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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Coast Survey Collaborates with Mexico and Cuba on Charting Issues

Representatives from the Office of Coast Survey (OCS) traveled to Mexico City to discuss chart boundary issues within the International Chart Scheme with Mexico and Cuba prior to the International Hydrographic Organization's MesoAmerican-Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission (MACHC) meeting in October. OSC is providing essential chart data to update their International Charts that fall within U.S. waters to benefit the mariner with consistent data across borders, particularly in the Florida Straits. The International Chart scheme was developed by the MACHC to facilitate the efficient co-production of charts in boundary areas in support of safe and efficient maritime commerce across the MesoAmerican-Caribbean region. For more information, contact [Travis Newman](#).

NOAA Co-Hosts Meeting on Aquaculture Issues in Coral Reef Ecosystems

Last week, NOAA and the Environmental Protection Agency co-hosted a meeting with representatives of five federal agencies of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) to discuss roles and regulatory authorities regarding aquaculture activities in U.S. coral reef ecosystems. The session reviewed the permitting process for aquaculture projects in Federal waters and developed an initial list of additional information and guidelines needed. This information will be used by the USCRTF to assess the need for aquaculture guidelines and standards for coral reef ecosystems. For more information, contact [Gabrielle Dorr](#).

NCCOS Geographic Information System Tool Enhances Hurricane Tracking Website

A geographic information systems (GIS) tool developed by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, to quickly and easily produce image output for each feature in a data layer, is being used by the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) to improve the usability of its Emergency Response Imagery web pages. The NGS's "Hurricane Team" uses the tool, which works with ArcGIS 9 software, to support NOAA national security and emergency response requirements by creating overview maps for its website for each new hurricane. The maps, used to track hurricane landfall locations (http://ngs.woc.noaa.gov/eri_page/), now include imagery locations, local roads, and place names. For more information, contact [Ken Buja](#).

NOAA Implements Hazards and Marine Debris Survey Project in Mississippi

NOAA's Office of Coast Survey began implementation of the Hazards and Marine Debris Survey project in Biloxi Bay, MS, on September 12. The NOAA-funded survey team of contractors will search, detect, and report on any submerged objects left by hurricane Katrina that pose a risk to commercial fishing and

shrimping vessels. The Biloxi Bay survey is the start of a series of planned surveys along the coastal and offshore waters of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. NOAA, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR), and the U.S. Coast Guard (mobile sector), have identified the first set of areas to be surveyed. The survey findings will be used by Mississippi's DMR, the U.S. Coast Guard, NOAA, and FEMA to report, chart, assess, and remove the hazardous objects. For more information, contact [Tim Osborne](#).

Commerce's NOAA and Interior Department Release Draft Framework for Developing System of Marine Protected Areas

Public Comment Period Open for 145 Days

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of the Interior today jointly released a draft framework that outlines guidance for cooperative efforts to increase efficient protection of U.S. marine resources and develop the national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the United States.

The first effort of its kind in the nation, the framework describes a national system of MPAs built in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments as well as other stakeholders. The national goal is to increase efficient protection of U.S. marine resources by enhancing government agency cooperation, helping to sustain fisheries and maintain healthy marine ecosystems for tourism and recreation businesses, and improving public access to scientific information about the nation's marine resources.

The draft framework will be available for public comment for 145 days and can be found online at www.mpa.gov. "The Administration is firmly committed to sound management and effective conservation of our ocean and coastal resources," Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne stated in a jointly signed letter to governors. "The draft framework offers a proposal for working together at regional and national levels to support the effective use of marine protected areas and achieve common goals for conserving the nation's vital marine resources."

Crafted with input from the 30-member MPA federal advisory committee, state agencies, and the public, the framework proposes collaborative efforts for building the initial national system with existing MPAs. It also outlines guidance on building agency partnerships and engaging stakeholders to enhance MPA stewardship. These efforts are currently being tested on a regional level by government agencies on the west coast.

MPAs in the U.S. are managed by a host of federal, state, local and tribal agencies, including national marine sanctuaries, state parks, and national wildlife refuges. Under the proposed definition of "marine protected area" in the framework, the National Marine Protected Areas Center has initially identified about 1,500 marine conservation areas, managed by over 100 hundred agencies, that would likely qualify as MPAs under the proposed definition. Most of these areas were established after 1970, allow multiple uses, and are managed by state agencies. While the proposed definition includes areas ranging from those that allow fishing to areas closed to all uses, less than one percent of U.S. waters are currently set aside as no-take marine reserves.

The release of the draft framework is the result of comments received from a series of public dialogue meetings and federal, state, and tribal agency workshops; the MPA Federal Advisory Committee; fishery management councils; anglers; conservation organizations; the energy industry; commercial fishermen; coastal communities; scientists; divers; and others. Recommendations were provided to NOAA and the

Department of the Interior in separate written reports by the federal advisory committee and the states. The reports as well as comments and notes from public meetings can be found at www.mpa.gov.

After the 145-day public comment period ends, the MPA Center will address all comments received, and begin working with government partners to establish the national system.

Executive Order 13158 was signed by President Clinton in May 2000, and endorsed by the Bush Administration in July 2001. It calls for "...a scientifically based, comprehensive national system of MPAs representing diverse U.S. marine ecosystems, and the Nation's natural and cultural resources." The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, released in 2005, outlines a variety of actions for promoting the responsible use and stewardship of ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of all Americans. These actions, which emphasize greater scientific and programmatic coordination between ocean agencies as well as those taken under the MPA Executive Order, complement one another and will be closely coordinated.

NOAA Issues Unscheduled El Niño Advisory **El Niño Makes a Comeback**

Sept. 13, 2006 — Scientists at the [NOAA Climate Prediction Center](#) reported today that [El Niño conditions](#) have developed in the tropical Pacific and are likely to continue into early 2007. Ocean temperatures increased remarkably in the equatorial Pacific during the last two weeks. "Currently, weak El Niño conditions exist, but there is a potential for this event to strengthen into a moderate event by winter," said Vernon Kousky, NOAA's lead El Niño forecaster.

Some impacts from the developing [El Niño](#) are already evident in the pattern of tropical precipitation. During the last 30 days, drier-than-average conditions have been observed across all of Indonesia, Malaysia and most of the Philippines, which are usually the first areas to experience ENSO-related impacts. This dryness can be expected to continue, on average, for the remainder of 2006.

Also, the development of weak El Niño conditions helps explain why this Atlantic hurricane season has been less active than was previously expected. El Niño typically acts to suppress hurricane activity by increasing the vertical wind shear over the Caribbean Sea region. However, at this time the El Niño impacts on Atlantic hurricanes are small. "We are still in the peak months of the Atlantic hurricane season, and conditions remain generally conducive for hurricane formation," said Gerry Bell, NOAA's lead seasonal hurricane forecaster.

Typical El Niño effects are likely to develop over North America during the upcoming winter season. Those include warmer-than-average temperatures over western and central Canada, and over the western and northern United States. Wetter-than-average conditions are likely over portions of the U.S. Gulf Coast and Florida, while drier-than-average conditions can be expected in the Ohio Valley and the Pacific Northwest.

The term El Niño refers to the large-scale ocean-atmosphere climate phenomenon linked to a periodic warming in sea surface temperatures across the central and east-central equatorial Pacific (between approximately the date line and 120 degrees west). El Niño represents the warm phase of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, cycle, and is sometimes referred to as a Pacific warm episode. El Niño originally referred to an annual warming of sea surface temperatures along the west coast of tropical South America.

Relevant Web Sites

- [El Niño/southern Oscillation \(ENSO\) Diagnostic Discussion](#)
- [Weekly Update: ENSO Cycle: Recent Evolution, Current Status and Predictions \(PowerPoint\)](#)
- [NOAA's El Niño Southern Oscillation](#)
- [NOAA Satellite Images of Sea Surface Temperature Anomalies](#)

U.S. Has Second Warmest Summer on Record

Nation Experienced Warmest January - August Period On Record

Sept. 14, 2006 — Summer 2006 was the second warmest June-to-August period in the continental U.S. since records began in 1895, according to scientists at the [NOAA National Climatic Data Center](#) in Asheville, N.C. Additionally, the [2006 January-to-August](#) period was the warmest on record for the continental U.S. Above-average rainfall last month in the central and southwestern U.S. improved drought conditions in some areas, but moderate-to-extreme drought continued to affect 40 percent of the country.

U.S. Temperature Highlights

The average June-August 2006 temperature for the contiguous United States (based on preliminary data) was 2.4 degrees F (1.3 degrees C) above the 20th century average of 72.1 degrees F (22.3 degrees C). This was the second warmest summer on record, slightly cooler than the record of 74.7 degrees F set in 1936 during the Dust Bowl era. This summer's average was 74.5 degrees F. Eight of the past ten summers have been warmer than the U.S. average for the same period.

The persistence of the anomalous warmth in 2006 made this January-August period the warmest on record for the continental U.S., eclipsing the previous record of 1934. A blistering heat wave in July impacted most of the nation, breaking more than 2,300 daily records and more than 50 all-time high temperature records. Additional high temperature records were broken during the first part of August.

The Residential Energy Demand Temperature Index (REDTI) ranked this summer as the sixth highest index in the 112-year record. Using this index, NOAA scientists determined that the nation's residential energy demand was approximately 10 percent higher than what would have occurred under average climate conditions for the season. Last month was the 11th warmest August on record in the contiguous U.S.

U.S. Precipitation Highlights

The summer's record and near-record heat, combined with below-average precipitation, worsened drought conditions throughout much of the summer for large parts of the country. But above-average rainfall in August helped ease drought conditions in some of the most severely affected states.

An active monsoon season in the Southwest gave New Mexico its wettest August on record, and precipitation in Arizona also was above average. Drought relief extended to New Mexico, parts of Arizona and west Texas. However, the heavy downpours brought flooding across parts of the entire region.

The Plains states, the Midwest, the Carolinas and parts of the Northeast benefited from above-average precipitation in August. This helped reduce drought severity in other areas such as the Dakotas and parts of Oklahoma but was not sufficient to end drought in the most severely affected parts of those states. Drought conditions worsened in some parts of the country. Rainfall in August was below normal from Montana to southern California and the Pacific Northwest. This contributed to a continuing and already-

active wildfire season. Through early September, the number of acres burned in the U.S. is nearing the record of almost 8.7 million acres burned during all of 2005, according to the National Interagency Fire Center.

Global Highlights

It was the third warmest June-August (northern hemisphere summer) on record for global land- and ocean-surface temperatures since records began in 1880 (1.01 degrees F/0.56 degrees C above the 20th century mean) and the fourth warmest August (0.0.97 degrees F/0.54 degrees C). The warmest northern-hemisphere summer and August occurred in 1998.

Relevant Web Sites

[Climate of 2006: August in Historical Perspective](#)

[NOAA Drought Information Center](#)

In the Gulf States

Florida Communities Trust Awards More Than \$77 Million in Grants to Florida's Communities

~DCA announces 2006-2007 land acquisition grant recipients~

TALLAHASSEE- Florida Communities Trust (FCT), housed within the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) announced funding for twenty-four new land acquisition projects, totaling almost \$78 million to communities across Florida. When local matching funds are added, over \$136 million will be going to Florida's communities to provide public recreation and green space. Eighty-five local governments and nonprofit environmental organizations submitted a total of 115 applications requesting more than \$240 million in grant funding, record numbers for the program.

"I am pleased to see so many of Florida's communities submitting projects to set aside land and I applaud the grant recipients for their commitment to preserving natural resources and enriching the quality of life for citizens and future generations," said Governor Jeb Bush. "The unprecedented amount of funding requested by local governments through FCT illustrates the strong need for this sort of community-based program," added Bush.

The Florida Communities Trust was created in 1989 to aid local governments in protecting land, waterfront access, natural areas and cultural resources in an effort to enhance Florida's communities. Due to its locally driven nature, FCT differentiates itself from other state land acquisition programs. Grants are awarded through an annual competitive application cycle that places an emphasis on projects that further the vision expressed in the local government's comprehensive plan.

"Providing open space and recreational areas is a key element in sound community planning," said Thaddeus Cohen, Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs. "FCT is able to assist communities every year in adding these critical components to provide a more livable community and a better quality of life for residents," added Cohen.

Over the past 15 years, FCT has provided Florida's communities with more than \$575 million.

Adding local match funds to the completed acquisitions, over \$1 billion has gone toward the preservation of land for parks and open spaces across the State. FCT provides local governments the opportunity to leverage their dollars with state funds, optimizing conservation benefits, resulting in tens of thousands of acres acquired for public use and enjoyment.

“The partnership between FCT, local governments and environmental non-profits has continued to enhance Florida’s communities by acquiring unique land that citizens and visitors can enjoy,” said Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Colleen Castille. “FCT provides local governments with a wonderful opportunity to preserve treasures that are unique to the individual communities,” added Castille.

About Florida’s Communities Trust:

Administered by the Department of Community Affairs, Florida Communities Trust is a state land acquisition grant program that has provided more than \$535 million to local governments to preserve parks and recreational space. FCT makes available \$66 million of Florida Forever funds on an annual basis.

About the Department of Community Affairs:

DCA was established to assist Florida’s communities in meeting the challenges of growth, reducing effects of disasters and investing in the community.

For more information regarding the Department of Community Affairs and the Florida Communities Trust grant program and for a full list of projects, please visit www.dca.state.fl.us.

Rookery Bay Opens Red Tide Exhibit at Environmental Learning Center

--New exhibit informs public of red tide research initiatives

NAPLES – Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) today unveiled a new, permanent red tide exhibit at the Environmental Learning Center. The exhibit will provide visitors with an opportunity to learn about red tide, its effects on human health, seafood safety and red tide research in South Florida.

“Increasing awareness for residents and visitors about red tide is an important step in addressing public health and the environment,” said Rookery Bay NERR Director Gary Lytton. “Red tide also has an impact on boating and tourism, linking the health of our coasts to the health of our economy.”

The exhibit was developed by the Collier County chapter of Solutions To Avoid Red Tide, Inc on behalf of the Red Tide Alliance, whose members include Mote Marine Laboratory and Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Institute. Funding for the red tide exhibit was provided through a grant from the Florida Department of Health.

Rookery Bay was established 28 years ago as a partnership between the State of Florida and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The reserve is one of 27 research reserves operating across the nation. The Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) manages Rookery Bay along with 44 other sites that include aquatic preserves, National Estuarine Research Reserves and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. CAMA’s programs and activities are designed to help Floridians better understand and conserve the State’s resources through research, education and preservation.

For information about Rookery Bay or Florida's estuaries, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/. For more about the Friends of Rookery Bay, visit www.rookerybay.org.

Lake Charles Completes Debris Cleanup One Year After Hurricane Rita Strikes

BATON ROUGE – One year after Hurricane Rita devastated several south western Louisiana parishes, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality announced that more than 99 percent of all of the hurricane generated debris has been cleaned up.

DEQ, with the approval from local officials, established 186 debris management sites selected to handle staging, chipping, grinding, burning, and disposal of debris generated as a result of Hurricanes Rita. Through this collaboration, DEQ, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers have hauled and disposed of 8.4 million cubic yards of construction and demolition debris.

Hurricane Rita one year report:

- 1008 of 1009 structures have been demolished.
- 2,233,384 pounds of hazardous and non-hazardous debris has been properly disposed of
- 152,868 orphan containers (drums, cylinders, propane tanks, fuel tanks, etc.) have been properly disposed of
- 39,713 white goods (refrigerators/freezers, washers/dryers, stoves, AC units, etc.) have been recycled
- 3,164 electronic goods have been recycled
- 1,373 water samples were taken and 22,330 analyses performed
- 69 school assessments were completed

“It is very significant accomplishment that nearly 100 percent of the debris generated by Hurricane Rita has been cleaned up,” said DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel. “State, local and federal agencies all shared a common purpose to clean up southwestern Louisiana in a safe, environmentally sound manner. This could not have been accomplished without the collaborative spirit of all parties involved.”

Louisiana Recovery Authority Launches Virtual Media Center in Advance of Rita Anniversary

LAKE CHARLES, La. (September 22, 2006) - In anticipation of the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Rita, the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) launched a virtual media center today to serve as a portal for reporters covering the event. The portal, located at www.rememberrebirth.org, will operate as the central online resource for Rita anniversary-related news. The Web site will be continuously updated with recovery statistics, press releases, fact sheets, contact information and more.

Reporters can also access the LRA's recently released [Rita Report](#), outlining progress made since the storm one year ago. The report summarizes the social and economic impact and recovery of parishes throughout Southwest Louisiana that were affected by Hurricane Rita. Recovery activities and statistics highlighted on the site include:

IMPACT:

- Nearly 20,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees were successfully re-evacuated prior to Hurricane Rita's landfall.

- Immediately following Hurricane Rita, more than 15,500 people were displaced outside of Louisiana compared to 16,500 people displaced within the state.
- Hurricane Rita caused \$592 million in damage to Louisiana's agriculture, forestry and fishing industry.
- An estimated 25,000 head of cattle were lost as a result of Hurricane Rita.

RECOVERY:

- More than \$362 million has been obligated in 58 Louisiana parishes for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and public infrastructure repair projects through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance program and the state's Local Government Infrastructure program.
- More than 2.6 million tons of debris were generated by Hurricane Rita. As of September 2006, FEMA reported workers had hauled 99% of the debris and demolished more than half of the structures severely damaged by the hurricane.
- Nearly \$4 million in Louisiana Bridge Loans were distributed to more than 130 business owners in Southwest Louisiana to give them access to capital immediately following the disaster.

Data indicators also highlight there are more than 13,000 homeowners in Southwest Louisiana that are eligible to receive assistance through the Road Home program, which covers all uninsured, uncompensated damages incurred by homeowners, regardless of their geographic location or whether their losses were caused by wind damage, flood damage or both.

Road Home Assistance Centers opened last month in Terrebonne, Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion parishes.

Only 1,450 homeowners in the 15 parishes most severely impacted by Hurricane Rita have submitted applications for assistance through the Road Home. All homeowners who suffered major or severe damage are encouraged to apply online at www.road2la.org or by calling 1-888-ROAD-2-LA.

When Hurricane Rita made landfall along the Texas/Louisiana border on September 24, 2005, it was a Category 3 hurricane with winds in excess of 120 miles per hour pushing a 20 foot storm surge. The devastation it left behind made it the third most expensive natural disaster in US history.

Joint Budget Committee Approves \$14 Million to Support Parishes Implementing New Building Codes

BATON ROUGE, La. (September 21, 2006) - The Louisiana Legislature's Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget approved the Louisiana Recovery Authority's (LRA) plan this week to provide \$14 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Funds to local governments as they implement the new statewide building codes.

The initiative will offer training for code enforcement officials so they can accurately implement the provisions of the revised code. Parishes without a building inspection office will be provided with resources to create one. "We thank the committee for their support of this important initiative as we rebuild our homes, schools and workplaces," said LRA Board Member Tim Coulon. "This sends a clear message to local cities and parishes that we are here to help - we will provide all the resources they need to help them meet these new codes."

The stringent new codes were developed as part of Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco's ongoing commitment to rebuild a safer, stronger and smarter Louisiana. In accordance with the state's Uniform

Construction Code Council (UCCC), local governments must implement the new statewide building code by January 1, 2007.

Mississippi Coastal Cleanup Nets 4,032 Bags of Trash

Boaters and land-based volunteers flocked to Mississippi's beaches, islands and waterways to pick up marine debris at 44 designated cleanup sites during the 18th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, part of the International Coastal Cleanup—the world's largest single-day volunteer effort to clean up the marine environment. More than 3,200 volunteers picked up 4,032 bags of trash along 147 miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties and the Barrier Islands during the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup.

Volunteers collected 63,111 pounds of trash—that's more than 31.5 tons of marine debris—including 4 dump truckloads of marine debris too large to fit in trash bags, such as the two refrigerators found on Deer Island. Other items collected were: tires, a car battery, a television, two riding lawn mowers, tires, 8-track tapes, a kitchen cabinet door, ceramic serving dishes, a bundle of foreign mail, a swim fin, wooden pallets, Princess Diana Royal Wedding commemorative coin, two cars, a Tennessee Williams novel, and boxer shorts. There were 4 bird entanglements reported, one turtle, and a raccoon. The most peculiar item reported was a breast implant found on Horn Island. The DMR Fisheries Dive Team did an underwater cleanup at its site at the pier at West Ship Island and removed three bunches of fishing line, including some with treble hooks and some with a mirror lure.

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup—in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup—takes place each year on the third Saturday in September. 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-goers. During last year's International Coastal Cleanup about 450,000 volunteers worldwide removed debris from 18,000 miles of coasts spanning 74 different nations. They collected 8.2 million pounds of debris, including enough picnic supplies for a family of four to have a picnic every day for the next 60 years.

More than 50 percent of the debris found during the last Mississippi Coastal Cleanup came from land-based sources such as beach picnics, inappropriate or illegal dumping and general littering. The source of most debris is human activity. "Debris generated on land can be blown, swept, or washed out to sea. While storms like Katrina are one source of debris, most debris can be traced back to a single source—people," said Lauren Thompson, state coordinator of the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and public relations director for the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. "If we change our behavior, we can keep marine debris out of the water."

The mission of the international 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 affect 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.

After the cleanup, John Graham of Outback Steakhouse in D'Iberville and his staff—assisted by 50 Girl Scouts—provided a free lunch of hamburgers, chicken sandwiches, chips, fruit and drinks to 1,500

volunteers between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. In Jackson County, 500 volunteers received a free lunch of beef and chicken sandwiches, sides and drinks at The Shed Barbeque in Ocean Springs courtesy of The Shed and Chevron. In Hancock County, the Office of Congressman Gene Taylor and the Bay St. Louis Rotary Club treated volunteers to hotdogs and drinks at a cookout held at the foot of Garfield Ladner Memorial Pier and Coleman Ave. at the beach in Waveland.

“The community came out in full force to make this year’s Mississippi Coastal Cleanup a huge success. Thousands of South Mississippians and visitors rolled up their sleeves to clean up their coastal communities and make our shoreline and waterways a safer and more enjoyable place for people and wildlife,” Thompson said. “The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup was made possible only through the dedication and hard work of the coordinators, sponsors and volunteers who planned and participated in this hands-on educational event.”

DMR to Conduct Meetings with MS Commercial Fishermen in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson Counties

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will conduct meetings in Hancock, Jackson and Harrison counties with licensed Mississippi commercial fishermen later this month. The purpose of the meetings is to get input from fishermen about the implementation of programs designed to study the recovery of Mississippi fisheries. The following meetings will be held:

- **Hancock County:** Sept. 26, 6-8 p.m. at Kiln Library, 17065 Hwy. 603, Kiln, Miss.;
- **Jackson County:** Sept. 27, 6-8 p.m. at Pelican Landing, 6217 Hwy. 613, Moss Point; and
- **Harrison County:** Sept. 28, 6-8 p.m. at Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, 1815 Popp’s Ferry Road, Biloxi.

The programs to be implemented are funded by an emergency declaration approved by the U.S. Congress and signed by President George W. Bush in June 2006. For more information, call Rita Duvernay at (228) 523-4066.

Galveston County Dune Protection and Beach Access Plan Approved

Beach user fee of \$10 a year will raise money for beach related services

AUSTIN — The Texas General Land Office has approved the Galveston County Dune Protection and Beach Access Plan. Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, announced today.

The county had been operating under a conditionally approved plan since August 16, 1993. “County officials should be commended for working with the Land Office to finalize a plan that not only protects county beaches, but enhances them,” Patterson said. “This plan strikes the delicate balance of protecting public access to Texas beaches while maintaining private property rights for those who own land along the coast.”

The Dune Protection and Beach Access Plan allows Galveston County officials to impose a \$10 beach user fee via an annual parking sticker for parking on Bolivar beaches. Money raised through this fee is dedicated to beach related services.

The plan also establishes a new dune protection line at 200 feet landward of the line-of-vegetation on Bolivar Peninsula, except for areas on the western end of the island. Development in this area is subject to permitting through the Texas General Land Office.

Also under the new plan, property owners will be allowed, under certain conditions, to build cisterns, septic tanks and septic fields on previously platted lots seaward of a structure provided they do not encroach on the public beach.

For more information on the Texas Open Beaches Act or the Dune Protection program, visit <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/beachdune.html>.

For a copy of the Galveston County Dune Protection and Beach Access Plan, visit http://www.co.galveston.tx.us/dunes/dunes_project_select.htm.

Patterson Announces Details of Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy

Policy balances private property rights with public access

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today released details of his Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy. “This policy balances the right of public access to Texas beaches with the interests of property owners whose homes wind up on or near the beach due to erosion,” Patterson said. “This policy is a commonsense approach, clear and focused.”

Patterson’s Plan for Texas Open Beaches, released earlier this summer, seeks to avoid costly, time-consuming litigation by offering up to \$40,000 to help property owners move their structures away from the public beach. Patterson’s Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy, however, clarifies how the Land Office will prioritize removal of structures on the public beach through litigation. Patterson stressed that structures not blocking public access to or use of the beach, that do not pose an imminent health or safety hazard, or that are not on state-owned submerged land will not be a priority for litigation.

The decision to pursue litigation to remove a property from the public beach will be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the conditions existing at the time a determination is made.

“I want to make it clear: My intent is to work with property owners to resolve such a situation amicably where practical,” Patterson said.

Patterson has made \$1.3 million in state money immediately available to remove qualified houses from the public beach. He said he will also seek additional funding for this effort. Patterson’s “Plan for Texas Open Beaches” presents eight proposals, some of which include legislative measures for the upcoming 2007 session.

This is the most comprehensive plan to address the issue of structures on the beach since the creation of the Open Beaches Act in 1959. No other Land Commissioner has addressed this issue with this level of specificity. His proposals include immediate steps to:

- Allow the Land Commissioner discretion to determine which houses on the beach constitute a public health and safety threat. This will allow the Land Commissioner to better prioritize efforts to remove houses that may be in violation of the Texas Open Beaches Act.
- Adopt new rules to allow owners of houses on the beach to get repair permits or hook up to public utilities — as they could under the recently expired enforcement moratorium — but without protection from removal actions.

- Offer \$1.3 million in initial state financial assistance to remove houses that are encroaching on the beach due to severe erosion of the Texas coast, and seek additional funding.

Patterson also detailed what he will seek from the 80th Legislature in 2007. If enacted, Patterson’s legislative agenda would:

- Create fines and civil penalties for those who willfully erect structures that hinder access to the beach;
- Deny state-funded windstorm insurance coverage for structures on the public beach based upon criteria set by the Land Commissioner;
- Study setbacks for new construction and seek additional authority for counties; and
- Make the provisions of the Open Beaches Act clear to buyers — in plain language — on disclosures for all coastal property transactions.

For more information on Patterson’s Texas Open Beaches Enforcement Policy or Plan for Texas Open Beaches, visit <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/beachdune/openbeaches.html>.

New Web Application Gives Texas Anglers Insight Into Potential Success by Bay

AUSTIN, Texas — When two or more anglers meet just about anywhere in the world, it’s a sure bet one of the first things out of one of their mouths goes something like this: “Doing any good?” Texas anglers now have a new tool to help answer that age-old question.

It’s called the “Catch Rate by Minor Bay Web Application,” and was created by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department’s coastal fisheries division and Geographic Information Systems lab with funding from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service State Wildlife Grant.

“This provides a way for the public to easily access summary data and to be able to evaluate different success rates for different species on different bays,” said Kim Ludeke, Ph.D., TPWD GIS lab manager. “You can also see how success rates have changed over times.”

The application covers every bay system in Texas, and shows some of the most popular boat ramps and access points on each bay. The application allows users to query by a fish species and year to see what bays have high, medium, and low catch rates. Alternatively, users can query for a particular bay and year to see what fish species they are likely to catch.

Catch rates are classified into high, medium or low based on monofilament gill net surveys conducted seasonally since 1981 by the Coastal Fisheries division. While users won’t be able to see what’s biting now, or how fishing was last week, they can get a good idea of which species historically have been most abundant in a particular bay, and how that body of water compares to others on the coast.

“Our 30-year database is widely acknowledged as one of the best in the world, and this is one way we can make that data available to our constituents,” said Larry McKinney, Ph.D., director of TPWD’s coastal fisheries division. The application includes an extensive “Frequently Asked Questions” section to help users navigate its menus, and query results are printable.

On the Net:

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/maps/gis/ris/catch_rate.phtml

Other News

New Listserv for Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network (EEN) has a new listserv to facilitate information sharing around the Gulf. The EEN is charged to, "... facilitate information sharing at multiple levels, transfer successes among members and maximize the impact of limited educational resources," as noted in the Governors Action Plan For Healthy and Resilient Coasts. Hosted by the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, the listserv is the first step toward accomplishing this goal and will function until a more permanent mechanism is developed.

The listserv is interactive, allowing users to submit information to the network without waiting for a newsletter, monthly deadline, or other barrier. To subscribe to the listserv log onto: <http://www.disl.org/mailman/listinfo/gomaeen> and follow the instructions.

Corps of Engineers Seeks Public Comments About Proposal to Renew and Revise Nationwide Permits

WASHINGTON, DC – The U.S. Corps of Engineers has begun seeking comments about a proposal to renew and revise nationwide permits for work in wetlands and other waters that are regulated by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 101 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. "We shall improve the environmental protection provided by the nationwide permits while providing timely authorizations for work in water and wetlands," John Paul Woodley Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), said. "We have also simplified the text in the permits to clarify them and improve compliance."

The nationwide permits authorize activities that are similar in nature and cause only minimal adverse environmental impacts separately or on a cumulative basis. Activities ranges from work associated with aids to navigation and utility lines to Coast Guard-approved bridges and cleanup of hazardous and toxic wastes.

Many of the nationwide permits remain unchanged from 2002. The Corps' division engineers may add, after public review and consultation, regional conditions to protect local aquatic ecosystems such as fens or bottomland hardwoods or minimize adverse effects on fish or shellfish spawning, wildlife nesting or other ecologically critical events.

The proposal is to be published in the Federal Register on September 26. The Corps will accept comments for a 60-day period that ends on November 24. The current set of nationwide permits expires in March 2007, and these proposed permits are to replace them. "Our goal is to develop nationwide permits that provide clarity and certainty, saving time and cost to the government and the regulated public," Mr. Woodley said. "We want to encourage innovation and creativity in meeting the challenges of protecting America's wetlands and aquatic resources." Additional information about the Corps' regulatory program can be found at <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/>

Clean Up Begins at Sabine National Wildlife Refuge

September 20, 2006

Contacts: Diane Borden-Billiot, 337-558-5574 M: 337-912-0622; Tom MacKenzie, 678-296-6400

Hackberry, LA—[Sabine National Wildlife Refuge](#) was trashed by hurricane Rita one year ago this week. This wildlife haven was literally covered with tons of debris carried into refuge marshes by Rita's storm surge. Almost one fourth of this 125,000 acre wetland refuge is covered with remnant homes, businesses, and industries from along Louisiana's coast. The approximately seven million cubic meters of debris (250,000 dump truck loads) contains everything from teddy bears to tanks the size of large 18-wheelers. A post hurricane assessment identified 1,400 potential hazardous material items containing an estimated 115,000 to 350,000 gallons of hazardous liquids and gases blown and submerged throughout refuge wetlands.

After hurricane Rita, FEMA had the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency clean up Cameron Parish, but the Stafford Act prevented them from working on federal property. Recovery of identified hazardous materials was estimated to cost millions to remove, which the Service did not have. On June 15, 2006, President Bush and Congress approved a \$132.4 million emergency supplemental fund for the Service to clean-up and make hurricane-related repairs throughout the Southeast. \$12 million from this supplemental will be used for the current clean-up operation at Sabine National Wildlife Refuge.

"The scope and complexity of this recovery effort is unprecedented," said Don Voros, Project Leader of the Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "We've made excellent progress to make this refuge safe for the public and for the wildlife."

An Incident Command staff composed of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, and Tennessee Valley Authority employees assembled during July 2006 to oversee the Sabine clean-up operation. Shortly after, Clean Harbors Environmental Services was contracted to conduct the debris removal. It takes thoughtful planning and specialized equipment to remove debris from sensitive wetland areas without road access. Service staff and wetlands specialists plan the recovery of each item in a safe manner with the least amount of damage to the wetlands.

This clean-up team includes 120 recovery workers and more than 40 highly specialized pieces of equipment. Equipment being used to accomplish the mission include: single, double, and triple engine airboats, airboat cranes, outboard boats, pontoon barges, long and short reach excavators, marsh buggies and draglines, four wheelers, vacuum trucks and other miscellaneous equipment. There are approximately 40 equipment resources deployed in the field. In less than a month, the container recovery unit has collected 1,283 items. The first container recovered was a leaking 55-gallon drum of oil sighted during an aerial reconnaissance and removed August 23, 2006.

The most hazardous materials collected so far have been propane, antifreeze and gasoline tanks. The largest tanks removed have been 20,000 gallon oil production tanks. Later this week a 30,000 gallon tank, the size of a large 18-wheeler will be recovered from the marsh. As these large containers are brought into the collection site, owners are being contacted to come pick them up, which all have done so far.

The major clean-up effort should be finished by December 2006. After that, the roads, restrooms and other facilities will still need to be constructed, which could take an additional six months or longer. "We hope to have portions of the refuge open by next summer," said Voros. He went on to say that the Service will have an ongoing monitoring program to be prepared for any items not found during the initial recovery effort which may be later discovered and might pose a threat to public safety, wildlife or the environment.

Fish and Wildlife Service Conducts Five-year Status Reviews of 14 Southeastern Species

September 8, 2006

Contacts: Tom MacKenzie, 404/679-7291

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) announces plans to conduct five-year status reviews of the endangered Alabama beach mouse and 13 other endangered and threatened species. These five-year reviews are conducted to ensure that listing classifications under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are accurate. Any interested party is invited to provide information and comments pertaining to these species. Written comments and information related to these five-year reviews must be received on or before November 7, 2006.

This notice covers fourteen species including the federally listed, endangered [Alabama beach mouse](#), [southern combshell](#) (mussel), [black clubshell](#) (mussel), [flat pigtoe](#) (mussel), [heavy pigtoe](#) (mussel), and [stirrupshell](#) (mussel). This notice also includes the federally listed, threatened [eastern indigo snake](#), [Red Hills salamander](#), [Ozark cavefish](#), [bayou darter](#), [Arkansas fatmucket](#) (mussel), [Louisiana pearlshell](#) (mussel), [Kral's water-plantain](#) (plant), and [Alabama streak-sorus fern](#) (plant).

Specifically, this review seeks information on: (1) species biology, including population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics; (2) habitat conditions, including amount, distribution, and suitability; (3) conservation measures that have been implemented; (4) threat status and trends; and, (5) other new information, data, or corrections, including taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the ESA list, and improved analytical methods. Comments and materials received will be available for public inspection by appointment.

In addition to reviewing the classification of these species, a five-year review presents an opportunity to track the species' recovery progress. It may benefit species by providing valuable information to guide future conservation efforts. Information gathered during a review can assist in making funding decisions, conducting interagency consultations, making permitting decisions, and determining whether to update recovery plans, and other actions under the ESA.

The Federal Register notice announcing the status review of these fourteen federally listed species is available on-line at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/E6-14866.htm>

Written comments and information submitted on the Alabama beach mouse may be e-mailed to robert_tawes@fws.gov, faxed to 251-441-6222, or sent via regular mail to the Field Supervisor, Daphne Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1208-B Main Street, Daphne, Alabama 36526.

Information submitted on the eastern indigo snake, Red Hills salamander, bayou darter, southern combshell, black clubshell, flat pigtoe, heavy pigtoe, stirrupshell, Kral's water plantain, and Alabama streak-sorus fern, may be e-mailed to cary_norquist@fws.gov, faxed to 601/965 4340, or sent via regular mail to the Field Supervisor, Jackson Field Office, 6578 Dogwood View Parkway, Suite A, Jackson, Mississippi 39213.

Information submitted on the Louisiana pearlshell may be e-mailed to deborah_fuller@fws.gov, faxed at 337/291-3139, or sent via regular mail to the Field Supervisor, Lafayette Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 646 Cajundome Boulevard, Suite 400, Lafayette, Louisiana 70506. Information received in response to this notice of review will be available for public inspection by appointment, during normal business hours, at the same addresses.

The Other Disaster Assistance: Infrastructure Aid- Federal funds help strengthen Texas communities hit by Hurricane Rita

Release Date: September 20, 2006

AUSTIN, Texas -- After Hurricane Rita's Sept. 24 landfall, Texans witnessed how disasters threaten more than personal property and homes. The hurricane damaged or destroyed bridges, highways, public buildings, parks and utility systems, not to mention leaving behind debris and disrupting communications and emergency services. A presidential disaster declaration authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help communities recover; and, in Rita's aftermath, FEMA has obligated more than \$360.3 million in public assistance funds to the state of Texas to help with infrastructure recovery costs.

"FEMA's grant sources for disaster assistance are through either the individual households or public agencies," said E.C. "Butch" Smith, director of the Texas Transitional Recovery Office in Austin. "The Public Assistance program helps public agencies respond to disasters, recover from their impact and mitigate against future disasters."

Public assistance grants are for state agencies, local governments, Indian tribes and some private nonprofit organizations that perform certain services of a public nature, including some educational institutions. The current obligated amount of \$360.3 million includes \$54.3 million for emergency work and permanent work on school properties damaged by Rita. For a project to be eligible for FEMA and state approval the work must be required or completed as a result of a federally declared disaster; the site or work performed must be located within the disaster area; and the repair or restoration must be the legal responsibility of the eligible applicant.

When a project is approved, FEMA "obligates" the funds to the state for administration to eligible applicants. Typically the federal share of eligible costs is 75 percent. Texas is receiving Hurricane Rita infrastructure grants based on 90 percent reimbursement for permanent work, and 100 percent reimbursement for emergency work. Eligible projects resulting from Rita include documented debris removal, temporary sheltering, interim housing, emergency protective measures, and work designed to restore damaged facilities to pre-disaster condition.

Documentation of damage is important to the project submission process. The process protects public funds and maintains accountability for their use. Common reasons that funding may be held up or denied included: insufficient documentation, poor project accounting, unsupported costs, duplicated benefits, excessive equipment charges or unrelated project charges. Eligible expenses may not be reimbursed if improperly documented.

As a result of Hurricane Rita, Texas will also receive \$103.6 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds, which have been tagged by the state to be used for voluntary buyouts of homes in the flood plain; for public shelters; and construction of safe rooms in residences for storm protection. Authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and administered by FEMA, the HMGP provides grants that allow states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration. These projects carry a 75 percent federal share.

Grant Opportunities

Competitive Funding Opportunity for FY 2008 for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

NOAA has requested proposals in order to develop a prioritized list of projects that are ready and eligible for funding in fiscal year (FY) 2008 under the CELCP (similar to FY 2007). See the following Federal Register Notice and Full Funding Opportunity notice for specific details and requirements for this competition. Applications must be received from eligible coastal states through grants.gov or by mail no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on October 27, 2006. Each state may submit no more than 3 project proposals. Each project proposal may request a maximum of \$3 million in federal funding. Interested parties should contact the appropriate [state's CELCP lead](#) for additional information on the state's project solicitation process.

Summary: NOS/OCRM is soliciting coastal and estuarine land conservation acquisition projects from eligible coastal states. The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) was established “for the purpose of protecting important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses.” The announcement solicits proposals for land acquisition projects, up to 3 years in duration, with the purpose of protecting important coastal and estuarine areas. Project proposals should reflect priorities identified in an approved state CELC plan or, if a state's plan has not been completed, by the state's approved coastal management program. Eligible coastal states may submit up to three project proposals with a requested funding level not to exceed \$3,000,000 per project.

Dates: Proposals must be received by the NOS/OCRM no later than 11:59 p.m. EST, October 27, 2006. The closing deadline for applying through grants.gov is the same as for the paper submission noted in this announcement. Applicants are strongly recommended to allow sufficient time for delivery of materials, electronically or by mail, by the deadline.

Addresses: The full funding opportunity announcement and application materials are available via the grants.gov web site: <http://www.grants.gov> (opportunity # NOSOCRM-2008-2000828); via the CELCP website at <http://www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/land/celcplfundingop.html>; or by contacting the program officials identified below. Applicants must comply with all requirements contained in the full funding opportunity announcement. Applications may be submitted electronically through grants.gov at the internet site: <http://www.grants.gov> or by mail to the address listed here. If submitting electronically, NOAA strongly recommends that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through grants.gov. If submitting paper applications by mail, a signed original and 4 copies may be submitted to Attn: Elaine Vaudreuil, NOAA, Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Policy and Evaluation Division (N/ ORM7), 1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4, 10th Floor Station 10657, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

For Further Information Contact: CELCP Program Managers: Elaine Vaudreuil, OCRM, 301-713-3155 ext 103; via Internet: Elaine.Vaudreuil@noaa.gov or Elisabeth Morgan, OCRM, 301-713-3155 ext 166; via Internet at Elisabeth.Morgan@noaa.gov.

Websites:

[Federal Register Notice](#)

[Full Funding Opportunity Notice includes Project and Budget Templates and Project Application Checklist](#)
[Project Description/Scope of Work Template](#)
[Budget Template](#)
[Project Application Checklist](#)

Training and Conferences

Gulf Estuarine Research Society Meeting

November 2 - 4, 2006

Omni Marina Tower
707 N Shoreline Boulevard
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401

The Gulf Estuarine Research Society (GERS) sponsors biennial meetings in even years to foster interactions among estuarine scientists performing research in bays, estuaries, and the coastal zone of the Gulf of Mexico. GERS is an affiliate society of the Estuarine Research Federation (ERF), which publishes the journal *Estuaries and Coasts* and sponsors biennial fall meetings in odd years. The GERS meeting provides a perfect opportunity for presentations by students, or others beginning their careers. The informal meeting format will encourage lively interactions and provide a forum to build collegial relationships among the Gulf's scientific community. Scientists, resource managers, and others working in estuarine, coastal, and oceanic environments of the Gulf of Mexico are invited to attend and participate. The meeting format will include an invited plenary session, contributed oral presentations, and posters on specific regional research.

The 2006 meeting will be held at The Omni Marina Tower in downtown Corpus Christi, Texas. The meeting will be held November 2 - 4, 2006 and will start with a social event on Thursday evening, presentations all day Friday, continuing for a half-day on Saturday. The location is on the waterfront and downtown Corpus Christi has many excellent restaurants and watering holes to this a fun visit.

The registration fee is \$60 per person. The fee includes breaks, and the conference banquet. All persons attending must register. Use the attached registration form. The preferred method to register is to fax the form to Dixie Smith at 361-825-2050.

Contacts

Paul Montagna paul.montagna@tamucc.edu or Greg Stunz greg.stunz@tamucc.edu.

Florida West Coast Artificial Reef Workshop

The conference will provide an opportunity for artificial reef coordinators and managers on Florida's west coast to network and receive information updates on various artificial reef developments and issues. Sessions will include discussion on several issues related to artificial reefs, including their economic impact, fisheries surveys and impacts of red tides.

Location: Manatee County Extension Office, Palmetto, Florida

Dates: November 9, 2006

Contact Information: John Stevely 1303 17th St. West Palmetto, FL 34221 Phone: +1 941-722-4524

E-mail: jmarine@ufl.edu

Home Page URL:

http://flseagrant.org/program_areas/ecosystem_health/artificial%20reef%20meeting/index.htm

9th International Conference on Shellfish Restoration

Throughout the world there is a growing commitment to the restoration of degraded coastal ecosystems. Political pressure by shareholders in the future of the world's coastal areas has resulted in renewed interest in preserving and enhancing coastal resources at all levels of government. At the local level many volunteer organizations have developed successful programs to identify problem areas, recommend improvements and monitor progress.

The 9th International Conference on Shellfish Restoration (ICSR'06) will provide an opportunity for government officials, resource managers, users, community leaders and residents to discuss approaches to restore coastal shellfish ecosystems through management, enhancement and restoration efforts, and to learn about and discuss innovative management, ecological and social approaches to restore degraded shellfish habitat and improve coastal ecosystem health.

Location: Charleston, South Carolina, USA

Dates: November 15-19, 2006

Contact Information: Elaine Knight

E-mail: Elaine.Knight@scseagrant.org

Phone: +1-843-727-6406

Fax: +1-843-727-2080

Home Page URL: <http://www.scseagrant.org/icsr.htm>

Katrina: After the Storm Summit, Sept. 27-30 at University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign

A year after hurricane Katrina's devastation of the Louisiana and Mississippi gulf coasts, rebuilding efforts are finally moving forward. But it's the remaining, deeper tears in the region's social fabric that will be the main focus of a unique series of dialogues and events at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (and webcast online at www.hastac.org) designed to build community, connect diverse local and national audiences and ignite real and long-lasting positive change.

The four-day summit "Katrina: After the Storm - Civic Engagement Through Arts, Humanities and Technology" will take place Sept. 27-30. The free summit is being organized to engage the public in critical conversations about issues that arose in Katrina's wake, including social justice and equity, broken connections and the need for community healing. The summit is also part of the HASTAC ("haystack": the Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) InFormation Year 2006-07, a yearlong program that promotes the human and humane dimensions of technology. HASTAC is an international consortium of humanists, artists, scientists, social scientists, and engineers, with over 80 participating institutions.

Using advanced multicast audio and video technology, the summit also will connect members of the U. of I. and local communities with virtual communities at many venues. Lectures, panel discussions and other activities will focus on topics ranging from understanding and predicting dangerous weather, disaster preparedness and deployment of mobile hospitals to re-imagining public schools and the role of social entrepreneurship in rebuilding communities.

Also, ongoing throughout the summit will be "MiX TAPESty: A Hip Hop VR Experience," a collaboration between the U. of I. Krannert Art Museum's Collaborative Advanced Navigation Visual Arts Studio (CANVAS) and Duke University that will give middle school students hands-on experience with virtual-reality technology while learning history.

The summit opens with "A Cajun Fais Do-Do C-U Style" beginning at 6 p.m. Wednesday, September 27. The event will feature a screening of excerpts from "Perseverance: Putting It Back Together One Day at a Time," a documentary ethnography project about one man's determination to rebuild his home in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward, produced by U. of I. graduate student Maria Lovett; a panel discussion, musical and spoken-word performances, and an opportunity for the public to record personal stories. Following two days of presentations and performances, the summit culminates with "New Orleans Rising: A Town Hall Meeting," from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, September 30. The meeting was engineered with the vision of bringing together participants from Champaign-Urbana and sites across the country to share ideas for creating strong communities that can effectively manage future disasters.

More information about the summit, including registration instructions, event times and locations, sponsors and partners, is available on the Web at www.katrinasummit.uiuc.edu. For those unable to attend the "Katrina: After the Storm" events in person, a live webcast feed will be available on the HASTAC website. Please register at <https://www.hastac.org/user/register/> and then visit <http://www.hastac.org/live/> for more information. [Quicktime, VLC or other MPEG-4-compatible media player required.] Podcast and vodcast versions of the webcasts will also be made available after the event. Everyone is invited to contribute to discussion about the events and related issues on the online forum (<http://www.hastac.org/forum/29>).

Did you find this edition useful? Please send suggestions, comments, and new items for publication to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov