NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management
leads the nation's management and conservation of coastal and ocean resources

GULF OF MEXICO NEWS

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

New Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas Now Available

For the first time in 25 years, a new Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas is now available (http://gulfatlas.noaa.gov). Based on the idea of a traditional atlas but offered via the Internet by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the new Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas provides answers to questions related to the physical environment, marine resources, and economic activity in the Gulf of Mexico. Published on-line by NOAA's National Coastal Data Development Center (NCDDC), a division of the National Oceanographic Data Center, this initial release of the pilot version of the atlas has 95 map plates in 31 different subject areas with more planned in 2012.

As plans to restore the Gulf of Mexico after recent disasters have progressed, federal and state agencies have turned to NOAA for data and information about all aspects of the Gulf of Mexico. One of the most requested resources for that data and information has been the "Gulf of Mexico Coastal and Ocean Zones Strategic Assessment Data Atlas" published by NOAA's National Ocean Service in 1985 as a large hardcopy tabletop book. The new on-line Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas updates and expands that publication. The new Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas provides more than just a map. Each plate has a description, written by recognized subject matter experts, explaining how the data was gathered and how it is relevant. Users can also link directly to the data and to a high resolution image of the original 1985 plate if available.

"Though published by NOAA, the Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas is truly a collaborative effort," said Russell Beard, Director of NCDDC. "The Atlas has data from federal, state, non-governmental agencies, and academia. We also had representatives from a cross section of those data providers on the Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas Prototype Executive Steering Committee who provided guidance on the plates and the supplementary information."

The 2011 Atlas pilot is an example of the philosophy of leveraging resources among agencies and activities involved in geospatial data as outlined in the US Department of Interior and Federal Geographic Data Committee "Geospatial Platform Modernization Roadmap v4 – March 2011". The pilot Gulf of Mexico Data Atlas also supports NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Action Plan II, and the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force's Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy.

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. Join us on Facebook, Twitter and our other social media channels.

NOAA awards research grant to help prevent toxin-induced seafood poisoning in Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean

December 22, 2011

NOAA has awarded the first year of an anticipated five-year, $4 million grant to scientists researching the causes of Ciguatera fish poisoning, the most common form of algal toxin-induced seafood poisoning in the world, focusing on the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean.

Ciguatera affects tens of thousands of people annually, but the occurrence has been impossible to predict and manage. The research project could lead to better predictions of ciguatera outbreaks.

“Ciguatera is of great concern to people who prefer or depend on reef fish in their diets,” said Michael Parsons, professor of marine science and director of the Coastal Watershed Institute at Florida Gulf Coast University, who will lead the international research team. “Anything we can do to lessen illnesses by reducing the exposure to the toxins that cause ciguatera would be a great benefit to the consumer.”

Joining Parsons will be Don Anderson and Mindy Richlen, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; Deana Erdner, University of Texas Marine Science Institute; Ron Kiene, University of South Alabama; Yuri Okolodkov, University of Veracruz, Mexico; Alison Robertson, U.S. Food and Drug Administration Gulf Coast Seafood Laboratory; and Tyler Smith, University of the Virgin Islands.

The study was funded through a national competition of the Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms (ECOHAB) Program run by NOAA’s National Ocean Service/National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. The first year award will be $554,159; the entire five year grant could total $4,015,370.

Air pollution levels from Deepwater Horizon spill similar to large urban area

December 19, 2011

The Deepwater Horizon site.

Download here. (Credit: NOAA)

The amount of air pollutants in the atmospheric plume generated by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was similar to a large city according to a new NOAA-led study published today in a special issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Researchers from the NOAA Earth System Research Laboratory (ESRL) and NOAA’s Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) in Boulder, Colo., along with university colleagues, focused on ozone and particulate matter—two pollutants with human health effects.

About eight percent, or about one of every 13 barrels of the Deepwater Horizon-spilled oil that reached the ocean surface, eventually made its way into airborne organic particles small enough to be inhaled into human lungs, and some of those particles likely reached the Gulf coast when the winds were blowing toward the shore, according to the study.

"We could see the sooty black clouds from the burning oil, but there’s more to this than meets the eye. Our instruments detected a much more massive atmospheric plume of almost invisible small organic particles and pollutant gases downwind of the oil spill site," said Ann M. Middlebrook, scientist at NOAA ESRL’s Chemical Sciences Division (CSD) and lead author of the study.

According to the study, over the course of the spill, the total mass of organic particles formed from evaporating surface oil was about ten times bigger than the mass of soot from all the controlled burns. Controlled burns are used to reduce the size of surface oil slicks and minimize impacts of oil on sensitive shoreline ecosystems and marine life.

The organic particles formed in the atmosphere from hydrocarbons that were released as surface oil evaporated, and they got bigger as they traveled in the plume. The atmospheric plume was about 30 kilometers wide– about 18.5 miles – when it reached the coast.

Some of the hydrocarbons from the evaporating oil reacted with nitrogen oxides in the atmosphere to create ozone pollution, but this other atmospheric plume was only 3 to 4 kilometers (2 to 3 miles) wide at the coast.

"The levels of ozone were similar to what occurs in large urban areas. During the oil spill, it was like having a large city's worth of pollution appear out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico," said Daniel M. Murphy, NOAA scientist at ESRL/CSD and a co-author of the study.

The relatively small amounts of nitrogen oxides in the vicinity of the oil spill (which included nitrogen oxides emitted by the spill cleanup and recovery efforts) limited the amount of polluting ozone that was formed offshore. When the excess hydrocarbons reached the coast, they could have reacted with on-shore sources of nitrogen oxides, such as cars and power plants, to form additional ozone.

The researchers gathered data in June 2010 on two flights of NOAA's WP-3D research aircraft that was outfitted to be a "flying chemical laboratory." They also analyzed data gathered on ships in the vicinity and at two monitoring sites in Mississippi downwind of the oil spill.

They used a regional air quality model to project the path of the particle pollution, and found that time periods when the pollution plume was predicted to have reached the coast matched up well with a few short periods of high readings at the monitoring sites.

In addition to the organic particles that formed from the evaporating oil, soot particles were lofted into the atmosphere from the oil that was burned on the surface.

The authors note that their findings could help air quality managers anticipate the effects of future oil spills. The depth of the Deepwater Horizon spill, about a mile beneath the surface, limited the effects on air quality because some hydrocarbons, such as benzene, largely dissolved in the water.

"It was fortunate that the effects on air quality of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill were limited in scope," said Middlebrook. "Our findings show that an oil spill closer to populated areas, or in shallower waters, could have a larger effect."

The new paper, Air Quality Implications of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, has 25 co-authors from NOAA ESRL and CIRES. For more information, visit the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences website.

NOAA Offers Real-time Observations in GIS Compatible Format

The Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) now offers retrieval of its latest observations and time series data in KML (Keyhole Markup Language) format. Users of the Integrated Ocean Observing System Sensor Observation Services can request data, including water levels, tide predictions, and meteorological information, such as wind, air pressure, and air temperature, from one or multiple stations. CO-OPS observations in KML format that are compatible with applications such as Google Earth, Microsoft Virtual Earth, ArcGIS Explorer, and Google Maps will be able to reach a wider base of consumers than ever before. For more information, contact Mohamed Chaouchi.

NOAA releases regional saltwater recreational fishing plans designed to improve fishing, stewardship and science

December 6, 2011

NOAA releases regional saltwater recreational fishing plans designed to improve fishing, stewardship and science NOAA today released the first regional saltwater recreational fishing action plans designed to help improve fishing opportunities and address recreational fishing priorities in each of the nation's six coastal regions and for the angling community that fishes for tunas and other highly migratory species.

Saltwater angling is a treasured national pastime that provides significant benefits – jobs, income and sales - to our nation's economy. In 2010, saltwater recreational fishing contributed $50 billion in sales to the U.S. economy and supported 326,000 jobs in fishing and across the broader economy.

The new action agendas mark the first time NOAA has both national and regional strategies in place to address the priorities of the nation's estimated 11 million saltwater anglers who took approximately 73 million fishing trips in 2010. The plans are based on goals and objectives identified by participants at the 2010 Saltwater Recreational Fishing Summit.

"We worked closely with saltwater anglers and their supporters on plans designed to improve stewardship and fishing today and for future generations," said Eric Schwaab, assistant NOAA administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "We'll revisit the regional action plans regularly to ensure we continue to address our shared goals."

A few examples of top priorities in the six regions include:

- Hawaii and the Pacific Islands: A project to increase the number of fish available in the future by improving the survival of fish caught and released by anglers.
- Alaska: A project to identify and restore important fish spawning habitat by opening up fish passages on rivers and streams and removing marine debris.
- Northwest: A project to develop and evaluate a new, more flexible management approach for Chinook salmon that may allow for increased recreational fishing.
- Southwest: Multiple cooperative scientific research projects with anglers to improve survival of fish caught and released by anglers and improve information on recreational catch and effort.
- Northeast: A project to work with the regional fishery management councils to ensure that Atlantic herring, mackerel, squid and butterfish populations are maintained at healthy levels. This project would also focus on reducing the unintended catch of forage fish such as river herring, which are important food for striped bass and other fish prized by saltwater anglers.
- Southeast: A project to investigate more flexible management strategies to provide greater fishing opportunities to the charter boats and other recreational "for-hire" boats.

Each of the regional action agendas includes projects that address the five national recreational fishing action goals which are:

- Improving recreational fishing opportunities
- Improving recreational catch, effort and stock status data
- Improving social and economic data on recreational fisheries
- Improving communications
- Improving institutional orientation to promote greater understanding of saltwater angling issues.

The new action agendas include ongoing projects or projects expected to be completed in the next 12 to 24 months. The projects improve science and stewardship and help build stronger partnerships with the saltwater angling community through a more visible and responsive regional NOAA presence. To read the regional saltwater angler action agendas go to: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2011/12/recfish.html.

Gulf of Mexico Disaster Response Center

December 1, 2011
Contact: Amy Gohres, amy.gohres@noaa.gov

Artist rendering of facility.
Click the image to take a look inside the DRC.

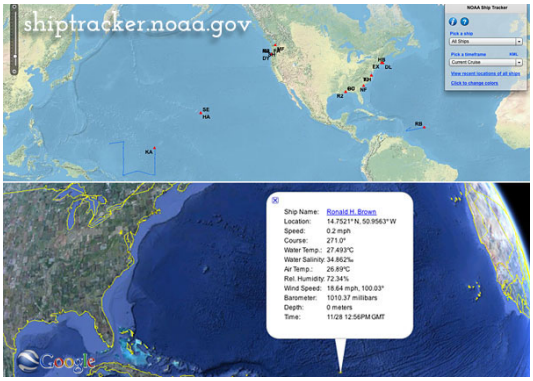
Construction is nearly complete on NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Disaster Response Center (DRC) in Mobile, Alabama. The center will serve as a hub to enhance All Hazards preparedness and response in coordination with partners and stakeholders such as public health officials, fire chiefs, emergency management personnel, oil spill response coordinators, and volunteer organizations throughout the Gulf States.

The 15,000-square-foot facility is designed to be operational during severe weather events and is Category 5 hurricane resistant with an interior F5 tornado shelter. The facility not only includes office space, a training room and conference rooms, but also a large multifunction space which can be used for trainings, meetings, emergency response operations, and drills. The DRC leverages services from across NOAA and is managed by NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R).

Improved NOAA Ship Tracker *Now Available*

Track NOAA's Fleet Via Web Browser, Google Earth

November 29, 2011



NOAA's *Ship Tracker* allows anyone to find out where NOAA's hydrographic survey, oceanographic research, and fisheries research vessels are located in near real-time.

Want to know where NOAA's fleet of ships are located right now? With NOAA's newly improved Ship Tracker, it's now easier than ever. This month, the National Ocean Service's Special Projects Office launched a major update to NOAA's *Ship Tracker* website, serving up a redesigned interface and performance improvements that make this tool faster and easier to use.

Ship Tracker provides near real-time positioning for NOAA's fleet of large ships along with weather conditions at those locations. In addition, current locations of ships are available as a download (known as a KML feed) that can be imported into Google Earth. Ship locations are maintained on the *Ship Tracker* website for one year.

NOAA awards grant to save endangered sea turtles from toxic red tides in the Gulf of Mexico

November 21, 2011

Florida scientists and veterinarians studying the causes of sea turtle deaths in the Gulf of Mexico have been awarded $227,793 for the first year of an anticipated three-year, $653,379 project to determine how the red tide toxin, or brevetoxin, affects turtle health.

Endangered sea turtles inhabit areas in the Gulf of Mexico where toxic red tides are caused by algal blooms, leading to sickness and death. Turtle deaths from red tides have spiked in recent years, threatening populations in the Gulf of Mexico. This research will advance treatment and rehabilitation procedures by predicting threatening conditions and allowing more rapid and targeted care by coastal resource managers.

Sarah Milton, Ph.D. professor of biology at Florida Atlantic University, will lead the research team and will be assisted by scientists and veterinarians from Harbor Branch Institute, Mote Marine Laboratory and Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute.

"Sea turtles are physically robust animals, often surviving boat strikes or shark attacks, but they have proven to be highly sensitive to pollution, and are good indicators of environmental degradation," said Milton. "In recent years, red tide events in the Gulf of Mexico have led to hundreds of sea turtle deaths." The project was funded through a national competition of the Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algal Blooms (ECOHAB) Program run by NOAA's National Ocean Service/National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science.

NOAA awards a total of $10.8 million to four minority serving institutions to train next generation of scientists

Awards may grow to $15 million for each university over five years

November 16, 2011

Students pursuing applied research in NOAA-related scientific fields.
(Credit: NOAA)

NOAA's Office of Education announced that it has awarded grants totaling $10.8 million to four lead minority-serving institutions across the country to train and graduate students who pursue applied research in NOAA-related scientific fields.

Awards were made to four lead universities — City College of New York, Florida A&M University, University of Maryland-Eastern Shore, and Howard University — which partnered with 20 other schools to form four cooperative science centers. The centers will train students in remote sensing, environmental science, living marine resources, and atmospheric science — all core scientific fields for NOAA. The awards may grow to $15 million over five years for each lead center, depending on performance and appropriations.

"These awards enable us to develop a strong, well trained, diverse workforce for NOAA and the nation," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "These grants recognize the importance of STEM fields — science, technology,

engineering and mathematics — to the future of America's ability to innovate and compete in the global community."

The awards were made through NOAA's Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions. Since the first awards were made in 2001, NOAA cooperative science centers have trained 1,766 students, with 921 of them earning degrees in NOAA-related fields. NOAA has hired 100 center-trained graduates. The long term goal of NOAA's Educational Partnership Program is to increase the number of students, particularly from underrepresented communities, who attend minority serving institutions and graduate with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"America's future ability to compete and succeed globally depends on the investments we make today in science, technology, engineering and math education," said Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, chairwoman of the Appropriations subcommittee which funds NOAA. "I am proud that this grant from NOAA will give minority students across the country additional building blocks they need to focus their education and jumpstart their careers. I will continue to fight for federal investments to support the innovation and scientific research that has the power to save lives, create prosperity and keep America competitive in the global arena."

The awards were announced in a ceremony on Capitol Hill attended by Under Secretary Lubchenco and representatives of the lead and partner institutions, and co-hosted by U.S. Sen. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah of Pennsylvania, and U.S. Rep. Jose Serrano of New York, as well as. All center awards were made after a rigorous competitive peer review process by external reviewers from academia and other federal agencies.

FY 2011 NOAA EPP Center Award Recipients

NOAA greenhouse gas index continues climbing

November 9, 2011

VIDEO: NOAA greenhouse gas index continues climbing. View YouTube video (Credit: NOAA)

NOAA's updated Annual Greenhouse Gas Index (AGGI), which measures the direct climate influence of many greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane, shows a continued steady upward trend that began with the Industrial Revolution of the 1880s.

Started in 2004, the AGGI reached 1.29 in 2010. That means the combined heating effect of long-lived greenhouse gases added to the atmosphere by human activities has increased by 29 percent since 1990, the "index" year used as a baseline for comparison. This is slightly higher than the 2009 AGGI, which was 1.27, when the combined heating effect of those additional greenhouse gases was 27 percent higher than in 1990.

"The increasing amounts of long-lived greenhouse gases in our atmosphere indicate that climate change is an issue society will be dealing with for a long time," said Jim Butler, director of the Global Monitoring Division of NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory in Boulder, Colo. "Climate warming has the potential to affect most aspects of society, including water supplies, agriculture, ecosystems and

economies. NOAA will continue to monitor these gases into the future to further understand the impacts on our planet."

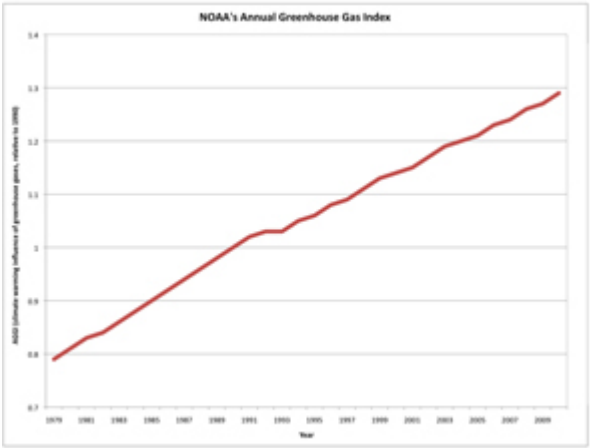
The AGGI is analogous to the dial on an electric blanket – that dial does not tell you exactly how hot you will get, nor does the AGGI predict a specific temperature. Yet just as turning the dial up increases the heat of an electric blanket, a rise in the AGGI means greater greenhouse warming.

NOAA scientists created the AGGI recognizing that carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas affecting the balance of heat in the atmosphere. Many other long-lived gases also contribute to warming, although not currently as much as carbon dioxide.

The AGGI includes methane and nitrous oxide, for example, greenhouse gases that are emitted by human activities and also have natural sources and sinks. It also includes several chemicals known to deplete Earth's protective ozone layer, which are also active as greenhouse gases. The 2010 AGGI reflects several changes in the concentration of these gases, including:

A continued steady increase in carbon dioxide: Global carbon dioxide levels rose to an average of 389 parts per million in 2010, compared with 386 ppm in 2009, and 354 in the index or comparison year of 1990. Before the Industrial Revolution of the 1880s, carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere was about 280 ppm. Carbon dioxide levels swing up and down in natural seasonal cycles, but human activities – primarily the burning of coal, oil, and gas for transportation and power – have driven a consistent upward trend in concentration.

A continued recent increase in methane: Methane levels rose in 2010 for the fourth consecutive year after remaining nearly constant for the preceding 10 years, up to 1799 parts per billion. Methane measured 1794 ppb in 2009, and 1714 ppb in 1990. Pound for pound, methane is 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, but there's less of it in the atmosphere.



NOAA's Annual Greenhouse Gas Index is a gauge of the climate warming influence of greenhouse gases added to the atmosphere by human activities and compared with the "index" year of 1990. The AGGI shows a steady upward trend, reaching 1.29 in 2010. This means that the heating effect of additional greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has increased by 29 percent since 1990 High resolution (Credit: NOAA)

A continued steady increase in nitrous oxide: Best known as laughing gas in dentistry, nitrous oxide is also a greenhouse gas emitted from natural sources and as a byproduct of agricultural fertilization, livestock manure, sewage treatment and some industrial processes.

A continued recent drop in two chlorofluorocarbons, CFC11 and CFC12: Levels of these two compounds – which are ozone-depleting chemicals in addition to greenhouse gases – have been dropping at about one percent per year since the late 1990s, because of an international agreement, the Montreal Protocol, to protect the ozone layer.

Scientists at NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory prepare the AGGI each year from atmospheric data collected through an international cooperative air sampling network of more than 100 sites around the world.

NOAA researchers developed the AGGI in 2004 and have so far back calculated it to 1978. Atmospheric composition data from ice core and other records could allow the record to be extended back centuries.

NOAA finds bacterial infection as cause of death for five northern Gulf dolphins; investigation continues

October 27, 2011

Pathology experts contracted by NOAA have identified the bacteria Brucella in five bottlenose dolphins that died in the northern Gulf of Mexico. These five are among the 580 dolphins in higher than expected strandings that began in February 2010 and are continuing. NOAA has declared it an “unusual mortality event,” triggering a focused, expert investigation into the cause.

Brucella bacteria are commonly found in populations of marine and terrestrial animals throughout the world, but infection in humans is rare in the U.S., and there are no documented U.S. cases of Brucella in humans originating from marine sources. NOAA advises anyone who sees a stranded dolphin in the Gulf of Mexico region to call 1-877-WHALE HELP (1-877-942-5343). The stranded dolphin should not be touched, and pets should be kept away from the dolphin as well. The public should also avoid touching live dolphins in the wild.

“We believe these five dolphins died from brucellosis. Die-offs from bacterial infections could be occurring because the bacterium has become more lethal, but they could also be occurring, or be more severe, because the dolphins are more susceptible to infection. Severe environmental stress, including from exposure to oil, could have reduced the animals’ ability to fight infection," said Teri Rowles, DVM, Ph.D., coordinator of NOAA’s National Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program. "Right now, there is insufficient information to distinguish between these possible explanations for the increases in mortality of dolphins in the northern Gulf of Mexico. We continue to investigate the factors causing the die-off, and any possible connection to the BP-Deepwater Horizon oil spill."

Scientists have tested 21 dolphins for Brucella so far, with five testing positive. The two adults and three fetuses with brucellosis died off the Louisiana coast between June 2010 and February 2011. The cause of death for the 16 dolphins that did not test positive for Brucella is still under investigation.Scientists are also looking at additional samples from more dolphins.

NOAA is working with a team of marine mammal health experts, including veterinarians, epidemiologists, biologists and toxicologists, to investigate the cause of death for as many of the 580 dolphins as possible. The working group that advises NOAA on these investigations developed a multi-tiered approach earlier this year. The findings may take years to complete and will be made public when scientifically and legally appropriate. Given the decomposition of some of the carcasses, some analyses cannot be performed.

“As we examine the causes of this unusual mortality event, we are investigating the most common causes of die-offs in dolphins first, including infectious disease and marine biotoxins,” said Stephanie Venn-Watson, DVM, MPH, a veterinary epidemiologist and chair of the working group. “With this unusual mortality event including a high number of fetuses, we included Brucella testing due to its known ability to infect dolphins and cause their pregnancies to fail.”

On land, Brucella can infect cattle, goats, dogs and pigs and can lead to illness, including failed pregnancies. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that brucellosis in people is rare in the United States, with approximately 100 to 200 people infected with brucellosis per year. NOAA is collaborating with public health officials to protect the health of people working with stranded dolphins. Cooking seafood kills the Brucella bacterium, and as there have been only three cases globally linking Brucella infection to consumption of raw seafood, there is minimal risk of exposure to humans through the consumption of seafood.

NOAA is reminding anyone who sees a stranded marine mammal to avoid touching it and to report the stranding to 1-877-WHALE HELP (1-877-942-5343). Updates about the ongoing investigation into the cause of the unusual mortality event can be found on NOAA Fisheries' Web site.

NOAA invests nearly $1 million with university partners for hurricane advances

October 27, 2011

NOAA's Office of Weather and Air Quality has funded 12 multi-year proposals totaling $942,235 this year from university partners along with federal scientist collaborators to more rapidly and smoothly transfer new technology, research results, and observational advances through NOAA's Joint Hurricane Testbed (JHT). These projects further NOAA's commitment to create a Weather-Ready Nation, in which the country is able to prepare for and respond to environmental events that affect safety, health, the environment, economy, and homeland security. This year's projects range from $35,000 to the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere in Colorado to develop a real-time surface wind analysis to $135,000 the University of Rhode Island to improve tropical cyclone operational models.

"This is research-to-operations in action for hurricanes," said John Cortinas, director of NOAA's Office of Weather and Air Quality, the office that manages the U.S. Weather Research Program (USWRP), of which JHT is a part. "For example, during Hurricane Irene, researchers tested new instruments and collected data that will help forecasters understand the state of the ocean under a hurricane and used satellite information to determine the current intensity of the hurricane."

The JHT was formed by the USWRP to advance the transfer of new research and technology to improve the analysis and prediction hurricanes at forecast centers. The JHT provides a framework for NOAA, university, and industry researchers to work on specific topics related the hurricanes, such as improvements to computer models, wind measurements, and satellite observations.

A description of projects funded in 2011 is available online.

Started in 2001, the JHT is supported in part by the NOAA Office of Weather and Air Quality through the U.S. Weather Research Program and is jointly managed by NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and National Weather Service. More information is available online.

NOAA releases status report on Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary marine resources

Report highlights local, regional, global stressors to Keys marine ecosystem

October 21, 2011

Elkhorn coral, listed in 2006 as threatened on the Endangered Species Act, is still found within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, but well below its historic population numbers. High Resolution (Credit: NOAA/FKNMS)

NOAA scientists have found that pressure from increasing coastal populations, ship and boat groundings, marine debris, poaching, and climate change are critically threatening the health of the Florida Keys ecosystem. Many historically abundant marine resources such as green sea turtles and coral habitat continue to be at risk with low rates of recovery.

The findings were released today in the *Condition Report 2011 for Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary,* describing the status and trends of the sanctuary's water quality, habitats, and marine and cultural resources, and the human activities that affect them. This report is one of an ongoing series of condition reports for NOAA's 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. It will guide a comprehensive review of sanctuary regulations and management plan beginning in 2012 and provide an important baseline on the status of sanctuary marine resources.

The report documents improvements in local water quality and an increase in the size and abundance of some fish species and spiny lobster in large reserves within the sanctuary, but also notes that challenges remain such as, addressing regional influences to water quality, human impacts on marine resources, and the effects of climate change. It further suggests additional efforts are necessary to support sustained management efforts, and increase regulatory compliance and community engagement to address those challenges.

"This report provides us with a great benchmark that can be used to protect our sanctuary's valuable and productive marine ecosystem," said Sean Morton, superintendent, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. "The report also helps identify gaps in current monitoring efforts and highlights areas where we need additional information. Our long-term monitoring shows management actions are contributing to some positive results, however recovery of ecosystem health takes time.""

After being subject to decades of intense fishing pressure in the Florida Keys, harvest of Goliath grouper has been prohibited since 1990.
High Resolution (Credit: NOAA/FKNMS)

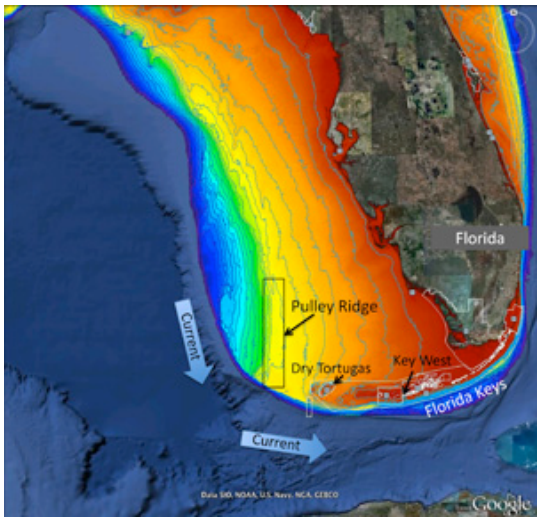
Since its designation in 1990, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has worked with a wide array of local, state, and federal partners to promote conservation and sustainable use of the Keys ecosystem for future generations. These objectives are addressed through public education and research programs, the implementation of regulations including the prohibition of pollution discharge in sanctuary waters, and the designation of highly protected no-take marine zones to protect 6,000 species of marine life and reduce user conflicts. These efforts have been critical tools for natural resource management in the Florida Keys where ocean recreation and tourism supports more than 33,000 jobs, and accounts for 58 percent of the local economy and $2.3 billion in annual sales.

NOAA prepared the condition report in consultation with outside experts from the scientific community. The full report is available online at http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/fknms.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,900 square nautical miles of critical marine habitat, including coral reef, hard bottom, sea grass meadow, mangrove communities and sand flats. NOAA and the State of Florida manage the sanctuary. Visit us at http://floridakeys.noaa.gov or on Facebook.

NOAA awards nearly $1 million to University of Miami for coral investigation

Project will investigate role Florida's deep coral reefs play in fisheries, ecosystems



Map of project area showing Pulley Ridge, off the west coast of Florida at depths of 200-330 feet in relation to the downstream reefs of the Dry Tortugas and Florida Keys. Colors represent water depth, which ranges from 33 feet (red) to depths of 820 feet or greater (dark blue). Current arrows depict prevalent current direction. Background image is from Google Earth and the depth information is from the U.S.Geological Survey and NOAA.

High resolution (Credit: With permission from R. Cowen.)

October 13, 2011

NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science has awarded $998,703 to the University of Miami to investigate how the deep coral reefs of Pulley Ridge may replenish key fish species and other organisms in the downstream reefs of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Tortugas Ecological Preserve.

Pulley Ridge, a relatively healthy coral ecosystem off the southwest coast of Florida, is home to important commercial and recreational fisheries such as grouper and snapper. With the well-documented decline of Florida's reefs, areas like Pulley Ridge may serve as sources of larvae that can help sustain the Florida Keys' reef ecosystem and the tourism economy that depends on it. With more of this type of information, resource managers will be better positioned to develop more effective strategies to protect these reefs.

"We're trying to understand not only whether these ecosystems have resources in common, but also the mechanisms of connectivity between them," said Daniel J. Basta, director of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. "This will give managers information they need to protect reef ecosystems, as well as critical underwater corridors that help replenish Florida's reefs."

The $998,703 grant is for the first year of the 5-year project led by the University of Miami, and represents a collaboration of more than 30 scientists at ten different universities pooling their expertise with state and federal agency scientists through NOAA's Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the University of Miami in coordination with the Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research, and Technology at Florida Atlantic University.

In the Gulf States

Oyster gardeners grow 57,155 oysters for restoration in 2011

(MOBILE, Ala.) – Falling temperatures and family gatherings are all indicative of the beginning of the holiday season. For the Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program gardeners and adopters, these signs also point to the culmination of their hard work and dedication: planting season. Since July 9, gardeners and adopters have cared for their juvenile oysters; keeping them clean, keeping them safe and getting them ready for their important future on a restoration reef site.

Four months of work recently concluded the 2011 Oyster Gardening Season with the transport of 57,155 oysters from the comfort of their garden homes to their new residence on a restoration reef site. These oysters grew well, averaging 2.4 inches, which will help them survive without the routine care of their gardeners and adopters or the protection of their gardens. Next spring, these oysters will be ready to spawn, with the hopes that their larvae will find suitable habitat and thrive within Mobile Bay and the Mississippi Sound.

Alma Bryant High School Students Derick Tillman, left, Bentley Dearmon, Michael McCarthy, Johnathan Childress and Stephen Denmark help collect and plant oysters with the Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program. See more photos at http://masgc.org/oyster/Photos.htm.

As in years past, the Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program was excited to have students from Alma Bryant High School. The students Derick Tillman, Bentley Dearmon, Michael McCarthy, Johnathan Childress and Stephen Denmark participate in the field work. They worked hard to collect the gardening oysters, record final measurements and counts and complete the planting as a component of their marine science class.

The Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program is a completely volunteer-based restoration/education/research project that has planted nearly 500,000 oysters on restoration sites in Mobile Bay and the Mississippi Sound. Partners include the gardeners and adopters, as well as the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and Auburn University. If you would like to join as the newest gardener or adopter for the 2012 season, contact PJ Waters at 251.438.5690 or online at www.oystergardening.org. For additional questions or information, contact P.J. Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, 251-438-5690.

You can see more photos at http://masgc.org/oyster/Photos.htm.

Free marketing service to help seafood businesses

(MOBILE, Ala.) – The Alabama MarketMaker website will go live Oct. 14, offering Alabama fishermen, seafood processors, seafood distributors and farmers a free opportunity to connect with potential customers online. Alabama MarketMaker uses an interactive mapping system coupled with a searchable database to locate producers and businesses with local products for sale. It also helps pinpoint markets for specific agricultural and seafood products based on detailed census data. Producers (farmers and fishermen) can participate in MarketMaker to enhance their profitability by providing detailed information about their products and businesses. Businesses can register for free at http://al.foodmarketmaker.com.

"The idea of web-based marketing may be somewhat new to the fishing industry, but it has been around for years," said Ralph Hode, fisheries disaster recovery coordinator for the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. "It stands to reason that the Marine Directors of the five Gulf states had great foresight in requesting that a portion of the post-oil disaster funds provided to us by Congress be used to advertise via the Internet."

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission awarded a grant that funds an Alabama MarketMaker outreach coordinator position. Beth Walton, who is serving as the outreach coordinator and works through the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, is available to answer questions and help seafood businesses input their information.

"I am looking forward to working closely with all sectors of the seafood and charter boat industries to help them develop their business profiles for Alabama MarketMaker," Walton said. "We will be hosting training workshops so that folks will be familiar with how MarketMaker can help to increase their business."

Walton's position will help ensure that business owners are successful in joining the Alabama MarketMaker site. "Having an individual like Beth dedicated to outreach means that seafood business owners and managers have the opportunity for one-on-one training and that, over time, they will have someone in whom they have confidence when they need help," Hode said. "The appointment of Beth as the outreach coordinator for this program speaks well for the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant group in that they believe in the program."

MarketMaker is part of a national web portal, so the availability of Alabama products is made known to consumers all over the country. The site also allows businesses to connect with each other. The MarketMaker site is one tool that may help the seafood industry, including fishing guides, connect with buyers during these hard economic times, Hode said. For more information, contact Walton at 251-438-5690 or bethanyw@auburn.edu. You can also view the Alabama MarketMaker Promo.

Florida's Ranchlands Help to Preserve Landscapes, Protect and Improve

Contact: DEP Press Office, (850) 245-2112, depnews@dep.state.fl.us
Nov. 29, 2011

OKEECHOBEE, FL — Leaders of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) today marked the expansion of an innovative, cost-saving land management strategy with the signing of partnership agreements with eight Florida ranchers. Water managers are collaborating with landowners to achieve water storage, water quality and habitat improvement benefits north of Lake Okeechobee but at less cost than traditional government land acquisition programs.

DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. and SFWMD Executive Director Melissa Meeker met with landowners at the Dixie Cattle Ranch in Okeechobee County to finalize the new agreements that will store 4,800-acre feet of water on private lands and improve water quality in Lake Okeechobee, the coastal estuaries and the Everglades.

The ranchlands — totaling 9,500 acres across three counties — have become part of the SFWMD's Dispersed Water Management Program to store water on public, private and tribal lands. The program is an important new tool that is helping to improve water quality, protect water resources and conserve Florida's habitats. At the same time, using working ranchlands to achieve environmental benefits also helps sustain jobs, keeps land on local tax rolls and avoids burdening taxpayers with new debt to buy title to the land. The effort parallels the water resource goals of Florida's successful land acquisition programs without the higher cost of buying and managing land.

"Getting the water right is central to every aspect of Florida life and its future," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Collaborating with property owners to store excess water helps advance the conservation and natural resource protection goals of highly successful environmental protection programs, without the high cost of land acquisition, the burden of ongoing debt payments and leaving landowners to do what they do best — manage the land and support our economy."

Located just north of the City of Okeechobee and the lake, 1,075 acres on the Dixie Ranch is becoming a working example of the innovative land preservation and water storage strategy. With simple features such as berms and water control structures already built by the landowner, the property is ideally suited to capture and store water that would otherwise flow directly into Lake Okeechobee. This helps prevent nutrients such as phosphorus from reaching the lake and reduces potential discharges to the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, as well as offering additional flood protection for the communities surrounding these water bodies. Rehydrating ranchland also benefits habitat for native plants and wildlife.

"Shallow water storage coupled with large regional reservoirs provides additional tools for better managing water in the regional system and protecting South Florida's water resources," said SFWMD Executive Director Melissa Meeker. "The Dispersed Water Management Program is an innovative way of involving private partners in environmental solutions and achieving our goals for water storage, water quality and habitat enhancement in a fiscally responsible way for taxpayers."

Dispersed Water Management Program

Since the start of its Dispersed Water Management Program in 2005, the District has collaborated with a coalition of agencies, environmental organizations, ranchers and researchers to utilize approximately 229,000 acres of land for water storage, water quality improvement and habitat enhancement. In addition to employing regional public projects, the program encourages property owners to retain water on their land rather than drain it and to accept and detain regional runoff.

"The future of water storage north of Lake Okeechobee relies on innovative partnerships and marks a milestone in our collective efforts to preserve both the Northern Everglades and our working landscapes for future generations," said Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam. "This program is a progressive way of achieving our shared goals of environmental restoration and a healthy and sustainable agricultural economy."

Based on data and experience gained from eight original pilot projects, the District in October doubled participation in the program with the approval of eight new contracts, spanning Okeechobee, Polk and Highlands counties. Together, projects on the newly enrolled lands will provide 4,800 acre-feet of regional storage and additional nutrient benefits. One of the pilot projects used to develop the Dispersed Water Management Program was shown in a single year to have removed 8.4 metric tons of phosphorus to improve water quality in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed. The District is investing $7 million over 10

years for the latest contracts. A total of $46 million has been designated over the next five years to help further achieve program goals.

The Dispersed Water Management Program Northern Everglades – Payment for Environmental Services is being implemented in coordination with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), UF/IFAS and the World Wildlife Fund.

For more information:

- Just the Facts: Dispersed Water Management Program
- List of the FY2012 Projects: Northern Everglades
- Map of the Latest Projects
- Overview of Water Storage and Treatment Projects
- Before and After Photos of a Dispersed Water Project
- Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program
- Florida Ranchlands Environmental Services Project

DEP'S Rookery Bay NERR Shark Research to be Featured in Nationally-Syndicated TV Production

~Ocean Mysteries with Jeff Corwin featuring Rookery Bay NERR will air tomorrow morning on ABC~

For Immediate Release: Nov. 4, 2011
Contact: DEP Press Office, 850.245.2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve fisheries biologist Pat O'Donnell (left) prepares the gear while Ocean Mysteries host Jeff Corwin explains the importance of shark research for the TV audience.

NAPLES -- Shark research at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) will have the national spotlight tomorrow in a segment of Ocean Mysteries with Jeff Corwin. The new production, launched jointly by the Georgia Aquarium and Litton Entertainment, is part of the Litton Weekend Adventure Saturday morning three-hour educational programming block on ABC. The shark research episode, featuring RBNERR's fisheries biologist Pat O'Donnell, along with Mike Hyatt and Paul Anderson, PhD., two of the other researchers involved in the study, is scheduled to air tomorrow Saturday, Nov. 5.

"We are thrilled that the Rookery Bay is being recognized in this production," said Rookery Bay NERR Manager Gary Lytton. "Millions of TV viewers nationwide will have a great opportunity to learn more about sharks and the importance of mangrove estuaries as shark nurseries through our collaboration with Corwin and the Georgia Aquarium."

Five years ago, Rookery Bay NERR's long-term shark monitoring program caught the attention of Florida Aquarium veterinary staff working to improve captive shark handling techniques. Subsequently, Rookery Bay NERR entered into a cooperative research effort with the Florida Aquarium, the Georgia Aquarium and Shedd's Aquarium in Chicago. The collaborative shark stress response project required access to wild-caught sharks, such as those encountered monthly in RBNERR's project.

As production plans got underway at the Georgia Aquarium for Ocean Mysteries, the Rookery Bay shark capture project became the perfect opportunity to put Corwin in close contact with wild sharks. Filming took place aboard a Rookery Bay NERR research vessel in the Ten Thousand Islands in August 2011. The crew encountered four sharks: two lemon (Negaprion brevirostris), a bonnethead (Sphyrna tiburo) and a blacktip (Carcharhinus limbatus). While the cameras rolled, the sharks were measured, weighed and had other data recorded before being tagged and released with Corwin's assistance and enthusiastic explanation of their significance to the ocean ecosystem.

DEP Research Reserves Awarded $1.4 Million in Grants for Water Studies

Oct. 24, 2011
Contact: DEP Press Office, 850.245.2112, DEPNews@dep.state.fl.us

PONTE VEDRA BEACH – Today, at the annual National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) meeting, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. announced more than $1.4 million in grants awarded to Rookery Bay and Guana Tolomato Matanzas (GTM) NERRs, two of DEP's three statewide research reserves. The grants were awarded by the NERRS Science Collaborative to advance water quality research.

"Estuaries are among the most productive ecosystems on earth, serving as nurseries for fish and shellfish and providing vital nesting and feeding grounds for coastal birds, sea turtles and marine mammals," said Secretary Vinyard. "I'm proud of the hard work by these amazing scientists and these grants will help their efforts to ensure continued protection of these important resources."

All 28 NERRs across the nation were invited to apply for this funding, and of the 19 proposals submitted, DEP's NERRs were two of only seven awarded. Improving water quality is a top priority of DEP and these grants further support water quality research in the state's estuaries. In addition, both projects will involve and be guided by local stakeholders' feedback and target important environmental concerns in local communities.

"Florida coastal communities need relevant, timely information to plan for a future with adequate fresh water and one that is poised to adapt to rising sea levels," said NERRS Science Collaborative Director Richard Langan. "We are extremely pleased to be able to support projects at the GTM and Rookery Bay NERRs that will bring together the perspectives of local landowners, scientists, engineers, regulators and nonprofits to provide the critical information that these communities need to tackle these challenges head on."

This year's NERRS meeting is being held at GTM NERR, and is co-hosted by the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (NERRA). The annual meeting is a working conference where members share expertise and craft plans for the coming year. Representatives from all 28 NERRs, as well as leadership from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), gather to collaborate and develop short and long term plans, program strategies and goals for every NERR.

"The research produced in Florida will have significant local, regional and national benefits," said NERRA Executive Director Rebecca Roth. "This federal funding advances the science-based practical

help provided by National Estuarine Research Reserves to address the diverse challenges faced by coastal communities today and into the future."

The meeting provides an opportunity for the various program sectors to come together to receive relevant, targeted information and training for interdisciplinary colleagues within the NERRS. As the primary planning meeting for the year, attendance by core staff is a grant requirement for NOAA funding to all NERRs. Attendees will participate in research presentations, training, break out groups and field experiences at the GTM NERR facility and around the Jacksonville area. The meeting began today and will last through Friday, Oct. 28, 2011.

Grant Funded Project Information
GTM NERR, located in Ponte Vedra Beach, will be awarded $618,377 over a three-year period for a collaborative project between the NERR and the University of Florida. The study areas will include Summer Haven and Marineland and the beach erosion, dune breaches and barrier island washovers that have occurred there during past storm events. This project will develop and test an improved planning process for adaptation to coastal hazard events in the Matanzas Basin.

"We are honored to receive this grant to help further our research," said GTM NERR Manager Mike Shirley. "These next three years will involve hard work and dedication by our scientists and researchers as they apply coastal science to issues faced by local decision makers."

Rookery Bay NERR, located in Naples, will be awarded $815,000 over a three-year period for a water use project and allocation study in collaboration with engineers and other scientists from the private sector. Findings from this project will be used to guide water management efforts and improve water quality in Henderson Creek, the primary source of fresh water for Rookery Bay. Improving water quality and creating healthier environmental conditions directly supports Collier County's economy by sustaining habitats critical for the success of sport fishing, ecotourism and recreational boating.

"We are excited to begin work using the funds from this prestigious grant," said Rookery Bay NERR Manager Gary Lytton. "Outcomes of this important research initiative will inform critical decisions about the delivery of needed fresh water to help sustain the health of the Rookery Bay estuary while also meeting the needs of the community."

DEP Celebrates Finalized Bayou Chico Restoration Plan

~DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. joins local, regional stakeholders to commemorate significant achievement~

Oct. 18, 2011

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. today joined Escambia County Commissioner Grover C. Robinson, IV, City of Pensacola Mayor Ashton Hayward and other stakeholders to celebrate the adoption of the Bayou Chico Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) at a ceremony held at the Sanders Beach – Corinne Jones Community Facility in Pensacola. The water quality restoration plan, developed in partnership with the City of Pensacola, Escambia County, Emerald Coast Utility Authority (ECUA), Escambia County Health Department (ECHD), Florida Department of Transportation, Bayou Chico Association, U.S. Naval Air Station, University of West Florida and the Bay Area Resources Council identifies actions to decrease fecal coliform bacteria in six waterbody segments within the Bayou Chico watershed.

"One of DEP's top priorities is getting Florida's water right, which includes both ensuring an adequate supply and improving the quality of our water," said Secretary Vinyard. "I am proud to join today with the local governments and stakeholders who worked with us to create this water quality improvement

plan. The entire Pensacola region should celebrate this achievement. DEP looks forward to continuing this partnership as we take immediate action to improve the water quality of this important watershed."

The waterbodies addressed by this Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) consist of Bayou Chico, which discharges directly to Pensacola Bay, and the Jones Creek, Jackson Creek, Bayou Chico Drain, Bayou Chico Beach (at Lakewood Park) and Sanders Beach waterbody segments. Water quality restoration targets, called Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), were adopted by DEP for the six water bodies. The TMDLs establish the amount of bacteria that needs to be reduced to restore the beneficial uses of these water bodies. The TMDLs require reductions in fecal coliform bacteria of 61 percent in order to meet water quality standards.

The BMAP lists the steps that must be taken to reduce bacteria, a schedule for their implementation, and potential resources to accomplish the reductions.

"Protecting and restoring our waterways is a key issue for my administration," said City of Pensacola Mayor Ashton Hayward. "Secretary Vinyard has been a good friend to Pensacola and a great help to me as Mayor. I appreciate DEP's work to put this plan in place and I look forward to a cleaner, healthier Bayou Chico."

The Bayou Chico BMAP was developed under DEP's comprehensive approach to identify polluted waterways and build partnerships with local, regional and state interests to return the water bodies to a healthy condition. Through its science-based program, DEP determined that the Bayou Chico watershed was not meeting Florida's water quality standards and, therefore, established restoration targets and worked in collaboration with local stakeholders to create the BMAP. The local stakeholders identified more than 50 projects to achieve restoration in these water bodies and have committed to monitoring to ensure restoration occurs and to identify additional fecal coliform sources.

"Escambia County has taken Bayou Chico's historical water quality issues very seriously. Water quality monitoring has shown that the highest fecal coliform levels are at the mouths of the three main tributaries to the bayou – Jones Creek, Jackson Creek, and Maggie's Ditch," said Taylor "Chips" Kirschenfeld, Escambia County Water Quality & Land Management Division. "Therefore, we have focused our efforts on improving water quality in the tributaries by restoring wetlands, restoring stream channels, restoring floodplains, reducing stormwater impacts, and installing educational signage to increase the public's awareness of how they can help reduce pollution. The good news is that recent monitoring shows that water quality is slowly improving."

Examples of significant project commitments include the following:

- Emerald Coast Utility Authority (ECUA) – Sewer Expansion Programs - ECUA has an ongoing capital improvement program focusing on the phase out and elimination of poorly operating or failed septic tanks through the expansion of the ECUA wastewater collection system. The priority areas targeted for this program are typically located close to surface water or public drinking water wells, or where the operation of septic tanks has caused health concerns. The program includes financial incentives to encourage connection to the sewer system. In addition, ECUA waives the wastewater capacity impact fee for all connections in the project areas that are completed within 365 days of notice of availability of the system.
- Lift Station Upgrades and Emergency Power Generation Program – ECUA also upgraded a number of lift stations throughout its service area and has installed emergency power generators at the new Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and the existing Main Street WWTP to address the release of untreated sewage caused by power failures—another potential source problem that can be posed during heavy storm events, including hurricanes.

- MS4 Capital and Drainage System Repair Projects – Between 1999 to present, Escambia County and the City of Pensacola have completed numerous new capital improvement projects in the Bayou Chico watershed at a cost of over $10 million. This does not include the estimated $3,390,900 of HUD/CDBG funds that Escambia County secured in 2010 to complete ECUA's Lakewood Park sewer expansion projects (Phases IV and V, and part of Phase VI). In addition, Escambia County completed and is continuing to monitor the Jones Creek Restoration Projects, which include natural stream channel restoration, associated sediment and erosion controls, and floodplain and wetland restoration/preservation, as well as the Jackson Lakes and Glynn Key Stormwater Projects in the watershed.
- Bayou Chico Association and Marina Owners, Pump Outs in Florida – Currently three pump-out stations are available in local marinas in the Bayou Chico watershed, including one mobile unit that can be transported to any boater who requests the service. Recent upgrades and capacity to handle more sewage were added to this mobile unit.
- Clean Marina and Clean Boatyard Program Establishment – There are currently ten public marinas and one private marina (Pensacola Yacht Club) in the Bayou Chico watershed. Four of the ten public marinas have so far been awarded Clean Marina and/or Clean Boatyard status, and one private marina is pending Clean Marina status.

"The BMAP process allows us to identify the water quality improvement projects being conducted by all of the stakeholders on Bayou Chico. As part of the BMAP process measurement of the water quality over the next few years will show the effectiveness of our efforts and allow for adjustments in the plan to better utilize the resources that are available for water quality projects," said John H. Naybor, President of the Bayou Chico Association and Chairman of the Florida Clean Boating Partnership. "The Bayou Chico Association has been working towards a cleaner Bayou for many years but this plan finally allows us to see the efforts of every group, reduce any redundant efforts, and track the results of these efforts in order to maximize our overall results."

Proposed actions include improvements in stormwater management, implementation of corrective actions for sewer system failures, removal of failing septic tanks, field investigations to better identify and mitigate pollutant sources and ongoing public education programs. The stakeholders have already implemented many of these actions and the remaining projects will be in place within the next five years.

For more information about DEP's water quality protection and restoration programs visit: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/watersheds/bmap.htm.

Florida Meets with Federal Leaders, Reaffirms Florida's Commitment to Everglades Restoration

~ State presents strategy to improve water quality ~

Oct. 6, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Florida Governor Rick Scott, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. and South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) Executive Director Melissa Meeker today met with U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Deputy Secretary of Civil Works Jo Ellen Darcy and U.S. Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General Ignacia Moreno to reaffirm Florida's long-standing commitment to restoring America's Everglades. During a meeting of state and federal principals, Florida's Governor outlined a strategy for

improving water quality and sending cleaner water south to the vast ecosystem, while protecting jobs and the state's economy.

"Today, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to ask our federal and state Everglades restoration partners to agree on a strategy that puts the ecosystem first and prevents costly, ongoing litigation from derailing our mutual progress toward restoration," said Governor Scott. "A strong Florida partnership will help usher in the next generation of projects that will improve water quality in South Florida, while still protecting jobs and the state's economy."

Announcing a strengthened Florida partnership that focuses on the heart of the Everglades system, Governor Scott called upon the DEP and the SFWMD to work hand-in-hand to further improve the quality and quantity of water flowing into the Everglades. By focusing on implementing restoration projects on lands already in public ownership, the state is saving taxpayer dollars and minimizing the effects of government's land acquisition efforts on local and state agricultural-based economies.

"Everglades water quality is a top priority for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection," said DEP Secretary Vinyard. "We have a conceptual path forward for one of our long-standing challenges, and I am extremely optimistic that through cooperation and collaboration we will deliver measureable and permanent results."

DEP and the SFWMD will continue to work closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and implement projects that will treat water to ultra-low levels of phosphorus. To protect South Florida's unique make-up of flora and fauna, DEP in 2006 established a stringent phosphorus water quality standard for the Everglades of 10 parts per billion.

"This strategy has great potential to address critical areas of the River of Grass and build on the progress we've made in meeting the restoration needs of Everglades National Park and the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge," said SFWMD Executive Director Meeker. "A strong partnership with DEP is invaluable as we work together toward achieving our state's water quality goals."

Since 1994, Florida's network of stormwater treatment areas south of Lake Okeechobee — with a combined treatment area of 45,000 acres — have retained approximately 1,470 metric tons of phosphorus that would have otherwise entered the Everglades. Through April 2011, more than 3,800 metric tons of phosphorus have been prevented from entering the Everglades through treatment wetlands and the Best Management Practices program covering the Everglades Agricultural Area. Florida has invested more than $1.8 billion to improve the quality of water flowing into America's Everglades. In addition, Florida has dedicated more than $2.4 billion to the 50-50 state-federal partnership to implement the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Louisiana Launches GulfSource.org, Single Source Website for Seafood, Water and Sediment Safety Test Results

October 7, 2011 – Louisiana officials announced today the launch of GulfSource.org, a site that makes public all of the seafood, water and sediment safety testing information conducted since the 2010 BP Oil Spill under the Louisiana Seafood Safety Plan. The site, which allows users to scroll through all available samples or conduct specific searches by area, date or sample type, utilizes information from the Louisiana departments of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Health and Hospitals (LDHH), Environmental Quality (LDEQ), and Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF).

"Though we've been testing seafood, water and sediment since April 30, 2010 in response to the BP oil spill, the information has been difficult to widely distribute to the public until the launch of GulfSource.org," said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham. "We hope the public will utilize GulfSource.org

to find out what the safety test results in seafood from areas they fish or from waters they consume reveal. What is truly encouraging is that, to date, not a single sample has failed our safety tests. We now we have the tool to share those results with the general public. Rebuilding our seafood brand starts with rebuilding consumer confidence in our product. We hope GulfSource.org helps us accomplish that task."

"The public should have easy access to food safety information and GulfSource.org is a great companion to the work we're already doing with EatSafe.La.Gov," DHH Secretary Bruce D. Greenstein said. "Transparency of critical health and safety information is a top priority at DHH, where we worked with our state agency partners to publish seafood testing results almost immediately after the BP disaster and throughout the following year. GulfSource takes that work to the next level and allows the world to see for itself that we have the most-tested seafood out there."

"Now it will be easier for people outside of Louisiana to know what we already know – the seafood is safe and as good as ever," said DEQ Peggy Hatch. "The goal of the plan was to ensure seafood safety for all the people who enjoy the best seafood in the world. With the launch of this new website, anyone will be able to see the results. This is the culmination of a statewide effort from many agencies to develop and execute a sampling plan like none other."

"Our office has a long history of ensuring the quality and safety of Louisiana food," said Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, D.V.M. "It's our duty to continue this obligation to our Louisiana seafood industry and the consumers and patrons that enjoy shrimp, crab and finfish."

Louisiana officials reached an agreement with BP to test seafood, sediment and water from across the Louisiana coast for traces of toxins called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and for dispersants called Dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate (DOSS). The agreement funds the testing program, called the Louisiana Seafood Safety Plan, up to $18 million for a total of three years ($6 million per year).

To date, none of the samples tested have showed levels of PAHs or dispersants near the U.S. Food and Drug Administration-established "level of concern." In fact, of the samples that showed any minute traces of PAHs, none were above background levels (the levels found in seafood before the oil spill). Test results for dispersants are also available on GulfSource.org. GulfSource.org allows the general public full access to information on how testing is conducted, specifically where it is conducted, and when and what the results from the lab analyses show. For more information, visit GulfSource.org.

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is charged with managing and protecting Louisiana's abundant natural resources. For more information, visit us at www.wlf.louisiana.gov on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ldwffb or follow us on Twitter @LDWF. For more information please contact Olivia Watkins at owatkins@wlf.la.gov or (225) 610-8660.

MDMR Artificial Reef Bureau adds Inshore Fishing Reef in Pass Christian

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' (MDMR) Artificial Reef Bureau has completed work on the Pass Christian Key, which is an inshore reef comprised of deployed material from the Bay St. Louis Washington Street Pier.

The concrete rubble from the pier was donated to MDMR for the purpose of creating a new artificial reef in the Mississippi Sound. The well-lit fishing reef is located a little over one half mile south of the beach and one mile east of the Pass Christian Harbor.

Since April 2007, the MDMR Artificial Reef Bureau has conducted 141 inshore material deployments in the three coastal counties, using 24,000 cubic yards of crushed concrete and limestone. In addition, since

September 2006, the Artificial Reef Bureau has conducted 115 offshore deployments using materials such as retired fishing vessels, concrete culverts, missile ballasts and even a 107,000-gallon tank donated by Stennis Space Center.

"We're extremely proud to be able to say that over 100 percent of Mississippi's pre-Katrina artificial inshore and offshore reefs have been restored," said Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR Artificial Reef Bureau Director.

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.

Secretary of State Returns More Than $9.7 Million to Gulf Coast from Tidelands Leases and New Assessment Collections

BILOXI, Miss. – Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann presented a check for $9,707,662 to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) at a ceremony held Dec. 1, 2011, at the Secretary of State's Office in Gulfport-- the largest tidelands amount ever returned to the Gulf Coast to date.

"The tidelands check is a crucial component of preserving the culture of the Mississippi Gulf Coast," said Hosemann. "The Mississippi State Legislature and the Secretary of State's Office are committed to maximizing the benefit of our state-owned lands and the preservation of our coastal areas. This $9,707,662 is an integral part of ensuring that goal."

"These Tidelands funds are critical to the cities, counties, NGOs and others along the Mississippi Gulf Coast," said MDMR Executive Director Bill Walker. "These funds provide for access projects that allow our citizens and visitors to better enjoy our marine resources and waters. These funds provide for research and academic programs that better inform our public about the value of our marine resources to the Gulf Coast and to Mississippi as a whole. These funds allow us in certain instances to provide indirect assistance to tourism and economic development, to directly assist in environmental conservation, and to leverage federal funds. The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources looks forward to working with the Secretary of State and the Mississippi Legislature to continue to use these funds to the betterment of the environment, economy, and quality of life along the Mississippi Gulf Coast."

The tidelands lease revenue was collected on leases on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011. The Tidelands Assessment revenue is a result of House Bill 44, passed in the 2005 Fifth Extraordinary Session. That bill allowed land-based casinos on the Coast and required them to pay a tidelands assessment, which is based on a casino's capital investment.

As Secretary of State, Hosemann negotiates tidelands leases on behalf of the state. Traditionally, the Mississippi Legislature appropriates the lease revenue for specific projects. Rent is collected from tidelands leaseholders by the Secretary of State and then returned to the MDMR at the end of the fiscal year.

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 MDMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

MDMR, Stennis Partner to Deploy Offshore Artificial Fishing Reef

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' (MDMR) Artificial Reef Bureau and NASA's Stennis Space Center recently teamed up to continue efforts to enhance deep water fishing in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Since Hurricane Katrina—when nearly 100 percent of Mississippi's artificial reefs were destroyed—the MDMR has conducted 113 artificial reef deployments and, most recently, with the help of a unique tank donated by Stennis Space Center in Hancock County, added three additional structures to Fish Haven 13.

Back on June 17, employees at Stennis Space Center began preparing a 107,000 gallon hydrogen sphere to be deployed south of Pascagoula. The final destination was 85 feet of water in the popular Fish Haven 13, which is located 23 miles south of Pascagoula. On Oct. 27, the mission was successful along with two smaller tanks also donated by Stennis. The sphere was built in the 1960s and used as a reservoir for liquid hydrogen in case of an emergency during testing at the second stage of Saturn V. Since no emergencies unfolded, the end result will benefit anglers for years to come.

"The sphere no longer was needed after the Saturn V Program ended," said Bryon Maynard, a lead system engineer in the NASA Engineering and Test Directorate at Stennis. "A lot of people forgot what it was or what it had been built for. It became known as the 'big round thing,' the BRT. Everyone who visited out here would ask about it."

The BRT, which weighs 98,000 pounds, sank in less than 10 minutes with the help of air bags attached to the top by Matthews Brothers of Pass Christian to make sure the container sank in an upright position on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico. To ensure safety—proper clearance for passing shipping vessels—the tank was sank in 85 feet of water to gain enough clearance for the vessels. Kerwin Cuevas, MDMR Artificial Reef Bureau director, said the BRT has a safe clearance of 50 feet. Cuevas also said the new structure will immediately attract baitfish that ultimately will attract predators like red snapper, mangrove snapper, grouper and trigger fish.

"The BRT and other two tanks were donated by Stennis Space Center and we want to thank them for their generosity," Cuevas said. "The BRT is an aluminum 107,000 gallon tank 37 feet tall by 45 feet wide. It was deployed in Fish Haven 13 in 85 feet of water and has a relief of 35 feet off the bottom.

"The funds used to deploy the BRT were the Emergency Disaster Relief Program funds from NOAA due to Hurricane Katrina. This was a joint effort between Stennis Space Center, Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. We would like to thank Mr. Bryon Maynard from Stennis Space Center, who was instrumental in getting the tanks donated for reef material. The BRT and the other two tanks will provide excellent reef fish habitat fish for a long time. This new habitat will also offer our fishermen of Mississippi more offshore fishing opportunities."

Partnerships such as these, along with federal funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) after Katrina and continuous effort by the MDMR's Artificial Reef Burerau have helped to restore over 100 percent of Mississippi's inshore and offshore artificial reefs.

Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Nets 2,218 Bags of Trash

More than 3,100 volunteers scoured Mississippi's beaches and waterways picking up marine debris at 77 designated cleanup sites during the 23rd annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, part of the International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest volunteer effort to clean up the marine environment. During the 2011 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, 3,102 volunteers picked up 2,218 bags of trash, including 55 bags of recyclables, along 202 miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. The cleanup is organized by the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and Mississippi Marine Debris

Task Force. The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup returned to the beaches and barrier islands and again expanded its reach through its partnership with Mississippi Power's Renew Our Rivers program, cleaning four sites on the days leading up to the October 15 cleanup and one additional site on cleanup day.

All told, 3,102 volunteers collected 123,032 pounds of trash including 171 tires—that's 61.5 tons of marine debris. This included items too large to fit in trash bags such as household appliances and remnants of homes washed away during Katrina. More than 20 tons of debris was removed from the Ansley Preserve alone using heavy equipment as part of the Renew Our Rivers program. Other items found were: a channel marker, remnants of homes, jet ski, car bumper, propane tanks, more than one refrigerator, coffee maker, furniture, golf club, tractor tire, blow [illegible] mattress, fire alarm, barricade, electrical wire, plastic window, baby carriage, wooden door, dead alligator gar, hypodermic needle, Bacardi sign, television child's car seat and 500 square feet of plastic sheeting was found on Sand Island. Also, volunteers collecting trash at four sites in Jackson County separated out and filled 55 bags with recyclable items.

During the International Coastal Cleanup, hundreds of thousands of people across the world spend three hours combing the beaches and waterways to pick up trash that pollutes our waters, harms marine life, hampers tourism and poses health risks to beach [illegible] Coastal Cleanup, last year's International more than 600,000 volunteers in 108 countries removed more than 8 million pounds of debris from the ocean, rivers, lakes and waterways.

"Our coastal waterways provide food for our families, recreation and livelihoods for many of us," said Lauren Thompson, state coordinator for the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and public relations director for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. "It's the lifeblood on which our fisheries and marine wildlife depend. Our annual coastal cleanup is a reminder that, yes, we can make a difference in keeping our shorelines clean and litter [illegible] free, one piece of fishing line at a time, one plastic bag at a time."

The mission of the International Coastal Cleanup is to remove debris from shorelines, bayous, bays, rivers, waterways and beaches; collect valuable information on the amount and types of debris collected; educate people on the issue of marine debris; and use the data collected to effect positive change. Volunteers clean beaches and collect information on what they find, using the International Coastal Cleanup Data Card, so that sources of marine debris can be targeted for education or pollution prevention campaigns. State coordinators mail the data cards to the Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C. where the data is tabulated. Over the years, data from the cleanups have been used to enact local, state, national, and even international legislation and agreements.

"The turnout today and the support that the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources has received from the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force and our more than 80 sponsors is a clear indicator that many Mississippians do care about our coastal environment," Thompson said. "They understand and see it as an extension of our own backyards that we can care for, maintain and protect not just today, but each and every day by choosing to dispose of our trash properly."

Mission-Aransas Reserve awarded grant to study climate change effects on freshwater inflows

The Reserve was recently awarded a $750,000 grant from the NERRS Science Collaborative to conduct essential research that will help establish future freshwater inflow requirements in the face of climate change. This project will work with the current Texas Commission of Environmental Quality to extend collaborative methods for the Guadalupe and San Antonio basin science and stakeholder committees. Researchers at the Reserve will be working with collaborators Dr. Tarla Rai Peterson from Texas A&M

University and Dr. George Ward from The University of Texas to conduct the study.

Project Overview
There are several social, climatic, physical, and biological areas of research that have been identified as beneficial for improving freshwater inflow recommendations for the Guadalupe and San Antonio bay/basin (GSA), including:(1) better understanding of the impacts of land use and climate change on water usage and runoff,(2) additional data on circulation between estuaries, and(3) more information about specific areas within the estuary where focal species are found in high abundance and/or in the best physical condition. The overall goal of the proposed project is to improve the quality of environmental flow recommendations for the GSA bay/basin by collaborating with local stakeholders and scientists to overcome some of these research barriers and provide additional information and data for the Senate Bill 3 adaptive management process. The collaborative process will employ a combination of interviews with primary resource users, stakeholder-guided workshops, and mediated modeling.

Specific project goals include:
1. Examine the effects of land use and climate change on freshwater inflows to the Guadalupe and Mission-Aransas estuaries.

2. Improve inputs to the TxBLEND salinity model of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB).

3. Collaborate with intended users (BBASC) to identify and conduct a priority research project related to one of the focal species mentioned in the BBEST report.

4. Develop shared systems learning among the local stakeholders and scientists, and summarize that learning using STELLA (developed by isee systems), or a similar user-friendly software, to construct a system dynamics model of the Guadalupe and Mission-Aransas estuaries that integrates stakeholder and scientist knowledge and serves as an educational tool.

Open for Business: Mission-Aransas Reserve Headquarters

Construction of the Mission-Aransas Reserve Headquarters facility is complete and we recently celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 23rd! The Headquarters is located in the 36,000 square foot Estuarine Research Center on the University of Texas Marine Science Institute campus. The Center has unique design features and was constructed to be energy efficient and to withstand the conditions of our harsh coastal environment. It features three floors of state-of-the-art marine laboratories and also contains space on the third floor for the University of Texas Marine Science Institute to expand.

The new Headquarters will enable Reserve staff and student researchers to continue their groundbreaking research and stewardship activities within the Mission-Aransas Estuary. Their projects will further our understanding of the role that estuarine ecosystems play for our economy and environment, including serving as filters for pollutants and buffers from storms.

The building is the first educational facility in South Texas constructed for certification by Leadership in

Energy and Environmental Design at the silver level, and includes a number of innovative features. Designed by Richter Architects, the building's east-west orientation helps decrease solar heat gain and will help to protect it from storm surges. The southernface of the building is stepped inward from roof-to-ground to provide shading from summer sun, while its north face opens upward to provide natural light to the interiors.

It also features solar panels, large cisterns for rainwater capture, and surrounding gardens that highlight local flora. The Estuarine Research Center was built as a partnership between The University of Texas at Austin and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with support from the Texas General Land Office and individual donors.

Post-Rollover pier plan presented for public comment

Contact: Jim Suydam, jim.suydam@glo.texas.gov
Dec 09, 2011

AUSTIN — Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson today released his proposed plan to build a pier on Bolivar Peninsula for public comment as the closure of Rollover Pass nears. The Texas Legislature authorized $5.85 million in 2009 to close the popular fishing pass following Hurricane Ike's devastation of the area. Exhaustive studies have concluded that Rollover Pass significantly contributes to erosion on Bolivar beaches, threatens the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, causes high salinity levels in the Galveston Bay system and costs taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in maintenance costs each year.

"Rollover Pass will soon close and it's important now that folks tell us what they think about our plan for what could follow," Patterson said. "Replacing Rollover Pass with a 1,000-foot pier could not only be great for fishermen, but for surfers and area business too - just without all the erosion and annual costs to taxpayers."

Patterson said his plan to build a pier on Bolivar was developed with input from Galveston County; PenDeCo; the Gulf Coast Rod, Reel and Gun Club; the Gilchrist Community Association and Surfrider Foundation. Patterson took one of the last remaining steps required by the Legislature to close Rollover this week by posting his declaration in the Texas Register that the pass causes increased erosion and needs to be closed. To learn more about the proposed pier and to comment on the Rollover Pass Recreational Amenities Plan visit www.glo.texas.gov/coastal and look for the link under "what's new." A summary of the erosion research already conducted on Rollover Pass and its problems can also be found there.

"I urge anyone interested in Rollover Pass to take a few moments to review the facts about why the pass must be closed and tell us whether the proposed Recreational Amenities Plan is what they want to see next," Patterson said.

Keynote speakers set for U.S.-Mexico Border Energy Forum in El Paso

Oct 24, 2011

Austin — Keynote speakers at this week's U.S.-Mexico Border Energy Forum will include distinguished business and government leaders from both sides of the border. All 10 U.S. and Mexican states along the border are represented at the forum, which takes place Oct. 27-28 at the El Paso Convention Center.

This year's forum — the 18th annual — will be bigger than ever, coinciding with the Re-Energize the America's conference www.reenergizetheamericas.com focusing on clean energy development for the

Paso del Norte region of Texas, New Mexico and Chihuahua. A dinner for both the conference and forum on Wednesday, Oct. 26, will feature keynote speaker Hunter L. Hunt, CEO and president of Dallas-based Hunt Consolidated Energy.

On Thursday morning at 8:30 a.m., Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson will moderate the opening plenary session with other government, university and business leaders from the U.S., Mexico and Canada. Thursday's keynote speaker will be Kevin Taylor, vice president of Dallas-based global architecture firm HKS, Inc., who will speak at 10 a.m. about the green energy and sustainability features incorporated into the design of Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. On Friday at 8:30 a.m., the keynote speaker will be Dr. Pablo Mulás del Pozo, executive director of the Mexico Member Committee of the World Energy Council, as well as the Instituto de Investigaciones Eléctricas (Electric Research Institute, the Mexican government's energy research center).

This forum was founded by the General Land Office in 1994 to share information about energy and environmental issues on both sides of the border," said Commissioner Patterson. "The idea is to provide policy planners with the best information available so they can make wise decisions, forge partnerships and work for the region as a whole.

The U.S.-Mexico Border Energy Forum helps top leaders track developments affecting the natural gas markets, seek more interconnections for electricity and natural gas, and find new partners for developing renewable resources, especially wind and solar. The forum strives to bring all sectors to the table — local, state, and federal governments from both sides of the border, energy producers as well as industrial consumers, environmental organizations and academic researchers.

The forum is intended to promote sensible use of energy throughout the American Southwest and northern Mexico, working together to be leaders for continental cooperation.

Among the key issues on the agenda are wind and solar power, smart grid and electric transmission, doing business in the border states, energy efficiency and water systems, financing energy projects and infrastructure, and energy security.

The forum is a non-profit event coordinated by the Texas General Land Office in collaboration with numerous public and private sector organizations. For more information on the Border Energy Forum, please visit www.borderenergyforum.org.

Adopt-A-Beach to Launch its Marine Debris Public Awareness Campaign

Adopt-A-Beach to Launch its Marine Debris Public Awareness Campaign The Texas General Land Office's Adopt-A-Beach program was recently awarded a Cycle 16 Grant through the Texas Coastal Management Program. The grant will fund development of a new outreach campaign to help increase public awareness of the threat caused by marine debris on the Texas coast, and spur volunteer participation in the program's coastwide cleanup efforts.

Adopt-A-Beach is uniquely able to organize annual coastal cleanups that draw thousands of volunteers to the Texas coast. Creating an Adopt-A-Beach volunteer workshop will allow current and new volunteers to network, share ideas and bolster their interest in the program. The results of this initiative will have a direct impact on supporting tourism in the local economy and protecting the fragile coastal environment for all Texans.

Currently, the Adopt-A-Beach program is celebrating its 25th anniversary and this is a great opportunity to revitalize the program through marketing, tourism enhancement, and increased public education. We

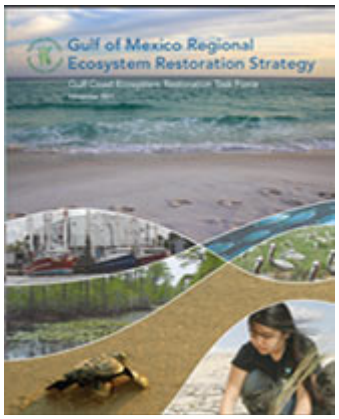
want to encourage the public to make conscious decisions to keep our coastline clean through everyday decisions like disposing of trash properly.

Be on the lookout for both printed and social media advertisements for Adopt-ABeach, including a contest for high school students to craft and produce an Adopt-ABeach video Public Service Announcement (PSA) about marine debris. An Adopt-A-Beach website re-design is also in the works. The improved website will inform and educate targeted audiences, provide tools to help change behavior through increased involvement, ensure a consistent and recognizable visual identity for the campaign Web presence, and provide a new login section for site coordinators to download information.

In addition, the Adopt-A-Beach program will also organize and host a one-day Marine Debris Summit on Friday, January 13th at Moody Gardens on Galveston Island. It will be free and open to the first 200 folks who sign up at beach@glo.texas.gov. Seating is limited. A complimentary lunch will also be served. The summit will serve as a platform to share information about efforts to reduce beach litter. Adopt-A-Beach site coordinators, Beach Guardian adopting groups, local government and community leaders, appropriate non-profit organizations, corporations, and sponsors will also be invited to the event. Contact Renee Tuggle at 1-877-TXCOAST for more details or email her at beach@glo.texas.gov.

Other News

Gulf Coast Task Force Releases Final Ecosystem Restoration Strategy on December 5, 2011



The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force today released its final strategy (PDF) for long term ecosystem restoration for the Gulf Coast, following extensive feedback from citizens throughout the region. EPA Administrator and Task Force Chair Lisa P. Jackson, joined by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Administrator Jane Lubchenco, Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, and USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Harris Sherman, made the announcement today during keynote remarks at the 2011 State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit in Houston.

The Task Force delivered the final strategy on Friday, Dec. 2 to President Barack Obama, who established the Task Force by executive order to continue the Administration's ongoing commitment to the Gulf region.

The strategy is the first restoration blueprint ever developed for the Gulf with the full involvement of all of the essential parties throughout the region, including the states, tribes, federal agencies, local governments and thousands of involved citizens and organizations. The plan represents a commitment by all parties to continue to work together in an unprecedented collaboration to prepare the Gulf region to transition from response to recovery and address the decades-long decline that the Gulf's ecosystem has endured.

This final strategy represents the Task Force's strong commitment to the restoration of the Gulf Coast. The strategy was developed following more than 40 public meetings throughout the Gulf to listen to the concerns of the public.

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces $50 Million for Gulf Coast Restoration

Agricultural Producers in Five States Will Help Improve Ecosystem Health of Gulf Coast

12/05/2011 10:15 AM EST, Release No. 0499.11
Contact: Office of Communications (202)720-4623

WASHINGTON, Dec. 5, 2011 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is launching an innovative water and wildlife conservation effort along the Gulf Coast of the United States. This action is part of the Obama Administration's efforts through its Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The Task Force today released its final strategy for long term ecosystem restoration for the Gulf Coast.

"The Obama Administration is committed to ensuring our coasts are healthy and resilient," Vilsack said. "Helping agricultural producers voluntarily improve the health of their land will sustain and enhance the production of food and fiber, while also improving water quality upon which communities depend. This initiative also will benefit the estuaries, fisheries and wildlife so integral to jobs and the economy in the Gulf."

The new Gulf of Mexico Initiative will focus up to $50 million, over three years, in conservation assistance to farmers and ranchers in priority areas along seven major rivers that drain to the Gulf. All five states along the Gulf Coast are part of this effort, including Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Many communities and cities along these rivers—such as Pensacola, Mobile, Biloxi, and San Antonio—will benefit from the cleaner water, more abundant wildlife, and healthier fisheries produced by this project.

USDA will work with a team of local, state and federal partners to deliver this project. Through this effort, Gulf farmers and ranchers will invest in voluntary conservation to provide cleaner water and more abundant wildlife for their neighbors and communities.

NRCS and its conservation partners developed this initiative in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and President Obama's call to action to help restore the waters, shores and wildlife populations along the Gulf Coast. This effort incorporates what the public and communities have requested through their input into the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Strategy to restore the Gulf Coast. This initiative is a perfect complement to the Task Force's first-of-its-kind strategy that was released today.

"The conservation partnership is taking proactive steps to improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico," said USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman. "This initiative is a powerful example of how government can collaborate with private citizens, communities, and private organizations. Together, we can identify challenges, leverage each other's resources and capabilities, and make a difference for both the environment and our quality of life."

Sixteen priority watersheds in seven major river basins in five states are targeted for participation in the new Gulf of Mexico Initiative.

Alabama - Upper Fish River Watershed in the Weeks Bay (Fish River) River Basin
Alabama/Florida - Canoe Creek Watershed and Sandy Hollow-Pine Barren Creek Watershed in the Escambia River Basin
Florida - Little Pine Barren Creek Watershed in the Escambia River Basin
Florida - Old Grassy Lake Watershed in the Middle Suwannee River Basin
Florida - Area, Allon Lake Watershed in the Middle Suwannee River Basin
Florida - Blue Lake Watershed in the Middle Suwannee River Basin
Florida - Pickel Lake Watershed in the Middle Suwannee River Basin

Louisiana - Bayou Corne-Grand Bayou Watershed and Bayou St. Vincent-Little Grand Bayou Watershed, all in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary
Louisiana - Bayou Grand Marais Watershed in the Mermentau River Basin
Mississippi - Rotten Bayou Watershed and Bayou LaTerre Watershed in the Jourdan River Basin
Texas - Kuy Creek–Guadalupe River Watershed, Guadalupe River–South Guadalupe River Watershed, and Hynes Bay–San Antonio Bay Watershed, all in the Lower San Antonio River/Guadalupe River Basins.

Since 1935, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and private landowners delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests.

For more information about the Gulf of Mexico Initiative and NRCS's programs and services, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Gulf of Mexico Foundation Receives $1.163 Million Grant from the Economic Development Administration and $1.75 Million Commitment from Transocean to Build Habitat Restoration Technology Training Center

WASHINGTON / HOUSTON / CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS – Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank today announced a $1.163 Million Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to the Gulf of Mexico Foundation to build and establish the Gulf of Mexico Habitat Restoration Technology Training Center (HRTTC) in Galveston, Texas. Transocean and the Offshore Technology Conference Executive Committee (OTCEC) have contributed the initial lead gifts of $1.75 million and $200,000, respectively. These financial commitments kick off a $7 million capital campaign which includes the purchase of 1.819 acres of commercial property and an adjacent 15-acre wetland parcel located at 8614 Teichman Road, Galveston, Texas, which will be the home of the new Gulf of Mexico HRTTC.

“The Gulf of Mexico Foundation promotes and facilitates conservation of the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico and its resources through education, public awareness, restoration projects, research, and leadership programs. The HRTTC will provide in-person and online habitat restoration training programs focused on a holistic, ecosystem-based approach. The HRTTC will function as a center for workforce development, technical assistance, education and outreach services serving the range of businesses, organizations, communities, and governance entities which use and depend upon the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico. HRTTC programs/curriculum are geared towards educators, students, program developers, business and industry professionals, and the community at large,” explained Dr. Quenton Dokken, President and CEO of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation.

“The Obama Administration is committed to creating jobs, encouraging innovation and improving our nation’s economic competitiveness,” Blank said. “This EDA grant will provide initial funding support to develop the Gulf of Mexico HRTTC. The Center should become an invaluable resource in responding to natural and manmade disasters that have a decidedly negative impact on the fragile coastal systems and

economy of the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to providing training for recovery and restoration operations, the HRTTC will also serve as a Thought Center for assisting communities in planning for the economic and environmental impacts in their areas and sharing best practices to ensure the continued conservation management of these natural resources."

"Transocean partners with local communities and encourages volunteerism in all areas of our operations worldwide and we have been a long time supporter of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation and its programs," said Dr. Ian Hudson, the company's Director of Operations Decision Support, who also serves as Vice Chairman of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. "Many of our people live and work in the Gulf region and we are very pleased to support the construction and development of a center where educators, the community and industry can partner to enhance sustainable models for Gulf restoration and further education efforts that embrace sound economic and environmental principles."

This location was selected with assistance from the Galveston Economic Development Partnership and was chosen based upon the availability of an adjacent 15-acre wetland parcel. The Foundation was able to acquire the wetlands parcel thanks to a generous donation from the Offshore Technology Conference Executive Committee. The wetlands will be restored and used for education, training and as a community resource.

"Galveston was selected for the HRTTC due to its coastal location and diversity of marine habitats," said Dr. Dokken. "The HRTTC will be an important element in furthering Galveston as a hub of habitat restoration science and technology, communication outreach, and education for the entire Gulf of Mexico region."

Estimated costs for acquisition, construction, furnishings and equipment for the HRTTC building total $7 million. Thanks to the generous support of the EDA, Transocean, and the OTC Executive Committee, the Foundation purchased the land and began planning site preparation and design of the HRTTC building. "Continued philanthropy is crucial to the success of the HRTTC capital program," said Wayne Johnson, Chairman and Founding Member of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. "Without additional philanthropic support, we cannot fully realize the potential of the HRTTC and begin to reverse the decline of the Gulf of Mexico's habitat."

To make a donation, visit www.gulfmex.org/support or contact Dr. Quenton Dokken at 361-882-3939 or qdokken@gulfmex.org.

About the U.S. Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov):
This year, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) marks 45 years of public service, with a mission of leading the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. EDA is an agency within the Department of Commerce.

About the Gulf of Mexico Foundation (www.gulfmex.org)
The Gulf of Mexico Foundation promotes and facilitates conservation of the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico and its resources through education, public awareness, research, and leadership

programs. The Gulf of Mexico Foundation facilitates efforts and programs within the Gulf of Mexico and its coastal regions to achieve and sustain a high quality of life, with the environment and the economy receiving equal consideration. To help protect and conserve the Gulf of Mexico for future generations, donate to the GMF today. 85% of all Gulf of Mexico funding contributes directly to the restoration, conservation, and education of the Gulf of Mexico region.

About Transocean (www.deepwater.com)
Transocean is the world's largest offshore drilling contractor and the leading provider of drilling management services worldwide. With a fleet of 135 mobile offshore drilling units, excluding two Ultra-Deepwater Drillships and four High-Specification Jackups under construction, Transocean's fleet is considered one of the most modern and versatile in the world due to its emphasis on technically demanding segments of the offshore drilling business. Transocean owns or operates a contract drilling fleet of 50 High-Specification Floaters (Ultra-Deepwater, Deepwater and Harsh-Environment semisubmersibles and drillships), 25 Midwater Floaters, nine High-Specification Jackups, 50 Standard Jackups and one swamp barge.

About OTC
Founded in 1969, the Offshore Technology Conference is the world's foremost event for the development of offshore resources in the fields of drilling, exploration, production and environmental protection. OTC is held annually at Reliant Park in Houston. For more information, visit www.otcnet.org.

Contact
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Transocean Guy Cantwell 713-232-7647

October 2011 Coastal Management News

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

- Wisconsin Improves Safety at Sea Caves
- Florida Preserves Prehistoric Coastal Heritage
- Pennsylvania Enhances Access to Delaware River Estuary
- Washington Releases Online Recreational Planning Tool
- Meeting Aligns State and NOAA Capabilities
- OCRM Releases Great Lakes Supplement to Adaptation Planning Guide
- OCRM Adds Ocean Plan to Massachusetts Coastal Program
- Proposed Illinois Coastal Program Out for Public Comment
- Experts Discuss Creating Lovable and Durable Coastal Communities
- National Coastal Zone Management Program Grant News
- CELCP Updates
- NOAA Spotlight: The National Ocean Service Responds to Hurricanes

CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Update

New CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Updates are now available online. The Coastal Programs Division of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management distributes the CZMA Climate Change and Coastal Hazards E-News Update to keep state and territory coastal program managers and climate change/coastal hazards staff informed about climate change (as it pertains to coastal hazards) and coastal hazards activities.

Gulf of Mexico Summit a resounding success

The Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies just completed hosting the second State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit at the Houston Omni Galleria Hotel December 4-8. With more than 400 registrants, 80 speakers, and 30 sponsors, Summit 2011 was a resounding success. Key speakers included EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality Nancy Sutley and former first lady Laura Bush. In the audience were scientists and policy makers from all five Gulf states, the US federal government, and Mexico. Topics of discussion at the Summit included:

- Defining a Healthy Gulf of Mexico
- Implementation of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force Plan and A Gulf of Mexico Report Card
- A healthy Gulf economy
- Mitigating and adapting to sea level rise in the Gulf
- Policy implications of coastal and ocean management in the Gulf
- Metrics for assessing the Gulf
- Partnerships for a sustainable Gulf
- Gulf of Mexico University Research Consortium

State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit
VIEW VIDEO PROCEEDINGS ONLINE

NOAA to fund student training

HRI receives $2 million STEM grant

NOAA awarded HRI with a second five-year grant for the NOAA Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC). The grant's goal is to get underrepresented groups more involved in NOAA-related sciences and is one of only five such grants awarded around the US. Florida A&M University will be the lead on the $15 million grant. HRI will receive $2.2 million of that to focus on education in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

HRI Associate Director Dr. Wes Tunnell is the principal investigator for the ECSC at HRI. All HRI Endowed Chairs will be engaged in student research training, as will partner institutions including Delaware State University, Jackson State University, University of Texas at Brownsville and Creighton University. Regional partners include the Mission Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Gulf of Mexico Alliance and Gulf Coast Ocean Observing System.

New ecosystem services grant

Focus on oysters, marshes, mangroves

A research team that HRI assembled was awarded a $648,000 grant in September by Sea Grant and NOAA to research ecosystems services valuation under a grant called the Broad Area Funding Opportunity for the Gulf of Mexico Region.

HRI Endowed Chair for Socio-Economics Dr. David Yoskowitz, Principal Investigator, assembled a multidisciplinary team composed of natural and social scientists from HRI and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Resources for the Future, the Northern Gulf Institute, Florida International University and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation.

The team's proposal, entitled "Ecosystem Services Provided by Gulf of Mexico Habitats: Tools, Valuation and Application," received the two-year grant. The main goal of the project is to carry out primary valuation studies for selected ecosystem services provided by oyster reefs, marshes and mangroves.

Other Sources of Information for the Gulf of Mexico Region

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

Restore the Gulf

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

NOAA Gulf Spill Restoration

NOAA and other federal and state agencies are leading efforts to assess impacts to, and determine appropriate restoration for, Gulf resources injured by the Deepwater BP oil spill. We are in the process of identifying the types of restoration activities that will be appropriate to restore the natural resources impacted by the spill. This is a key step in the ongoing Natural Resource Damage Assessment for the spill. Through the process, you will have the chance to give us your feedback on what projects are important to restore the affected resources after the spill. You can make your voice heard by submitting a project idea. You can also view projects that have been submitted for consideration.

The restoration planning process involves many steps and includes input from scientists, experts, and the public. Restoration can take many years and requires the work of many dedicated people. NOAA will continue this work until the Gulf of Mexico is restored to its pre-spill condition. Over the years, NOAA has been involved with 380 restoration projects in the Gulf. NOAA's restoration scientists and specialists in the Gulf states have been providing technical assistance, coordination, and funding for restoration to many local organizations. Learn more about NOAA's restoration projects in the Gulf using our interactive Restoration Atlas.

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force

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

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

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

Gulf of Mexico Alliance

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is a partnership of the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, with the goal of significantly increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. See Gulf of Mexico Alliance News and Events.

Other Gulf of Mexico Alliance Related Links

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

Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative

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

Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training

Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training is a unique collaboration between the five Gulf Coast National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Programs. Through the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are now working together to address priority issues affecting the entire Gulf of Mexico region. Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training is educating professional audiences and coastal

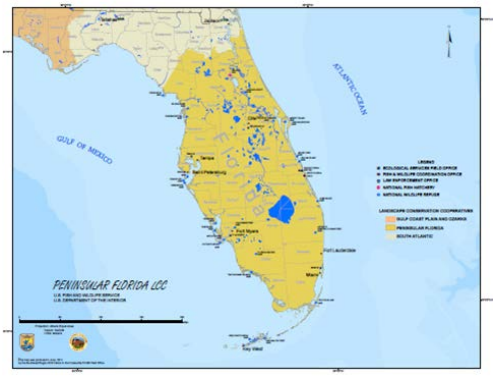
communities across each of the five Gulf States using shared information and technology. From coastal community resilience to habitat conservation, topics covered in Gulf of Mexico Coastal Training workshops address priority issues and promote activities that improve the health of the Gulf of Mexico.

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

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives for the Gulf of Mexico Region

The following websites provide information about activities, announcements, and events for the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives in the Gulf of Mexico region. Landscape Conservation Cooperatives are applied conservation science partnerships among federal agencies, regional organizations, states, tribes, NGOs, universities and other entities within a geographic area. They are designed to inform resource management decisions in an integrated fashion across landscapes at a broader scale than any individual partner's responsibility. The partnerships will consider landscape-scale stressors, including climate change, habitat fragmentation invasive species, and water scarcity as it attempts to provide a vision for a landscape capable of sustaining healthy populations of fish, wildlife, plants and cultural resources.

Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative

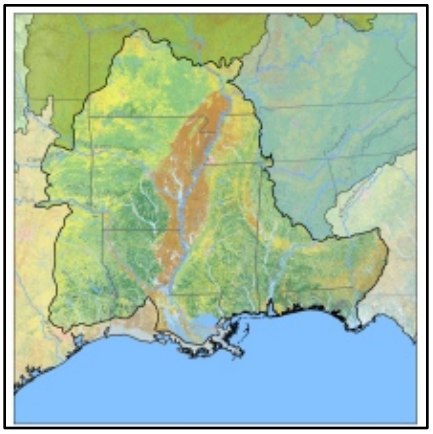


The Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative (PFLCC) is part of a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). The PFLCC will complement Florida's Wildlife Action Plan and other landscape level conservation strategies to restore, manage, and conserve the biodiversity of the region in the face of both climate change and intense development pressure associated with a rapidly growing human population.

South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative

The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (SALCC) is part of a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. The SALCC crosses six states, from southern Virginia to northern Florida. The South Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative is the leading forum in which the conservation community develops a shared vision of landscape sustainability, cooperates in its implementation, and collaborates in its refinement. The mission of the SALCC is to create a shared blueprint for landscape conservation actions that sustain natural and cultural resources. The SALCC publishes a monthly newsletter to share more information about the Cooperative.

Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative



The Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GCPO LCC) describes both a unique geographic region as well as a new kind of conservation partnership. It is part of a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs). LCCs are partnerships among federal agencies, regional organizations, states, tribes, NGOs, universities and others, all of whom leverage resources to define a common vision for sustaining natural resources within a region. The GCPO LCC conducts research, develops tools that improve natural resource management, and conducts outreach. The goal is to focus coordinated action in support of shared conservation priorities across large connected areas, or landscapes. The GCPO LCC publishes a newsletter, the GCPO Monitor, to share more information about the Cooperative.

Gulf Coast Prairie Landscape Conservation Cooperative

The Gulf Coast Prairie Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GCPLCC-*website coming soon*) is part of a national network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. The Gulf Coast Prairie encompasses portions of five states (Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Kansas) and four terrestrial ecoregions (Oaks and Prairies, Gulf Coast Prairie, Tamaulipan Brushlands, and Edwards Plateau). Eventually, it is envisioned to include portions of three Mexican states that share similar habitats (Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila).The GCP LCC consists of partnerships based on science, and brings information to on-the-ground strategic conservation efforts. The GCP LCC offers leadership to strengthen the effectiveness of conservation of wildlife populations and their habitats throughout the region by providing the best available scientific information to inform management decisions. It will achieve this collaborative vision through shared access to science, data, expertise, and resources.

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

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