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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Weeks Bay NERR Celebrates 20th Anniversary

U.S. Representative Jo Bonner (R-AL) is scheduled to visit Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Fairhope, AL, on April 8. He will join Reserve staff to celebrate 20 years of estuarine research, education, outreach and stewardship. A full day of celebration, including a ceremony and exhibits featuring raptors, reptiles and amphibians, is planned. The 6,016-acre Weeks Bay reserve is a small shallow embayment emptying into Mobile Bay and includes parts of the tributary Fish and Magnolia Rivers. The reserve is managed by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. For more information, contact [George Cathcart](#).

Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Stan and Wilma "Retired" From List of Storm Names

Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Stan and Wilma, all from the historic 2005 Atlantic hurricane season, were "retired" by an international hurricane committee of the World Meteorological Organization, which includes the NOAA National Hurricane Center, during their annual meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Now retired, these five storms, part of last season's record-setting 27 named storms and 15 hurricanes, will not reappear on the list of potential storm names that is otherwise recycled every six years. Dennis, Katrina, Rita, Stan and Wilma represent the type of devastating storm that is "retired" for causing a large loss of life and property. These names will not be used again for sensitivity reasons and to establish distinction within the scientific and legal communities. Read the [Full Story](#).

NOAA Begins Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Restoration Project

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Restoration Center and Louisiana Department of Natural Resources have awarded a \$17.7 million wetlands restoration contract that will protect and create 1,400 acres of wetlands in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana. The project, awarded to Pine Bluff Sand and Gravel Company of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is located in an area that protects approximately 3,000 acres of fragile interior marshes between the Little Lake shoreline and Bayou L'Ours Ridge. The Little Lake Shoreline Protection/Dedicated Dredging Project is an area of considerable wetland loss which was caused by shoreline erosion, subsidence, and channel construction.

"This project marks one of the largest marsh creation projects in the nation," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "This project, and others like it are a key component in protecting natural resources in Louisiana as well as providing defense against hurricanes. It is exciting to see coastal restoration of this magnitude happening so soon after the impact from last year's hurricanes."

NOAA Fisheries Service habitat specialists, working through the NOAA Restoration Center, coordinate the planning, construction and monitoring of wetlands projects such as the Little Lake/Round Lake Project as part of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, commonly known as the

Breaux Act. In addition to the importance to wildlife habitat, wetlands and coastal marshes provide an indispensable buffer for populated areas against the impacts of coastal storms and hurricanes. The 2005 hurricane season underscored this fact.

"This partnership with NOAA allows the state to restore some vital marshland in Lafourche parish," said [Scott A. Angelle](#), secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. "The project will put nutrient-rich dredged material into an area that has been deprived and degraded over the years."

The Little Lake/Round Lake Project is designed to prevent erosion along roughly five miles of Little Lake shoreline; create 490 acres of inter-tidal wetlands along the Little Lake shoreline; and nourish 530 acres of intermediate marsh. The project is key to the restoration and protection of coastal Louisiana, its communities and its natural resources. The project is scheduled for completion as early as winter 2006.

The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act funds habitat restoration programs on an 85 percent - 15 percent cost sharing with the state of Louisiana. Five federal agencies and the state comprise the CWPPRA team working to reverse the loss of approximately 25 square miles of wetlands per year in Louisiana. Cooperative wetlands rebuilding projects under CWPPRA are implemented through agreements between the federal agency sponsors and the Louisiana DNR. Projects are selected and managed by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, as established by CWPPRA. The Task Force is a partnership among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Commerce's NOAA Fisheries Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Governor's Office.

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Will Convene Meetings of the Ad Hoc Shrimp Effort Working Group (AHSEWG)

Tampa, Florida – April 4, 2006 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene meetings of the Ad Hoc Shrimp Effort Working Group (AHSEWG) to begin evaluating shrimp effort in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico. The working group, appointed by the Council during its March 2006, regular meeting, is charged with providing the Council with alternatives for determining the appropriate level of effort in the shrimp fishery in the EEZ. The group also will discuss the level of effort necessary to achieve optimum yield in the shrimp fishery and what level of effort would derive the maximum benefits of that fishery.

The AHSEWG includes fishery biologists, economists and others knowledgeable about shrimp effort in the Gulf of Mexico. The group will convene April 27 – 28, 2006 and May 23 – 24, 2006 at the NMFS Galveston Laboratory, Building 216, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, Texas. Both meetings will begin at 9:00 a.m. on the first day and conclude no later than 3:00 p.m. on the second day. For more information, or for copies of meeting agenda, please call 813-348-1630.

Although other non-emergency issues not on the agenda may come before the AHSEWG for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (M-SFCMA), those issues may not be the subject of formal action during these meetings. Actions of the AHSEWG will be restricted to those issues specifically identified in the agenda and any issues arising after publication of this notice that require emergency action under Section 305(c) of the M-SFCMA, provided the public has been notified of the Council's intent to take action to address the emergency.

In the Gulf States

Massive Marsh Planting Project to Begin in Alabama and Mississippi

April 7, 2006

Mobile, AL., An unprecedented marsh gardening project, spanning two states and utilizing the talents of many agencies, is ready to begin this spring. Headed by Dr. Just Cebrian, Senior Marine Scientist at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, this ambitious “greening of the estuaries” seeks to establish new, or rehabilitate existing, marsh sites.

In 2002, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program’s Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. This document identifies the crucial role salt marshes and submerged grasses play in the bay area and the need for their preservation and restoration. Many area organizations and agencies have similar plans which identify the importance and need to preserve estuarine ecosystems. Work such as that done by Dr. Cebrian, and collaborators including Weeks Bay and Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserves, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, and the volunteers of Gulf Shores High School, Fairhope High School, Americorps and Mississippi Power, is vital to tackling the challenges.

Saltmarshes and submerged grass beds were once dominant habitats along the Gulf Coast. Due to man-made and natural causes, these habitats have dwindled significantly. These highly valued habitats provide a multitude of functions from providing food and shelter for aquatic organisms to serving as wave attenuators and buffers for erosion control, and are thought to act as natural water purification systems. Dr. Cebrian’s research specifically will examine how black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*), a dominant plant of our coastal saltmarshes, can be restored and if the restored marshes truly act as water cleansing systems.

Planting sites will include the Grand Bay Reserve within the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Weeks Bay Reserve, and the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. Dr. Cebrian’s project will test what the optimal conditions are that will encourage new growth, least disturb donor sites and best filter water quality. The first project kicks off in the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve along Bayou Heron, Mississippi during the second and third week of April. The ambitious schedule of restoration involves two days of harvesting black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*), constructing a sand wedge at the erosion site, and then transplanting the *Juncus* sp. to the sand wedge. The program involves the coordinated efforts of Dr. Cebrian and his students with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, staff members from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources’ and the Grand Bay Reserve and volunteers from Mississippi Power.

Like our backyard gardens, these restored coastal ecosystems will need the constant attention of everyone involved. Projects such as these bring together the efforts of researchers, resource managers, and educators to fulfill a vital need of a healthy coastal environment. To learn more log onto: www.mobilebaynep.com for links to various organizations and their activities.

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Florida Legislature Considers Creating Cabinet-Level Environment Official

Source: Naples Daily News Date of Story: April 5, 2006; Summary by: Megan Knott

Florida's House Environmental Regulation Committee has proposed a constitutional amendment that could place the job of protecting the state's fragile environment in the hands of a single official. Representative Mitch Needleman's (R-Melbourne) bill would create a state Department of the Interior led by an elected Cabinet-level official. The new department would take the place of the state Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, five water management districts, and the state Department of Environmental Protection. Environmentalists are concerned that the bill would place the power of regulating the environment in the hands of policymakers who may be more inclined to make decisions based on politics and without the necessary scientific analysis. Needleman, who heads the Committee, claims the bill will help the environment. Since the Department of Interior head will be required to run for election every four years, voters and political leaders are more likely to be involved and informed on environmental matters. Others believe that making the state's leading environmental official a member of the Florida Cabinet could help improve the conditions of the state's wildlife, natural lands, and waters.

Governor Bush, Cabinet Recognize April as Water Conservation Month

--State encourages protection of Florida's water quality and supply--

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Jeb Bush and the Florida Cabinet today acknowledged April as Water Conservation Month. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), together with the Florida Section of American Water Works Association, endorsed the proclamation recognizing the importance of preserving and protecting the quality and supply of Florida's water for future generations.

“Florida is working to ensure a reliable supply of water for the future by pursuing state and local partnerships, adopting smart management practices and implementing conservation strategies,” said DEP Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “By using water wisely we can protect rivers, springs and wetlands, ensure a reliable supply of water for the state's natural resources and identify water needs for our growing economy.”

Florida is home to 50,000 miles of rivers and streams, more than 700 freshwater springs and draws 92 percent of the state's drinking water from underlying aquifers. The Sunshine State is recognized as a national leader in water management, conservation and reuse. In 2005, DEP's Clean Water State Revolving Fund was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the State's efforts to promote water conservation and reuse. Since its inception in 1988, Florida's State Revolving Fund program has awarded more than \$2 billion in loans for water quality protection projects, including funding 83 water reuse projects totaling more than \$260 million.

For more information about Florida's water, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/water. For more tips on water conservation, visit http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2006/water_tips.htm.

Governor Blanco's Statement Following U.S. Senate's Approval of Supplemental Appropriation

"The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee today approved significant funds for Louisiana's recovery, including an additional \$4.2 billion in CDBG housing funds dedicated to our state. I was privileged to be present in the committee room when the President's supplement appropriations request was considered and approved. Today's action, if approved by both houses of Congress, will allow us to fully fund our housing program and will enable our citizens to rebuild, repair or relocate. Today's action means that our families and communities are much closer to having the assistance they desperately need to begin restoring their homes and communities."

"In addition to funding our housing plan, the committee provided additional funds for: levee construction and repair; assistance to help our colleges and universities affected by the storms; funds to help our ports, our farmers and our vital Gulf fisheries recover; and, funds for demonstration projects for so-called 'Katrina cottages'. I want to thank President Bush and Chairman Don Powell for making this request on our behalf. I am grateful to the committee's chairman, Thad Cochran, and Senator Robert Byrd, and all members of the committee for their efforts on our behalf. I extend my special thanks to Senator Mary Landrieu, who fought so hard and effectively for our citizens during this process. I know that she and Senator David Vitter will be an effective team for Louisiana when this bill reaches the Senate floor after the Easter recess."

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force Publishes March Newsletter

The March 2006 edition of WaterMarks provides detailed articles on Louisiana's hurricane impacts and recovery. Stories include:

- Hurricanes Prove the Urgency of Rebuilding Wetlands
- Coastal Landscape Battles Weather to Protect Mainland
- Scientists Take the Pulse of a Pummeled Coast
- Breaux Act Projects Stand Up to Hurricanes' Punishment
- Interview with Robert A. Dalrymple

You can view WaterMarks at <http://www.lacoast.gov/watermarks/2006-03/watermarks-2006-03.pdf>.

Coastal Expos Bring Beach to Texas Cities

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Parks & Wildlife Department brings the coast to local communities this spring through Coastal Expo events in Edinburg, Victoria and Pasadena offering fun, family-oriented activities for all ages. Coastal Expo events allow visitors to see and touch crabs, sea stars, and other coastal animals; view a glass-bottom stream; solve a mysterious fish kill; learn what washes up on the Texas coast; fish for live catfish; and participate in other great activities. In the process, they learn about Texas coastal ecosystems, why they are important, and how to protect them.

On April 3-4, the "All American City" of Edinburg and the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands and World Birding Center are partnering to bring Coastal Expo to the Lower Rio Grande Valley. More than 3,000 school children are expected to attend the two-day event. In addition, it will be open to the public for Family

Night on April 3rd from 4-8 p. at the Edinburg Municipal Park. During this free family event, visitors can interact with crabs, fish, and other coastal animals while learning about freshwater inflows, coastal conservation issues and beach habitats.

“Coastal Expo is a great opportunity for people to explore the Texas coast for the first time, learn why coastal ecosystems are so important, and also what they as individuals can do to protect it,” said Kris Shipman, TPWD coastal expo coordinator. Activities include touch tanks with a wide variety of live coastal animals such as sea urchins, sea squirts, crabs, and other sea life. At the glass-bottom stream, visitors will learn about animals’ natural habitats and how bugs can indicate pollution levels in water.

Participants will also have an opportunity to solve a mysterious fish kill, paint images of coastal fish, identify beach objects by touch, and learn about fishing, boating safety, and other coastal issues through a variety of fun and educational devices. For more information, see the Coastal Expo Web pages: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/conservation/coastalexpo/>.

Mitigation Agreement in Texas to Benefit Wildlife, Highways

AUSTIN — Texas transportation and wildlife officials today announced an agreement to increase large-scale wildlife habitat protection while also facilitating new highway projects. The written agreement between the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) formalizes and expands the environmental strategy known as mitigation banking. Developing mitigation banks in advance of large transportation projects can provide maximum public recreation and wildlife conservation with transportation funds that would have been spent anyway to offset project environmental impacts.

“Increasingly, wildlife biologists and other environmental scientists realize that to effectively conserve those woods and waters that are the key for wildlife survival and our human quality of life, you really have to work on a landscape scale,” said Joseph B.C. Fitzsimons, TPW Commission chairman. “With a big mitigation bank, we’re talking about the ability to protect major components of the ecosystem, such as river watersheds or coastal marshes.”

The agreement between the two state agencies calls for TPWD to identify large tracts of land suitable for use as mitigation banks, obtain all state and federal approvals and make available to TxDOT at a competitive cost the mitigation banking credits needed to satisfy mitigation requirements. “As transportation demand increases in Texas we must still work to make sure that in building for growth we plan for environmental impacts and do what we can to offset them in a way that is better for the resource and the public,” said Mike Behrens, TxDOT executive director. “This agreement will allow us to do that in concert with our Parks and Wildlife Department partners.”

Federal laws such as the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act allow compensation for losses of wetlands and endangered species’ habitat that result from public works projects. This is known as mitigation, meaning natural resource restoration, creation, enhancement or preservation to compensate for unavoidable resource losses caused by development projects. Historically, this could mean many small mitigation sites patch-worked along a new highway. These “postage stamp” wetlands were often unproductive and inappropriate for fish and wildlife because of their proximity to human development, the difficulty of re-creating necessary hydrology, and inadequate scale. The new interagency agreement focuses mitigation on large acreage sites picked in advance for their ecological value. Typically, natural resource agencies identify locations with high ecological value and work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which issues permits for highways and other public works projects and private projects that

affect wetlands, to set up mitigation bank sites and establish wetland credits for them. Mitigation bank credits can be purchased to offset wetland impacts of these projects.

“This agreement is important not only to conserve wildlife habitat on a landscape scale, but also as another means to provide public outdoor recreation,” said Philip Montgomery, TPW Commission member from Dallas. “Access to prime places to hunt and fish and otherwise enjoy the outdoors is an increasing challenge for many Texans.” For example, TPWD expects to complete arrangements by late 2006 for the proposed 33,000-acre Pineywoods Mitigation and Conservation Area between highways US 59 and US 69 on the Neches River south of Lufkin in Angelina, Polk and Jasper Counties. This area was identified as a priority in the 1984 Texas Bottomland Hardwood Preservation Program Report. It includes large stands of mature river bottomland hardwoods, a vital yet vanishing habitat type, and it connects the Angelina and Crockett national forests. The site will include a wetland mitigation bank to offset impacts in the Pineywoods Ecological Area. Eventually the site will become a TPWD wildlife management area that could offer public recreation such as boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, and birding.

The two state agencies have already partnered on three mitigation banks. In the early 1990s, TPWD and TxDOT developed the Old Sabine Bottom Wildlife Management Area (WMA) as a mitigation bank along the Sabine River north of Tyler. In the mid-1990s, the department worked with TxDOT to conserve the Blue Elbow Swamp as a mitigation bank called the Tony Houseman WMA along the Sabine River where I-10 crosses it. In 1999, TPWD and others created the Columbia Bottomlands Mitigation Bank in Brazoria County, also working with TxDOT. This site has since become the Nannie M. Stringfellow WMA, part of the Austin’s Woods initiative to protect migratory songbirds.

Patterson Announces 10th Annual “Treasures of the Texas Coast” Children’s Art Contest Winners

Grand prize winner to be announced prior to Adopt-A-Beach Spring Cleanup

AUSTIN - Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson today announced the 46 winners in the 2006 Treasures of the Texas Coast Children’s Art Contest. The Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program organized the annual art contest and received 6,718 entries from children across Texas. The artwork illustrates what children like about the Texas coast and the Adopt-A-Beach slogan, “Trashing Texas Beaches Isn’t Cool.”

“The overwhelming response to this contest just goes to show how Texans love their beaches,” Patterson said. “Grown-ups should pay attention to what these kids are saying: Trashing Texas Beaches Isn’t Cool.”

The General Land Office will feature the winning entries in the Children’s Art Contest Calendar, which will be available in January 2007. The grand prize winner, who will be announced later this month, will receive two round-trip tickets to any Continental destination in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. In addition, the winner’s class will enjoy a party at any one of three Schlitterbahn Waterparks, located in New Braunfels, South Padre Island and Galveston. The grand prize winner’s teacher will also receive two round-trip tickets from Continental Airlines.

All 46 winners will receive one ticket to the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, two all-day passes to Schlitterbahn Waterparks, prizes from Keep Texas Beautiful, a certificate of recognition from Patterson and a calendar featuring the winning artwork.

This year’s contest sponsors are Continental Airlines, Schlitterbahn Waterparks, Texas State Aquarium and Keep Texas Beautiful. The annual contest is organized through the General Land Office’s Adopt-A-

Beach Program. This year's Spring Cleanup is scheduled to take place on April 29 at 27 locations all along the Texas coast.

For more information on the Adopt-A-Beach Program, the Children's Art Contest, or the Spring Cleanup, call toll free at 1-877-TXCOAST or visit the Web site at www.texasadoptabeach.org. The winning artwork will be displayed later this week on the Adopt-A-Beach Web site.

Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Program Celebrates Twenty Years with the Help of Shell

"Twenty for Twenty" program raises cash for cleaner beaches

AUSTIN — Twenty years after 2,800 Texans volunteered a Saturday morning for the first Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup, the highly successful volunteer program is reaching out to more Texans thanks to a \$20,000 donation from Shell Oil Company. "What started as a once-a-year cleanup has grown into a continuous educational project that is changing hearts and minds about marine debris," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "Shell's generous donation will help us educate more Texans about the need to keep our beaches clean."

Shell's contribution will fully fund Patterson's "Twenty for Twenty" program designed to celebrate 20 years of volunteer environmentalism while raising the visibility and reach of this vital program. Independent of the dollars raised for each of the three yearly cleanups, the "Twenty for Twenty" program will fund a limited number of frameable posters commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Adopt-A-Beach Program, help pay for a direct mail fundraising campaign, as well as permanent thank you signs for those who "adopt" stretches of Texas beach. The Land Office selected Shell for this unique partnership because of the company's long relationship with the Adopt-A-Beach Program. "Shell Oil Company has a strong history of working to protect our beaches and bays," Patterson said. "They are a good corporate citizen and a perfect partner for this effort."

"The Texas General Land Office Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup has grown over the years to become a model worldwide for what I call 'elbow-grease environmentalism'," Patterson said. "The goal is to make every Texan aware of the importance of keeping our beaches clean. It's the right thing to do -- for the environment and economy of the Texas coast." The Adopt-A-Beach program is an all-volunteer effort dedicated to preserving and protecting Texas beaches. Since the first cleanup in 1986, more than 335,000 volunteers have picked up more than 6,350 tons of trash along 200 miles of Texas beaches. For additional information on the Adopt-A-Beach Program visit www.texasadoptabeach.org, or contact the GLO at 1-877-TXCOAST.

Other News

Release of Multi-Agency Report Shows Elevated Lead Levels in New Orleans Soil, Consistent with Historic Levels of Urban Lead

Release date: 04/04/2006

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

(Washington, D.C. - April 4, 2006) EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) released data today showing elevated lead levels in some soil samples in New Orleans. The lead levels appear to be consistent with historic levels reported in a local university study conducted in New Orleans prior to the hurricane. Nationwide studies of older cities have shown similar findings of elevated lead levels in urban soil. Today's report is part of the continuing post-Katrina monitoring.

Further analyses are underway to try to determine the source of elevated lead at the locations. The state of Louisiana and the New Orleans Health Department as part of their long-standing program to limit lead exposure to residents, is recommending with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) that residents take steps to prevent potential exposure to lead in the area. In addition to lead, arsenic and benzo(a)pyrene were also detected in some samples. The arsenic results indicated that concentrations are not expected to cause any chronic health impacts assuming long-term (i.e., 30-year) exposures to children and adults in a residential setting. Therefore, no follow-up is necessary in this case.

One location near the Agriculture Street Landfill showed levels of benzo(a)pyrene exceeding EPA's residential guidelines. Federal partners are working to determine the appropriate course of action for the localized area of elevated benzo(a)pyrene.

Agencies that participated in the investigation and analyses are the EPA, LDEQ, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the New Orleans Health Department.

[Data and the areas sampled](http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults) (<http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults>)

[More information on lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) (<http://www.epa.gov/lead>)

USGS and Florida State University Scientists Collaborate on Submarine-Ground-Water-Discharge Study in the Northern Gulf of Mexico

By Peter Swarzenski

During the week of January 30, 2006, scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) joined scientists from Florida State University (FSU) to begin an investigation of the links between submarine ground-water discharge and climatic (seasonal) change. Submarine ground-water discharge—the flow of ground water directly into seawater—can strongly influence coastal ecosystems, with the potential for harmful effects if the ground water contains high levels of contaminants or excess nutrients.

For the recent study, part of a multiyear project funded by the National Science Foundation, USGS scientist Peter Swarzenski and his SGD team members Chris Reich (USGS) and Jason Greenwood (ETI Professionals, Inc.) traveled from their office in St. Petersburg, Fla., to the FSU Marine Laboratory at Turkey Bayou on Florida's northwest coast (south of Tallahassee). There they worked with FSU professor of oceanography Bill Burnett and his team of students (Natasha Dimova, Benjamin Mwashote, Rick Peterson, and Isaac Santos) at a study site near the lab. USGS participation in the study was twofold:

To conduct a series of intercalibration experiments using two new types of autonomous seepage meters—devices that can measure direct ground-water discharge at a particular point. The USGS seepage meters are equipped with electromagnetic flow meters (for more information on these seepage meters, see "An autonomous, electromagnetic seepage meter to study coastal groundwater/surface-water exchange"), whereas the FSU seepage meters use thermal flow meters. Intercalibrating the two types of instruments will allow us to compare high-resolution data collected with each type of meter.

To study the subtle response of the freshwater/saltwater interface to water-level changes over several tidal cycles, using a new, high-resolution (56 electrodes with 2-m spacing) resistivity array that collects data at regular intervals (time-series data). Such an approach can produce very high resolution snapshots of the dynamic mixing processes that occur within the freshwater/saltwater interface.

On February 2, Peter Swarzenski was invited to present the recent results of submarine-ground-water-discharge studies at a seminar hosted by the FSU Department of Oceanography. Preliminary results suggest that during this dry-season, 5-day experiment, fluctuations in the submarine-ground-water-discharge rate as measured by one electromagnetic seepage meter appeared to respond almost predictably to water-level changes, with discharge increasing during times of low water levels (low tides).

In the coming months, additional analyses, including time-series measurements of ^{222}Rn , ^{223}Ra , ^{224}Ra , ^{226}Ra , ^{228}Ra , and possibly thoron (a radioactive isotope of radon, ^{220}Rn , with a half-life of just 55 seconds!), will complement the resistivity and seepage-meter work. These isotopes are much more abundant in ground water than in surface water and therefore serve as effective tracers of ground-water discharge. An advantage of geochemical tracers over seepage meters is that they provide a regional-scale estimate of submarine ground-water discharge, rather than the extremely local coverage provided by seepage meters.

The scientists plan to deploy instruments at the site again during the wet season (July-September) to gather data for comparison with those they collected during the recent dry-season experiment. For more information about submarine ground-water discharge, see "[Submarine Ground-Water Discharge and Its Influence on Coastal Processes and Ecosystems](#)," in *Sound Waves*, June 2004; "[Submarine Groundwater Discharge: An Unseen Yet Potentially Important Coastal Phenomenon](#)"; and "[Submarine Ground-Water Discharge](#)".

A Green Light for Restoration: Transplanted Georgia Marsh Plants Thrive in Dieback Sites

In 2001 salt marshes all over Georgia were laid bare by an unprecedented dieback that affected both dominant salt marsh plants there, *Spartina alterniflora* and *Juncus roemerianus*. By the end of the event more than 800 hectares had been affected. Can the impacted areas be restored using transplants from

nearby healthy stands, or are those areas still under the influence of whatever caused the diebacks in the first place, destined to remain bare until nature takes its course?

Results from a transplant study conducted in two of the affected marshes indicate that active restoration might work well at GA sites. Nearly 100% of transplants of both plant species survived after being moved to dieback areas and significant plant growth was observed in both healthy and dieback areas. In some cases growth was actually greater in dieback areas than control sites unaffected by the dieback, perhaps due to elevated porewater ammonium concentrations observed in dieback soil samples. Other porewater parameters were similar between the experimental and control sites. These results suggest that restoration via transplanting has a good chance of success.

Similar major dieback events have occurred recently in such widespread areas as New England, the Carolinas, and the Gulf of Mexico. This study provides hope that restoration can be successful after these events, but better monitoring of marsh systems may help detect the early stages of these diebacks in order to determine their causes.

Source: Ogburn, M. B. and M. Alber. 2006. An investigation of salt marsh dieback in Georgia using field transplants. *Estuaries and Coasts* 29(1): 54-62.

Grant Opportunities

Grants Available for Hurricane-Impacted Communities

Release date: 04/07/2006

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(ATLANTA – April 7, 2006) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a new grant opportunity for communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The new grant program is titled, "Environmental Justice Grants in Support of Communities Directly Affected by Hurricane Katrina." Total funding for the project is \$150,000 and EPA will make awards in the amounts of \$25,000 or \$50,000 only. Organizations with projects to address local environmental or public health issues stemming from the hurricanes may apply by April 30, 2006.

Eligible applicants for this program are limited to local non-profit community-based organizations and local environmental justice networks, local universities or colleges, and local churches located within the states of Alabama and Mississippi designated eligible for individual assistance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

To help organizations understand the grant application process, EPA will host workshops at the following times and locations.

- Wednesday, April 12, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 6716 Beinville Blvd, (Hwy. 90), Ocean Springs, Miss.
- Thursday, April 13, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, Faith Tabernacle of Praise, 336 Rodenberg Avenue, Biloxi, Miss.

- Thursday, April 13, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm, Diamondhead Baptist Church, 63789 Diamondhead Drive, North Diamondhead, Miss.

Those who plan to attend are asked to reply to Ella McLendon at 404-562-8316. In addition, EPA will host conference calls Tuesday, April 18, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. EST and Wednesday, April 19, 2006, at 10:00 am EST. The conference call-in number is 1-866-299-3188. When prompted, callers should enter code 4045629649. For more information, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/region4/ej/ejgrants.htm>.

Energy

Louisiana Governor Fights for Oil Rights

By Jaime Powell Caller-Times; 886-3716 or powellj@caller.com
March 29, 2006

Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco renewed her threat Tuesday to block future offshore lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico unless Louisiana gets a share of the federal royalties generated by oil production off the Louisiana coast. During the first day of the State of the Gulf of Mexico summit here, Blanco went on to say that Texas, Mississippi and Alabama should get their fair share of the billions of dollars the federal government collects each year from oil and gas production in the Gulf.

Blanco, in town with Gov. Rick Perry, Tamaulipas Gov. Eugenio Hernandez, Veracruz Gov. Fidel Herrera, along with 400 scientists, business leaders and government officials, wants to use federal oil royalty money for coastal restoration projects and hurricane protection, she said. While Louisiana collects royalties in the waters within three miles of its shores, it does not get a part of the billions of dollars recouped by the federal government each year beyond that border.

Blanco said that the oil industry has damaged hundreds of miles of Gulf Coast wetlands, which in turn has left urban centers along the coast such as the recently devastated New Orleans more vulnerable in the event of a hurricane, because the wetlands serve as a buffer against storms. But various oil companies have said it is their policy to protect the wetlands and the Gulf, while reminding the public that natural disasters like hurricanes are unpredictable.

Under federal law governing offshore drilling, Blanco must sign off on federal lease sales and agree that they are consistent with the state's coastal management plan, which she said Tuesday is not going to happen unless the U.S. government gives Louisiana its share. "I won't give an inch," said Blanco, who has been publicly criticized for her handling of the state's emergency response to Hurricane Katrina.

The gulf summit is a venue for science, government, business and industry leaders to come together to work out solutions to problems in the Gulf of Mexico including pollution and the loss of wetlands, wildlife and marine species, said Harte Research Institute Advisory Council chairwoman Dr. Sylvia Earle. Topics to be discussed this week include coastal economy and the Gulf's health, habitats and the impact of catastrophic events. "This has to be something positive," Earle, a world-renowned marine biologist said. "Indifference is one of the greatest causes of the grief we are experiencing. That is changing and we see that right here. Complacency is gone. The role of the Harte Institute is to provide the forum."

It was a forum Perry, Blanco and the Mexican governors took advantage of Tuesday, building coalitions and offering each other promises of cooperation. Perry and Blanco pointed to the Gulf as the most

economically productive body of water in both the U.S. and Mexico, highlighting the coastal region's ports, fishing, tourism and offshore oil and gas industries. Perry said all of the affected states must join in taking responsibility for the upkeep and management of the Gulf.

"The fact is, Gulf waters respect no borders, and what happens in one coastal state can have a tremendous positive or negative impact on the entire group," he said. "Restored habitat in one state might ultimately result in new fishery jobs in another and shipping or retail jobs in a third. Pollution problems that begin off of one state's coastline could end up damaging ecosystems and tourism-based economies for hundreds of miles." Copyright 2006, Caller.com. All Rights Reserved.

Training and Conferences

Coastal Development Strategies Conference

7th Annual Smart Growth Conference

May 2 - 3, 2006: Saenger Theater, Historic District
Biloxi, Mississippi

Conference brought to you by: The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce. Working together, CRMP and the Coast Chamber will host this dynamic, practical and timely conference. We will provide you, the decision makers of Southern Mississippi, with the most successful smart growth and development tools, strategies, ideas and experiences from cities and leaders from around the nation.

Who should attend? Elected officials, planners, developers, bankers, public works directors, boards of supervisors, lawyers, designers, energy providers, builders, transportation officials, business owners, school teachers and citizens. In short, all of us who live and work with the decisions, both public and private, that are made every day and that affect our lives and our environment.

What is the cost? It is FREE. This year, because of the profound and widespread impact of Hurricane Katrina on our region the conference registration fee (\$125.00 last year) has been waived and there is no charge to attend the 7th Annual Smart Growth Conference. We do require you to complete registration forms, however, as they are required for meal plans and public accounting purposes.

How do I register? You can download a registration form at www.dmr.state.ms.us or call (228) 374-5022 and a form will be faxed or mailed to you. Return the registration following the directions provided. We look forward to seeing you!

Managing Visitor Use in Coastal Areas

The Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve is hosting a workshop titled: Managing Visitor Use in Coastal Areas

**Wednesday May 24, 2006, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Eastern Time) and
Thursday, May 25, 2006, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM (Eastern Time)**

at the St. Joseph Bay State Preserves Center, 3915 County Road C-30A, located near Port St. Joe, Florida.

This two-day workshop provides an overview of the human dimensions of protected area management, offers examples of visitor use and associated impacts to natural resources and visitor experiences, and demonstrates applications to help managers address the people side of resource management. Participants will experience hands-on tools, strategies and tactics for managing visitor impacts. Workshop presentations will also include local examples and case studies.

Registration is \$25 (includes lunch both days and materials). Deadline for registration is Friday, May 12.

To register and for more information contact: Rosalyn F. Kilcollins, Coastal Training Program Coordinator at (850)653-8063, ext. 13 or Rosalyn.kilcollins@dep.state.fl.us.

2006 Coastal America Annual Conference

The Coastal America Annual Conference will be held at the Riverview Plaza Hotel/Convention Center in Mobile, Alabama. Topics include state of the Gulf of Mexico, strategic assessment of wetlands, recovery of hurricane damaged areas and coastal ecosystem learning centers.

Dates: April 23-27, 2006

Location: Mobile, Alabama USA

Contact Information: E-mail: Montrese.Diggs@usda.gov

Home Page URL: http://www.coastalamerica.gov/text/annual_conference06.html

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