams have also documented thousands of oiled birds, sea turtles, and other wildlife.

[Public meetings](#) to discuss NRDA have already begun, and there will be more opportunities for **public involvement** throughout this process. Although no one knows how long this NRDA will take, we have accomplished much in the first six months and will continue to work to **assess the damage and restore the coast**.

NOAA Releases Draft Management Plan for Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

October 22, 2010



An abundance of sea life inhabits the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.
[High Resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA today released a comprehensive draft management plan and environmental assessment for [Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary](#) for public review and comment. Based on several years of scientific study and public input, the plan includes recommendations for expanding sanctuary boundaries to include additional reefs and banks in the northwestern region of the Gulf of Mexico and examining the need for a specific study to assess impacts of hook-and-line fishing and scuba diving.

“The draft management plan is the result of a collaborative effort that involved many hours of hard work from sanctuary staff and from the sanctuary’s advisory council,” said Daniel J. Basta, director of [NOAA’s Office of National](#)

[Marine Sanctuaries](#). “We welcome further public review and comment as we go forward with the important job of managing this special undersea place for future generations to enjoy.”

The new draft plan is a major revision to the sanctuary’s original management plan published in 1991. It identifies actions to be undertaken by sanctuary staff within the next five to 10 years to protect and conserve marine resources in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. It includes action plans to address six priority topics: sanctuary expansion, education and outreach, research and monitoring, resource protection, visitor use, and operations and administration.

“This plan is centered on the need to manage marine resources for biodiversity conservation,” said George Schmahl, sanctuary superintendent. “This is an evolving approach that stresses conservation of sanctuary resources important to the region’s biological communities and integrates compatible human uses.”

Periodic management plan review is required by Congress for each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries to ensure that they continue to conserve, protect, and enhance their nationally significant living and cultural resources while allowing compatible commercial and recreational activities.

A public meeting will be held on Dec. 9, 2010, from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary headquarters - 4700 Avenue U, Building 216, Galveston, Texas.



Scuba divers explore the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.
[High resolution](#) (credit: NOAA)

All comments must be received by January 20, 2010. Written comments should be sent by e-mail to fgbmanagementplan@noaa.gov, by fax to 409-621-1316, or by mail to:

George Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent,
Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary,
4700 Avenue U, Bldg 216, Galveston, Texas, 77551

Copies of the draft management plan and environmental assessment are available at Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary's headquarters offices in Galveston. Copies may be requested by calling 409-621-5151 ext 103 or via e-mail: fgbmanagementplan@noaa.gov. The plan may also be downloaded from the sanctuary's [website](#).

Located 70 to 115 miles off the coast of Texas and Louisiana, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is one of 14 marine protected areas — including 13 sanctuaries and one marine national monument, managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Designated in 1992, the sanctuary is home to some of the healthiest coral reefs in the South Atlantic and Caribbean region. The sanctuary currently includes three separate banks, encompassing 56 square miles, that are part of a larger system of reefs and banks along the continental shelf in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

Update on Disaster Response Center

The Office of Response and Restoration and the NOS Communications and Education Division collaborated to develop and launch the first [Web presence](#) for the new Gulf of Mexico Disaster Response Center (DRC). Construction is now underway for the DRC, a centralized coastal crisis support facility and communications hub. The new facility will support decision makers in their efforts to prepare for, assess, and respond to coastal ecological and economic distress. The DRC will deliver state of the art science and information to emergency managers and other critical stakeholders to assist them in making timely decisions using the best available information to protect and restore the Gulf Coast's communities, economies, and valuable natural resources. For more information, contact [Brendan Bray](#).

NOAA Launches New Gulf Spill Restoration Website

It's been nearly seven months since the explosion on the oil rig that led to the loss of 11 lives and the Deepwater BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. When oil began to leak into the Gulf, NOAA immediately got to work monitoring the oil's trajectory and collecting samples of water and sediments before the oil hit the coastline. Since then, we have engaged an unprecedented response to the spill. In most large oil spill cases, [Natural Resource Damage Assessment \(NRDA\)](#) teams collect several hundred samples in the field. To date, BP spill NRDA teams have launched more than 70 offshore research cruises to gather data and collected 25,000 environmental samples for analysis and surveyed more than 2,000 miles of shoreline for oil.

NOAA has launched a new website, www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov, to better keep the public informed about NRDA and restoration of the Gulf Coast following the spill. Launched at the six-month anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon incident, the site features modern design and updated functionality.

You can use the website to find:

- The latest Deepwater BP oil spill NRDA news,
- A simple explanation of the [NRDA process](#),

- Information about [the spill](#),
- NOAA's [involvement to date and plans for restoration](#),
- Easy-to-understand [fact sheets](#),
- How to get involved, including signing up for [our e-mail list](#) and attending [public meetings](#), and
- [Photos, videos, and a map](#) of NOAA's restoration projects in the Gulf.

As the NRDA process unfolds, the site will serve as the [repository for case documents](#) and source for public meeting dates and future restoration plans. Bookmark [the site](#) or subscribe to [our RSS feed](#) in your favorite reader to stay in the know about NRDA.

BOEMRE, DOE, and NOAA Announce Nearly \$5 Million for Joint Environmental Research Projects to Advance Ocean Renewable Energy

October 26, 2010

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) today announced eight joint research awards totaling nearly \$5 million to support the responsible siting and permitting of offshore wind energy facilities and ocean energy generated from waves, tides, currents and thermal gradients. This critical research will address key information gaps regarding the potential environmental effects of renewable ocean energy. This collaborative, interagency effort will help lay the foundation for a clean, renewable offshore energy industry that will diversify our nation's energy mix, enhance our energy security, create American manufacturing jobs, and reduce carbon emissions.

"The nation's oceans represent a major potential source of clean renewable energy, and DOE is committed to developing the innovative technologies that will harness that potential," said U.S. Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. "Our partnership with fellow federal agencies will help to streamline the responsible deployment of offshore renewable energy technologies that will create U.S. jobs while improving America's energy security."

"We are pleased to join with our partners in announcing these important studies that will give us insight into ocean renewable energy development. Opportunities such as these allow us to enhance our knowledge of the nation's oceans, advance the work within the scientific community and take important steps on the path toward energy independence," said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich.

"There are many new and exciting renewable energy opportunities waiting for us in the ocean," said Commerce Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco. "These grants will help realize that potential by understanding environmental impacts and incorporating appropriate mitigation measures from the outset."

Research funded under each of the program's eight topic areas will help reduce the environmental risks and regulatory uncertainties associated with offshore renewable energy deployment. The competitively-selected, peer-reviewed research projects will identify and address information gaps that currently limit the development and deployment of these promising offshore renewable energy sources. Additionally, the

research from these projects will help support the activities of the [National Ocean Council](#) established by President Obama on July 19, 2010.

The projects were solicited through a competitive joint funding process known as a Broad Agency Announcement, with the support of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program. This innovative partnership between BOEMRE, DOE and NOAA creates a common research portfolio that meets key industry and regulatory needs. This significantly magnifies the impact of all three agencies' research funding by eliminating redundancies, supporting complementary work, and sharing the results of research findings. More information about funded projects is available [online](#).

Dr. Lubchenco Visits Gulf Reserve, Meets Area Teachers

NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco visited the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve on Alabama's Gulf coast, on Oct. 23, to talk with teachers about their education needs following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

More than a dozen middle and high school teachers from Alabama, Mississippi, and the Florida panhandle met with Dr. Lubchenco to hear about NOAA's involvement in responding to the worst oil spill in U.S. history. Dr. Lubchenco praised the teachers for helping shape the region's future decision makers and emphasized that NOAA considers education to be the underpinning of the science NOAA delivers.

The teachers talked about their experiences in the classroom at the time of the spill and suggested ways NOAA can support their teaching efforts with data and other resources related to the oil spill. Several teachers suggested that while NOAA provides data and information, it is not always in the most usable form for students and teachers. Also at the event were education representatives from the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Sea Grant, the Reserve System, and NOAA's Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program.

Dr. Lubchenco toured the Reserve, including a visit to the Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog to see carnivorous plants and a wildflower wetland habitat that is becoming rare in Gulf coast communities. She also saw the Reserve's new education and training facilities and the Weeks Bay Explorer pontoon boat used for education and outreach.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's education program is a core element of the system's mission and relies on NOAA science to educate teachers and students about critical estuarine and coastal issues. The meeting between Dr. Lubchenco and Gulf area teachers reinforces the importance of education in NOAA's mission. Contact: Atziri.Ibanez@noaa.gov

NOAA and FDA Announce Chemical Test for Dispersant in Gulf Seafood; All Samples Test Within Safety Threshold

October 29, 2010

Building upon the extensive testing and protocols already in use by federal, state and local officials for the fishing waters of the Gulf, NOAA and FDA have developed and are using a chemical test to detect dispersants used in the Deepwater Horizon-BP oil spill in fish, oysters, crab and shrimp. Trace amounts of the chemicals used in dispersants are common, and levels for safety have been previously set.

Experts trained in a rigorous sensory analysis process have been testing Gulf seafood for the presence of contaminants, and every seafood sample from reopened waters has passed sensory testing for contamination with oil and dispersant. Nonetheless, to ensure consumers have total confidence in the safety of seafood being harvested from the Gulf, NOAA and FDA have added this second test for dispersant when considering reopening Gulf waters to fishing.

Using this new, second test, in the Gulf scientists have tested 1,735 tissue samples including more than half of those collected to reopen Gulf of Mexico federal waters. Only a few showed trace amounts of dispersants residue (13 of the 1,735) and they were well below the safety threshold of 100 parts per million for finfish and 500 parts per million for shrimp, crabs and oysters. As such, they do not pose a threat to human health.

The new test detects dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, known as DOSS, a major component of the dispersants used in the Gulf. DOSS is also approved by FDA for use in various household products and over-the-counter medication at very low levels. The best scientific data to date indicates that DOSS does not build up in fish tissues.

“The rigorous testing we have done from the very beginning gives us confidence in the safety of seafood being brought to market from the Gulf,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary for commerce and NOAA administrator. “This test adds another layer of information, reinforcing our findings to date that seafood from the Gulf remains safe.”

“This new test should help strengthen consumer confidence in Gulf seafood,” said Margaret A. Hamburg, Ph.D., commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. “The overwhelming majority of the seafood tested shows no detectable residue, and not one of the samples shows a residue level that would be harmful for humans. There is no question Gulf seafood coming to market is safe from oil or dispersant residue.”

The 1,735 samples tested so far were collected from June to September and cover a wide area of the Gulf. The samples come from open areas in state and federal waters, and from fishermen who brought fish to the docks at the request of federal seafood analysts. The samples come from a range of species, including grouper, tuna, wahoo, swordfish, gray snapper, butterfish, red drum, croaker, and shrimp, crabs and oysters.

Previous research provided information about how finfish metabolize DOSS, and at FDA’s Dauphin Island, Alabama lab, scientists undertook further exposure experiments on fish, oysters and crab; similar experiments on shrimp were held at NOAA’s Galveston, Texas lab. These exposure studies further support that fish, crustaceans and shellfish quickly clear dispersant from their tissues, and provided samples with known concentrations for use as standards for validating the methodology. Samples undergoing chemical analysis are always accompanied by standards with known concentrations of DOSS, to verify the equipment continues to measure the compound accurately.

Nearly 9,444 square miles, or about 4 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf are still closed to commercial and recreational fishing.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is responsible for ensuring the safety and quality of more than a trillion dollars worth of products that are critical for the survival and well-being of all Americans. Find FDA online at <http://www.fda.gov>.

CO-OPS Unveils New Operational Forecast System in Tampa Bay

On October 28, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) unveiled the Tampa Bay Operational Forecasts System (TBOFS) to serve navigation, emergency response, and ecological forecasting marine communities. The model generates water level, current, temperature, and salinity nowcast/forecast guidance four times per day. Aerial animations of the entirety of Tampa Bay and time series at particular stations or points of interest are available for 20 locations. The TBOFS was developed by the Office of Coast Survey in a joint project with CO-OPS using Rutgers University's Regional Ocean Modeling System. Access TBOFS data online at www.tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/models.html. For more information, contact [Cristina Urizar](#).

Gulf Coast Sites to Get Post-spill Comparison

Throughout May 2010, scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's Mussel Watch program collected oysters, sediments, and water samples along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to benchmark conditions prior to landfall of oil from the BP/Deepwater Horizon spill. This month, those scientists are again fanning out to visit the same locations to gather samples now that much of the surface oil has found its final resting place. The May and November samples will be compared to determine whether there have been measurable increases in oil-related compounds as a result of the spill. Mussel Watch has developed baseline data for numerous marine contaminants including compounds associated with oil pollution. This work is made possible through collaboration with NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Laboratory in Pascagoula, MS; Mote Marine Laboratory; Louisiana State University; and TDI-Brooks International, Inc. For more information, contact [Gunnar Lauenstein](#).

Federal & Academic Scientists Return from Deep-sea Research Cruise in Gulf of Mexico

Scientists Observe Damage to Deep-sea Corals

November 4, 2010



A single colony of coral with dying and dead sections (on left), apparently living tissue (top right) and bare skeleton with very sickly looking brittle star on the base.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: Image courtesy of Lophelia II 2010 Expedition, NOAA-OER/BOEMRE.)

Government and academic scientists on a multi-week [expedition](#) to explore deep-sea coral habitats in the Gulf of Mexico have observed corals and associated communities of marine life that show evidence of recent damage. Today marks the conclusion of this year's cruise, the fourth of a multiyear collaboration sponsored by NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE). The expedition is chronicled at <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>.

Operating from the NOAA Ship Ronald H. Brown and using a variety of tools including the National Deep Submergence Facility's Jason II remotely-operated vehicle (ROV), researchers were working at a site 1,400 meters deep (roughly 4,600 feet) and

approximately seven miles southwest of the Macondo wellhead when they visually observed dead and dying corals with sloughing tissue and discoloration.

Charles Fisher, Ph.D., professor of biology at Penn State University and chief scientist on the expedition, described much of the soft coral observed in an area measuring about 15 to 40 meters as covered by what appeared to be a brown substance. Ninety percent of 40 large corals were heavily affected and showed dead and dying parts and discoloration. Another site 400 meters away had a colony of stony coral similarly affected and partially covered with a similar brown substance.

The 2010 expedition revisited many sites from missions in previous years and documented that in nearly all cases, there was no observed change. Until laboratory analyses are conducted, scientists cannot be certain what caused the impacts. Sediment and coral samples were collected with the ROV and were brought to the surface for analyses. Further testing will also determine if the substance is oil, and if so, whether it is consistent with the release from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

“These observations capture our concern for impacts to marine life in places in the Gulf that are not easily seen,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary for commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Continued, ongoing research and monitoring involving academic and government scientists are essential for comprehensive understanding of impacts to the Gulf.”

“Through the continued work of ongoing research projects such as this, BOEMRE scientists, other government scientists, academia and the public can better understand the potential effects of offshore energy exploration and development, including the possible effects of the Deepwater Horizon blowout and spill,” said BOEMRE director Michael R. Bromwich. “Today’s preliminary observations highlight the need for continued scientific research in the Gulf of Mexico.

“While this mission was not designed to be focused on oil spill research, the timing and location provided an opportunity to observe any impacts to our research areas,” said Fisher.

The 2010 expedition was supported by a number of partners including NOAA, BOEMRE, Penn State University, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Temple University, Louisiana State University, Florida State University, the U.S. Geological Survey, the PAST Foundation, T.D.I Brooks International and C&C Technologies.

Celebrating 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. The NOAA fleet of ships and aircraft is operated, managed and maintained by the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, which includes commissioned officers of the NOAA Corps and civilian wage mariners.



The gorgonian sea fan *Callogorgia americana* and symbiotic brittle stars from a site at approximately 350 meters depth in the Green Canyon area of the Gulf of Mexico. In the bottom left of the image are some small, brown anemones that have colonized a portion of the skeleton of the sea fan.

[High resolution](#) (Credit: Image courtesy of Lophelia II 2010 Expedition, NOAA-OER/BOEMRE.)

BOEMRE is the federal agency within the Department of Interior responsible for overseeing the safe and environmentally responsible development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf.

NOAA's Enforcement Actions in the Gulf of Mexico Help Ensure Safe Seafood

Shrimp trawlers face fines for fishing over the summer in area closed due to BP oil spill

November 22, 2010

Eight shrimp trawlers have been charged by NOAA with allegedly fishing this summer in the area of the Gulf of Mexico that was closed due to the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill. The notices of violation and assessment (NOVAs) were issued as part of NOAA's effort to help ensure the seafood reaching America's dinner tables was safe – and to protect the livelihoods of Gulf fishermen who were respecting the closures.

All of the eight shrimp trawlers' catches – about 107,500 pounds of shrimp – were returned to the water to ensure the potentially tainted seafood did not come to market. All eight vessels were boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard off the coast of Louisiana in June, July, or August, with the most recent NOVA being issued Nov. 3.

“Throughout the oil spill event this summer, stringent enforcement of the closed areas was essential to ensuring both seafood safety and consumer confidence in Gulf seafood,” said Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. “NOAA remains determined to protect the fishermen who follow the rules and the American public who eat the seafood they catch.”

NOAA's Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation (GCEL) issued the first NOVA in July, five NOVAs in September, one in October and one earlier this month. NOVAs are issued after the Coast Guard and NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) complete their investigations.

Six of the shrimp vessels were assessed civil penalties of \$15,000 for allegedly fishing in the closed area, and one of the six was assessed an additional \$3,000 for two alleged violations involving bycatch reduction devices. Bycatch reduction devices are special openings sewn into a shrimp trawler's nets to allow non-targeted species such as red snapper to escape, while retaining shrimp.

A seventh shrimp trawler received a \$50,000 NOVA -- \$30,000 for allegedly fishing in the closed area a second time after having been previously warned by state officials, and \$20,000 for four alleged violations regarding turtle excluder devices, special nets with openings that allow turtles to escape and not drown. The openings in this vessel's nets were allegedly too small to allow larger, mature turtles to escape.

Earlier this month, GCEL issued a \$20,000 NOVA to an eighth shrimp vessel for allegedly fishing in the closed area in August, following significant public outreach and prior enforcement actions putting the regulated community on notice that fishing in the closed areas was prohibited.

“Our outreach and enforcement efforts worked, and most of the fishing industry readily complied with the closed areas resulting from the oil spill in order to ensure seafood safety,” said Hal Robbins, special agent in charge of NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement southeast division.

The ships' owners and operators have 30 days to respond to NOVAs by paying the penalty, seeking to have it modified, requesting a hearing before an administrative law judge or requesting an extension of

time to respond. To date, one respondent has paid in full, and that case has been closed. One has requested a hearing, which is set for Jan. 18, and the other parties still have time to respond.

NOAA also continues to work closely with the FDA and the Gulf states to ensure seafood safety. NOAA and FDA are working together on broad-scale seafood sampling that includes sampling seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside and market-based sampling.

The mission of NOAA's OLE is to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations enacted to conserve and protect our nation's marine resources. To report a suspected violation, contact OLE's national hotline at 1-800-853-1964.

Federal Interagency Group Issues Peer-Reviewed 'Oil Budget' Technical Documentation

Oil Spill Calculations Released in August Undergo Further Review

November 23, 2010

The Federal Interagency Solutions Group, established at the request of the U.S. Coast Guard and authorized under a directive from the National Incident Commander (NIC), is releasing today a peer-reviewed report that details the scientific calculations of the Deepwater Horizon BP Oil Spill "Oil Budget Calculator" response tool announced last August. The report, developed in collaboration with federal and independent scientists and following an extensive review of the initial findings, revises as necessary the estimated short-term fate of the oil discharged from the wellhead through mid-July when the well was capped.

The Oil Budget Calculator's purpose was to describe the short-term fate of the oil and to guide immediate efforts to respond to the emergency. It does not provide information about the impact of the oil, nor indicate where the oil is now. The Oil Budget Calculator uses collected or reported data, such as the amount captured at the wellhead, combined with model-projected estimates based on historical oil spill data for similar types of oil, as well as the expertise and observations of oil- and oil spill-response scientists from government agencies, academia and the energy industry.

Improvements have been made to the calculator since it was first used. The revised Oil Budget Calculator was adjusted based on modified calculations and modeling, as well as additional knowledge about the Deepwater Horizon spill provided by the science team. The revised calculations provide the basis for the updated budget issued in the report, as well as the best- and worst-case scenarios.

"As we said in August, we promised to provide the technical documentation for the Oil Budget report and refine our estimates where possible. This report fulfills that promise. The Oil Budget was not created to draw conclusions about the long-term environmental impact. The estimates were designed to guide operational response decisions and provide clarity on how much oil could be captured or mitigated and how much oil was not recoverable," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Fully understanding the damages and impacts of the spill on the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem is something that will take time and continued monitoring and research by federal and academic scientists."

Today's report provides the technical basis underlying the Calculator's oil fate estimates used to help respond to the spill. This report, following additional assessment and peer-review, is largely consistent with early results released by the federal government. The most significant change is a doubling of the

expected amount of oil classified as “chemically dispersed” — revised from 8% to an estimated 16% with a possible range of between 10% and 29%. Additional data and studies have over the course of the past few months led the oil budget team to relax certain initial conservative assumptions with regard to the effectiveness of dispersant operations. The early estimate of the percentage of “other” (or, “residual”) oil was 26%; the current version of the Calculator estimates it as 23%, and qualifies this estimate with the belief that, with high confidence, the true percentage should be between 11% and 30%.

Oil Budget (Released Aug. 4)		Oil Budget Technical Report		
Category	% of Total	Category	% of Total	Change
Direct Recovery	17%	Direct Recovery	17%	None
Burned	5%	Burned	5%	None
Skimmed	3%	Skimmed	3%	None
Chemically Dispersed	8%	Chemically Dispersed	16%	+8%
Naturally Dispersed	16%	Naturally Dispersed	13%	-3%
Evaporated or Dissolved	25%	Evaporated or Dissolved	23%	-2%
Other	26%	Other	23%	-3%

The three lead editors of the report were William Lehr, Ph.D., senior scientist with NOAA’s Office of Response and Restoration; Sky Bristol, science coordinator for informatics, U.S. Geological Survey; and Antonio Possolo, Ph.D., chief of the Statistical Engineering Division, National Institute of Standards and Technology. The report includes major contributions from 15 international academic institutions, government agencies and industry experts as well as additional contributions from a wide-ranging group of others. The peer-review process was independently coordinated through the University of New Hampshire’s Coastal Response Research Center in Durham, N.H.

The report specifically recommends future research and planning to be directed to three areas that would reduce the uncertainty of the estimates and improve future response activities:

- (1) Protocols for surface and subsurface sampling: Although oil samples were collected for impact assessment, samples were not systematically collected to support the development of the Oil Budget Calculator. For example, samples often came from skimming barges where oil and water mixtures in different states of degradation were blended together. Future response plans should specify methods for gathering proper representative samples.
- (2) Dispersed oil droplet size: A major improvement in estimating dispersant efficiency would be possible if practical operational tools and methods existed to characterize droplet size distribution of subsurface oil.
- (3) Basic models for longer-term processes: Although longer-term processes such as biodegradation often happen outside the time frames of the response, understanding and being able to predict such longer-term changes may be useful in making response decisions.

This report was written to document for the scientific community and other interested parties the technical underpinnings of the Calculator and provide recommendations for future research and refinement of the tool for possible use in future spills.

The full 217-page report, including appendices and peer-review team comments, is available online. [Download the report from RestoretheGulf.gov](#)

New Rule Prohibits Vessel Sewage Discharge into Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Waters

November 29, 2010



Pump-out station. [Download here](#) (Credit: NOAA)

A [new NOAA rule](#) will prohibit boaters from discharging or depositing sewage into all waters of the [Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#). The rule, which takes effect on December 27, also requires that vessel marine sanitation devices are secured to prevent discharges within sanctuary boundaries.

Acceptable methods of securing marine sanitation devices include, but are not limited to, all methods that have been approved by the U.S. Coast Guard. Several private, local, state and federal entities provide or support numerous pump-out stations throughout the region to assist boat operators in complying with this rule.

“This rule is another important step in restoring the water quality of the Florida Keys,” said Sean Morton, sanctuary superintendent. “Combined with other strategies such as increased pump-out facility availability and ongoing progress in advanced wastewater treatment, this new rule brings us closer to reversing the trends of declining water quality associated with human sources of pollution.”

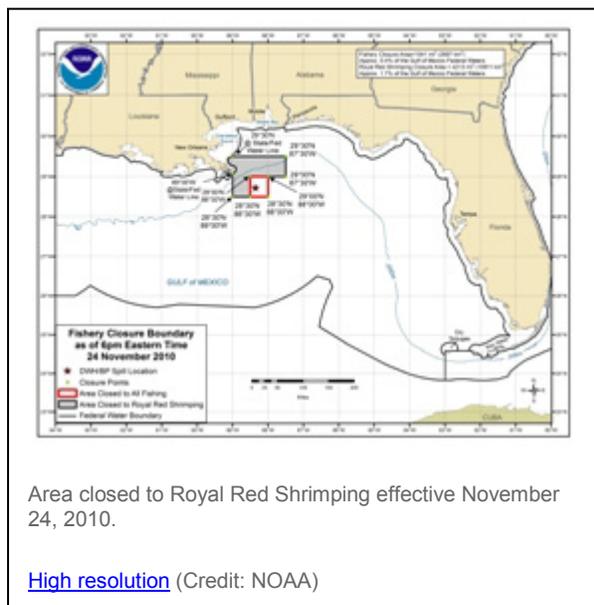
Vessel sewage discharge has been prohibited in state waters of the sanctuary since its designation as a No Discharge Zone by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2002. Under the new rule, both state and federal sanctuary waters now will be protected from potentially harmful vessel sewage discharge. Current marine sanitation treatment devices do not kill all viruses found in wastewater, nor do they remove nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen. This new rule prohibiting discharges and requiring the devices to be secured will help prevent these pollutants from entering the sanctuary. Excessive amounts of nutrients can harm coral reef ecosystems by degrading water quality and stimulating the rapid growth of aquatic plants and algae, which in turn smother and kill live coral.

[NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#) received more than 1,400 written comments during a 90-day comment period for the proposed rule, which was published in the Federal Register on Nov. 16, 2009. Established in 1990, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,900 square nautical miles of important marine habitat, including maritime heritage resources, as well as coral reef, hard bottom, seagrass meadows, mangrove communities and sand flats. NOAA and the state of Florida manage the sanctuary.

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NOAA Closes 4,200 Square Miles of Gulf Waters to Royal Red Shrimping

November 24, 2010



Today, out of an abundance of caution, NOAA has closed 4,213 square miles of Gulf of Mexico federal waters off Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to royal red shrimping. The precautionary measure was taken after a commercial shrimper, having hauled in his catch of the deep water shrimp, discovered tar balls in his net.

Fishing for royal red shrimp is conducted by pulling fishing nets across the bottom of the ocean floor. The tar balls found in the catch may have been entrained in the net as it was dragged along the seafloor.

Other fishing at shallower depths in this area has not turned up any tar balls and is thus not impacted by this closure. The fisherman who reported this catch had trawled for brown shrimp in shallow waters in a different portion of the area to be closed earlier in

the day without seeing tar balls.

Following the report of tar balls, NOAA was in contact with shrimpers involved in royal red shrimping in this area. Only a handful of the approximately 250 permitted royal red shrimp fishermen are currently active in the fishery. The tar balls are being analyzed by the U.S. Coast Guard to determine if they are from the Deepwater Horizon/BP spill.

This decision was made in consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The closure becomes effective at 6 p.m. EST and does not apply to any state waters.

“We are taking this situation seriously. This fishery is the only trawl fishery that operates at the deep depths where the tar balls were found and we have not received reports of any other gear or fishery interactions with tar balls.” said Roy Crabtree, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service southeast region. “Our primary concerns are public safety and ensuring the integrity of the Gulf’s seafood supply.

Royal red shrimp are caught in Gulf waters deeper than 600 feet and are the only species targeted with trawls at these depths. The more common Gulf shrimp species are brown, white and pink shrimp and are caught in waters less than 300 feet deep. The agency has received no reports of tar balls from fishermen that target other species in that area. Fishing for other shellfish and finfish species within this area is still allowed.

These waters were closed to all commercial and recreational fishing earlier this summer because of the

Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill and were reopened to all fishing on November 15 after hundreds of seafood specimens sampled from the area, including royal red shrimp, [passed both sensory and chemical testing](#). Additionally, no oil was observed in the area for a period of 30 days prior to the reopening.

NOAA and FDA are continuing to work together to sample seafood from inside and outside the closure, and are continuing market-based sampling of seafood processing plants and dockside sampling. NOAA is also sending vessels to the area to re-sample for royal red shrimp. The agency will reopen this area after determining there is no seafood safety concern. NOAA will conduct extensive sampling in the area, subjecting specimens to sensory and chemical analysis, including the recently approved chemical test for dispersants, in accordance with the rigorous re-opening protocol agreed to by NOAA, the FDA and the Gulf states.

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

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

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

Other NOAA News

Live from Undersea Lab: NOAA Webcasts Corals Research to U.S. Classrooms

English and Spanish-language segments to reach underrepresented students, communities

October 12, 2010

The wonders of coral reefs and life thriving below the sea will be broadcast live on the Internet to classrooms and communities nationwide during a NOAA science and education mission at [Aquarius Reef Base](#). The world's only undersea research station, the Aquarius is located within [Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#). The 10-day mission starts today.



Aquarius Reef Base is an underwater research laboratory located within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

Web programs will be broadcast daily, one in English and one in Spanish, via the OceansLive.org education web portal. Additionally, the mission includes outreach to students in underrepresented communities as part of a NOAA partnership with the Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans (MERITO) program and the National Association of Black Scuba Divers. The goal of the partnership effort is to increase knowledge and stewardship of the ocean, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to explore the wonders of science, technology, engineering and mathematics relevant to NOAA's mission.

The mission, "Aquarius 2010: If Reefs Could Talk," is structured to help students and the public better understand their connection to the ocean and their role in helping to sustain it. During daily live webcasts from the research

station, a team of scientists and educators will feature live video streams, showcase specimens, discuss topics common to many of our national marine sanctuaries, and highlight the importance of conserving our nation's underwater resources. Science program themes during this mission will include biodiversity, climate change, field science technology and careers.

"People protect what they understand and love, so our goal during this mission is to help the public understand that a healthy ocean matters to all of us," said Kate Thompson, the NOAA mission's education coordinator. "The more people we introduce to the ocean, the more we will empower citizens with the knowledge to support responsible stewardship of our ocean resources."

The Aquarius Reef Base is anchored on a sand patch 60 feet below the surface near a coral reef in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Aquarius is owned by NOAA and operated by the University of North Carolina Wilmington. The facility enables divers to "saturate," meaning they stay undersea and have extended bottom time for diving and research by going through 17 hours of decompression at the end of a mission instead of going to the surface each day.

"Scientists and educators will live and work in Aquarius studying the health of the nearby Conch Reef research area and how changes in the abundance and diversity of animals and plants affect it," said Steve Gittings, national science coordinator for NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and one of the lead scientists for the mission. "The findings will help us all better manage human activities so we can protect these struggling marine ecosystems for future generations."

"[Aquarius 2010: If Reefs Could Talk](#)," is result of collaboration between academic, federal, industry, and private partners, including NOAA, UNCW, California State University Monterey, Morgan State University, AT&T and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

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New Federal Rule Allows NOAA to Deny Port Entry to Illegal Fishing Vessels

October 13, 2010

A new federal rule will allow NOAA's assistant administrator for fisheries to deny a vessel entry into a U.S. port or access to port services if that vessel has been listed for engaging in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by one of the world's international fishery management organizations. The rule takes effect on Oct. 27, 2010.

"This is a global problem that subjects our fishermen to unfair competition with illegally caught fish products entering the marketplace here and abroad. Illegal fishing also depletes fish stocks, which ultimately hurts the legal fishermen, fishing nations and their economies," said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "Denying port access to vessels engaged in illegal fishing is an effective way to curb this damaging activity."

Foreign vessels are required to provide a notice to the U.S. Coast Guard prior to arriving in the U.S. If the vessel is on one of the IUU vessel lists, NOAA Fisheries will be notified and a consultation with federal agencies will ensue. NOAA's assistant administrator for fisheries will determine whether to deny entry to the vessel or if other restrictions will be placed on the vessel consistent with our international obligations.

The new rule will also prohibit persons and businesses from providing certain services to, and engaging in commercial transactions with, listed IUU vessels. Those services would include at-sea transporting of fish harvested by a listed IUU vessel, processing fish harvested by a listed IUU vessel or processing fish using a listed IUU vessel; joint fishing operations; providing supplies, fuel, crew, or otherwise supporting a listed IUU vessel; and entering into a chartering arrangement with a listed IUU vessel.

Current U.S. law has largely discouraged IUU fishing vessels from arriving in U.S. ports. However, there have been a few instances when transport vessels identified on IUU lists have reached U.S. ports. This rule clarifies actions that the U.S. can take to deny these vessels entry into, or access to, the United States. The new rule is part of international efforts to address IUU vessels, which often flout other rules as well, including labor rights, habitat protection, safety-at-sea and food safety requirements.

In recent years, several organizations, such as the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries commissions, have adopted binding measures that establish both procedures for identifying vessels that engaged in IUU fishing activities and actions to be taken against such vessels. Such measures can act as a strong deterrent to IUU fishing by reducing the profitability of such activities. Nations that are members of these organizations are required to take actions against the listed IUU vessels, such as today's action which essentially closes markets to the vessels.

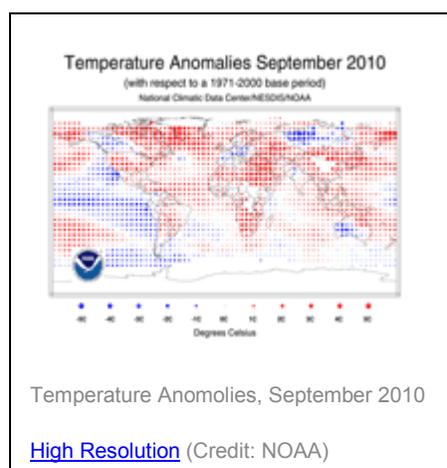
IUU fishing activities include fishing in an area without authorization; failing to record or declare catches, or making false reports; using prohibited fishing gear; re-supplying or re-fueling IUU vessels. Links to relevant conservation measures and IUU vessel lists can be found at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ia/challenges/iuu.htm>.

Social Science Products and Services Provided to Coastal Community

The NOAA Coastal Services Center has released a report examining why coastal planners do (or do not) incorporate hazard mitigation planning. The report also recommends strategies to create more resilient communities. Local barriers to hazard-mitigation planning include a lack of public support or political will, limited actionable local data, and a “disconnect” with emergency planners. The benefits of hazard-mitigation planning include intrinsic satisfaction, saved lives, reduced economic losses, and compliance with Federal and State mandates. Titled ‘Hazard and Resiliency Planning: Perceived Benefits and Barriers among Land Use Planners,’ the full report and a two-page summary are available online. For more information, contact [Heidi Recksiek](#).

NOAA: Year-to-Date Global Temperature Ties for Warmest on Record

October 15, 2010



The first nine months of 2010 tied with the same period in 1998 for the warmest combined land and ocean surface temperature on record. The global average land surface temperature for January–September was the second warmest on record, behind 2007. The global ocean surface temperature for January–September was also the second warmest on record, behind 1998.

The monthly analysis from NOAA’s [National Climatic Data Center](#), which is based on records going back to 1880, is part of the suite of climate services NOAA provides government, business and community leaders, so they can make informed decisions.

Scientists, researchers and leaders in government and industry use NOAA’s monthly reports to help track trends and other changes in the world's climate. This climate service has a wide range of practical uses, from helping farmers know what and when to plant, to guiding resource managers with critical decisions about water, energy and other vital assets.

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Additional Information

[September 2010 Global State of the Climate – Supplemental Figures & Information](#)

NOAA Takes Steps to Reform Enforcement Practices

Seeks comments on draft penalty policy

October 18, 2010

As part of an ongoing effort to reform its enforcement practices, NOAA's Office of General Counsel, through its Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation, is requesting public comment on a new draft penalty policy that will provide guidance to its lawyers as they calculate civil penalties arising from cases involving individuals and companies that violate fishing and environmental laws.

The proposed policy, posted on NOAA's website today, is designed to ensure penalties are assessed in a fair and consistent manner and that they are appropriate to a given violation.

"This new draft policy, aided by the input of the public and fishery stakeholders during this comment period, will put us closer to our goal of an enforcement policy that is effective and transparent," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere, and NOAA administrator.

"Along with the other actions we have taken, and the public comments on those that are still pending, I know we can create a policy that enforces regulations fairly, and protects the vast majority of fishermen who play by the rules."

Under the new draft penalty policy, NOAA will improve consistency at the national level, and will provide a clearer understanding of NOAA's penalty policies. The proposed policy will help NOAA to protect fisheries and natural resources consistently and effectively.

When finalized, the new Policy for the Assessment of Civil Administrative Penalties and Permit Sanctions will supersede previous guidance issued by NOAA's Office of General Counsel.

The draft policy is available electronically at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/draft_penalty_policy.pdf and comments must be received by **December 20**. Please submit written comments to:

E-mail:	Penaltypolicy@noaa.gov
Fax:	301-427-2210
Mail:	Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation NOAA 8484 Georgia Ave., Suite 400 Silver Spring, Md. 20910 Attn. Frank Sptel

To receive a printed copy of the draft policy, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the above U.S. mail address.

This new policy is the latest step the agency has taken to assure fair and effective enforcement and to protect natural resources. NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement has taken several other actions to improve its enforcement operations:

- Finalized its process for setting national and regional priorities based on comments received during the National Enforcement Summit, held in Washington in August. Input on specific priorities will be solicited from a wide range of stakeholders this fall and incorporated into draft

national regional priorities in January, which will be released for public comment. These priorities will help guide NOAA's future enforcement policy.

- Cancelled one-third of the Office of Law Enforcement's purchase cards to better control expenditures and ensure the purchase card process is managed consistent with all guidelines. All future purchases with the cards will be fully consistent with the new draft asset forfeiture fund policy that was released for public comment on September 29. The comment period on the draft asset forfeiture fund policy ends November 29.
- Begun work to establish a robust and effective compliance assistance program and name a compliance liaison for New England to help the fishing industry comply with fishery regulations. To ensure the program addresses the priorities identified by its stakeholders, NOAA will discuss the program this week at the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee public meeting in Annapolis, Md. Committee members represent a variety of stakeholders from across the country and will provide recommendations for the compliance assistance program as well as the position description for the liaison in the Northeast.

The October 2010 edition of Coastal Management News is now available.

Checkout the newsletter online at <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/news/docs/czmnewsoc10.pdf>. Inside you'll find the following stories:

- * Virginia Promotes Green Infrastructure in Regional and Local Planning Efforts
- * Indiana Develops Onsite Sewage System Tracking Program
- * NOAA to Designate Wisconsin National Estuarine Research Reserve
- * New England Develops Regional Coastal and Estuarine Lands Initiative
- * Great Lakes Managers Meet in Indiana
- * New National Ocean Council to Guide National Ocean Policy Planning
- * NOAA Announces Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Opportunity
- * OCRM Announces CZM Information System Awards
- * OCRM Releases Climate Change Adaptation Planning Guide
- * CELCP Updates
- * NOAA Spotlight: NOAA Website Aims to Advance Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning

Thanks again to everyone who contributed articles for this quarter's newsletter. To be added to the newsletter distribution list to receive this newsletter directly, please contact christa.rabenold@noaa.gov. The submission deadline for the next newsletter is January 1, 2011.

NOAA: Another Winter of Extremes in Store for U.S. as La Niña Strengthens

October 21, 2010



The Pacific Northwest should brace for a colder and wetter than average winter, while most of the South and Southeast will be warmer and drier than average through February 2011, according to the annual Winter Outlook released today by [NOAA's Climate Prediction Center](#). A moderate to strong La Niña will be the dominant climate factor influencing weather across most of the U.S. this winter.

La Niña is associated with cooler than normal water temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific Ocean, unlike El Niño which is associated with warmer than normal water temperatures. Both of these climate phenomena, which typically occur every 2-5 years, influence weather patterns throughout the world and often lead to extreme weather events. Last winter's El Niño

contributed to record-breaking rain and snowfall leading to severe flooding in some parts of the country, with record heat and drought in other parts of the country. Although La Niña is the opposite of El Niño, it also has the potential to bring weather extremes to parts of the nation.

“La Niña is in place and will strengthen and persist through the winter months, giving us a better understanding of what to expect between December and February,” said Mike Halpert, deputy director of the Climate Prediction Center – a division of the [National Weather Service](#). “This is a good time for people to review the outlook and begin preparing for what winter may have in store.”

“Other climate factors will play a role in the winter weather at times across the country,” added Halpert. “Some of these factors, such as the North Atlantic Oscillation, are difficult to predict more than one to two weeks in advance. The NAO adds uncertainty to the forecast in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic portions of the country.”

Regional highlights are available [online](#).

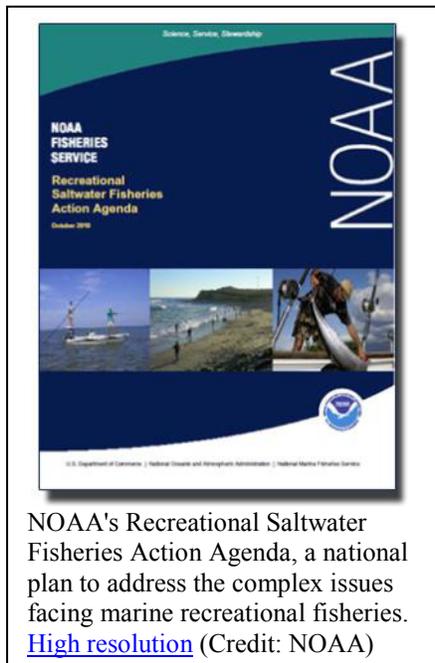
This seasonal outlook does not project where and when snowstorms may hit or total seasonal snowfall accumulations. Snow forecasts are dependent upon winter storms, which are generally not predictable more than several days in advance.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service 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 at <http://www.facebook.com/US.National.Weather.Service.gov>.

NOAA Announces Action Agenda for Recreational Saltwater Fisheries

Funds effort to reduce fish mortality in recreational fisheries

October 26, 2010



NOAA's Recreational Saltwater Fisheries Action Agenda, a national plan to address the complex issues facing marine recreational fisheries. [High resolution](#) (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA has released the [Recreational Saltwater Fisheries Action Agenda](#), a national plan to address the complex issues facing marine recreational fisheries. The plan will improve science and stewardship and build a stronger partnership with the recreational community. It is a direct outcome of input received from recreational fishermen during the April 2010 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Summit organized by NOAA.

The Action Agenda includes a set of broad national goals, while focusing immediate attention on five priority issues:

- ensuring balanced recreational representation in the management process;
- more fully integrating recreational fishing values into the NOAA mission and culture;
- improving data on recreational fishing and fisheries;
- addressing recreational interests in NOAA's catch share policy; and supporting cooperative research and monitoring.

“The Action Agenda is the roadmap for us to fulfill our commitments made during NOAA’s Recreational Fishing Summit,” said Eric Schwaab, NOAA assistant administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service. “We know it is the strength of our actions that matter in the end, and we are committed to moving forward aggressively.”

Schwaab also announced that NOAA will provide a \$276,000 grant to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to help give recreational fishermen conservation information. A portion of the national grant will support a collaborative workshop in spring 2011 to examine how best to reduce barotrauma – the injury to deepwater fish when pulled to the surface rapidly – in recreational fisheries, in order to improve survival of fish caught and then released.

“The resulting mortality due to barotrauma is a contentious issue among stakeholders,” said John V. O’Shea, executive director of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. “The workshop will provide recreational fishermen, scientists, and managers the opportunity to develop a common understanding and approach to address this important issue.”

“Collaboratively, the recreational fishing community is a leading player in this program that will introduce stewardship to new anglers and reinforce the stewardship of existing anglers to reduce mortality of caught and released fish,” said Andy Loftus, coordinator for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission project. “The workshop will develop the best information available on catch-and-release practices that will be communicated to anglers for implementation. It’s a win-win in the best tradition of the recreational angling community and NOAA.”

NOAA Launches Education Website With New Look and Content

November 2, 2010



New NOAA Education Website.
[Site Link](http://www.education.noaa.gov) (Credit: NOAA)

To better connect educators and students who are interested in NOAA's education and science resources, NOAA has just completed a major update of the agency's primary education resource portal, <http://www.education.noaa.gov>.

This website serves as a portal to lesson plans, educational multi-media, data sources, career profiles, and other education content from across the agency. The content is centered on five thematic areas that highlight NOAA science and stewardship, the themes are: Oceans and Coasts, Climate, Weather and Atmosphere, Marine Life, and Freshwater. Under each theme are topical resource collections that support common teaching topics and align with state and national science education standards.

"Educators look to NOAA as a trusted source for science based content they can use in their classrooms," said Louisa Koch, director of the [NOAA Office of Education](http://www.noaa.gov/education). "This website has been completely redesigned and makes it easier for them to find the materials they need and want."

Teachers looking for information about hurricanes, tides, climate change, the water-cycle or other earth science topics will find scientifically accurate and evaluated content on this site. Materials will be added regularly and the list of collections will continue to grow to support the needs of the education community with current real-world science content. The site also provides information on professional development, academic scholarships, career exploration, and education grants.

The resources on <http://www.education.noaa.gov> are easy to access and are easy to include into existing teaching activities. Whether an educator needs a video, educational game, data set, lesson, or activity the site provides some of the best materials NOAA and its educational partners have to offer.

The update to this website is based on research about what educators need for in their classrooms to teach science and stewardship. Input was gathered from educators on a national and local level to create a blueprint for this new format.

OCRM Launches OTEC Web Page

In response to resurging interest in renewable energy production, the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has launched a new Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) Web page. The page has information on OTEC and NOAA's licensing authority and includes the Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Act of 1980, the Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Research, Development, and Demonstration Act, workshop reports, factsheets, and schematics. The Webpage is at: <http://coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/programs/otec.html>. Contact: Whitney.Blanchard@noaa.gov.

CICEET Posts Fall Reports

The University of New Hampshire/NOAA Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) has posted its Fall 2010 progress reports for active and completed projects at www.ciceet.unh.edu/news/releases/fall10_reports/index.html. The projects are listed by region, to help coastal managers easily find science and technology developments in their region.

CICEET projects are dedicated to developing tools that help coastal communities become more resilient in to development and climate change. Focus areas include improved tools for land use planning, habitat restoration and protection, and water quality monitoring. The reports are submitted by the projects' investigators and detail progress in gathering data, meeting research objectives, reaching out to coastal managers, and soliciting feedback from potential users. Contact: Dwight.Trueblood@noaa.gov.

MPAC Launches California Ocean Atlas Data Viewer

The National Marine Protected Areas Center has launched the California Ocean Uses Atlas online data viewer, an interactive application developed in collaboration with NOAA's Special Projects Office. This tool will help users visualize the results of the California Ocean Uses Atlas project, a collaboration between the MPA Center and the Marine Conservation Biology Institute. This viewer serves data on 27 different uses, representing the suite of human ocean activities covering the area from California's coastline to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Users can answer simple spatial queries on overlapping human uses in California's ocean, and display use data relative to Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and other background layers.

Use data were collected in a series of workshops for ocean use experts held between October 2008 and July 2009. Data displayed reflect the "Dominant Use Areas" of each use, defined as "where most of the use happens most of the time," and as mapped by multiple, independent groups. For more information on the general footprint for each use, GIS data, maps, and project information, visit www.mpa.gov. Contact: Mimi.Diorio@noaa.gov.

National Hurricane Center Updates Storm Surge Website

NOAA's National Hurricane Center (NHC) has updated its storm surge website to include risk maps that provide a snapshot of maximum potential storm surge from hurricanes of varying strengths. The maps are based on simulations that take into account hypothetical storms with different combinations of storm speeds, landfall locations, storm tracks, storm sizes, storm intensities, and astronomical tides. The NHC notes that the maps should be used for outreach, education, and awareness, but are not appropriate for planning, mitigation, or real-time applications. Visit the new site at: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/ssurge/risk/index.shtml?gm>.

Public Review of Draft Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard

The Federal Geographic Data Committee is conducting a public review of the draft Coastal and Marine Ecological Classification Standard through December 2010. The standard will provide a consistent national framework for organizing information about all aspects of coastal and ocean ecosystems. For more information about the standard and to review the latest draft, visit:

<http://www.csc.noaa.gov/benthic/cmecs/>.

Restoration Center Launches New Online Guide to Tidal Hydrology Restoration

The NOAA Restoration Center and Coastal Services Center have developed a new guidance manual for tidal hydrology restoration. Titled "Returning the Tide: A Guidance Manual for Tidal Hydrology Restoration in the Southeastern U.S.," the guidance manual provides tips, tools, and real-world project examples to restoration practitioners and coastal resource managers who may not have familiarity with tidal hydrology restoration techniques.

Unique features of the manual include the Toolkit and Project Portfolios. The Toolkit section is a resource for restoration project planning and implementation, offering downloadable checklists, spreadsheets and data sheets. The Project Portfolios provide details on 13 real-world projects including background, results, and lessons learned followed by downloadable cost estimates, budgets, and designs.

The toolkit can be viewed online at http://www.habitat.noaa.gov/partners/toolkits/tidal_hydro.html.

In the Gulf States

Relay Reef in Mobile Bay to Open for Harvest

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Marine Resources Division announces the opening of the Relay Reef in Mobile Bay to the harvest of oysters beginning on October 21, 2010. This reef was created by the oyster relay project conducted in March of this year and the opening will allow the first harvest from this reef.

The reef will be divided into two harvest areas; an area for tongs and an area for oyster dredges. The tonging area, on the southern half of the reef, will be open for harvest from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a limit of eight sacks per person or a maximum of 16 sacks allowed per boat. The dredge area, on the northern half of the reef, will be open for harvest from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., with a limit of 16 sacks per boat. Only boats with a draft less than four feet will be allowed on the reef to minimize damage to the reef. Sack size and proper culling of oysters will be strictly enforced.

Dredges must be inspected and permitted at the Marine Resources Division's Dauphin Island office. Inspections will be conducted Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4

p.m. Dredges must have a self-dumping basket and cannot exceed 125 pounds or have more than 16 teeth which must be spaced less than three inches apart.

All harvested oysters must be inspected by Marine Resources Division staff and tagged at one of the oyster management stations. Oyster management stations will be located inside East Fowl River and at the Heron Bay Cut-off. Oyster tags can be purchased at either oyster management station.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com.

Market Research Identifies Charter-fishing Customers

A recent survey of fishing-charter customers is coming in handy as federal waters reopen after the Deepwater Horizon oil well disaster. Gulf Shores/Orange Beach Tourism (GSOBT), the destination marketing organization for Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, is using the information to attempt to attract more fishermen to Alabama.

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, the Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and GSOBT worked together on the research study. It was conducted early this year and found that anglers chartering boats spent an average of more than \$2,500 per fishing excursion, including the cost of the trip, accommodations, food, entertainment and travel. The survey also identified the demographic and psychographic profiles of the current charter fishing customers, quantified the industry's economic impact and identified consumer attitudes.

"We feel that because we have identified customer characteristics and attitudes, that information will assist us in reaching more customers and expanding the market," said Colette Boehm, special projects director for GSOBT.

Researchers also conducted a PRIZM Target Analysis using a database of customers who had taken a fishing trip while in the area. PRIZM is a strategy for identifying marketing targets based on two observations:

- The best customers for your product are existing customers. The people who have already used your product or a similar one or other people like your existing customers are your most likely potential customers.
- Birds of a feather flock together. In choosing a place to live, people tend to seek out neighborhoods compatible to their lifestyles, where they find others with similar consumer behavior patterns.

"While the PRIZM portion of the project helps us determine where potential customers can be found, the survey helps us understand what messages are important to convey to them in our communications," Boehm said.

Alabama's charter fishing customers mostly come from the southeastern United States (89 percent). By examining the addresses of fishing customers, the study determined that the candidates for targeted marketing are all upscale groups. The highest-scoring cluster of charter fishing customers came from what the PRIZM analysis identifies as "fast-track families." Fast-track families include upscale parents

aged 35-54 and their kids. Most of the parents work in management, own their homes and are college graduates.

The second main group worthy of targeting is the “country squires.” These 35-to 54-year-olds graduated college and have children. Some attended additional school. Most of them own their homes and have jobs in management.

The third group is described as “country casuals.” They typically are upscale adults, 45 to 64 years old, who do not have kids. They likely are college graduates with management positions.

As far as what is important to fishermen, in the online survey, 99 percent revealed that the knowledge and courtesy of the captain and crew were “very important” or “somewhat important,” making it the highest-ranked factor on the list. Other factors anglers marked as important included the amount of fish caught (96 percent); cleanliness of the boat (95 percent); price of the trip (91 percent); amount of fish kept (88 percent); and variety of fish caught (81 percent).

[Alabama visitor and fisherman profiles](#)
[Alabama charter fishing survey](#)

Recipe for Restoration: Oyster gardeners grow shellfish population

November 18, 2010

The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program brought another season to a close Nov. 8-9 as program organizers and student volunteers collected oysters from gardens throughout Baldwin and Mobile counties. They took the oysters to reefs in Mobile Bay, where they will help purify the water, create habitat for marine life and spawn more oysters next spring.

Sixty-two Mobile Bay Oyster Gardeners had been growing the oysters in gardens off their wharves since early July. They raised and cared for 17,500 adult oysters that were added to the restoration reefs.

“We were pleased to have 62 gardeners and look forward to adding to that number for the 2011 season,” said PJ Waters, an extension specialist with Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. “Gardeners, adopters and program sponsors play critical roles in the success of the oyster gardening program. Following the events of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, those efforts are more important than ever.”

Alma Bryant High School students Alan Vo, Dustin McGallagher, Alden Bosarge, Cameron Perry and Joseph Perrine and instructor Lynn Stewart helped collect and plant the oysters.

The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program is sponsored by the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, The Sybil H. Smith Charitable Trust, the Organized Seafood Association of Alabama and Wintzell’s Oyster House in cooperation with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium.

Alabama Trustees Hear from Public at NRDA Meeting

November 22, 2010

Members of the public attended a public meeting in Spanish Fort, Ala., to learn about NRDA. The public was asked to provide input in the process to help **assess the damage** to the Alabama coast from the Deepwater Horizon spill at a meeting on November 11 in Spanish Fort, AL.

More than 50 members of the public attended to hear from representatives of the trustee [agencies responsible for the natural resources](#) impacted by the Gulf spill. Elected officials from Dauphin Island, Spanish Fort, Daphne, Gulf Shores, and Rep. Jo Bonner's office were in attendance.



Admiral Paul Zukunft with the Coast Guard kicked off the meeting with an overview of the initial response to the spill and **ongoing clean-up efforts** and how that differs from NRDA.

Will Brantley, of the [Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#) (ADCNR), the state's lead trustee agency for the spill, provided an overview of the [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#) (NRDA) process and ways the public can be involved.

"The goal of NRDA is to return injured natural resources to their pre-spill condition and compensate the public for the time period that services were impacted," Brantley said. "NRDA is **focused on restoration.**" In addition to attending meetings and providing comments, members of the public can be a part of the NRDA process by providing restoration project ideas and feedback to draft restoration plans, Brantley said.

Representatives from ADCNR's Commissioner, the [Geological Survey of Alabama](#), and the [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#) answered questions, many of which focused on human use of natural resources, an issue of particular interest to Alabamans.

"**Human use of the natural resources** includes going to the beach, enjoying the sand, swimming, fishing, and bird watching," said Will Gunter of ADCNR. "Valuing that loss is difficult, but the trustees are working to figure that out.

"Some of the ways we can **restore for those losses** include making it easier for people to enjoy the resources such as building boat launches," he said. "And **the public will be compensated** for the time the resources couldn't be used."

The NRDA for the Gulf spill does not have a set timeline and may take years. But **restoration is considered early** in the process, said Pete Tuttle of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Additional meetings will be scheduled, and information will be posted on our [calendar](#).

Manatee Awareness Month

November is critical time for Gulf Coast manatees

November is Manatee Awareness Month, and it couldn't come at a better time for Alabama's official state marine mammal. November is the time of year when manatees begin the seasonal migration to warmer waters for refuge during the cold winter months. It is also the time when sighting reports become critical because manatees are at greater risk of stranding due to cold stress.

Researchers with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Mobile Manatees Sighting Network (MMSN) are closely monitoring the movements of manatees in Alabama and Mississippi to be sure the animals make their normal seasonal movements following the exceptionally cold winter of 2009 and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Two manatees tagged in Alabama started their migration to warmer waters in Florida via the Intracoastal Waterway in October this year. Not all manatees have left Alabama, however, and later migrants are at greater risk from cold stress. Manatees have been reported as recently as Nov 9, near the battleship in Mobile Bay, Alabama and as far west as Corpus Christi, Texas.

Most manatees begin their migration when water temperatures drop below 68°F. There are approximately 5,000 West Indian manatees left in the United States, and nearly 5% of this known population died last year, primarily due to cold stress and boat strikes.

Researchers ask boaters in Alabama and Mississippi to help manatees migrate safely by using caution and keeping a look out when on the water. Boaters can look for characteristic swirls resembling flat 'dinner plates' on the water, mud trails, or a snout or tail breaking the water's surface. Senior Marine Scientist, Dr. Ruth Carmichael, commented, "It is important to remember that manatees are not always alone. If you see one, there may be more, and they can be tough to see, especially in our turbid waters."

Dianne Ingram, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, US Fish and Wildlife Service, adds, "We would also like to remind folks not to feed or bring water to manatees, a federally protected species, which can encourage them to stay too long in colder areas. With continued cooperation from the public, manatees are making a comeback rangewide, which is reassuring."

Wearing polarized sunglasses to improve vision, obeying speed zones, using poles, paddles or trolling motors when close to manatees, and having someone scan the water while under way will help locate and avoid manatees. MMSN Technician, Nicole Taylor advises, "Manatees need space and people who spot them should try not to alter their natural behavior. The best rule of thumb is to stay at least 100 feet from manatees and report any sightings as soon as possible." MMSN hopes to raise awareness through education and outreach efforts this winter, including publication of a seasonal newsletter and participation in public events. Alabama and Mississippi residents can report sightings, sign up to receive the MMSN newsletter, learn where to see MMSN at events, or make a donation by phone: 1-866-493-5803 (toll-free, 24 hrs), online: <http://manatee.disl.org>, email: manatee@disl.org, or on Facebook (Mobile Manatees Sighting Network).

DEP, Fabien Cousteau and Students Celebrate Florida Mangrove Day

~Event raises awareness of conservation and restoration of Florida's aquatic life and habitats~



HOLLYWOOD– The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Fabien Cousteau, grandson of famous oceanographer Jacques Cousteau and founder of Plant A Fish today celebrated Florida Mangrove Day with students from the Environmental Science and Everglades Restoration magnet school program at South Plantation High. About 75 students, in partnership with Plant A Fish, took to the beach at John U. Lloyd Beach State Park to harvest approximately 1,000 propagules, or mangrove seeds that will be grown in a nursery environment at South Plantation High School.

With the goal of learning the importance of mangroves to Florida aquaculture and aquatic life, the students will grow the propagules in a nursery environment within their school for one to two years, and then return the mangroves to their natural habitat as part of a restoration project.

“As Floridians, it is important to protect our aquatic resources and empower and support local communities in their conservation efforts,” said DEP Deputy Secretary Jennifer Fitzwater. “Our environment is the backbone to Florida’s way of life and today’s event helps ensure residents and visitors can enjoy our state’s natural landscapes.”

Governor Charlie Crist issued a proclamation declaring October 1, 2010 as Florida Mangrove Day. The idea of a Mangrove Day initiative developed from the partnership between Plant A Fish, a non-profit organization focused on education, empowerment and restoration, and the Environmental Science and Everglades Restoration magnet school program at South Plantation High. The Plant A Fish program model focuses on building partnerships, such as DEP’s Division of Recreation and Parks, for the restoration and preservation of mangroves and coral reefs located in Florida.

“Plant A Fish is excited to partner with the Environmental Science and Everglades Restoration magnet school program at South Plantation High and DEP’s Division of Recreation and Parks on the inaugural Mangrove Day event. Our mission is to educate and empower local communities to play an active role in the restoration of the oceans for future generations. Florida Mangrove Day affords us the opportunity to take such steps and also highlight the particular importance of the role mangroves play in Florida’s delicate aquatic ecosystems,” said Fabien Cousteau, founder of Plant A Fish.

Mangroves are one of Florida's true natives. They thrive in salty environments because they are able to obtain freshwater from saltwater. Florida's estimated 469,000 acres of mangrove forests contribute to the overall health of the state's southern coastal zone. Mangroves are a distinctive ecosystem that provide protected nursery areas for fish, crustaceans and shellfish. They also provide food for a multitude of marine species such as snook, snapper, tarpon, jack, sheepshead, red drum, oysters and shrimp. Healthy mangrove forests support Florida's important recreational and commercial fisheries.

Gulf Coast Recovery Act Project Halted by Oil Spill Resumes at Florida's Topsail Hill Preserve State Park

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today marked the resumption of an important habitat restoration project at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park near Destin, FL funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The project, which was temporarily delayed by the response to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, is a joint effort with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks and Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council.

"The continuation of the Topsail Hill Preserve project is creating environmental and economic benefits for Florida's Gulf Coast region," said Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director Rowan Gould. "This Recovery Act project is part of a long-range plan to restore Topsail Hill Preserve State Park to its natural state, restore the proper flow of water, and encourage plants and animals to return and flourish," said Gould. "Our partnerships with multiple agencies on projects such as this are helping the Service to make a tremendous difference in the health of local communities across the nation, while making important contributions to the future of America's wildlife and wild places."

Located in Santa Rosa Beach, 10 miles east of Destin, Topsail Hill Preserve State Park encompasses 14 different natural communities, including wet prairie, scrub, beach dune and rare coastal dune lake habitat. It is also part of the dwindling habitat of the endangered Choctawhatchee beach mouse and endangered flatwoods salamander. The restoration work funded by ARRA will help reestablish the flow of surface and subsurface water, which is essential to the health of both upland and wetland natural communities within the Preserve. "Restoration of the natural surface hydrology is essential to enhancing the wetlands and uplands in the watershed of two rare coastal dune lakes at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park," said DEP Deputy Secretary Bob Ballard. "This state park provides a direct economic impact of more than \$7 million to the local community. This project will further enhance the valuable natural resources at Topsail Hill that attract Florida residents and visitors to the Santa Rosa Beach area."

In 2009, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded \$400,000 in ARRA funding to the Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council of Milton, FL., to restore and enhance portions of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. Three Rivers, in turn, awarded a contract to Middle Creek Contracting Co., a small construction company based in nearby Defuniak Springs, FL.

The project began in the summer of 2010, but was abruptly halted a short time later when Incident Command teams responding to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill needed to use Topsail Hill Road as an access road for beach clean-up and assessment teams. The project was on hold for several weeks and recently resumed.

"The Three Rivers Resource Conservation and Development Council is pleased to be participating in this ARRA-funded project that will help restore habitat at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park," said Travis Davis, project leader for the Council. "This project greatly contributes to -more- our mission of conserving the natural resources and improving the economic condition of citizens in Northwest Florida."

For a full list of ARRA funded projects nationwide, go to the Department of the Interior's Recovery Web Site at <http://recovery.doi.gov/>. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has pledged unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Department's economic recovery projects. The public will be able to follow the progress of each project on the recovery web site, which will include an interactive map that enables the public to track where and how the Department's recovery dollars are being spent. In addition, the public can submit questions, comments or concerns at recoveryact@fws.gov.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen visit www.fws.gov.

Created in 1935 by the Florida Legislature, the Florida State Park system has grown from eight to 160 parks in the last 75 years. Today, the Florida Park Service manages more than 700,000 acres of Florida's natural environment, including 100 miles of beaches, eight National Historic Landmarks and 39 sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Florida State Parks has been recognized by the National Recreation and Park Association as the nation's first and only two-time Gold Medal winner for the nation's best park service. For more information about Florida's state parks, visit www.FloridaStateParks.org.

DEP Implements Second Phase of Protections for Northwest Florida Environment

--Implementation of the second phase of law creating Northwest Florida environmental program to reduce flooding, safeguard waterways and habitat goes into effect November 1--

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that the second phase of expanded protection for water resources in Northwest Florida will go into effect November 1.

The Florida Legislature passed House Bill 7163 in 2006, creating an Environmental Resource Permitting (ERP) program in Northwest Florida. DEP and the Northwest Florida Water Management District (NFWMD) have worked with area stakeholders since that time to put effective rules and practices in place. The first phase, limited to stormwater management systems, became effective October 1, 2007, and brought comprehensive flood protection and updated stormwater quality provisions to Northwest Florida for the first time.

November 1 inaugurates the second and final phase of the ERP program to protect isolated wetlands in Northwest Florida. Applicants will now be able to apply for one authorization from either DEP or the NFWMD that covers both wetland and stormwater permitting requirements. ERP streamlining eliminates the need for the two separate stormwater and dredge and fill authorizations currently required.

The ERP program regulates activities that generate stormwater, alter surface water flows, and involve dredging in wetlands and other surface waters, including dredging navigation channels, clearing and filling wetlands, and construction and alteration of urban and residential development, highways, docks, and seawalls. Applications are sent to either the DEP or the NFWMD in accordance with a division of responsibilities that are laid out in an Operating Agreement. Under that Agreement, DEP will handle, among other things, individual single-family activities requiring dredging and filling in wetlands or other surface waters, commercial, or governmental development involving five acres or more of dredging or filling in, on, or over wetlands or other surface waters, and most activities in open waters, such as construction of docks, marinas, and all activities on state owned submerged lands.

“This is a tremendous advance in preserving Northwest Florida's wetlands, which store water and provide essential habitat for birds and other wildlife,” said DEP Secretary Mimi Drew. “Bringing Northwest Florida up to date in ERP affords the same level of water resource protection that's been available in the rest of Florida for more than 15 years.”

The ERP program regulates activities that generate stormwater, alter surface water flows, and involve dredging and filling in wetlands and other surface waters, and addresses urban and residential development activities, highways, docks, and seawalls. The program includes a strong mitigation component to offset unavoidable impacts. Protecting isolated wetlands in Northwest Florida will allow DEP to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to allow Florida's permit to serve as the federal authorization for some activities. This State Programmatic General Permit has been in place in the rest of the state and can now be expanded to Northwest Florida.

"The Northwest Florida Water Management District is here to help the public, not just regulate it," added Julian Gotreaux, Director of the District's Environmental Regulations Section. "We routinely balance the needs of the regulated community and the health and safety of people and the environment. We are educators in the field. It's our goal to help individuals identify when they need a permit and thereby avoid any compliance or enforcement issues."

DEP recently launched a new online business portal which hosts the agency's public access tools in one convenient location. Many licenses, permits, reservations and subscription services can now be easily navigated from the portal, including various ERP authorizations from DEP. The business portal also allows users to sign up for agency publications and permit notifications, follow contaminated site cleanup, and make campsite reservations at Florida's 160 state parks. To view the business portal, visit www.fldepportal.com.

The NFWFMD is also in the process of developing online ERP authorizations that will complement those on the DEP business portal. To learn more about Environmental Resource Permitting in Northwest Florida, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/northwest/ERP/permitting.htm.

Rookery Bay to Host Public Meeting for Management Plan

~Public encouraged to offer input on site specific management plan~

NAPLES – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (RB NERR) will hold a formal public meeting for input on the site specific management plan draft for the RB NERR on Wednesday, December 8, 2010. To view a copy of the draft management plan for RB NERR, visit www.aquaticpreserves.org.

RB NERR is managed by DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA). CAMA is responsible for the management of Florida's 41 Aquatic Preserves, three National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs), the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and the Coral Reef Conservation Program. These protected areas comprise more than four million acres of the most valuable submerged lands and select coastal uplands in Florida.

The event will take place:

5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 8, 2010

Rookery Bay Reserve

300 Tower Road

Naples, FL

To learn more about DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/programs/cama.htm>.

October 1 Marks 30 Years of the Louisiana's Coastal Resources Program

Governor Bobby Jindal has proclaimed October 1, 2010 - Louisiana Coastal Management Recognition Day. This day marks the 30th anniversary of the state's Coastal Resources Program and its efforts to preserve and protect the valuable marshes and wetlands that lie within the coastal zone boundary of our state. The recognition serves also to honor the men and women of the Office of Coastal Management within the Department of Natural Resources for having the foresight to implement reforms and improvements that will help achieve sustainability of Louisiana's coastal resources.

▶ [Governor's Proclamation](#)

Public Meeting for Louisiana Coastal Management Review

▶ [Public Notice: Meeting for Coastal Management 312 Review on January 3, 2011](#)

Pursuant to the federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, a public meeting will be held as part of the federal performance evaluation of the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program (LCRP). The meeting will be held at 6:30 pm (1830 hours) CST on Monday, 3 January 2011 in the Griffon Room, LaSalle Building, Capitol Complex, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Physical address is 617 North 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA. For location information including map and parking information please visit <http://dnr.louisiana.gov/visitorcenter-start.ssi>.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive public comments regarding the operation and implementation of the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program (LCRP) since the last evaluation in April 2005. Written comments are encouraged, and participation at the public meeting is not required for submission. Written comments should be sent to Mr. Gregory Gervais, NOAA/NOS/OCRM, 1305 East West Highway, N/ORM7, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or via e-mail to greg.gervais@noaa.gov no later than 15 days after date of public meeting.

The Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration, and Conservation Meets Holds Meeting

Baton Rouge, La - The Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Protection, Restoration, and Conservation held a meeting today in Baton Rouge to hear from a collection of scientists on an array of technical topics associated with Mississippi River diversion projects.

Nick Howes, PhD., a scientist and Boston University graduate, and Dr. Ioannis Georgiou of the University of New Orleans, discussed new data on the resiliency of low salinity wetlands during hurricanes. Their research suggests that wave action has more of a detrimental effect on brackish and intermediate wetland types than the more southerly-positioned saline marshes. While wetlands in Louisiana are being lost due to high rates of subsidence, there is potential for rapid loss during single storm events. During Katrina, wave action (shear stress) exceeded soil strength in low salinity wetlands and resulted in large areas of wetlands loss. Their work noted that a combination of weaker roots and shallower rooting depths exacerbated this loss.

Andy Nyman, a PhD. scientist at Louisiana State University specializing in plant responses in wetlands ecosystems, presented information on soil strength and marsh vertical accretion related to river diversions. Nyman's findings suggest soil strength is dependent upon the presence of live root mats, and that marshes receiving more freshwater from diversions have greater production than those in salt water marshes. Bryan Piazza, PhD. with The Nature Conservancy, spoke about the ecological benefits to fisheries related to river diversions and their operational schemes. He emphasized the need for decision-makers to consider multiple, complex ecological factors as they craft management plans for both existing and future diversions in south Louisiana. His work has provided a definitive correlation between productivity of certain fish species and the operation of diversions, particularly the mimicking of seasonal flooding events that occurred historically in Louisiana.

The last speaker on the agenda was Rick Raynie, as scientist with the Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration who presented information on the role of river diversions in coastal protection and restoration. Mr. Raynie advised that re-establishing the deltaic cycle by reconnecting the Mississippi River to the adjacent marshes is the most critical component in the ultimate sustainability of south Louisiana and the Mississippi Delta. He added that continued development of scientific tools and an improved understanding of river dynamics will allow these diversions to maximize efficiency through their operations and continually improve design in planning of future work. Even with decreased suspended sediment loads in the river, models suggest that it is possible to use diversions to build land that is sustainable, even with projected rates of subsidence and sea level rise.

Upon conclusion of the presentations, Commissioners discussed the need to continue to examine the affects of diversions on the ecosystem in order to better incorporate science into coastal policy. The next meeting of the Advisory Commission will take place in early December.

LUMCON Starts New Adult Education Program

October 28, 2010

The Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, or LUMCON, has started a new adult-education program, Gulf Lagniappe, to help you learn more about Louisiana and its coastal issues. The program is a series of one-day workshops held through July at LUMCON, 8124 La. 56, Cocodrie. Each workshop is open to any adult Gulf Coast resident 18 years old or older who is interested in learning more about Louisiana's coastal and marine environments.

Each workshop will focus on one or more of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's priority issues. Each workshop session includes an in-depth talk given by one of LUMCON's research scientists; an environmental discussion aboard one of LUMCON's research vessels, the R/V Pelican; laboratory activities; and a guided tour of LUMCON.

The first workshop in the series is scheduled for Dec. 18. The topic is Louisiana's fisheries and will be led by Dr. Edward Chesney. Pre-registration is encouraged, however on-site registration is available. The cost is \$10 per person. For information, contact Murt Conover at mconover@lumcon.edu or 851-2860 or Holly Hebert at hhebert@lumcon.edu or 851-2842. The program is sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

New Oyster Farming Technique Increases Productivity, Offers Entrepreneurial Opportunities

November 18, 2010

A new oyster farming initiative has launched in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The goal of this effort, a collaboration between researchers from Louisiana State University and Auburn University, is industry adoption of off-bottom oyster culture to supplement the traditional harvest. Historically, oysters are grown on and harvested from reefs on the water bottom. In this new process, oysters are grown suspended in the water column.

Benefits of this new oyster farming technique include increased productivity; job creation; and continued production of a safe, sustainable domestic oyster supply, according to John Supan, Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter oyster specialist, and Bill Walton, Auburn University aquaculture and fisheries specialist. Off-bottom culture also protects oysters from predators, provides a means to reduce fouling, and allows complete harvests of planted oyster seed, a major advantage over traditional oyster harvesting.

“This could be an important addition to a traditional coastal industry,” said Walton. “It’s clean, green and energy efficient. And, it provides business opportunities to those already in the oyster industry as well as other coastal residents.”

“Through proper planning, off-bottom culture can work in harmony with other water uses and users,” added Supan. “It can support both part- and full-time incomes, just like natural fisheries, but with greater control over the natural variability that dominates bottom harvesting.”

Although this program was developed prior to the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the oil spill prompted increased interest in oyster farming. “We have received more calls and questions about oyster farming in the last four months than we have combined over the prior 12 months,” said Walton. “The spill has created a window of opportunity where traditional oystermen are eager, even desperate, to find ways to get back to working on the water as soon as possible.” “Catastrophe causes change,” added Supan. “The challenge is to direct change to improve conditions, not to settle for status quo. This project will attempt to do just that.”

Both the Auburn University Shellfish Laboratory on Dauphin Island, Ala., and the Sea Grant Bivalve Hatchery at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Marine Research Laboratory on Grand Isle, La., will provide oyster seed for this tri-state project. The project is funded through the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium by the National Sea Grant College Program's Marine Aquaculture Initiative, a national grant competition.

LDWF’s Fisheries Research Laboratory in Grand Isle provides research and hatchery space to researchers from the Louisiana Sea Grant. LDWF officials are also working with officials in Plaquemines Parish to develop plans for a facility which would provide space for oyster spat, oysters in the larval stage, to develop before they are utilized by industry.

“Louisiana’s oyster fishery has been hit with major natural and man-made disasters in the last five years, and has grown wiser for it,” said LDWF Assistant Secretary Randy Pausina. “We are thrilled that Louisiana Sea Grant and researchers at Auburn University have worked so diligently to develop new methods for safeguarding and developing our oyster reefs along the coast. Our department is going to work side-by-side with the industry and researchers to help ensure the success of our oyster fishery.”

A series of workshops are planned during 2011 and 2012 on the new technique, addressing issues such as appropriate culture systems, oyster seed stock, growing market-quality oysters, and developing practices

and regulations in collaboration with state agencies. For more information, contact Supan at jsupan@lsu.edu or Walton at billwalton@auburn.edu.

LDWF is charged with managing and protecting Louisiana's natural resources. For more information, visit www.wlf.louisiana.gov, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pages/Baton-Rouge-LA/Louisiana-Department-of-Wildlife-and-Fisheries, or Twitter [@LDWF](https://twitter.com/LDWF).

Louisiana Co-Trustees Hear from Public at Coastal Meetings



Members of the public attended public meetings throughout coastal Louisiana to learn about NRDA.

The agencies responsible for natural resources damaged by the Deepwater Horizon spill will **represent the public** during the damage assessment process, Louisiana officials said at public meetings throughout the state in late October.

Hosting the meetings were the state [co-trustees](#) the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration

Authority, Louisiana's lead trustee agency for the oil spill, the Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources.

After introductory remarks from Drue Banta, representing the Governor's Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration, Karolien Debusschere, deputy coordinator for LOSCO, gave an overview of the [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#) process.

Banta, Debusschere, and Stephanie Morris, special counsel for LOSCO, answered questions after the presentation. Questions ranged from concerns about public input in the process to a timeline for completing assessment, restoration planning, and implementation.

"The NRDA process is designed to be lengthy," Morris said. "We want to be sure we **don't short change Louisiana resources** and that our assessment is based on sound science."

Banta described the possibility for emergency and early restoration projects to take place while assessment is still going on. "Louisiana can't wait years for our resources to be restored," she said. "Early on we're looking to implement large-scale, sustainable coastal restoration projects."

The public will have additional opportunities to be involved in NRDA including submitting and commenting on restoration project ideas. Debusschere stressed that these were the first in a series of meetings that will take place as the Gulf spill assessment and restoration process progresses.

The next public meeting about the process has been scheduled for November 11 in Spanish Fort, Alabama. Future meeting dates will also be posted on the [events calendar](#).

MPB releases Educator Guide for the Gulf Islands

JACKSON, Miss. --Today, Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) released an Educator's Resource and Activity Guide to accompany its award-winning documentary, *The Gulf Islands: Mississippi's Wilderness Shore*.

The Gulf Islands: Mississippi's Wilderness Shore is an MPB production showcasing the natural beauty of the Gulf Islands National Seashore Park, specifically the barrier islands along the coast of Mississippi and the Davis Bayou area in Ocean Springs. The Gulf Islands documentary presents the islands' history, natural significance, their role to protect Mississippi's coast from hurricanes and the efforts to further protect and restore them.

The Gulf Islands National Seashore is a protected region of barrier islands along the Gulf of Mexico and features historic resources and recreational opportunities spanning a 12-unit park in Florida and Mississippi. The Mississippi section encompasses Cat Island, Petit Bois Island, Horn Island, East and West Ship Islands, and the Davis Bayou area. Barrier islands, long and narrow islands made up of sand deposits created by waves and currents, run parallel to the coast line and serve to protect the coast from erosion. They also provide refuge for wildlife by harboring their habitats. From sandy-white beaches to wildlife sanctuaries, Mississippi's wilderness shore is a natural and historic treasure.

MPB's Educators Resource and Activity Guide provides a detailed introduction to Ship Island, including important people, places, and events. The Guide also features sample activities and projects for use in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

Nikki McCelleis, MPB's Deputy Director for Education said, "The curriculum serves as a supplemental instructional resource relative to the specifics of *The Gulf Islands* documentary and can be used to expand upon the knowledge gained from viewing the documentary."

The Gulf Islands: Mississippi's Wilderness Shore won a 2010 Southeast Regional Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Photographer Program (Non-News) category. The documentary was also nominated for Outstanding Achievement in the Documentary "Historical and Photographer Program (Non-News) categories. In addition to the Southeast Regional Emmy Award, *The Gulf Islands: Mississippi's Wilderness Shore* won a Silver Telly Award in the Documentary category. Numerous film festivals across the nation and the world have screened the documentary, including Going Green, Blue Ocean, Hawaii Ocean, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Ocean, Heart of England, International Film Festival Thailand, International Film Festival Ireland, and American Conservation Film Festivals. The documentary is also airing on over 20 PBS stations throughout the country.

Educators who wish to view this guide can go to

<http://www.mpbonline.org/television/specials/GulfIslands/index.htm> or www.mpbeducatorexpress.com.

Video Shows Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Volunteers How to Safely Remove Debris While Protecting Important Habitat

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force want everyone to have a safe and fun time at this year's Mississippi Coastal Cleanup on Saturday, Oct. 16, 2010. This year's cleanup will focus on inland areas and waterways instead of the beaches and barrier islands. This means volunteers will be trekking through areas never before included in

the Mississippi cleanup. Many of these areas may have sensitive habitat and may be best reached by kayak or canoe. With this in mind, Task Force member Stacy Speas with Gulf Islands National Seashore, along with other Task Force members and videographer Mozart Dedeaux with the Pascagoula River Audubon Center, created a video to offer tips for volunteer safety as well as protection of the Mississippi Gulf Coast's valuable local resources.

The video can be found on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPpLagFQy-w and on the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Web site at www.mscoastalcleanup.org. "The video is designed to not only be relevant to the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, but for any cleanup, whether a volunteer group effort or an individual endeavor," Speas said.

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup can be found online at www.mscoastalcleanup.org, or follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pages/Mississippi-Coastal-Cleanup/119348171071 and Twitter at www.twitter.com/mscoastcleanup.

Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Volunteers Fill Out Data Cards to Help Identify Sources of Marine Debris, Enact Change

BILOXI, Miss. –Volunteers will help remove debris from inland areas and waterways this year instead of the beaches and barrier islands, and they will fill out Data Cards identifying the types of debris they find. The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup has partnered with Renew Our Rivers in their shared goal of keeping our waterways clean.

This year's event will provide organizers with a new snapshot of the kinds of debris that travel to the ocean by way of storm drains and inland waterways. As part of the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC)—the world's largest volunteer event on behalf of the marine environment—the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup aims to stop marine debris problems at the source. The Data Cards provide Mississippi Coastal Cleanup organizers and the ICC with information about the most prevalent components of marine debris. Each year, the Data Cards are tallied, and from the results, the "Top 10 Debris Items Collected in Mississippi" and the "Top 10 Debris Items Dangerous to Marine Life in Mississippi" are determined. This data provides elected officials and community leaders with the means to make informed policy decisions and to more effectively tailor and expand recycling and other waste reduction programs.

This year, several sites will participate in an effort to recycle the debris they find. Designated groups will separate recyclable trash as they collect it and note on their Data Cards how many bags of recyclables they have. At the end of the day, the total amount of bags will be tallied and sent to the ICC along with other data collected. The Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force plans to expand the recycling effort in coming years and use the data to educate volunteers on the importance of recycling. Among recyclable trash to be collected are aluminum cans, plastic bags, bottles and even fishing line. Volunteers around piers are encouraged to place any fishing line they collect in the monofilament recycling tubes that can be found at about 45 piers and harbors along the Mississippi coast.

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.

DMR Offers Mississippi Shrimp Fishermen Free TED Gear for Their Skimmer Trawls

BILOXI, Miss. – The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has free turtle excluded device (TED) gear available for commercial shrimpers using skimmer trawls. Though recently there have been fewer reports of endangered sea turtle sightings and strandings in Mississippi, the DMR remains active in efforts to reduce fishery-sea turtle interactions and is continuing its partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), through the BP Recovered Oil for Wildlife Fund, to provide free of charge TED gear and installation instructions to Mississippi commercial shrimpers who agree to voluntarily use TEDs in their skimmer trawls.

So far through the program, the DMR has given out 278 TEDs to 139 boats. If you are interested in receiving free TED gear and installation instructions for your Mississippi commercial skimmer trawl, please contact the DMR Shrimp and Crab Bureau at 228-374-5000.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has indicated that TED gear for Gulf of Mexico shrimpers using skimmer trawls may be required in the near future. This gear update would relieve skimmer trawl shrimpers from tow-time restrictions, and the 55-minute skimmer trawl tow time will still be in place to protect sea turtles if a vessel doesn't have TEDs installed.

For questions about program funding and conditions, contact the NFWF at 262-567-0601. For questions about the potential federal TED gear requirement for skimmer trawls, please contact the NMFS Regional Office at 727-824-5312.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment Described at Mississippi Public Meeting



MDEQ's Trudy Fisher answers public questions at Nov. 22 meeting; Photo courtesy of MDEQ
Mississippi citizens discussed restoring the Gulf of Mexico following injury from the Deepwater Horizon spill at a meeting in Long Beach, MS, on Monday November 22. About 50 people attended to discuss the process of assessing the impacts and restoring the environment.

This was one of a [series of informational public meetings](#) taking place across the Gulf region. The evening began with informal one-on-one conversations about the work being done to

assess the injuries and plan for restoration. Representatives from the Mississippi and federal agencies responsible for the impacted resources described the process of [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#), or NRDA, and answered questions.

Trudy D. Fisher, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), gave an overview of NRDA and discussed MDEQ's role as a [trustee agency](#).

“NRDA is basically the process that allows MDEQ, as trustee, the authority to seek compensation for restoration of the state’s natural resources,” Fisher said. “This process is complex, and one that may last many years, but we want to keep the public involved and informed every step of the way.”

Representatives answered questions from the audience on topics including seafood safety, dispersants, human health, and [public involvement in NRDA](#).

Trustees throughout the Gulf region are working diligently to ensure the region is fully restored from injuries sustained to the environment following the Gulf spill.

For more information about Mississippi’s role in the NRDA, visit www.deq.state.ms.us/nrda, and for details on future public meetings as they are scheduled, check out [our site’s calendar](#).

Texas’ Oldest Agency Unveils Cutting-edge Website: www.glo.texas.gov

October 01, 2010

AUSTIN — The Texas General Land Office today unveiled a website -www.glo.texas.gov - with a sleek, corporate feel that reflects the professional evolution of the state's oldest agency. "The Texas General Land Office operates more like a business than any other state agency, and this new website reflects that," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "I hope everyone will take a moment to visit www.glo.texas.gov , take a look around and tell us what you think."

The website redesign is the first in more than 15 years for the Land Office. The old website had grown to more than 20,000 pages, had many bad links, outdated information, circular navigation and did not market the agency to the public in a positive, unified way.

On a visitor's first visit to www.glo.texas.gov , Patterson's image springs to life and speaks a welcoming message: "Welcome to the new Texas General Land Office website. I hope you'll take a moment to learn more about the agency and our mission. Let us know how we can help, and thanks for your interest." On a visitor's second visit, Patterson welcomes them back. The image is silent, unless clicked upon, after that.

"This website represents a whole new approach to how the Land Office interacts with Texans and our business customers," Patterson said. "This redesign shifts the website away from bureaucracy and jargon to present the agency in a much more organized, easy to use way."

The Land Office's new homepage now features a stunning photo of the Guadalupe Mountains, but is meant to be minimalist and focus a visitor's attention on the top agency news, user-friendly navigation and an innovative display of the agency's best known public programs. A new feature called MegaMenu allows visitors to jump to almost any page on the website in one or two clicks - a well-understood concept in Web marketing.

"We've had teams of smart people working for months to make this website as easy to use as it can be," Patterson said. "It's now simple enough that even I can use it."

But the Land Office website is not just a marketing tool. It's a business tool. For example, in the first four days of this month, the Land Office is expected to receive approximately \$40 million in routine oil and gas earnings dedicated to the Permanent School Fund. Private oil and gas companies producing on school

fund lands report how much they owe via downloadable forms every day. It's vital the Land Office's website not only works well, but is easy to use.

The website redesign was long overdue - the better part of five years in the making, said Land Office Communications Director Mark Loeffler, who led the effort. "The website represents an introduction to our agency for many Texans, so it has been 're-imagined' with them in mind," Loeffler said. "From easy navigation, jargonless text and 'How Do I' questions, to consistent use of images and color, this website sets a new standard for state agencies."

As of October 1, 2010, all visitors to the old URL (glo.state.tx.us) will be redirected to the new URL (glo.texas.gov).

Patterson Welcomes President Obama's offshore Wind Start

Five years after Texas, Feds finally sign their first offshore wind lease

AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson drew attention to the Obama Administration's belated entry into the offshore wind race today after U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar signed the nation's ninth lease for the development of offshore wind power with much fanfare. Patterson signed the first lease on behalf of Texas five years ago.

"We've always known Texas leads the nation in offshore wind energy development - now we know it's by at least five years," Patterson said. "I welcome the Obama Administration into the offshore wind energy business. Better late than never."

Salazar and Cape Wind President Jim Gordon signed the first federal lease for an offshore wind farm this morning at the American Wind Energy Association's Offshore Wind Conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

After Patterson signed the first offshore lease in the Gulf of Mexico, the private developers working to build the nation's first wind farm have struggled with financing and hurricanes. "This is still a young industry here in the U.S.," Patterson said. "But I still predict the nation's first offshore wind turbine will go up over Texas waters."

Since 2005, Patterson has signed eight leases with private developers working to build offshore wind farms. Coastal Point Energy LLC and Baryonyx Corporation hold the leases. None of the leases have produced a watt of energy yet, but have already earned nearly \$500,000 for the school children of Texas.

"The real money, of course, will come in once turbines are up and begin to spin," Patterson said. "Just like with oil and gas, Texas school kids will earn a percentage of every bit of energy produced by offshore wind out to 10.3 miles from the Texas coast. I'm confident the Texas General Land Office will make that day come sooner rather than later."

Sustainable energy sources such as wind, geothermal and solar power will only become a viable part of our nation's energy portfolio if they make dollars, not just sense. "I'm proud to say Texas is leading the way toward that future," Patterson said.

West Galveston Island Beach Project is Cancelled

Timing and legal issues from court decision spells end for project

AUSTIN — Work on a vital West Galveston Island beach renourishment project (CEPRA 1391) has stopped and the project is cancelled, Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson announced today.

The \$40 million effort to restore and nourish six miles of beach - from the west end of the Galveston Seawall to 13 Mile Road - was vital as a defense against high erosion rates threatening the island tax base and infrastructure. The project's contractor was set to begin placing sand on the beach today. The project would have been funded by the General Land Office's Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act Program with a mix of local, state and federal money.

Patterson said a recent Texas Supreme Court opinion in a case brought forward by California-based Pacific Legal Foundation has muddied the legal waters enough to delay the beach project indefinitely. With projected delay costs in the millions, Patterson decided to stop the \$40 million project.

"Our hands are tied now," Patterson said. "With this much money on the bubble, the delay caused by these legal questions makes it too costly to continue this project."

The Court ruling 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 public beach easement on the West Galveston Island beach targeted by the Land Office for renourishment. Without that easement, the Constitutional prohibition against spending public money to improve private property made the project impossible.

"It's ironic that the Pacific Legal Foundation's actions will harm the beachfront property owners they claim to defend," Patterson said. "Without this beach project, beachfront property owners will eventually have a lot less property to own when erosion claims their property as state-owned 'wet beach.'"

"You might win in court, but you can't litigate Mother Nature," Patterson said.

The Land Office is reviewing other ways the money can be used to fight erosion on Galveston Island that may not conflict with the court decision.

Patterson also announced he will host an open question and answer session in Galveston for beachfront property owners, property rights advocates and the general public to learn more about the court decision and its effect on the Texas Open Beaches Act. Details will be forthcoming.

Broadcast quality video footage of homes on the beach on Galveston Island may be downloaded here: <http://tinyurl.com/glo-beachhomes>.

Gulf Restoration following Deepwater Horizon Spill Discussed at Texas Public Meeting

More than 50 members of the public attended a public meeting in Texas to learn about NRDA. The Gulf of Mexico will be restored following damage from the Deepwater Horizon spill, and the public will play a major role in that restoration process, officials said at a meeting in Galveston, Texas, on October 12.

More than 50 people attended to discuss the process of **assessing the damage and restoring the environment**. This was the first in a series of informational public meetings to take place across the Gulf region in the coming weeks.

The evening began with one-on-one conversations about the work being done to assess the damage and plan for restoration. Representatives from the Texas and federal agencies responsible for the impacted resources described the process of [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#), or NRDA, and answered questions.

Don Pitts with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department spoke about the **cooperative nature of the process** and the importance of states and federal agencies working together and with the public. “This is the start of a dialogue with the public,” Pitts said. “The public is an important part of the restoration process.”

Craig Giggelman, with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, emphasized the **bottom line: restoration**. “The natural resources, including wildlife, fish and habitats, will be restored,” Giggelman said. “Our mission is to compensate the public and restore what was lost.”

Troy Baker with NOAA outlined the process and highlighted the formal and informal ways the **public will be involved**, including this and future meetings and public comment periods. He described the NRDA process as legal, collaborative, and restoration-focused.

Audience questions were primarily NRDA-focused, including potential for land acquisition, use of dispersants, data access, seafood safety, long-term Gulf restoration, and a time frame for the restoration process.

While there is no timeline for completing assessment and restoration, **typical NRDAs can take years to complete**.

“Every spill is different,” Baker said. “We’re working together to make sure we conduct a complete and accurate assessment.”



Other News

Accepting Nominations for the 2011 Gulf Guardian Awards

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program partnership developed the Gulf Guardian awards as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and organizations that are taking extraordinary steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. The Gulf Guardian Award recipients exemplify what the Gulf of Mexico Program partnership is all about; innovative solutions that come about when we pool resources and look for creative ways to positively impact our quality of life and economic well being on the Gulf of Mexico.

The first Gulf Guardian Award winners were recognized in 2000. For the year 2011, the Gulf of Mexico Program partnership will be awarding 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards for seven (7) categories: **Business & Industry, Environmental Justice/Cultural Diversity, Civic/Non-Profit Organizations, Partnerships, Youth Environmental Education, Individual, and Bi-National partnership efforts.** All 21 winners in these seven different categories will be rewarded and recognized with an impressive marble and glass memento, press coverage on their project, and recognition by their peers at a special Gulf Guardian Awards ceremony.

The Gulf of Mexico Program is underwritten by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, and community leaders from all across the five Gulf States and Mexico. To complete a nomination application for 2011, go to the Gulf of Mexico Program's web site at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo>, and then click on the Gulf Guardian Application button. Applications are available in both English and Spanish. **Nominations are due by March 15, 2011.** If you have any questions, or require further information or assistance, please contact [Diane Altzman](mailto:altsman.diane@epa.gov) at (228) 688-7015 or email at altsman.diane@epa.gov.

Obama Administration Officials Release Progress Report on Work of Climate Change Adaptation Task Force

October 14, 2010

WASHINGTON – A new interagency report released today outlines recommendations to President Obama for how Federal Agency policies and programs can better prepare the United States to respond to the impacts of climate change. The report, produced by the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, recommends that the Federal Government implement actions to expand and strengthen the Nation's capacity to better understand, prepare for, and respond to climate change. The recommendations include making adaptation a standard part of agency planning and ensuring scientific information about the impacts of climate change is easily accessible.

The Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force is co-chaired by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and includes representatives from more than 20 Federal Agencies. When the President signed the Executive Order on Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance, on October 5, 2009, he called on the Task Force to develop, within one year, Federal recommendations for adapting to climate change impacts. "Progress Report of the

Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force,” released today, provides those recommendations, based in part on numerous listening sessions and public outreach events with a wide range of stakeholders.

“Taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the effects of climate change is a priority, and we must also prepare for the inevitable effects of climate change. Adaptation requires thoughtful, preventative actions and investments to build resilience and reduce risk,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “The Federal Government must consider climate impacts in decision making and how it will affect our services, operations and assets throughout the country.”

“This report’s framework for climate adaptation moves science into practice to help the Nation cope with the impacts of climate change,” said Shere Abbott, Associate Director for Environment in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. “It makes plain that adaptation, and not just mitigation, is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid the worst consequences of global climate change, and it outlines a course of action that will put that part of our Nation’s response on track to succeed.”

“There is a growing and urgent need for society to develop and implement science-based strategies to adapt to climate change,” said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. “Adaptation and resilience will require partnerships and action across all segments of society—the public sector, local to Federal government, the private sector, the nonprofit sector and individuals. In addition, climate change impacts vary from region to region, so new approaches and preparations tailored to meet the needs and solutions for each region must also be part of our strategy.”

The Federal Government is already taking steps to build adaptive capacity and increase resilience to climate change in the United States and internationally. In the Progress Report, the Task Force recommends that the Federal Government implement the following actions to expand and strengthen these efforts to help the Nation better understand and prepare for climate change:

- Make adaptation a standard part of Agency planning to ensure that resources are invested wisely and services and operations remain effective in a changing climate.
- Ensure scientific information about the impacts of climate change is easily accessible so public and private sector decision-makers can build adaptive capacity into their plans and activities.
- Align Federal efforts to respond to climate impacts that cut across jurisdictions and missions, such as those that threaten water resources, public health, oceans and coasts, and communities.
- Develop a U.S. strategy to support international adaptation that leverages resources across the Federal Government to help developing countries reduce their vulnerability to climate change through programs that are consistent with the core principles and objectives of the President’s new Global Development Policy.
- Build strong partnerships to support local, state, and tribal decision makers in improving management of places and infrastructure most likely to be affected by climate change.

The Task Force’s work has been guided by a strategic vision of a resilient, healthy, and prosperous Nation in the face of a changing climate. To achieve this vision, the Task Force identified a set of guiding principles that public and private decision-makers should consider in designing and implementing adaptation strategies. They include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Adopt Integrated Approaches:** Adaptation should be incorporated into core policies, planning, practices, and programs whenever possible.

- **Prioritize the Most Vulnerable:** Adaptation strategies should help people, places, and infrastructure that are most vulnerable to climate impacts and be designed and implemented with meaningful involvement from all parts of society.
- **Use Best-Available Science:** Adaptation should be grounded in the best-available scientific understanding of climate change risks, impacts, and vulnerabilities.
- **Apply Risk-Management Methods and Tools:** Adaptation planning should incorporate risk-management methods and tools to help identify, assess, and prioritize options to reduce vulnerability to potential environmental, social, and economic implications of climate change.
- **Apply Ecosystem-based Approaches:** Adaptation should, where appropriate, take into account strategies to increase ecosystem resilience and protect critical ecosystem services on which humans depend, to reduce vulnerability of human and natural systems to climate change.

The Task Force will establish, by Spring 2011, a partnership committee composed of local, state, and Tribal representatives to consult with the Federal Government as it begins to implement the recommended actions. The Office of the Federal Environmental Executive, with the advice of the Task Force's Agency Adaptation workgroup, will develop implementing instructions within 120 days for how agencies should undertake adaptation planning. Through this planning process, agencies will develop and implement strategic plans that identify how and where adaptation should be incorporated into their programs, policies, and regulations.

The Task Force will continue to meet over the next year as an interagency forum for discussing the Federal Government's adaptation approach and to support and monitor the implementation of recommended actions in the Progress Report. It will prepare another report in October 2011 that documents progress toward implementing its recommendations and provides additional recommendations for refining the Federal approach to adaptation, as appropriate. The full report can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/ceq.

EPA Administrator Names Executive Director for New Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

WASHINGTON- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lisa P. Jackson has named John H. Hankinson, Jr. to be the executive director of the newly established Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. President Obama signed an executive order earlier this month establishing the task force, which will coordinate efforts to implement restoration programs and projects in the gulf coast region. Jackson, a New Orleans native, was named as chair of the task force due to her considerable involvement in the Obama Administration's immediate response efforts following the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill and her knowledge and extensive experience in environmental issues - factors that will be central in spurring actions to help to restore the region's ecosystem while providing important support for the economy.

"We're pleased that John has accepted this responsibility and is willing once again to step up and serve the people of the gulf coast. He will play an instrumental role in fulfilling our commitment to a full and lasting restoration of this area," said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. "John's longtime experience with these issues and this region, along with his proven ability to get things done, will be invaluable assets in what is sure to be a long-term, hard-fought battle to restore the waters of the gulf. I have every confidence in him."

"I spent my childhood on the gulf and I am proud and honored to have the opportunity to carry out the president's commitment to restoring this vital ecosystem," Hankinson said. "I look forward to hearing from everyone in the gulf coast - from community groups to businesses to scientists - as we go about restoring a national treasure that also happens to be an economic engine for the entire region."

Hankinson has spent 30 years working on environmental issues in the private, public and non-profit sectors. The Florida native has brought together industry, government and stakeholder groups to form partnerships to restore ecosystems across the southeast. He has worked on the National Estuary Program in the Gulf of Mexico and directed the development and implementation of a water quality protection plan for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. He has over 10 years experience overseeing the restoration and protection of the St. Johns River system in Florida. Hankinson currently serves as an environment and conservation lands consultant, advising on land conservation, strategic land use decision-making, and constructive environmental management and policy projects across the Southeastern United States. He served as regional administrator of EPA region 4 from 1994-2001.

As the executive director of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, Hankinson - who will report directly to Administrator Jackson - will coordinate interagency efforts, oversee staff and outreach efforts develop a regional ecosystem restoration strategy and ensure that science underpins the task force's efforts. Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida will each have a state representative on the task force. The representatives will be selected by the governors of each gulf state and then appointed by President Obama, along with one senior official from each of several federal agencies, including the departments of Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce and Transportation. The task force will also integrate local stakeholders, representatives from affected tribes, and the scientific and academic communities. The task force will have a presence in each of the gulf states, in addition to Washington, D.C.

Administrator Jackson will hold the first meeting of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force on November 8 in Pensacola, Fla. More information about that meeting will be announced as it becomes available. View President Obama's executive order: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/05/executive-order-gulf-coast-ecosystem-restoration-task-force>

Entergy-Commissioned Study Finds Gulf Coast Faces \$350 Billion Exposure Due to Climate Change.

Entergy Corporation, an electric generation and transmission company, released a study produced by McKinsey & Co. and Swiss Re concluding that the Gulf Coast region of the U.S. faces potential economic losses of approximately \$350 billion over the next twenty years due to the expected impacts of climate change and related environmental risks. The combined effects of hurricanes, land subsidence, and sea level rise account for the bulk of the expected damages. The report recommends that Gulf Coast communities consider cost-effective adaptation measures such as improved building codes, roof retrofits, and beach nourishment. According to the study, \$50 billion in investments in these measures over the next twenty years could reduce expected damages by \$135 billion. The executive summary of the report is available online [here](#).

Most River Flows across the U.S. are Altered by Land and Water Management, Leading to Ecological Degradation

This report is available [online](#).

The amount of water flowing in streams and rivers has been significantly altered in nearly 90 percent of waters that were assessed in a new nationwide USGS study. Flow alterations are a primary contributor to degraded river ecosystems and loss of native species.

“This USGS assessment provides the most geographically extensive analysis to date of stream flow alteration,” said Bill Werkheiser, USGS Associate Director for Water. “Findings show the pervasiveness of stream flow alteration resulting from land and water management, the significant impact of altered stream flow on aquatic organisms, and the importance of considering this factor for sustaining and restoring the health of the Nation’s streams and ecosystems.”

Flows are altered by a variety of land- and water-management activities, including reservoirs, diversions, subsurface tile drains, groundwater withdrawals, wastewater inputs, and impervious surfaces, such as parking lots, sidewalks and roads.

“Altered river flows lead to the loss of native fish and invertebrate species whose survival and reproduction are tightly linked to specific flow conditions,” said Daren Carlisle, USGS ecologist and lead scientist on this study. “These consequences can also affect water quality, recreational opportunities and the maintenance of sport fish populations.”

For example, in streams with severely diminished flow, native trout, a popular sport fish that requires fast-flowing streams with gravel bottoms, are replaced by less desirable non-native species, such as carp. Overall, the USGS study indicated that streams with diminished flow contained aquatic communities that prefer slow moving currents more characteristic of lake or pond habitats.

“Management practices related to water demand continue to alter stream flows in many places,” said Jeff Ostermiller, Water Quality Manager with the Utah Division of Water Quality. “Understanding the ecological effects of these flow alterations helps water managers develop effective strategies to ensure that water remains sufficiently clean and abundant to support fisheries and recreation opportunities, while simultaneously supporting economic development.”

Annual and seasonal cycles of water flows — particularly the low and high flows — shape ecological processes in rivers and streams. An adequate minimum flow is important to maintain suitable water conditions and habitat for fish and other aquatic life. High flows are important because they replenish floodplains and flush out accumulated sediment that can degrade habitat.

“While this study provided the first, national assessment of flow alteration, focused studies within specific geographic regions will provide a better understanding of the ecological effects of altered stream flows, which can be more effectively applied to local water management challenges,” said Carlisle.

The severity and type of stream flow alteration varies among regions, due to natural landscape features, land practices, degree of development, and water demand. Differences are especially large between arid and wet climates. In wet climates, watershed management is often focused on flood control, which can result in lower maximum flows and higher minimum flows. Extremely low flows are the greatest concern in arid climates, in large part due to groundwater withdrawals and high water use for irrigation.

The study identified over 1,000 unimpaired streams to use as reference points to create stream flow models. The models were applied to estimate expected flows for 2,888 additional streams where the USGS had flow monitoring gauges from 1980-2007. The estimated values for the 2,888 streams were compared to actual, measured flows to determine the degree to which streams have been altered.

This study was conducted by the USGS [National Water-Quality Assessment Program](#), which has assessed the physical, chemical and biological characteristics of streams and rivers across the nation since 1991. For more than 125 years, the USGS has served as the Nation's water monitoring agency, including flow and quality in selected streams and rivers across the United States. USGS continues to work closely with the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies, states and local watersheds to assure that USGS monitoring and assessments provide useful information for managing and protecting streams throughout the Nation.

Water-quality data from more than 1,300 locations, much of it in real-time, are available through [USGS Water Quality Watch](#). Additional information about surface water, groundwater and water quality is available at the [National Water Information System Web Interface](#). You can also receive instant, customized updates about water conditions by subscribing to [WaterAlert](#).

First Meeting of the National Ocean Council

November 9, 2010

WASHINGTON – The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) today convened the first Principals meeting of the National Ocean Council in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. The meeting, attended by 25 Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Officials from across the Federal Government, focused on key steps to implement the National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and Great Lakes. Groundwork for the meeting was laid at an inaugural Deputy Committee meeting held in September that, as with today's meeting, was led by the Council co-chairs, OSTP Director John P. Holdren and CEQ Chair Nancy Sutley.

President Obama signed Executive Order 13547 on July 19, 2010, establishing our Nation's first comprehensive, integrated National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and Great Lakes. The Executive Order created the Cabinet-level National Ocean Council to coordinate across the Federal Government to implement the National Policy. The Principals meeting of the National Ocean Council was a critical starting point to begin to address the ambitious set of actions the National Policy lays out over the next 12 months.

During the meeting, the Council:

- Reviewed the role of the National Ocean Council and the work ahead;
- Approved the National Ocean Council charter;
- Approved operational items for establishing a Governance Coordinating Committee to formally engage with state, tribal, and local authorities;
- Approved the charter for the U.S. Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) Task Force for it to continue to coordinate the collection of information to establish the full extent of the continental shelf of the United States in accordance with international law; and
- Established Interagency Working Groups to address topics including information management and communications and public and stakeholder engagement.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/oceans>.

Ocean and Coastal Law Journal Call for Papers

The Editorial Board of the Ocean and Coastal Law Journal is currently accepting article submissions for its spring 2011 symposium issue *The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill: Impacts, Responses, Prevention, and Global Insights*. The Board will consider articles from scholars, practitioners, and policy makers from multiple disciplines addressing the full range of the spill's consequences, the lessons to be learned from this incident and other similar incidents abroad, and proposed changes in law and policy. Articles should be submitted to the attention of the Executive Editor at oclj@usm.maine.edu by January 2011. Articles should follow Bluebook citation format and be submitted along with a résumé or CV, by e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word, or by regular mail to: Ocean and Coastal Law Journal, University of Maine School of Law, 246 Deering Avenue, Portland, ME 04102. For more information about the Journal's mission and past publications, visit <http://mainelaw.maine.edu/academics/oclj/>.

National Environmental Education Week

April 10-16, 2011

The ocean covers nearly three quarters of our planet's surface, provides 70 percent of the oxygen in the atmosphere and houses about 20 percent of the known species on Earth. It regulates climate and weather and provides food and energy resources for humans worldwide. No matter how far from the coast, water in every stream or river on the planet eventually ends up in the ocean, and all life on Earth is dependent upon its health. Recognizing the importance of protecting the health of our ocean and understanding our dependence upon it regardless of its proximity, EE Week's 2011 theme is Ocean Connections. [Register today](#) to participate in EE Week 2011.

A Special Focus on the Gulf Oil Spill

As part of this year's theme, EE Week will provide special resources, lesson plans and opportunities for educator professional development and student learning about the Gulf oil spill. [Learn more](#).

Online Clearinghouse for Education & Networking: Oil Interdisciplinary Learning (OCEAN-OIL)

It is now more than 7 months since the largest marine oil spill in history began in the Gulf of Mexico. Many questions remain regarding the causes, magnitude and consequences of the Deepwater Horizon blow out. Larger questions remain regarding off-shore drilling and the use of energy and society. The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) and its partners, Boston University and Louisiana State University, have created a resource that will allow you to explore these questions and others, as well as to contribute your own expertise.

The Online Clearinghouse for Education & Networking: Oil Interdisciplinary Learning (OCEAN-OIL) is an open-access, peer-reviewed electronic education resource about the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The project is funded by the National Science Foundation.

OCEAN-OIL already contains:

- 1,000+ hyper-linked encyclopedia style [articles](#) related to the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster, including [offshore oil and gas](#), [the ecological effects of oil spills](#), [details of the event](#), [oil spill response](#), and [lessons from the disaster](#), and related topics
- 400+ [glossary of important terms](#) related to oil spill causes, impacts, clean-up, and prevention
- 75+ [acronyms](#) (LPG, PPM, ROV, VOC) to help decode the language of oil spill science
- 80+ [external resource links](#) to federal government sites, image galleries, news sources, industry, environmental groups, education, and journal articles
- [Deepwater Horizon photo gallery](#): Images by renowned photojournalist Gary Braasch
- [Deepwater Horizon by the Numbers](#): Publication quality graphs
- [Reports of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill](#)

The OCEAN-OIL website is seamlessly integrated into the Encyclopedia of Earth (www.eoearth.org), which is a free, peer-reviewed, searchable collection of content about the Earth, its natural environments, and their interaction with society, written by expert scholars and educators. NCSE coordinates the Encyclopedia. The Encyclopedia's Editor-in-Chief Cutler Cleveland of Boston University, who is an expert in energy and society, leads the development of the new online resource.

We invite you to contribute your expertise to this important initiative. To be a reviewer, follow these [procedures](#). You can become a contributor by registering [here](#). For more information contact Mallory Nomack at MNomack@bu.edu.

NCSE will also be holding a special one day symposium on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Disaster, exploring what is necessary for ecological and economic recovery as well as the broader issues of off shore oil drilling. It will kick off NCSE's 11th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Our Changing Oceans, January 19-21, 2011 in Washington, DC. Former EPA Administrator William Reilly and Senator Bob Graham, Co-chairs of National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling will keynote the symposium. Register today, space is limited. For more information, visit www.ourchangingoceans.org.

Grant Opportunities

FY 2010 Gulf Oil Spill Supplemental Federal Funding Opportunity

Federal Agency Name: Economic Development Administration (“EDA”), Department of Commerce (“DOC”)

Funding Opportunity Title: *FY 2010 Gulf Oil Spill Supplemental Federal Funding Opportunity* pursuant to Supplemental Appropriations Act, Pub. L. No. 111-212, 124 Stat. 2302 (2010) – Availability of funds under section 703 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. § 3233)

Announcement Type and Date: Initial announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity (“FFO”) dated September 23, 2010.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.307, Economic Adjustment Assistance

Application Submissions: Applications are accepted on a continuing basis and processed as received. Applications must be submitted electronically via www.grants.gov, as described in section IV of this FFO announcement. Subject to the availability of funds, winning applicants should expect to receive grant award packages no later than September 2011. EDA expects to have all funding under this FFO awarded by September 2011.

Funding Opportunity Description: Pursuant to the Supplemental Appropriations Act, Pub. L. No. 111-212, 124 Stat. 2302 (2010), EDA announces general policies and application procedures for the FY 2010 Gulf Oil Spill Supplemental Federal Funding Opportunity. This investment assistance will be made available to help devise and implement short or long-term economic redevelopment strategies and for technical assistance activities to address economic development challenges in regions impacted by the discharge of oil stemming from the April 20, 2010, BP Deepwater Horizon drilling rig explosion.

Conferences and Workshops

29th International Submerged Lands Management Conference

Purpose: Increase awareness of the management issues surrounding submerged lands within the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean, and provide a forum for discussion about submerged lands issues.

Thursday, December 16, 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. EST

- Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

For more information, visit www.submergedlandsconference.com.

Innovative Floodplain Strategies for Coastal Areas: Application of Coastal No Adverse Impact Principles

Host Partner: Rookery Bay Reserve

Location: Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center, Naples, FL

Date/Time: 12/7/2010

Price: \$10.00

Max Applicants: 30

"Innovative Floodplain Strategies for Coastal Areas: Application of Coastal No Adverse Impact Principles" will be held from 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM with lunch provided. The purpose of this event is to provide attendees with the floodplain management tools needed to decrease the cost of natural disasters, increase community resilience, and reduce negative impacts from flood events through the integration of growth management with natural resource planning. Register [online](#).

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Amy Gohres or Tabitha Stadler. Amy: amy@weeksbay.org, (251) 990-5004 Tabitha: Tabitha.Stadler@dep.state.fl.us, (239) 417-6310.

Nutrient TMDL Workshop

EPA Regions 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 together with EPA HQ, are sponsoring a TMDL workshop focused on addressing nutrient impairments through the TMDL process.

When: February 15-17, 2011

Where: New Orleans, LA

Who: The workshop is open to all State and Federal TMDL practitioners. However, priority for space will be given to the five regions sponsoring the workshop.

What: The workshop will focus on the current practices being utilized to address nutrient impairments through TMDL development and the 303(d) program.

The final workshop agenda will be developed over the next few months with state participation. Session topics will include:

- How nutrient related impairments are being identified and listed on state 303(d) lists,
- The current practices being used to develop nutrient TMDLs,
- Identification of new or innovative practices for developing nutrient TMDLs,
- Sessions specific to common challenges faced when developing nutrient related TMDLs, and
- Issues surrounding the challenges associated with implementation of nutrient TMDLs.

To be notified of updated information, receive registration information, or submit a topic presentation proposal: Add your name and email address to the workshop email list on the workshop website for periodic updates. http://www.tetrattech-ffx.com/NOLAnutrient_workshop/.

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



Laurie Rounds

Coastal Management Specialist

NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov

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