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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will Convene a Meeting of the Ad Hoc Grouper Individual Fishing Quota Advisory Panel

Tampa, Florida – April 27, 2006 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene a meeting of the Ad Hoc Grouper Individual Fishing Quota Advisory Panel (AHGIFQAP) to continue discussions regarding the scope and general configuration of an Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for the Gulf of Mexico commercial grouper fishery.

The Council has begun deliberation of a Dedicated Access Privilege System (DAP) for the commercial grouper fishery, and has appointed an Ad Hoc Grouper IFQ Advisory Panel composed of commercial grouper fishermen and others knowledgeable about DAP systems to assist in the development of such a program.

The AHGIFQAP was formed last year after the Council developed a regulatory amendment to control fishing in the red grouper fishery. That amendment set a commercial trip limit of 6,000 pounds in an attempt to extend the fishing year, which has closed increasingly earlier over the past few years as fishermen have reached the quota before the end of the season. It is expected that the new limits will lengthen the season some; however, moving to an IFQ system could be a more effective way of managing the fishery and extending the fishing year.

IFQ programs are designed to reduce overcapacity in the commercial fishery, lengthen the fishing season, lower operating costs by giving vessel owners more flexibility, improve market conditions, and increase safety at sea.

The panel will convene May 18 - 19, 2006 at the Double Tree Hotel Tampa Westshore, 4500 West Cypress Street, Tampa, Florida. The meeting will begin at 1 p.m. Thursday, May 18, 2006, and conclude no later than 3 p.m. Friday, May 19, 2006. To obtain copies of the agenda please call the Council office at 813-348-1630.

NOAA Hurricane Preparedness Campaign Goes Airborne for Gulf Coast & Florida Residents

With the impact of a record-breaking 2005 Atlantic hurricane season still etched on the coastline from Texas to Florida, and recovery on the minds of its residents, forecasters from the NOAA National Hurricane Center will join the aircrew from the NOAA Aircraft Operations Center on a hurricane hunter aircraft tour from May 1 - 5. The five-city, five-day mission will increase hurricane awareness and encourage preparedness in vulnerable coastal and inland communities along the Gulf coast and Florida. "The brave men and women who fly into the heart of the hurricane are our sentinels in the storm," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "They, and their U.S. Air Force Reserve Command counterparts, gather data critical to producing more accurate forecasts vital for warning the public." Read the [Full Story](#).

New Monitoring Capability to Improve Forecasts of Florida Harmful Algal Blooms

Last week, two new underwater gliders that can detect blooms of the toxic algae, *Karenia brevis*, commonly known as “Florida Red Tide” were deployed. Through a collaboration between the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's (NCCOS) Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment and the Mote Marine Laboratory, the two NOAA gliders join a third glider funded by the State of Florida to begin monitoring for harmful algae using an instrument called the BreveBuster. Use of the BreveBuster on gliders was developed with funding from the NCCOS's Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research, and the current glider project is part of a larger program to improve NOAA's contributions to the Integrated Ocean Observing System by demonstrating effective new monitoring capabilities. All three gliders can be deployed and unattended for up to three weeks at a time, and are expected to provide key data to improve the accuracy of NOAA's operational Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast System in Florida. Blooms of *Karenia brevis*, which Florida routinely experiences, can cause human respiratory distress, toxic shellfish, animal mortality, water discoloration, massive fish kills and losses to the tourism revenues of the state. For more information, contact [Richard Stumpf](#).

Mapping Shipwrecks in the Florida Keys

From April 23 to May 1, 2006, archaeologists from the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program are creating a new method for documenting shipwrecks during a mission to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Shipwreck Trail. The team will create high-resolution photo-mosaics of the following shipwrecks: the City of Washington; Benwood; Adelaide Baker Cluster A and B; North America; and San Pedro, which was a ship from the 1733 Spanish treasure fleet. Archaeologists will "fly" over the shipwreck while high-resolution cameras on a propulsion sled capture images of the shipwreck below. These images will later be pieced together with computer software, much like a giant jigsaw puzzle, creating a highly detailed photo-mosaic of the site. The photo-mosaics will provide archaeological data that will serve as a baseline to gauge the affects of hurricanes and other natural and human impacts on these historic treasures over time. Images taken during the project will also allow researchers and the public to view these shipwrecks in their entirety on the seafloor for the first time. The Shipwreck Trail provides information on nine different shipwreck sites, covering many ship types and historical periods. Presently, the trail relies on sketch maps to portray these fascinating sites. The new photo-mosaic images will allow the public and divers to view these wrecks in unprecedented detail. For more information, visit the following site: <http://www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/missions/2006fknms/>.

Special Hurricane Edition of Coastal Services

The May/June 2006 edition of Coastal Services examines the impacts of hurricanes over the past two years on coastal resource managers in the Gulf Coast. Articles in this edition look at managers' experiences during Hurricane Katrina, impacts of the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons on coastal management jobs, and lessons learned over the past two years. This special hurricane edition of the magazine will be distributed April 26. Coastal Services is a national trade journal for coastal resource managers published by NOAA's Coastal Services Center. For more information or to receive a copy, contact Hanna.Goss@noaa.gov.

Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology Identify Ocean Research Priorities

Priorities for ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes research were discussed at a national workshop held under the auspices of the interagency Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST) on April 18-20. Workshop participants reacted to a draft posted by JSOST, who divided research priorities along societal needs: Enhancing Human Health, Improving Ecosystem Health, Sustaining Natural Resources, Promoting Marine Operations, Ocean and Climate, Mitigating Effects of Natural Hazards, and Improving Quality of Life. Other over-arching themes running through the societal research needs included Basic Understanding of the Oceans, Ocean Observations and Infrastructure, and Ocean Education. The workshop resulted in identifying and outlining research priorities in these areas, as well as suggestions for a subsequent draft plan. Public comments will be accepted until May 15, 2006. For more information, contact [Beth Turner](#) or [Tom O'Connor](#). To view the initial draft visit: http://ocean.ceq.gov/about/docs/jsost_orpp_planningdoc.pdf.

In the Gulf States

Dauphin Island Causeway and Isle of Herbes: Beneficially Using Dredge Materials to Restore Critical Wetlands

In the 2005 National Coastal Condition Report (EPA, 2005), the Gulf of Mexico was ranked in the poor category relative to the status of estuarine habitats. Between 1990 and 2000, approximately 7,750 acres of estuarine wetland was lost in the Gulf region. Loss was associated with coastal development, sea-level rise, subsidence, and the interference with normal erosional/depositional processes.

In 1985, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) started using dredged material locally to restore and establish wetlands when they undertook a project on Isle of Herbes (aka Coffee Island) to create a marsh area on the northeast side of the island. Where proper sites can be located and government and private agency cooperation can be coordinated, USACE commonly uses dredged material to restore wetlands. Recently, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP), Mississippi Alabama Sea Grant Consortium (MASGC), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section and the Marine Resources Division, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and USACE came together to plan for two additional “beneficial use” projects to help restore critical wetlands within the Mobile estuary on the Dauphin Island Causeway and again on Isle of Herbes.

The Dauphin Island Causeway project will consist of the construction of approximately 3,960 feet of protective artificial reef wave break offshore to create a semi enclosed area for wetland re-establishment. *Spartina alterniflora* and *Spartina patens* will be the primary species of cord grass planted to colonize the area for wetland habitat along the 3,960 feet of shoreline (approx. 4 acres.) In addition, 2,250 cubic yards of dead oyster shells (hard bottom substrate) will be emplaced to promote oyster habitat. The objectives of this project are to stabilize sediments in the shallow near shore waters and reduce turbidity and erosion, resulting in improved water quality. This project is in the combined planning and development phase and is estimated to cost approximately \$439,000. It is estimated that construction will begin by summer, 2006.

The Isle of Herbes project will utilize dredge material from the maintenance of the Bayou La Batre Federal Navigation channel to restore approximately 10 acres of tidal wetlands. Material removed from the channel will be deposited inside a minimal containment levee constructed of natural material with a wave break that will be constructed offshore to reduce wave energy, providing protection to the newly created wetland. Deposited fill material will be used to achieve an appropriate elevation between the containment levee and shore at which point wetland species such as *Spartina alterniflora*, *Juncus roemerianus*, and *Spartina patens* will be planted. Once the plants are established, the containment dike will be breached at various locations to permit tidal flow. The objectives of this project are to restore wetland and associated vegetation to improve habitat for piping plovers, brown pelicans, seaside sparrows and diamond back terrapins, to increase nesting habitat for colonial birds, and expand suitable substrate for oyster reproduction.

USACE has recently completed its preliminary restoration plan and anticipates entering the combined planning and design phase within the next two to three months. The project is estimated to enter the construction phase some time during the summer of 2006 and is expected to cost up to \$850,000. -R. A. Swann: [Mobile Bay NEP Newsletter](#)

Alabama Environmental Management Commission Receives High Tech Update

Montgomery-- The Alabama Environmental Management Commission received a technology update at its regular meeting April 21 from Trey Glenn, director of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. Glenn told the commission that ADEM is implementing innovations and technology designed to streamline the department and help it operate more efficiently and effectively.

Glenn reported to the commission that ADEM has initiated electronic submittal and handling of data in its water division and electronic inspections utilizing tablet computers. The department also is integrating Geographic Information Systems and Global Positioning Systems (GIS and GPS) as a computer tool to link program information with data and files. Later this spring, the department will add aerial surveillance to enhance inspections and information gathering.

“These new initiatives build on what we’ve been doing,” said Glenn. “This use of new technologies represent major changes to our business process and reflect a larger vision of a more efficient and streamlined department.”

ADEM plans to integrate these new technical initiatives together with many other activities in the weeks and months to come. The changes are designed to help the department deal more effectively with federal budget cuts, changing program requirements, and continue its mission to protect Alabamians and safeguard the environment.

In other proceedings before the Environmental Management Commission, a resolution was passed to dedicate ADEM’s new lab in honor of former director Jim Warr, an update on the strategic plan was presented and public comments were given attention. The commission’s next scheduled meeting is June 2.

Florida Lt. Governor Announces \$82.9 Million in Additional Funds for Long Term Recovery

TALLAHASSEE- The Department of Community Affairs and the Florida Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program hosted Community Development Day at The Capitol. Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings addressed attendees on the importance of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and presented a check for \$82.9 million in a supplemental appropriation of Community Development Block Grant disaster funds awarded to help rebuild communities impacted by the devastating 2005 Hurricane Season.

“Thanks to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the steadfast determination of our Governor and State Legislature, we’ve now received an additional \$82.9 million to assist in the restoration of our communities,” said Lieutenant Governor Jennings. “These additional funds will spark continued economic growth by creating new jobs and helping all of our citizens regain a sense of normalcy in their everyday lives,” added the Lieutenant Governor.

Community Development Day is part of Community Development Week celebrated by the National Community Development Association. During this week the nation recognizes the contributions made to communities by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, which is administered in Florida by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and by local governments in large urban areas.

“Community Development Block Grant funds are responsible for helping communities across Florida recover from disasters, improve infrastructure, revitalize neighborhoods and provide affordable housing,” stated Department of Community Affairs Secretary Thaddeus Cohen. These funds ensure that citizens live in communities that they are proud to call home,” added Cohen.

The Florida Small Cities CDBG program is federally funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and is administered by DCA’s Division of Housing and Community Development. The program provides funding to small local governments for projects that include housing, neighborhood revitalization, commercial revitalization and economic development initiatives.

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, please visit www.dca.state.fl.us.

Loxahatchee River Science Symposium Offers Inside Look at Watershed Protection

--Experts present latest research and restoration initiatives for Wild & Scenic River--

JUPITER – More than 250 residents, students, researchers and environmental professionals converged today at the Jupiter Community Center for the 3rd Annual Loxahatchee River Watershed Science Symposium as experts shared developments in water and land management plans to protect this unique watershed. “The evolution of watershed management in Florida is embodied in the past, present and future of this Wild & Scenic River,” said DEP Director of Ecosystem Projects Kim Shugar. “Growth and development pressures resulted in the alteration of this precious ecosystem several decades ago. Today, scientific progress and public involvement have enabled local, state and federal agencies to implement more than a dozen initiatives to protect and restore this unique river system.”

Attendees received updates and technical presentations on projects that will restore and safeguard the Loxahatchee River and its estuary including aquatic and wetland biology, endangered species, environmental restoration, exotic species, watershed planning and protection and water quality. Part of the \$10.5 billion plan to save America's Everglades, the state is boosting water flow to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee to restore freshwater habitat through water storage, canal widening and new water control structures. Freshwater levels historically flowing from the Everglades to the river's 9.5-mile Northwest Fork were lowered in the 1950s and 1960s after the construction of canals, levees and roads. The dredging of the Jupiter Inlet also contributed to the movement of saltwater into the Northwest Fork.

The Loxahatchee River is one of only two federally-designated National Wild & Scenic Rivers in Florida. The Seminole Indians named the river Loxahatchee meaning "river of turtles." The coffee-colored river is home to a variety of wildlife including otters, herons, alligators and bobcats, and borders a subtropical swamp with ancient bald cypress trees, pond apples, orchids and osprey.

Symposium partners included the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Atlantic University Center of Environmental Studies, South Florida Water Management District, Friends of the Loxahatchee River, Jupiter Inlet District, Loxahatchee River Coalition, Loxahatchee River District, Martin County, Palm Beach County and University of Florida. For more information on the Loxahatchee River Watershed Science Symposium, visit www.riverfirst.com.

Recovery Begins on Cape St. George Lighthouse

--Historical resource will be temporarily relocated to Eastpoint--

APALACHICOLA – The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has begun efforts to recover the Cape St. George Lighthouse. The project, funded through DEP's Beaches and Coastal Systems, is expected to last two weeks. "The Cape St. George Lighthouse is a landmark for the local community and a part of Florida's history," said Director of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas Stephanie Bailenson. "It is only with the help of our partners that we are able to begin the process of resurrecting this historical resource."

The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR), the St. George Island Lighthouse Association and private contractors have partnered to recover and relocate the structure to a temporary upland site in Eastpoint sponsored by WOYS-FM. Historic specialists from the Department of State will assess possible reconstruction methods while the lighthouse is at this location, and the St. George Island Lighthouse Association will continue restoration efforts. The Cape St. George Lighthouse was originally constructed in 1852 and has stood through hurricanes including Opal, Ivan and Dennis as well as events such as the Civil War. The historical resource fell due to damage caused by weather and natural causes on October 21, 2005. For information about Apalachicola NERR or Florida's aquatic preserves, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/.

Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Plan Approved

Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco has approved the State Management Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species in Louisiana. The plan was developed by members of the Louisiana Non-Indigenous Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Task Force, representing both state and federal agencies as well as universities and industry. The management plan focuses on exotic aquatic invasive species (AIS) and aquatic pathways by which new AIS can enter the state and become established.

"Our goal is to prevent and control the introduction of new nonindigenous species, control the spread and impact of existing invasive species and eradicate locally established invasive species wherever possible," said Scott Longman, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries biologist and chairman of the Louisiana Aquatic Invasive Species Council and Task Force.

AIS problems in the state are well documented and pose a threat to Louisiana native plants and animals. Species such as hydrilla in Henderson Lake, St. Martin Parish, water hyacinth in the Atchafalaya Basin, Asian carp, and zebra mussels in the Mississippi River are among the better-known AIS that have impacted Louisiana waterways and cost millions of dollars to address.

The state plan has been forwarded to the national Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force for review. Once approved, the state would then qualify for additional federal funding opportunities to implement aspects of the management plan. Funding for the plan's development was provided by the Environmental Protection Agency-Gulf of Mexico Program, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Aquatic Invasive Species Program. For more information on the aquatic invasive species in the state, visit <http://is.cbr.tulane.edu>.

Marshfield Boat Landing Completed, Other Projects Visited Today

Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Iberia Parish officials held a ribbon-cutting today to mark the completion of construction work at the Marshfield Boat Landing. The project was constructed in three phases, with the final phase furnishing security lighting, an open air pavilion, rest rooms, and a water well. The construction amount for this phase of work was \$121,500.

Phases 1 and 2 increased the size of the landing from one to two, built bulk-heading, increased the size of parking areas and provided lighting around the area. DNR's Atchafalaya Basin Program funded the project with Iberia parish government on a 50-50 cost share basis. The project was designed by Freyou, Moore, and Associates of Baton Rouge, and the contractor was CASCO Construction Company of St. Martinville.

Following the ribbon-cutting event, State Representative Sydnie Mae Durand, New Iberia Mayor Hilda Curry and Atchafalaya Basin Program Director Sandra Thompson joined a crowd of participants for a Spring Tour of two projects located in New Iberia where improvements were underway at the Steamboat Warehouse and the Bayou Teche Museum.

Fact Sheets Help Property Owners Navigate FEMA Programs, Regulations

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Sea Grant Legal Program has developed a series of information sheets to help people affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita navigate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs and related legal issues during the continuing rebuilding process. The information sheets are available online at <http://www.laseagrant.org/comm/magazines.htm> and <http://www.lsu.edu/sglegal/pubs/other.htm>.

"This project came about after our extension program partners in the LSU AgCenter identified a need for a plainer explanation of FEMA reconstruction guidelines," said LSG Legal Program Director Jim Wilkins. "In many instances, specialized federal programs and documents are not only difficult for the

general population to understand but also for many local authorities who've never extensively dealt with a particular program before." The information sheets answer questions about the National Flood Insurance Program, flood elevations, rebuilding after a flood and other reconstruction matters.

"These documents will play a critical role in helping people make rebuilding decisions," said Dr. Rod Emmer, Executive Director of the Louisiana Floodplain Management Association, who is working with LSG Legal on the project. "Homeowners must understand the basics of these programs and then they will be better prepared to determine if they qualify for them. The increased cost of compliance is one such program that offers a way to better protect lives and property."

A Concrete Plan for Mississippi Seafood

BILOXI, Miss. -- Anglers along Mississippi's coast are in for a treat. Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) officials are working on a plan to soon begin rebuilding fishing reefs in the Gulf from piles of broken concrete drainage pipes crumbled by Katrina. While that project is expected to begin in May, DMR officials are also planning to begin limited restoration of coastal Mississippi's valuable oyster beds in May or June. Together, Mississippi's oyster and recreational and commercial fishing industries produce about \$178 million a year in revenue for the state and local businesses, state officials say.

Hurricane Katrina wiped out about 16 fishing reefs and 90 to 95 percent of this area's 12,000 acres of oyster beds on Aug. 29, according to DMR officials. "We have to rebuild them. They're very important to our economy," said Scott Gordon, director of the Marine Resources Shellfish Bureau.

Right now, DMR has enough money to begin building oyster beds with about 5,000 cubic yards of processed oyster shells, probably in the western Mississippi Sound, according to Gordon. But the agency will have to wait for more money from Congress to go further in the rebuilding process, Gordon said. Eventually, Gordon hopes to build most of the beds with the broken concrete from structures destroyed by Katrina scattered across the coast. The concrete would be crushed and spread across the bottom of Mississippi Sound to create new oyster beds. A bill now weaving its way through Congress would provide \$40 million to restore oyster and shrimp beds along the coasts of Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

Meanwhile, the road back for Mississippi's recreational and commercial Gulf fishing industry will begin soon at the Pass Christian Wharf, where a mountain of broken concrete storm drains is piled. DMR officials already have picked out sites about 20 miles due south of Ocean Springs and about 25 miles south of Gulfport. DMR Biologist Kerwin Cuevas said plans are to build 10 reefs right now, each about 50 yards by 50 yards in size. "We can start doing that in May," Cuevas said. "One load costs \$10,000 to barge and we'll need about 10 loads. Those reefs are very popular with recreational, charter boat and commercial fishermen."

Governor Barbour Announces Mississippi's "Stay Alert. Stay Alive." Campaign

(Biloxi, Mississippi) – Local, state and federal officials today joined Governor Haley Barbour in announcing an eight-week informational campaign to help make Mississippians more aware of how to protect themselves as the 2006 hurricane season approaches.

“Katrina, the worst natural disaster in American history, taught many lessons,” Governor Barbour said at an event marking the start of the campaign. “One of them is that even with all the information and assistance that is available, there really is no substitute for awareness and self-help, especially in the days before a hurricane is predicted to hit. “Experience tells us that advance preparation is the key. The ‘Stay Alert. Stay Alive’ campaign is designed to give people the information they need to make good decisions in advance so they can be prepared to successfully face whatever nature throws at us this year,” he said.

The awareness campaign is a partnership of various state agencies, non-profit organizations and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency. Each of the organizations will combine their hurricane awareness efforts so that all Mississippi residents, government agencies and businesses are prepared for the 2006 season, which officially begins June 1. During the campaign the agencies and organizations will focus on a variety of preparedness themes, including family disaster plans, businesses, travel trailers, evacuation routes, volunteer efforts, insurance, health issues and mental health needs.

FEMA and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency will also print door-hangers that FEMA Community Relations team members will place on the doors of the FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes. The door hangers feature disaster preparedness tips, remind tenants of an evacuation survey phone line and urge residents not to tow or move their travel trailer during an evacuation.

“As we prepare for the 2006 hurricane season, we face some very different challenges,” MEMA Director Robert Latham said. “More than 100,000 of our citizens now live in excess of 36,000 temporary travel trailers in our state making them more vulnerable than ever before. We urge our citizens to sit down with their families and develop a plan that includes early evacuation and a clear destination, a family communications plan, and supplies to support extended stays away from home. Citizens are also reminded to leave FEMA owned trailers behind.”

USEFUL WEB SITES

[Ready Business from U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

[Prepare and Recovery from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[Hurricane Awareness from Mississippi Emergency Management Agency](#)

Governor Barbour Signs Bill Creating Gulf Regional Water Utility Authority

(Gulfport, Mississippi) – Governor Haley Barbour today signed the Gulf Region Water Utility Authority Act (Senate Bill 2943), legislation derived from the Governor’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal’s recommendations on taking a regional approach to managing water and sewer utility services. “I want to thank the mayors and supervisors who worked tirelessly with my office to craft this legislation that will effectively implement the vision of the Governor’s Commission; I want to especially thank the members of the Legislature who recognized the value of this proposal,” Governor Barbour said.

The new law creates six individual county authorities for each of the affected counties: Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, Stone and George. Establishing these individual authorities will allow local control over development of water and sewer systems. In addition, a Regional Utility Board will be created to encourage long-term economic development and infrastructure planning.

“Through the provisions of this act, local governments will be working together, irrespective of political boundaries, as they rebuild South Mississippi,” Governor Barbour said. “We’ll have better managed and

more efficient water, sewer and storm water systems that are less susceptible to storm damage. That's good for all South Mississippi residents."

Director of Texas A&M's Floating Classroom Program Selected for Lyondell Environmental Award through Earthwatch Institute

COLLEGE STATION, TX – Willie Younger, Extension Marine Education Specialist with the Marine Advisory Service of Texas A&M University, has been selected from a field of educators from across the nation to receive the Lyondell Environmental Award. The award, made possible by a partnership between the Earthwatch Institute and Lyondell Chemical Company, includes participation in a major research project. Participant travel and other costs of the award are funded by Lyondell.

In July of this year, Younger and a small team of environmentally focused educators will travel to southwest England to assist a British marine mammal research team in an ongoing study of North Atlantic gray seals. Over a seven-day period, this international group of classroom teachers and outreach educators will document aspects of the growing interaction between these marine mammals and man. The project's goal is to determine what, if any, impact these frequent encounters are having on the gray seal population over the long term.

Both Lyondell and Earthwatch embrace the idea that "teachers," both formal and informal alike, hold the key to developing a greater understanding and appreciation for the environment on a global scale. Shelly Heuser, Plant Manager for Lyondell's Matagorda (Texas) plant, explained that, "Through sharing the knowledge and skills these educators gain with students, fellow teachers and a variety of influential persons in their home communities, an enhanced awareness will develop of how all things are ultimately connected and what we can do to protect our planet.

"We are certainly pleased that someone from Matagorda County was selected amongst all the applicants," added Heuser. "This truly showcases the caliber of educators in our area." Younger, director of Texas A&M University's Floating Classroom Program, noted that, "Lyondell provided me this once in a lifetime opportunity -- to be part of an important study that can contribute to the sustainability of both earth's natural resources and mankind's well-being. I greatly appreciate the confidence the sponsors have that I will produce a worthy return on their investment. Therefore, I enthusiastically look forward to this professional development adventure and my return to Texas to share with others what I saw, did and learned on the English coast while working with internationally respected marine mammal experts."

Texas Boaters Urged To 'Lift, Drift, Pole or Troll' as New Seagrass Reg Takes Effect

ROCKPORT, Texas — The popular Redfish Bay area receives an extra measure of protection beginning May 1. On that date, a new regulation takes effect, prohibiting the uprooting of seagrass within the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area (RBSSA). The shallow, highly productive body of water straddling the Aransas Bay and Corpus Christi Bay systems in the Coastal Bend boasts the state's northernmost extensive stands of sea grasses, highly evolved marine flowering plants that are one source of the area's bounty of red drum and spotted seatrout.

Aransas Bay, appropriately enough, often leads the state in the catch rate of red drum in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department gill net sampling. Anglers' success here has led to a surge in the area's popularity,

and the fragile seagrass meadows — they cover about a third of the 32,000-acre portion of the bay that has been designated a state scientific area — are showing the effects. “This area is number one for guided fishing trips, and receives the second highest pressure along the Texas coast for private boat anglers,” said TPWD Coastal Fisheries Biologist Faye Berens. “Visitors outnumber locals two to one.”

In a recent study, more than half of randomly selected areas in the bay showed evidence of propeller scarring. The trenches destroy the grass, fragment habitat, channel tidal movement and sometimes take years to recover. “A seagrass meadow supplies everything that many marine organisms need. It provides food for grazing animals at the base of the food chain, surfaces to cling on for small crawling critters, shelter and hiding places for small invertebrates and fish, and ambush points for the larger predators and game fish,” said Dennis Pridgen, another Coastal Fisheries biologist. “For them it’s the nursery, the roof over their heads and the grocery store all rolled into one.”

When the TPW Commission voted on the new rule in November 2005, several options were on the table. One was to replace voluntary “no-propeller” zones in the most sensitive parts of the bay with mandatory no-prop zones. Instead, commissioners chose the least restrictive option, one that focused on changing boater behavior and creating a new appreciation for the value of seagrass habitat. No portion of the RBSSA has been closed to any type of boat or motor. “What we’re trying to do is really get boaters to think about what they’re doing out in the water,” Berens said. “The responsibility is on the boater to know the area he’s fishing in, and also protect and preserve some of the habitat that supports the fish that he’s fishing for.”

To that end, TPWD has launched a public education and outreach program targeting boaters in the local area as well as around the state. At boat ramps in the nearby communities of Rockport, Aransas Pass, Ingleside and Port Aransas, signs will make anglers aware of the new regulation and also show the boundaries of the state scientific area. Boundary signs will mark the 50-square-mile area in which the regulation applies, and TPWD employees will install signs marking preferred access lanes (PALs) to help guide boaters safely through sensitive portions of the bay. Biologists developed the PALs based on the input of local boaters and commonly prevailing winds and tides in the area. TPWD’s Aransas Bay Ecosystem Leader Karen Meador stressed that the lanes are experimental. “We’re going to install these where we can, and where we think they will do the most good,” she said. “If we find that they are not useful, or if the lanes need to be marked in different areas, we can move them.”

Proponents of the new regulation are urging boaters who use the RBSSA to follow these rules of thumb:

- Even though boater access is allowed throughout the RBSSA, boaters can avoid damaging seagrass by simply avoiding shallow areas.
- If the vessel's wake is muddy, the propeller may be cutting into the bay bottom and causing damage. It is the boater's responsibility to know the depth of the water they are running in and to avoid areas too shallow for their vessel.
- When these shallow waters are encountered, it is suggested that boat operators LIFT their motors, DRIFT, POLE or TROLL.

In fact, “lift, drift, pole or troll” has become something of a mantra in the Coastal Bend — one that local biologists hope more boaters will adopt. “We have an amazing natural resource here,” said Larry McKinney, Ph.D., director of TPWD’s coastal fisheries division. “We want the people of Texas to be able to continue to enjoy it and to take advantage of the wonderful fishing opportunities Redfish Bay offers.” McKinney said that Census data suggest population — and fishing pressure — along the coast is likely to double in the next 20 years. “We have to take steps now to ensure our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same angling opportunities we take for granted today,” he said.

Other News

Hawaii Crews Vacuum Up Invasive Algae

April 14, 2006 — By Associated Press

HONOLULU — Marine researchers in Hawaii discovered a new way to clean ocean water from invasive algae -- sucking them up with an underwater vacuum. The Super Sucker, a 4-inch modified gold dredger that runs on bio-diesel, proved to be efficient in collecting alien algae at Kaneohe Bay on Tuesday. The device sucked 800 pounds of the plant per hour, work that would have required 150 volunteers and 10 divers to perform manually. "The reef coral that was smothered and dying can return to health," said Eric Conklin, a University of Hawaii graduate student who was wearing diving gear while scooping the bay's reefs with the vacuum.

Alien algae is a serious threat for the islands' coral reefs. It dominates large regions on Oahu's south shore as well as on Maui and Molokai. The algae growing in the bay blocks sunlight and takes away habitat for fish, said biologist Cynthia Hunter. The super sucker operates from a 13-foot by 25-foot covered barge that is docked at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology at Coconut Island. Powered by a 40-horsepower engine, it spews some 300 gallons of ocean water and algae per minute into a porous bin, where researchers pick out sea animals or native plants and return them to sea.

Another advantage of the vacuum is that it keeps the algae intact, which prevents the plant from regenerating through broken fragments. The vacuum, which was developed by Eric Co of The Nature Conservancy, was the brainchild of officials with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, botanists and biologists. It costs about \$150,000 a year to operate the Super Sucker, which has removed 25,000 pounds in its first 12 months of operation, said Bryan Parscal, operations supervisor for the project. The state also has funding for a Super Sucker Jr., which can be deployed in shallower waters outside the bay.

Environmental Progress in US-Mexico Border Region

Release date: 04/27/2006

U.S. and Mexican officials met today to report significant progress in improving the border area's environmental health at the National Coordinators' Meeting of the Border 2012 Program.

Accomplishments to date include:

- Implementation of the first air quality improvement plan in Mexico, an economically sustainable plan to virtually eliminate used tire piles along the U.S.-Mexico border by 2012;
- Removal of 2000 tons of hazardous waste to protect a local, economically disadvantaged residential community;
- Improved drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems for 1.5 million residents, and;
- Design of emergency response plans to better protect border residents.

The U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 program is a 10-year bi-national cooperative plan that protects public health and the environment along the 2,000-mile border region, home to approximately 12 million inhabitants. Official from the federal, state, local and border tribes all participated at today's meeting.

The officials also agreed on priorities for environmental collaboration for 2007. Included among the priorities for 2007 are increasing access to and improving safe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, retrofitting of diesel buses and trucks and improving availability of low sulfur diesel fuel on the border, and adoption of a bi-national scrap tire strategy.

More information on the EPA's U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Program: www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/intro.htm. Contact Information: Suzanne Ackerman, (202) 564-4355 / ackerman.suzanne@epa.gov.

Inaugural Southeast Diesel Collaborative Conference Held in Atlanta

(ATLANTA – April 26, 2006) Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the formation of a consortium of federal, state and local government agencies, non-profit and industry organizations with a goal to reduce diesel emissions in the Southeast. Organized as the Southeast Diesel Collaborative, EPA hosted the groundbreaking conference that focused on strategies to promote clean renewable diesel and emerging technology for the agriculture, heavy construction and on-road sectors. During the conference, EPA and the eight Southeastern states marked this collaborative effort with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing ceremony. The MOU articulates the common goals of the collaborative and bolsters the relationships between these diverse stakeholders.

"The partnerships formed through this collaborative will benefit the health of residents living in the Southeast," said EPA Deputy Regional Administrator Stan Meiburg. "By working together, the Southeast Diesel Collaborative enables us to maximize our resources and reduce diesel emissions."

EPA also announced that a \$100,000 grant will be available May 15 to fund projects within the Southeast to demonstrate effective emission control technologies and strategies, methods or approaches to reducing diesel emissions as part of the Southeast Diesel Collaborative. Projects may include, but are not limited to, a variety of emissions reductions solutions such as: add-on technology, engine replacement or rebuilds, and idle reduction technologies or strategies.

The Southeast Diesel Collaborative is a partnership composed of leaders from federal, state and local government, the private sector and other stakeholders in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The goal of the collaborative is to improve air quality by encouraging the use of clean, renewable energy and by reducing diesel emissions from existing engines and equipment from the agriculture, heavy construction and on-road sectors. The Southeast Diesel Collaborative is part of EPA's National Clean Diesel Campaign, a program combining regulatory measures with voluntary initiatives to reduce the pollution emitted from diesel engines across the country. Visit the National Clean Diesel Campaign at: <http://www.epa.gov/cleandiesel>. Contact Information: Dawn Harris-Young, (404) 562-8421, harris-young.dawn@epa.gov.

New Document Aimed at Improving Wetlands Monitoring Programs

(4/20/06) A new document, released today by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will help states and tribes develop consistent programs to improve wetland monitoring. The document outlines critical elements that programs should include.

"Application of Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment Program for Wetlands," is a follow-up publication to EPA's 2003 publication, "Elements of a State Water Monitoring and Assessment

Program." The new document describes the 10 recommended elements of a wetland monitoring and assessment program including a program strategy, monitoring objectives and design, and data management. It further describes wetland-specific assessment approaches available to states and tribes.

The purpose of the document is to increase the understanding of wetland quality by advancing the practice of wetlands monitoring and assessment. It provides information and illustrations of assessment approaches unique to wetlands while reiterating the basic structure of a monitoring program that includes wetlands. New guidance and more information about wetlands monitoring:

www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/monitor/. Contact Information: Dale Kemery, (202) 564-4355 / kemery.dale@epa.gov.

FEMA Publishes New Flood Risk Maps for Ascension Parish

DENTON, Texas -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently presented draft flood risk maps to communities in Ascension Parish, La.—an area that floods frequently. The maps will help county officials and local residents identify known flood risks and will be used for insurance and development decisions in the fast growing area.

The preliminary maps revise and update information on the existence and severity of flooding hazards in the cities of Donaldsonville and Gonzales, the Town of Sorrento, and the unincorporated area of the Parish. They are based on detailed ground elevation models, decades of rainfall and storm gauge information and current topographic data. The most detailed part of the study focused on areas of projected development or proposed construction.

“Ascension Parish suffers damage from major flooding on a regular basis. Because it is one of the fastest growing parishes in the state, it is critical for residents to look at the preliminary maps and be familiar with flood risks in their community,” said William Peterson, FEMA regional director. “These maps can help residents make informed decisions about flood insurance and flood protection.”

Residents and property owners who believe the flood maps contain errors have 90 days from April 20th to appeal by submitting scientific or technical information. Appeals are submitted through communities to FEMA, and once all appeals are resolved, FEMA will notify communities, insurance companies and residents of the effective date of the final maps. Floodplain administrators in each community have copies of the maps available for public viewing. In addition, the maps can be accessed on the parish government website at www.ascensionparish.net. When the flood maps are finalized and effective, some flood insurance policy holders may see changes in their policies. Peterson recommends that all policyholders contact their insurance agent or company to ensure that they have adequate coverage and that policies account for new flood risk information. More information on flood insurance is available at www.floodsmart.gov.

Flood Recovery Guidance Posted Online for Southern Parishes

NEW ORLEANS, La. -- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has released flood recovery guidance documents for Jefferson, Orleans and St. Bernard parishes as well as portions of Plaquemines and St. Charles parishes in southern Louisiana. The new work joins previously released guidance information available online at www.fema.gov.

The documents are Advisory Base Flood Elevations, known as ABFEs. They provide communities the critical engineering data they can use to make the best decisions on rebuilding safety. They are important tools in the work to rebuild and enhance structures to withstand a one-percent annual chance flood.

- St. Charles Parish, which received advisory guidance from FEMA for areas outside the levee last fall, now has interior levee information as well.
- The guidance for Plaquemines Parish includes the levee-protected area of Belle Chasse and all areas outside of levee protection in the parish. However, additional time will be needed to study the levee protected areas of lower Plaquemines Parish to make further determinations about the protection systems and thus rebuilding elevation guidance.
- The guidance documents show two main areas: interior levee and open coast. Within the interior levee areas of these parishes, FEMA recommendations reflect substantial progress made on the levees by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. FEMA recommends substantially damaged homes and businesses protected by levees elevate three feet, or follow what is shown on the current effective flood insurance rate map, whichever is higher.
- For substantially damaged buildings outside levee-protected areas in these parishes, FEMA recommends what is shown on the current effective flood insurance rate map (FIRM), plus one to three additional feet in elevation, depending on parish location.
- FEMA provides advisory information to local governments, but ultimately state and local officials, working with their citizens, make final decisions on land use and other building code requirements.
- Flood recovery guidance takes into account storm data from the past 35 years including hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as coastal land loss, degradation of coastal barriers and subsidence, or sinking land.
- Previously, guidance for areas impacted by hurricanes Katrina and Rita was issued and posted online for Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Lafourche, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermillion and portions of St. Charles parishes in southern Louisiana; and Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties in Mississippi.
- The flood recovery guidance documents provide Advisory Base Flood Elevations which are an interim product to assist communities in their rebuilding efforts while new preliminary FIRMs are being completed and provided to the communities for comment by the end of this year.

Energy

FERC Staff Issues Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Port Arthur LNG Project

(Docket Nos. CP05-83-000, et al.) Issued: April 28, 2006

FERC staff prepared a final environmental impact statement for Port Arthur LNG, L.P. and Port Arthur Pipeline, LP's (collectively Sempra) Port Arthur LNG Project. The project includes the construction of the Port Arthur liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Jefferson County, Texas and about 73 miles of new pipeline in Texas and Louisiana.

FERC's environmental staff concludes that Sempra's Port Arthur LNG Project with appropriate mitigating measures, as recommended, would have limited adverse environmental impact. The final EIS also includes a final General Conformity Determination to assess the potential air quality impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

(COE), the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Marine Fisheries Service cooperated in the preparation of the final EIS. Staff concludes the project would be environmentally acceptable action (with appropriate mitigation) because:

- The LNG terminal facility would make use of a site previously used for a dredge material placement area.
- The LNG terminal facility would be located in an area with access to a deep water federal navigation channel.
- Sempra would implement the FERC staff's Plan and Procedures to mitigate impacts on soils, wetlands, and waterbodies.
- Sempra would implement an approved Aquatic Resources Mitigation Plan to mitigate for, and minimize impacts on, wetlands and essential fish habitat.
- Sempra has routed the pipeline to avoid placement of the construction work area near most residences.

Appropriate consultations with and/or permits from the FWS, NOAA Fisheries, the COE, state historic preservation offices, the Railroad Commission of Texas and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (for the coastal zone management plan consistency determinations) would be required before Sempra would be allowed to begin construction.

Safety features would be incorporated into the design and operation of the LNG import terminal and LNG vessels, and can be expected to operate safely. Operational controls would be imposed by the local pilots and Coast Guard to direct the movement of LNG ships, and the security provisions to deter attacks by potential terrorists. An environmental inspection and mitigation monitoring program would be implemented to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures that become conditions of any FERC authorization. FERC Commissioners will take into consideration staff's recommendations and the final EIS when they make a decision on the project. A copy of the document is available at <http://www.ferc.gov/industries/lng/enviro/eis/04-28-06-eis-port.asp>.

MMS Publishes Final Rule on OCS Data Release and Definitions

WASHINGTON - The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today published a final rule in the [Federal Register](#) that denotes changes to oil & gas operation in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Among the changes are: revising certain existing definitions; clarifying the basis upon which the Regional Director invokes the requirement for an archaeological survey on a lease area; adding notification requirements on production status of wells; and updating both public information and Information Collection sections. "[Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf \(OCS\), 30 CFR 250 Subpart A, General—Data Release and Definitions](#)," will become effective May 24, 2006.

MMS recently redesigned and renamed some of its forms to streamline data submission. MMS also discovered inconsistent practices in first production reporting, which is a prime parameter in determining inspection and testing schedules for safety system devices. This final rulemaking will update the regulations to correspond to recently revised forms, provide clarity and explanation of definitions and forms, and clarify the requirements for first production notices.

MMS issued a [proposed rule](#) on March 23, 2005 ([70 FR 14607](#)). MMS received only one set of comments from the oil and gas industry prepared by the American Petroleum Institute and the Offshore Operators' Committee.

Pivotal U.S. Port Waits Hurricane Season Warily

by Bloomberg News International Herald Tribune 4/18/2006

URL: http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=31348

The only road in and out of Port Fourchon, Louisiana, the main U.S. staging point for deepwater oil and natural gas production, sits just two to three feet above the marshland. Last summer, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita largely spared the road, Louisiana Highway 1, because neither struck Fourchon directly. The port's director, Ted Falgout, acknowledges that the area may not be as lucky this hurricane season, which begins June 1. A storm might wipe out the highway as Katrina wrecked parts of the Gulf Coast last year, hindering access to production platforms in the Gulf of Mexico and cutting off a port where 11 percent of U.S. oil imports come ashore.

Raising and widening 17 miles, or 27 kilometers, of Highway 1 would prevent an extended shutdown, Falgout said, but the work would also cost more than \$1 billion. The port broke ground March 24 on a \$161 million bridge-replacement project that will take almost four years to finish, and the financing needed for the road improvements is not available. "If half the businesses here got knocked out, in 30 days they'd be back in operation," Falgout said. "The only investment we need to keep this place operational is a highway."

Fourchon is the destination for 1.2 million barrels a day of oil imports sent to the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port. An additional 400,000 barrels a day of domestic production comes ashore at the port. About 130 companies in Fourchon handle 75 percent of the service work for deepwater oil and natural gas producers in the gulf, the largest U.S. source of crude. Glen McMahan, who runs a dockside terminal that services three vessels for Halliburton, the Houston oil field services company, said the port was indispensable because of its location. Fourchon is one of only two oil ports that can accommodate vessels plying the deepest waters, he said.

Highway 1, a two-lane road, is the evacuation route for residents and for 6,000 offshore workers who park their cars at Fourchon. About 10,000 vehicles use the highway daily. Trucks used it to carry construction crews and supplies to make repairs after Katrina. Last year, the highway was closed for a day or two because of flooding from Katrina and Rita. This month, crews were repairing storm damage along lower-lying parts of the road. If the road were wiped out by a storm, it would take longer to get the deepwater oil industry working. Dave Thomas, manager of health, safety, environment and quality for Halliburton's Gulf of Mexico operations, said he would have to use shallow barges to get operations running again.

"You could fly people in and out of here if you had to," Thomas said. "It would require good logistics and planning, but you could do it." A coalition that includes the port and energy companies wants to ensure that the highway stays open. The group, which evolved from a task force created 10 years ago, arranged more than \$200 million in state, federal and private financing for the bridge and road work. The bridge, which connects Fourchon with the town of Leesville, is scheduled for completion in December 2009. Revenue from tolls will be used to repay bonds that helped to cover the construction costs. The financing was also supposed to pay for part of the highway project. But it will not get the funds because higher demand for labor and materials related to Katrina increased the cost of the bridge by almost 30 percent.

Governor Kathleen Blanco has asked Washington for a share of revenue from gulf energy leases, citing the state's role in bringing the results ashore. Without such a change, Falgout said there was no clear way to finance the road work. "Unless Louisiana gets a fair share of the revenues that are generated off of its coast," he said, "these types of projects will simply not be affordable and the oil and gas infrastructure is going to wash into the Gulf of Mexico."

Training and Conferences

U.S. ACOE Hosts Coastal Mississippi Second Round of Free Public Workshops to Seek Ideas to Reduce Storm Damage

Mobile, Alabama - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a second round of free workshops May 1, 2, and 4 to seek public input concerning the near-term projects that have been identified for the Mississippi coastal areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. "In the first round of workshops, we sought public ideas for ways to provide hurricane storm damage protection, protection from coastal flooding and restoration of critical environmental functions in the three Mississippi coastal counties affected by Hurricane Katrina," said E. Patrick Robbins, Public Affairs Officer, Mobile District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "The second round of workshops will let the public voice their preferences for the 15 near-term projects identified in the first round."

The workshops will be held in Jackson, Harrison and Hancock counties. The public is invited to take this opportunity to review options from the April workshops, express their preferences and comment on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each. These options can be previewed at www.msccip.usace.army.mil. This information will be used to develop a list of potential near-term projects that may be included the corps' 6-month report to congress. Individuals interested in stewardship of the Mississippi coast are encouraged to participate in one of three workshops. Individuals who cannot attend the workshops are encouraged to pre-register and participate via a webcast held May 3, 7 p.m. For information about the webcast or the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Project or to pre-register for the webcast, go to www.msccip.usace.army.mil.

County	Date	Time	Location
Hancock	May 1	6 p.m.	Bay-Waveland Middle School School Cafeteria 600 Pine Street Bay St. Louis, MS
Harrison	May 2	6 pm.	Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center 8115 Popp's Ferry Road Biloxi, MS
Jackson	May 4	6 p.m.	Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jackson County Campus, Cafeteria Building Highway 90 Gautier, MS

For workshop information, contact Mr. Philip Payonk at (251) 694-4111 or philip.m.payonk@usace.army.mil.

FEMA Plans Flood Insurance Community Workshop

BILOXI, Miss. -- Wrap up the week by joining experts from the contracting and building professions at a National Flood Insurance Community Workshop. Reservations are required and space is limited for the event to be held in the **Mississippi Coast Convention Center** at 2350 Beach Blvd. from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on **May 4**.

The workshop, sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Mitigation division, is designed for community leaders, lenders, insurance agents, realtors, surveyors, builders and developers. Sessions include coverage of flood insurance, construction permitting, elevation certificates, grants and codes and compliance and subrogation. Don't wait. Reserve your place by calling (228) 385-4999.

Coastal Society's 20th Biennial International Conference

May 13-17, 2006 - St. Pete Beach, Florida

The Coastal Society has scheduled its 20 Biennial International Conference for May 13-17, 2006 in St. Pete, Florida on the beach. The conference will be held at the Trade Wind Island Resort and will feature a rather extensive technical program along with plenary and special workshops and panel sessions. The conference theme is "Charting a New Course: Shaping Solutions for the Coast." After the last two summers, solutions are something we are all seeking to the natural hazards and related impacts. We provide five topical tracks including "Solutions for..." land use Challenges; Governing Ocean Use Conflicts; Effective Integration of Science; Changing Behaviors: Professionals and the Public; and Mitigating Coastal Natural Hazards. For more information, visit www.thecoastalsociety.org/conference/tcs20/index.html.

Nutrient Loading and Removal in the Lower Mississippi River Basin

This symposium is part of the reassessment of the Action Plan for Reducing, Controlling, and Mitigating Hypoxia in the Northern Gulf of Mexico, being undertaken by the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force. The symposium will focus on activities and trends in the lower Mississippi River and its major tributaries and watersheds, including both point and non-point sources of nutrient loading, as well as human and natural processes of nutrient removal and uptake.

Location: Royal Sonesta Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana

Dates: June 1-2, 2006

Contact Information: Doug Daigle, dougdaigle@mrba.org

Home Page URL: http://www.epa.gov/msbasin/news/SBC_callforpapers_GMPO31.pdf

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