

Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

October 27, 2006

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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Coastal Services Center Unveils Dock and Pier Website

Permitting of residential docks and piers is a contentious issue in many coastal areas. The NOAA Coastal Services Center's new website, "Visualizing Dock Growth," will help coastal communities better understand, visualize, and manage the cumulative impacts of dock and pier growth in waterways. The site, designed with partners at the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, features 3-D visualizations of various scenarios at a real-life study area. Visit the site at http://www.csc.noaa.gov/dock_growth/index.html. For more information, contact [Zac Hart](#).

NOAA Recognized at Preserve America Summit in New Orleans

The White House's Preserve America Initiative seeks to invigorate community efforts to preserve our priceless cultural and natural heritage. The Preserve America Summit, at which the First Lady was a keynote speaker, explored ways to build on progress made over four decades of stewardship and productive use of America's historic properties. NOAA was recognized with the Chairman's Award from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for its outstanding advancement of the administration's Preserve America Initiative. National Marine Sanctuary Program Director Daniel J. Basta co-chaired one of the forums. For more information, contact [Cheryl Oliver](#).

NOAA and Coastal States Organization Kick-Off Visioning Initiative

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, in partnership with the Coastal States Organization (CSO), initiated an ambitious year-long effort to envision the future of coastal management. The outcome will be a set of core principles and options that NOAA, CSO, and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association can use in proposals to reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act. The visioning effort is being implemented in three phases: 1) draft a discussion paper to identify key issues; 2) solicit input from state managers to help define priorities; and 3) engage the broader coastal community for input. To kick-off the effort, NOAA drafted a paper entitled, "Discussion Paper: Current and Future Challenges for Coastal Management." For more information, contact [Ralph Cantral](#) or [Joelle Gore](#).

NOAA Launches New Cooperative Institute to Address Northern Gulf of Mexico Issues

NOAA scientists met in Stennis, Mississippi, and via video teleconference with academic researchers from the newly established Northern Gulf of Mexico Cooperative Research Institute. The Institute was formed, under NOAA sponsorship, by Mississippi State University, University of Southern Mississippi, Louisiana State University, Florida State University, and Alabama's Dauphin Island Sea Lab to support coastal management needs through coordinated research efforts in the northern Gulf of Mexico. Institute projects are intended to serve coastal managers with enhanced environmental forecasts and other assessment tools. For more information, contact [Eric Davenport](#) or [David W. Evans](#).

Studies Affirm Seafood to be a Healthy Food Choice

Americans can decrease their risk for heart disease by substituting seafood for other animal proteins, according to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. A government-sponsored study, released today by the Institute, finds that seafood is rich in nutrients, low in saturated fats, and should be incorporated more into the American diet to reduce the risk of early death by heart disease – the primary cause of death in this country. These findings affirm dietary guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with support from the Food and Drug Administration, sponsored this independent study titled, “Seafood Choices: Balancing Benefits and Risks.” Both agencies seek to simplify the message for consumers and help the public understand how to maximize important health benefits of eating seafood while minimizing exposure to environmental contaminants found in nearly every food source, including fish. “NOAA is proud to help bring this potentially life-saving information to the public’s attention, especially in light of the alarming rates of death by heart disease among Americans,” said [Bill Hogarth](#), director of NOAA Fisheries Service. “With fish populations rebuilding to sustainable levels and under tight harvest controls in U.S. waters, Americans should enjoy seafood as part of a healthy diet.”

In spite of some concern about environmental contaminants, the study concludes that, on balance, “seafood is a nutrient-rich food that makes a positive contribution to a healthful diet.” The findings advise all Americans to eat seafood regularly. Those who eat more than two servings per week should incorporate a variety of species into their diet to benefit from the variety of nutrients in different species and to avoid accumulated exposure to environmental contaminants.

The study affirms federal guidance tailored for women who are pregnant, nursing or may become pregnant, and children under age 12. These segments of the population safely can consume 12 ounces of fish per week, including six ounces of white canned tuna, but should avoid large predatory fish such as shark, swordfish, tilefish and king mackerel. The study highlights scientific evidence that seafood benefits fetal brain development, and encourages pregnant women to incorporate a variety of seafood into their diet.

As the study points out, seafood is safer today than in previous decades. Authors of the report emphasize that many environmental pollutants have been declining, including persistent organic compounds such as PCBs, pesticides and other chemicals. Consistent with the Institute’s recommendation, the federal government continues to improve monitoring controls for both domestic and imported seafood to address safety concerns, and NOAA continues to develop better methods for detecting environmental conditions that could potentially affect seafood safety. NOAA works with a number of government and state agencies and private organizations to increase seafood safety research, monitoring, early detection, identification, and warning. NOAA is involved with additional studies currently underway to fill some of the data gaps identified by the Institute related to omega-3 fatty acids, selenium, and other nutrients found in seafood as well as contaminants such as methyl mercury and PCBs.

The Institute recommends that NOAA establish an interagency working group to improve consumer information and put health benefits of consuming seafood into perspective for the public. NOAA is taking the lead to work with other appropriate federal agencies to develop and test consumer messages and develop new Web-based tools that will allow consumers to generate tailored seafood consumption guidance based on their personal demographics.

An additional study to be released tomorrow in the Journal of the American Medical Association concludes that the benefits of eating seafood far outweigh perceived risks. Researchers with the Harvard School of Public Health conducted the study, “Fish Intake, Contaminants, and Human Health: Evaluating the Risks and the Benefits.” The paper points out that even modest consumption of fish reduces risk of coronary death by 36 percent and total mortality by 17 percent. Consistent with the Institute study, the Harvard authors recommend consumers vary the species of fish in their diets and limit intake of large predatory species, which are highest in mercury content.

The Harvard study concludes that avoidance of seafood consumption due to perceived health risks could result in thousands of needless deaths per year due to coronary heart disease and suboptimal neurodevelopment in children.

VT Halter Marine to Build Swath Vessel for NOAA

NOAA announced that VT Halter Marine Inc. of Pascagoula, Miss., will complete the final design and build of a new Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull Coastal Mapping Vessel, or SWATH CMV, for the agency. NOAA exercised a \$15 million option for the ship with VT Halter Marine, which also completed the vessel's preliminary design under a separate option. The primary mission of the SWATH CMV will be to map the full seafloor in coastal areas for the nation's nautical charts. It will operate in waterways along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, Caribbean Sea and Great Lakes, conducting basic hydrographic surveys of the seafloor using side scan and multibeam sonar technologies. The vessel's ability to monitor and detect changes to the seafloor—including obstructions, shoaling and other dangers to navigation—will enhance the nation's commerce and security and improve NOAA's ability to characterize marine ecosystems.

[Read the Full Story.](#)

Hypoxia Workshop Fosters Collaboration between Diverse Scientific Disciplines

Improving management of hypoxic and contaminant effects on living resources in the Gulf of Mexico was the theme of a September workshop held at Tulane University in New Orleans. Participants included National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science-sponsored scientists from the Aquatic Research Consortium, Long-Term Estuary Assessment Group, Oceans and Human Health Initiative, Northern Gulf of Mexico Ecosystems and Hypoxia Assessment and the Coastal Hypoxia Research Program.

These programs are conducting research on this topic independently, and the workshop served as a forum for sharing research findings and methodology, exchanging ideas, and establishing collaborations. For more information about this workshop, contact Alan Lewitus at (301) 713-3338 ext. 178 or Alan.Lewitus@noaa.gov or Carol Auer at (301) 713-3338 ext.164 or Carol.Auer@noaa.gov.

Lionfish Eradication and Control Appears Impractical

Coastal managers of the Gulf and South Atlantic states and Mexico were informed of the possible threat to their native reef fish communities during the biannual meeting of the Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species October 4-5, 2006. As the National Ocean Service's (NOS) representative on the multi-agency panel, an NCCOS scientist told managers that no eradication or control measures for lionfish appear practical. Given the expanse of habitat and cost of eradication and

control measures, coastal managers were encouraged to focus efforts on prevention of potentially invasive marine finfish. The Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species is one of six regional panels of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. To learn more about the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force visit <http://www.anstaskforce.gov>. For more information, contact James Morris at (252)-728-8782 or James.Morris@noaa.gov.

In the Gulf States

ADEM to Host Watershed Protection Workshop

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Environmental Management will present planning agencies, developers, construction professionals, elected officials and business leaders with valuable information on watershed protection Oct. 26 in Montgomery.

ADEM is hosting a workshop for Non-point Education for Municipal Officials. NEMO is an information and education program that addresses the relationship between land use and water quality. The program examines the impact of land use policies and non-point source pollution, sometimes referred to as storm water runoff, which occurs when rainwater washes debris and contaminants into rivers, streams and lakes.

“Our education and outreach efforts help protect Alabama’s water resources,” said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. “This program promotes responsible land and water stewardship in relationship to economic growth and development. Teaching local officials and developers about the link between land use and water quality is an important component in safeguarding our environment.”

NEMO in Alabama is a statewide coalition of public officials, organizations and citizens working to increase awareness about the environmental effects of storm water runoff. It provides constructive ideas concerning improved construction site designs and best management practices that can enhance watershed protection. This year’s NEMO Alabama training will provide information and expertise on how watershed partnerships, storm water control programs, the federal Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts, local ordinances and land use plans relate to one another to help maintain water quality. The workshop will also give ADEM an opportunity to present and explain the department’s various water monitoring activities around the state.

Grant Funding Available for Renewable Energy Technologies

--Grant program designed to stimulate investment in renewable energy--

TALLAHASSEE – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is now accepting grant proposals for the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program. Part of the 2006 Florida Energy Act, the grant program is designed to stimulate capital investment in the state and promote and enhance the statewide utilization of renewable energy technologies. The targeted grants program is designed to advance the already growing establishment of renewable energy technologies in the state, such as hydrogen, biomass, solar energy, geothermal energy, wind energy, ocean energy, waste heat and hydroelectric power. Through the 2006 Florida Energy Act, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$15

million for the grant program, with at least \$5 million to support bioenergy projects and \$10 million for projects that generate or utilize other renewable energy resources.

“Through the Renewable Energy Technologies Grant Program, Florida is encouraging investment in alternative energy technologies, which will build a diverse, reliable supply of energy for Florida,” said DEP Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “The development of renewable energy technologies will help reduce demand for foreign fuels, promote energy diversity, reduce pollution and promote economic growth.”

Grant proposals will be evaluated by the state based on a number of different criterion, including cost share percentage, economic development potential, energy efficiency and how the project fosters public awareness of renewable energy technologies. Grants will be awarded at a maximum of \$2.5 million per project. Eligible applicants include Florida municipalities and county governments, established for-profit companies licensed to do business in Florida, universities and colleges in the state, utilities located and operating within Florida, not-for-profit organizations as well as state agencies.

Spearheaded by Governor Bush and the Florida Legislature, the 2006 Florida Energy Act takes the first comprehensive step toward a diverse, reliable and secure energy future by reducing regulatory barriers to expedite electric generation capacity and providing rebates, grants and tax incentives to drive the development of alternative fuel technologies. The four year, \$100 million plan will diversify the state’s fuel supply, reduce Florida’s dependence on imported oil, spur economic growth and promote energy conservation and efficiency. For more information about the 2006 Florida Energy Act or information on the grant program, visit www.floridaenergy.org.

Governor and Cabinet Approve Florida Keys Purchase

--Vote approves total acquisition of 51.49 acres in Florida Keys

FLORIDA KEYS – Continuing their commitment to preserve environmentally-sensitive lands in the Florida Keys, Governor Jeb Bush and the Florida Cabinet today voted to acquire more than 51 acres as part of the Florida Keys Ecosystem Florida Forever project. With more than 3,950 feet of waterfront property combined, the properties are part of an accelerated plan to preserve almost 12,000 acres along the 106-mile chain of islands.

“Continued growth throughout the Florida Keys means it is more important than ever to protect sensitive land by placing it into public ownership for perpetuity,” said Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “By purchasing properties such as these, Florida is preserving both the wildlife and plant habitat as well as the environmental and economic value of the area.”

The Florida Keys Ecosystem Florida Forever project stretches from South Key Largo to Boca Chica Key, encompassing parcels of West Indian plants and some of the largest remaining tracts of undeveloped hardwood hammocks. The habitats support more than 60 rare and endangered plants and animals, including the Lower Keys marsh rabbit, Key deer and white-crowned pigeon. The project also helps protect the Outstanding Florida Waters of the Keys, recreational and commercial fisheries and the coral reefs off the island shores. More than 5,181 acres of the project are already in public ownership.

Wetlands Assimilation Project interview on WWL 870 AM

Garland Robinette discusses the Wetlands Assimilation Project with DEQ Senior Environmental Scientist Chris Piehler and Carlton Dufrechou, the Executive Director of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. The goal of the project is to pump tens of millions of gallons of treated sewage from New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish into eroding marshes and revitalize 10,000 of acres of wetlands. Robinette discussed the \$40 million project with Piehler and Dufrechou on October 17, 2006. Courtesy of Entercom Communications.

[Wetlands Assimilation Project interview on WWL 870 AM](#)

Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco Announces Historic MMS Lawsuit Settlement

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco announced in a press conference Tuesday the State of Louisiana has reached a settlement in its suit to stop the Minerals Management Service (MMS) from conducting any further oil and gas lease sales in the Western or Central Gulf of Mexico until it has prepared a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) covering the next sale in these areas. The new EIS must consider the impacts associated with all past, present and future reasonably foreseeable Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leasing activity, including those activities associated with Lease Sale 200, held in August 2006.

The State filed the suit in March, claiming the MMS had failed to properly assess the impacts of Hurricane Katrina and Rita on the Louisiana coast when it accepted bids on Lease Sale 200. A complete copy of the Governor's statement as well as a link to a video of the entire press conference is located at the following link: <http://www.gov.louisiana.gov/>. Sidney Coffee, Chair of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and Senior Advisor to the Governor for Coastal Activities and Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Angelle will be available for comment regarding today's press conference.

New Invasive Species Threatens Louisiana

An exotic invasive species of freshwater snail has been discovered in Louisiana. Several specimens, commonly referred to as the channeled apple snail, were collected from a canal in Gretna by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, at the request of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. These mollusks are known for their voracious appetite for aquatic vegetation. This group of snails has been a serious pest to rice farmers in parts of southeast Asia. Away from agricultural areas, these snails can severely impact native vegetation altering aquatic habitats. These species can be separated from native snails by their size, up to 4 inches, and their peculiar pink egg masses. The pink egg masses are attached to vegetation, boat docks or other structures above the surface of the water. Under ideal conditions these snails reach maturity in three months and can lay clutches of eggs, averaging 200 to 300, every few weeks. LDWF is asking anyone who finds snails that fit this description to please contact their nearest LDWF regional office. For information, contact Scott Longman at slongman@wlf.louisiana.gov.

St. Charles Parish Adopts Flood Elevation Guidelines; Approval Clears Way for Hazard Mitigation Money

BATON ROUGE, La. (October 18, 2006) - The St. Charles Parish Council agreed to adopt the Advisory Base Flood Elevations (ABFE) on Monday as recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and required by the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), clearing the way for \$3 million to help raise area homes to a safer elevation. Now that the parish has adopted the new guidelines, it is also eligible to receive a ten percent cost share match from the State to repair critical pieces of local infrastructure including roads, bridges and public buildings.

"The St. Charles Parish Council made a tough, but smart decision," said Tim Coulon, LRA Board Member. "This vote is a symbol of their commitment to rebuild safer, stronger and smarter." The parish's recent adoption also makes funding available for various hazard mitigation grant programs aimed at reducing losses in future disasters. This is only the first of several hazard mitigation projects in St. Charles Parish to be recommended to FEMA for funding. Additional recommendations are forthcoming now that the parish has adopted the ABFE. St. Charles Parish is the eleventh parish, out of 15, to approve the guidelines.

Parishes that have not adopted elevation guidelines by October 29, 2006, will not be eligible to apply for more than \$250 million in elevation grants. Parishes that fail to adopt the ABFE as recommended by FEMA will not be eligible for the cost sharing program or additional funds for hazard mitigation.

The following parishes have adopted the guidelines:

- Calcasieu
- Cameron
- Vermilion
- Iberia
- St. Mary
- Terrebonne
- Jefferson
- Orleans
- Tangipahoa
- St. Tammany
- St. Charles

Ocean Commotion at LSU on Nov. 2

BATON ROUGE – More than 2,400 students in grades K-8 will attend the 9th Annual Ocean Commotion on Thursday, Nov. 2, at LSU's Pete Maravich Assembly Center (PMAC), hosted by the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program. More than 50 exhibitors, including LSU researchers, private organizations and students from two area schools, will have displays ranging from coastal and marine wildlife to the preservation of Louisiana's wetlands. "There is such a diversity of things for children to see, smell, touch and learn about," said Dianne Lindstedt, Louisiana Sea Grant education coordinator. "It's a real sensory experience for the children."

Public and private schools, as well as home schoolers, have registered for this one day event. Students from grades 5-8 will attend the first session, which is held from 8:45 to 10:45 a.m. The second session, held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. will be for grades K-4. Schools must be registered in order to attend. This year marks the return of a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter and the Aquarium of the Americas to Ocean Commotion. Both had been participants in past years, but were unable to attend in 2005 due to the hurricanes that devastated the area. Also attending this year is the Estuarians, the mascots for America's Wetland (www.americaswetland.com). They will greet the younger group of students as they participate in the events around the PMAC.

Contact Roy Kron at (225) 578-6564, office, or (817) 691-9026, cell, for additional information.

New Road Home Policy Offers Additional Mitigation Grants

Now, homeowners who apply for Road Home funding, may receive additional dollars to help protect their homes against future water and wind damage. A new provision to the program allows all homeowners who apply to receive up to \$37,500 for undertaking specific mitigation measures when rebuilding their homes, including \$30,000 for elevation. The original policy capped assistance for all mitigation measures at \$30,000.

Homeowners who do not receive compensation grants for home repairs from The Road Home may still be eligible to receive mitigation grants so that all homeowners will be better prepared for potential future damage. The maximum Road Home grant, including mitigation, is still \$150,000. Homeowners who are eligible for Increased Cost of Compliance (ICC) funding from the National Flood Insurance Program, will still be eligible for Road Home elevation funds of up to \$30,000 (based on the cost of elevating the home) in addition to ICC funds up to a total maximum of \$60,000 for elevation.

Homeowners may also receive up to \$7,500 to complete specific non-elevation mitigation measures such as reinforcing garage doors, raising the washer and dryer, and raising or relocating water heaters or furnaces to a higher level. Various forms of window protection such as installing shutters, installing impact resistant glass or window covers also fall under the non-elevation mitigation category. Visit www.road2la.org for more information.

Mississippi DMR Begins Restoration of Artificial Reefs

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) recently began restoration efforts on the artificial reefs damaged by Hurricane Katrina by distributing approximately 500 concrete culverts (from the front beach drainage system in Harrison County) on Fish Haven 1 and Fish Haven 2. These reefs are located about 25 miles south of Biloxi. Hurricane Katrina damaged about 80 percent to 90 percent of Mississippi's nearshore and offshore artificial reefs on Aug. 29, 2005.

The culverts, which were replaced after being damaged by Hurricane Katrina, were donated by the city of Pass Christian "We would like to thank Mayor McDermott and the City of Pass Christian for giving us the culverts and letting us store them at Pass Christian Harbor," said DMR marine fisheries biologist, Kerwin Cuevas. "These concrete culverts will help replace essential reef fish habitat that was lost due to Hurricane Katrina."

The reefs will provide a hard bottom that will diversify habitat and, therefore, increase fish species diversity and richness. Matthews Marine of Pass Christian is the contractor deploying the reef material. The artificial reef project is being funded through the Tidelands Trust Fund. The Tidelands Trust Fund Program consists of funds derived from the lease rentals of tidelands and submerged lands. Revenues are collected by the Office of Secretary of State, appropriated by the state legislature and administered by the Commission on Marine Resources. All tidelands projects are reviewed, evaluated and recommended annually by the CMR, as mandated by Section 29-15-9 of the Mississippi Code of 1972.

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.state.ms.us.

Texas 'Takings' Decision

W. Seafood Co. v. United States, 2006 U.S. App. LEXIS 25520 (5th Cir. Oct. 11, 2006).

The city of Freeport, Texas, and the Freeport Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) proposed taking a portion of riverfront property owned by Western Seafood Company and giving it to a private party that planned to construct a private marina on the river. Western Seafood brought suit, alleging that the taking was in violation of the U.S. Constitution and the state constitution. The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas granted the city and the FEDC summary judgment. On appeal, the Fifth Circuit determined that the construction would not be an unconstitutional taking under the U.S. Constitution. However, the court ruled that in light of a recent state legislative action, which placed new limitations on using eminent domain for economic development or where the taking conferred a benefit on a particular private party, the taking could be in violation of the Texas Constitution.

Texas-led Team's Dietary Supplement Study Receives National Marine Aquaculture Award

COLLEGE STATION — A research project led by a Texas A&M University professor to study how dietary supplements might enhance the growth and health of red drum and Atlantic salmon was among those selected under a nationwide program of \$3.6 million in grants for sustainable marine aquaculture demonstration projects and research.

The \$199,103, one-year grant to Dr. Delbert Gatlin III of TAMU and an international team of researchers, including William Neill of TAMU, Barbara Grisdale-Helland of the Aquaculture Protein Centre of Norway, Sunndalsora, Norway, and Michael Hume of the USDA/Agricultural Research Service Southern Plains Agricultural Research Center, Food and Feed Safety Research Unit, was awarded under the 2006 National Marine Aquaculture Initiative, which is managed by the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Aquaculture Program and administered by the Sea Grant College Program.

Gatlin and his colleagues will test three prebiotics, food substances that promote the growth of certain beneficial bacteria in the fishes' intestines. Prebiotics are indigestible carbohydrates — in this case, fructooligosaccharide, mannanoligosaccharide and transgalactooligosaccharide.

The project was one of more than 200 totaling \$75 million that were submitted for funding for the 2006 initiative. Texas researchers also are lending their expertise to two funded projects led by researchers with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Joan Holt, professor of marine science and associate director of fisheries and mariculture at The University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, is a member of the research team that is studying aquaculture development and fishery enhancement of cobia. Tzachi Samocha, a professor at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Flour Bluff Shrimp Mariculture Laboratory and at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, is co-investigator on a project focusing on the commercialization of bait shrimp farming based on specific pathogen-free stocks. For the second project, Texas Sea Grant staff members, including Granvil Treece, aquaculture specialist, will conduct the education and information transfer of the results of the study.

The other 2006 grants range from \$150,000 to \$505,000 and support projects that assess the commercial potential of marine aquaculture, the feasibility of stock enhancement and the environmental impacts of aquaculture in various ecosystems, including specifically the genome mapping of striped bass, the culture of California yellowtail and the assessment of environmental impacts of offshore cage culture.

The grants approved for the 2006 initiative mesh with NOAA's goals of enhancing economic opportunities for developing marine aquaculture in the United States by supporting technology that will increase production efficiency through more environmentally and economically sustainable practices. The initiative also supports the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, which acknowledges the growing significance of domestic marine aquaculture for seafood production and the need for a federal regulatory framework for marine aquaculture. Since 1998, the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative has funded \$15 million in research projects to boost the domestic production of commercially and recreationally valuable marine shellfish and finfish species.

Currently, aquaculture is gaining momentum faster than any other form of food production worldwide, based on an unprecedented level of demand for seafood. At the current per capita consumption of one seafood meal a week, coupled with a modest increase in population, the United States will need an additional two million tons per year of seafood by 2025 to meet demand. Imports already make up more than 70 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States, and at least 40 percent of that imported seafood is farmed.

For more information:

Dr. Delbert Gatlin III, Texas A&M University: 979-847-9333 or d-gatlin@tamu.edu

On the Web:

Full Story: <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu/pubs/press/gatlin.php>

NOAA Aquaculture Program: www.aquaculture.noaa.gov

Texas Sea Grant: www.texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu

The Texas Sea Grant College Program is a partnership of university, government and industry, focusing on marine research, education and advisory services. Visit our web site at <http://texas-sea-grant.tamu.edu>

More Texas Marinas Participating in Clean Marina Program

COLLEGE STATION — Marinas in Texas are demonstrating their commitment to keeping Texas waterways clean as their participation in the Clean Texas Marina Program reaches 100. Twenty-eight percent of the state's 356 inland and coastal marinas are participating, with 59 certified as Clean Texas Marinas and another 41 pledging to do their part to keep Texas waterways free of harmful chemicals, excess nutrients and debris as they prepare for certification. The participants include municipal and privately owned marinas.

“Clean water enhances the quality of the boaters' experience on Texas waterways, and marinas are keenly aware that many coastal and inland waters are seriously impacted by water pollution,” said Dewayne Hollin, marine business management specialist at the Texas Sea Grant College Program and director of the Clean Texas Marina Program. “Working together through the Clean Texas Marina Program, we can find solutions to these environmental concerns. Environmental protection is part of the cost of doing business, and clean water means good business for marina owners and operators.”

The Clean Texas Marina Program is a co-sponsor of the 2006 Texas Marina Facilities and Services Directory, a comprehensive guide to the state's marinas, grouped by body of water. “It's important to know how waterways are being used by recreational boaters,” Hollin said. “This Marine Directory shows all services and facilities available on a statewide basis, both on inland lakes and coastal waters.”

The directory is based on data Hollin collects in his annual survey of Texas marinas. It includes location and contact information for the marinas and lists the facilities and services that each provides. Hollin said the publication is a good reference for marina planners, developers, and those who provide some type of marina services, and also helps to identify growth areas. Since the information was first collected in 1986, the number of marinas in Texas has risen by 47, from 309 to 356, which is a 15 percent increase. During that time, the number of coastal marinas has actually decreased from 125 to 104, or 16 percent, while the number of inland marinas has more than made up for the deficit, increasing from 184 to 252, or 37 percent. “In coastal areas like South Padre Island and Galveston Island, condos and other waterfront development may have replaced some of the boat access,” Hollin said.

Texas marinas have spaces for 58,459 boats, which includes 43,359 wet slips and 15,100 slots in dry storage. Ranked by total boat storage capacity, the Clear Lake/Galveston area is first with 10,174 spaces; Clear Lake alone has 7,535 spaces, followed by Lake Travis with 6,300, Lake Conroe with 4,803, Lake Texoma with 4,536 and Lake Ray Hubbard with 3,869. The area with the largest number of marinas is Lake Travis with 40, followed by 37 at Clear Lake/Galveston Bay; Clear Lake alone has 22 marinas. The next highest number of marinas is in the Corpus Christi/Port Aransas/Aransas Pass/Rockport area, where there are 31 marinas.

From the survey of services offered, in only three areas — sewer pump out service, boat rentals/charter services and lodging/RV park — has the percentage of marinas offering them increased since 1986. In all other areas, including haul-out facilities, retail sales of boats and equipment, boat repairs and fuel docks, the number of marinas offering these services and the percentage of total marinas offering them has fallen. The number of marinas offering pump out services, which has increased significantly since 1986, decreased by 12 since last year. Hollin noted that, while the long-term increase might be attributable to regulations in Texas, which prohibit boaters from discharging anything into public water within three miles of shore, “without the proper service, pump out stations are difficult to maintain, and they are not used very often in some places.”

The directory, which is co-sponsored by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Sea Grant College Program and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is available free of charge for single copies for the first time this year because of additional funding. For more information or to request a copy, contact Dewayne Hollin at dhollin@neo.tamu.edu.

1944 Texas Clipper to Become Gulf of Mexico Artificial Reef

BEAUMONT, Texas — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has completed contractual negotiations for the Texas Clipper to become the first major addition to the department’s Ships-to-Reefs program in more than 30 years. In early spring 2007, the clipper will be sunk 17 nautical miles off the southern coast of Texas to become an artificial reef. The department’s Texas Artificial Reef Program has worked for more than 10 years with the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD) to secure title to the Texas Clipper, a former WWII troop transport ship, cruise liner and training vessel for the Texas A&M University Maritime Academy.

“We are very pleased to announce that as of today, the *Texas Clipper* project is officially underway,” said Dale Shively, TPWD artificial reef program coordinator, on Oct. 11. Shively said a Notice-to-Proceed has been issued to Resolve Marine Services, Inc. of Port Everglades, Florida to begin preparations to tow the ship from the MARAD Reserve Fleet dock in Beaumont to Brownsville for cleaning and final preparations. The transfer of the title from MARAD to the State of Texas is set to occur once towing commences from Beaumont. Hazardous materials remediation

(cleaning) and hull modifications will be performed by ESCO Marine of Brownsville, a subcontractor for Resolve Marine Services. The process of preparing the ship for reefing could take four to six months. Towing will begin in late October or early November and the *Texas Clipper* will move slowly and deliberately out of Sabine Pass, through the Gulf of Mexico and into the Brazos Santiago pass. She will be moored at ESCO Marine's facility in Brownsville, cleaned of all environmental hazards and structurally modified to promote safe diving.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved the TPWD cleanup plan for the ship, but approval for sinking will be made after a final inspection by EPA. In early 2007, she will be towed to a permitted reef site 17 nautical miles off the southern coast of Texas near South Padre Island to become an artificial reef.

The U.S.T.S. Texas Clipper is a 473-foot decommissioned Texas Maritime Training Academy ship that served students and sea cadets at Texas A&M University at Galveston from 1965-1996. She traveled the world's oceans and students spent countless weeks on her decks and in her many cabins. The Texas Clipper was originally commissioned in 1944 as the U.S.S. Queens, a troop transport ship that served in World War II. She ferried fresh troops into battle and shuttled the wounded from Iwo Jima and was part of the American occupation at Sasebo, Japan. She was decommissioned in 1946. From 1948 to 1958, she was commissioned the S.S. Excambion and served as one of the post-war four aces for American Export Lines. As a cruise liner, she sailed to ports in the Mediterranean after her many Atlantic crossings.

The TPWD Ships-to-Reefs program uses the sinking of large obsolete ships to create artificial reefs, adding a unique dimension to the Texas Artificial Reef Program. Ships-to-Reefs efforts began in the mid 1970s through the efforts of the Texas Coastal and Marine Council with the reefing of 12 Liberty Ships at six sites along the Texas coast.

These were some of the ships that survived enemy sinking attempts during World War II. Since that time, many large ships have been scrapped with relatively few becoming artificial reefs. Recently, the U.S. Maritime Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have drafted guidelines for coastal states to follow in the preparation of obsolete ships for their respective artificial reef programs. Texas will continue to look for opportunities to acquire suitable ships for its offshore waters. For more information about Ships-to-Reefs or the Texas Artificial Reef Program, see <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/artificialreef>.

Other News

Army Corps Proposes Easing Gulf Wetlands Rule

Anger greets plan to let developers skip permits to speed recovery
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GULFPORT, MS, Oct 19, 2006 - Federal wetlands regulators have dropped a bombshell on environmentalists with a little-publicized proposal to relax restrictions on filling in certain wetlands along the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast to speed recovery from Hurricane Katrina. "It's unethical, illegal, immoral, unsustainable and they're simply doing it to make the fat cats richer faster," said Derrick Evans, executive director of a Gulfport, Miss., community group that plans to fight the proposal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps' proposal would allow property owners and developers to skirt the conventional "regional general permit" process for any projects that fill up to 5 acres of "low-quality"

wetlands in the six southernmost Mississippi counties. Especially galling to environmentalists: The new process would also eliminate the requirement for public notice of such projects.

Vital to ecosystems for their role in filtering runoff, controlling floods and decreasing erosion, wetlands are a hot topic all along the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast. Not only was the flooding from Hurricane Katrina exacerbated by the extensive loss of marshes and bogs to centuries of development in the region, the storm claimed thousands of acres of remaining wetlands. Last year's deadly hurricane also destroyed 70,000 homes and tens of thousands of other buildings in Mississippi. A desire to streamline the rebuilding process in the wake of Katrina is behind the proposed change in wetlands rules, said Jason Steele of the Corps' Mobile, Ala., office. *Read the rest of this article online at [MSNBC](#).*

New Regional Newsletter from the Army Corps of Engineers

The South Atlantic Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has released the first issue of [Spectrum](#), a new quarterly regional newsletter. Spectrum is a feature-oriented publication aimed at South Atlantic Division (SAD) team members, retirees, and other audiences who have an interest in Corps projects and programs. The publication is an opportunity to share experiences, successes, lessons learned and future plans. Issues of Spectrum will be both a window to regional efforts being made across the Division as well as a news source about the diverse workload in the Districts. Surveys indicate many would like to see more about what happens in the region. Suggestions, ideas, and author articles to be included in the publication are welcomed. Corps public affairs offices stand ready to offer professional help to those who desire to make those submissions. Contact them with your ideas. The Spectrum is your portal to the region. If you have an idea for Spectrum please e-mail them to the Regional Communication Council through its executive director, Rob Holland, at robert.g.holland@sad01.usace.army.mil.

Energy

Commission Finalizes Rule on Consolidated Federal Record for Judicial Review of Gas Infrastructure Proposals

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission today finalized a rulemaking that implements provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 requiring the Commission to coordinate the environmental review and the issuance of all federal authorizations for natural gas infrastructure proposals with other federal and state agencies, and to maintain a consolidated federal record for judicial appeal and review. "This final rule strikes an appropriate balance. It provides adequate time for federal regulatory deliberation, and allows project sponsors to avoid protracted regulatory review and judicial review processes," Commission Chairman Joseph T. Kelliher said.

Under the final rule, the Commission will act as lead agency for environmental review and will establish a schedule by which federal agencies, as well as state agencies acting under federally delegated authority, will reach final regulatory decisions necessary for the approval of natural gas infrastructure projects under section 3 or section 7 of the Natural Gas Act. The new rule applies to natural gas pipelines, compressor stations, storage fields, liquefied natural gas terminals and other related facilities.

The deadline for agencies' final decisions will be 90 days after Commission staff issues either an

environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) in a proceeding. The 90-day deadline would not apply if an agency's deadline is otherwise determined by federal law. To provide agencies with advance notice of when their final regulatory decisions will be due, the Commission will issue a scheduling notice for its environmental review, including target dates for issuance of the final EIS or EA. The Commission determined the 90-day timeframe will provide more certainty to the project applicants and to the public as to when to expect agency decisions affecting natural gas infrastructure proposals.

Although the Commission has authority to approve interstate gas infrastructure proposals under the Natural Gas Act, in general a project may not move forward unless several other agencies have also made favorable rulings regarding other aspects of the proposal under other federal laws. For example, state agencies have federally delegated authority under the Coastal Zone Management Act, administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce; the Clean Air Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Within 30 days of receiving an applicant's request for a federal authorization, the final rule directs agencies to inform the Commission: (1) whether the agency deems the application to be ready for processing and, if not, what additional information or materials will be necessary to assess the merits of the request; (2) the time the agency will allot the applicant to provide the necessary additional information; (3) what, if any studies will be necessary in order to evaluate the request; (4) the anticipated effective date of the agency's decision; and (5) if applicable, the schedule established by federal law for an agency to act. In addition, agencies are to provide the Commission with a copy of any data requests sent to applicants.

In addition to requiring the Commission to coordinate regulatory review among various agencies, the Energy Policy Act directed the Commission to maintain a complete consolidated record of all decisions made or actions taken by the Commission or by a federal administrative agency or officer, or state administrative agency or officer acting under delegated federal authority. This provision of the Energy Policy Act was recently upheld in a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. The final rule will require agencies to provide the Commission with a copy of the final decision or action taken and an index to the record to be filed within 30 days after the issuance of the agency's final decision or action. The Commission said a three-day timeframe, as proposed in a May 2006 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, was not needed to satisfy the Energy Policy Act mandate to maintain a complete consolidated record. The rule takes effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.

MMS Releases Summary of Lower Tertiary Play in Gulf

NEW ORLEANS – Minerals Management Service (MMS) today released a [summary of discoveries](#) industry has made in the Lower Tertiary Trend in the offshore ultra-deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) (on figure 1). Figure 2 provides the locations of the 12 announced discoveries. Lower Tertiary formations were deposited from about 65 million to about 35 to 23 million years ago. Discoveries in the GOM Lower Tertiary have been from variable depths, wells drilled as shallow as 15,000 feet in some areas and as deep as 30,000 feet in others.

“This is an exciting new trend in the Gulf of Mexico, and the recent announcement by Chevron and its partners of the results of the Jack 2 well provides additional proof of its great potential,” noted MMS Director Johnnie Burton. “This trend began to materialize in 2001 and 2002 with several discoveries in the Alaminos Canyon and Walker Ridge areas and now has extended to the Keathley Canyon area. The area could be as wide as 300 miles and involve as many as 3,000 blocks that MMS administers.”

The importance of the deepwater extension of the Lower Tertiary Trend, which has long been recognized as a major petroleum resource throughout the Texas and southwestern Louisiana area, is the significant

increase in oil and gas reserves it will provide for decades to come. Until these recent announcements, the reserve contribution of the Lower Tertiary in the Gulf was negligible. Ninety-nine percent of the GOM proved reserves were found in sediments less than 23 million years of Miocene age (Upper Tertiary) and younger, while one percent of the proved reserves are in older than 65 million years (Jurassic and Cretaceous age) sediment, which are primarily in nearshore areas offshore Louisiana and Alabama.

MMS officials also noted that the widespread industry interest in the Jack well test and the discovery by BP on its Kaskida prospect in 5,860 feet of water preceded heavy bidding activity at MMS's Western Gulf Sale 200 in August. At that sale, 82 tracts received bids in the Keathley Canyon area. In addition, the highest bid at the sale was offered by BP at \$21 million for Block 58 in Keathley Canyon, Petrobras bid \$12.8 million for Block 59 there, and Shell bid \$6.0 million for Block 56. These bids further illustrate industry's high interest in this area and, with its development, the subsequent growth in the nation's offshore deepwater resources.

Training and Conferences

Florida West Coast Artificial Reef Workshop

This **November 9th** conference to be held at the Manatee County Extension Office in Palmetto 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.

Contact Information: John Stevely: jsmarine@ufl.edu.
http://flseagrant.org/program_areas/ecosystem_health/artificial%20reef%20meeting/index.htm

Identification and Management of Invasive Terrestrial and Aquatic Plants Common to Coastal Mississippi

This is a **FREE** 1.5 day invasive plant identification and management class. Day 1 will focus on common terrestrial invasives such as cogon grass, kudzu, popcorn trees, and torpedo grass (to name a few). The afternoon session will include demonstrations of best management practices in the field. **Lunch will be provided!!** Day 2 of the workshop will focus on aquatic invasive plants such as alligator weed, giant salvinia, and water hyacinth. Participants will be able to identify these invasives, understand why these species should be carefully managed, and learn best management practices to control the proliferation of these species.

Date: November 16-17, 2006

Time: November 16th 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. (Terrestrial invasives and field management activity)

November 17th 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (Aquatic invasives)

Location: Gautier Convention Center

Cost: FREE

[To register, click here](#)

LEED for New Construction Technical Review

This is an intensive workshop designed to teach participants the LEED technical requirements and certification process for new construction projects. The workshop will include project case studies and strategies. Industry professionals seeking to increase their understanding of the LEED for New Construction Rating System and green building strategies should attend. Target audiences include **Architects, Consultants, Contractors, Designers, Developers, Engineers, and Manufacturers**. This class will be taught by U.S. Green Building instructor, [Susan Barnett](#). ***Continuing Education Credits are available!!*** This is an excellent opportunity for individuals preparing to take the LEED Professional Accreditation Exam. For additional information about this event, please [click here](#).

Date: December 5, 2006

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Location: [Pelican Landing Conference and Convention Center](#)

Cost: \$325 (USGBC Members) or \$425 (Non-Members)

Registration: You must register for this event through the U.S. Green Building Council. For registration instructions, please [click here](#).

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

