



May 26, 2006

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>NOAA Gulf of Mexico News</i> | 3 |
| NOAA Predicts Very Active 2006 North Atlantic Hurricane Season | 3 |
| David Kennedy Named Director of NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management . | 3 |
| Student Team from Mississippi's Sacred Heart School Names NOAA's New Fisheries Vessel | 4 |
| CO-OPs Announces IOOS Web Portal | 4 |
| NCCOS Provides tools for Ecological Forecasting for Southeast Florida Coasts | 5 |
| NOAA Continues Access to Ocean Data from Satellite Sensor | 5 |
| <i>In the Gulf States</i> | 6 |
| Massive Marsh Planting Project to Begin in Alabama and Mississippi | 6 |
| Governor Bush Recognizes National Beach Safety Week | 7 |
| U.S. Navy Sinks Old Warship for Reef off Florida | 7 |
| Mastercard International Lends Iconic Priceless® Advertising Campaign to Florida's Hurricane Preparedness Initiative | 8 |
| Florida DEP Awards Grant to City of Marathon | 9 |
| A New Framework for Planning the Future of Coastal Louisiana after the Hurricanes of 2005 ... | 9 |
| DMR to Enhance Mississippi Oyster Habitat through Grant-Funded Cultch Plants | 10 |
| Debris Removal Nears Completion Across Mississippi | 11 |
| Updates from Mississippi Office of Recovery and Renewal | 11 |
| Governor Haley Barbour & MEMA Director Announce Evacuation Survey Number for Six Southern Counties | 12 |
| The Texas Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan | 12 |
| Jamaica Beach Dune Restoration Under Way | 13 |
| Public Invited to Participate in Texas Reefing Program | 14 |
| <i>Other News</i> | 15 |
| EPA Posts Additional Sampling of Sediment in Flood Impacted Areas | 15 |

| | |
|--|------------------|
| EPA Administrator to Celebrate Georgia Aquarium’s Designation as a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center..... | 15 |
| Communities Get New Tool for Clean Air Strategy..... | 16 |
| Inland Flooding a Deceptive Hurricane Danger | 16 |
| Hurricane Storm Surge Can Be Deadly | 17 |
| <i>Energy.....</i> | <i>18</i> |
| FERC Staff Issues Draft EIS on the LNG Clean Energy Project | 18 |
| Staff of FERC Issue Draft EIS on Casotte Landing LNG Project..... | 19 |
| House Votes to Keep Offshore Oil Drilling Ban; Debates Natural Gas Ban..... | 20 |
| <i>Training and Conferences</i> | <i>21</i> |
| Storm Resistant Green Building Workshop and Tradeshow | 21 |
| MS-AL Sea Grant Workshop to Focus on Working Waterfronts | 22 |
| A Practical Guide to Conservation Easements | 22 |
| Alabama – Mississippi Bays & Bayous Symposium..... | 23 |

NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

NOAA Predicts Very Active 2006 North Atlantic Hurricane Season

Residents in Hurricane Prone Areas Urged to Make Preparations

May 22, 2006 — NOAA today announced to America and its neighbors throughout the north Atlantic region that a very active hurricane season is looming, and encouraged individuals to make preparations to better protect their lives and livelihoods. May 21-27 is National Hurricane Preparedness Week.

During a news conference at the NOAA National Hurricane Center, Deputy Secretary of Commerce David A. Sampson noted, "Preparation is the key message that President Bush wants to convey during National Hurricane Preparedness Week. The impact from these storms extends well beyond coastal areas so it is vital that residents in hurricane prone areas get ready in advance of the hurricane season."

"For the 2006 north Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA is predicting 13 to 16 named storms, with eight to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which four to six could become 'major' hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher," added retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

On average, the north Atlantic hurricane season produces 11 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes, including two major hurricanes. In 2005, the Atlantic hurricane season contained a record 28 storms, including 15 hurricanes. Seven of these hurricanes were considered "major," of which a record four hit the United States. "Although NOAA is not forecasting a repeat of last year's season, the potential for hurricanes striking the U.S. is high," added Lautenbacher.

Warmer ocean water combined with lower wind shear, weaker easterly trade winds, and a more favorable wind pattern in the mid-levels of the atmosphere are the factors that collectively will favor the development of storms in greater numbers and to greater intensity. Warm water is the energy source for storms while favorable wind patterns limit the wind shear that can tear apart a storm's building cloud structure. [Read the full story](#) and access links to additional information online.

David Kennedy Named Director of NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

David M. Kennedy has been named director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, where he will oversee the administration of the Coastal Zone Management Act and provide national leadership on the nation's coastal, estuarine and ocean management.

"It is with great pleasure that I announce David Kennedy's appointment to this critical post within NOAA," said John H. Dunnigan, assistant administration of NOAA's National Ocean Service. "David's collaborative style, ability to foster partnerships and strong management skills make him an excellent choice for guiding OCRM into the future."

Kennedy, a 17-year veteran of NOAA, has served as director of NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration for the past eight years, where he led a multi-disciplinary program to reduce risks to coastal and marine resources from environmental threats, including oil and chemical spills and hazardous waste

sites. In that post, he directed three divisions; the hazardous materials response division, the coastal protection and restoration division, and the damage assessment center, with 30 regional offices nationwide. His duties also included overseeing the Pribilof Islands Remediation and Land Transfer Project, NOAA's Marine Debris, Coral Reef Conservation, and Emergency Response programs.

Prior to leading ORR, David served as the chief of the hazardous materials response and assessment division from 1991 to 1998, working with local, state, and federal partners across the coastal U.S. to prepare for and respond to oil and chemical releases.

From 1978 to 1991, Kennedy was a scientific support coordinator, providing scientific advice to the U.S. Coast Guard during oil and chemical spills. During this time he coordinated federal scientific response to more than 100 oil and chemical spills, including the Argo Merchant, Amoco Cadiz, IXTOC I oil-well blowout, Presidente Rivera, World Prodigy, and Exxon Valdez. Prior to 1976, Kennedy was director of the spilled oil research team at the University of Alaska Geophysical Institute.

In addition to overseeing the coastal zone management program, Kennedy will guide the National Estuarine Research Reserve and Coastal Estuarine and Land Conservation programs, as well as the Marine Protected Area Center and the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology. Kennedy will also retain responsibility for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program and the Pribilof Islands Remediation Project. He officially assumes his duties on May 22nd.

Kennedy is a native of Oskaloosa, Iowa, and received a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology from the University of Northern Colorado. He and his wife, Gini, reside on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.

Student Team from Mississippi's Sacred Heart School Names NOAA's New Fisheries Vessel

A team of five students and their teacher from Sacred Heart School in Southaven, Miss., won the "Name NOAA's New Ship" contest with their entry of "Pisces" for the 208-foot fisheries survey vessel currently under construction in Mississippi. "The contest was designed to encourage students to learn more about NOAA and marine and coastal science in their region," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D, undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The school team produced an educational essay that supported their choice of ship name. They have played a part in NOAA's history." Read the [full story](#).

CO-OPs Announces IOOS Web Portal

The Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) is pleased to announce that an IOOS (Integrated Ocean Observing System) oriented web portal is up and running: <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/opendap.html>. In partnership with the National Data Buoy Center (NDBC), CO-OPS created this IOOS web site to provide access to NDBC's and CO-OPS' observational oceanographic data. The CO-OPS' IOOS team designed the portal by following guidance presented in Ocean.US' Data Management and Communications Plan. Users will find improved methods for observational data retrieval, information concerning IOOS meetings, useful IOOS links and related information. For more information, contact Dr. [Andrea Hardy](#).

NCCOS Provides tools for Ecological Forecasting for Southeast Florida Coasts

Accurate and detailed biological and geological digital map products of the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)-sponsored National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) have proven useful to local and state management authorities in decision-making related to resource assessment and evaluation of coastal environmental impacts in Southeast Florida and parts of the U.S. Caribbean region. The NCRI has produced several coastal resource maps to assess impacts from ship groundings, monitoring beach renourishment, and to evaluate effects of construction offshore, port anchorages, dredging, and historical dredge spoil deposition on Southeast Florida reefs. The maps are registered to detailed bathymetric base maps in the depth range of 0 to 100 feet. The NCRI is a Congressionally mandated program administered by NCCOS and is a core component of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program. For more information, contact [David Hilmer](#) or 301-713-3338 ext. 154.

NOAA Continues Access to Ocean Data from Satellite Sensor

NOAA, working in partnership with NASA, announced today that it is enabling continued access to satellite ocean data from a key sensor onboard the OrbView-2 satellite, operated by GeoEye, Corporation. Data from the Sea-Viewing Wide Field-of-View Sensor (SeaWiFS) has helped scientists understand climate trends and climate variability, including the El Niño and La Niña cycle. The data are also used to evaluate the impacts of hurricanes and other severe storms that impact coastal areas.

Through existing agreements with GeoEye and NASA, NOAA will – for the first time – provide \$500,000 to continue the collection of SeaWiFS data, including global coverage at four kilometers and contiguous U.S. coverage at one kilometer. This activity is consistent with the U.S. Commercial Remote Sensing Space Policy, the presidential policy that encourages the U.S. Government to utilize U.S. commercial remote sensing space capabilities to meet imagery and geospatial needs. NASA will continue to support mission operations and science data analysis of the SeaWiFS data, as well as provide access to resulting data products for Earth science research.

Regional data for the U.S. area will be merged from multiple receiving stations, simplifying access to the information. This type of access will improve the quality of NOAA's use of SeaWiFS for real-time operations, such as detecting harmful algal blooms. Each year, the U.S. economic impact of harmful algal blooms average \$49 million, according to economic statistics.

Launched in August 1997, SeaWiFS data comprise the longest continuous record of global ocean information including biology and biogeochemical properties. NOAA support will extend access to higher resolution SeaWiFS data for local U.S. waters until September 2006, and global data until April 2007.

NOAA's Satellite and Information Service: <http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov>

NASA's Ocean Color Web: <http://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov>

In the Gulf States

Massive Marsh Planting Project to Begin in Alabama and Mississippi

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. Or contact: Lee Yokel, Mobile Bay NEP Outreach Coordinator, (251) 431-6409, E-mail: lyokel@mobilebaynep.com.

Governor Bush Recognizes National Beach Safety Week

--Warning flags and rip current signs alert beach visitors to marine conditions--

TALLAHASSEE – Understanding the importance of safe marine recreation and water safety education, Governor Jeb Bush recognized the week of May 22-29 as National Beach Safety Week. “With millions of residents and visitors alike enjoying Florida’s beaches each year, beach safety is an important priority for the state,” said Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “Educating Florida’s beach-goers about water safety is the first step to actively protecting our friends and family.”

National Beach Safety Week, promoted through a partnership between DEP, the Florida Beach Patrol Chiefs Association and the Southeast and South Atlantic Regions of the United States Lifesaving Association, reminds visitors to use caution when enjoying the state’s marine resources. Swimming in groups, supervising children, refraining from alcohol consumption before swimming and observing beach safety warnings are a few of the many ways to ensure a safe recreational experience.

Last year, Governor Bush recognized the importance of beach safety when he signed House Bill 1395, strengthening the Beach Warning Flag System and ensuring statewide consistency. Florida’s beach flag program is utilized in over 85 coastal communities and state parks throughout the state. To further promote awareness of beach safety, rip current signs are also displayed on Florida’s public beaches. This year alone Florida will supply over 1,000 signs to more than 50 coastal communities.

The following events are being held during National Beach Safety Week in Florida:

May 24, 3:00 p.m., Hollywood, Florida
31st Annual Hollywood Invitation Ocean Rescue Tournament

May 28, 8:30 a.m., Treasure Island, Florida
Hobie Ocean Series Paddle Board Race, four and eight-mile

For more information on Florida’s Coastal Management program, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/cmp. To view the Governor’s proclamation visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/files/beachsafety.pdf>.

U.S. Navy Sinks Old Warship for Reef off Florida

May 18, 2006 — By Reuters

MIAMI — The U.S. Navy blasted holes in the retired U.S. aircraft carrier Oriskany off Florida's coast Wednesday and sent the warship to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico as the world's largest intentionally created artificial reef. The 888-foot, 32,000-ton combat veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars took about 35 minutes to settle below the surface after crews set off 22 small explosive charges in her hull, Navy spokeswoman Pat Dolan said.

The rusting ship, decommissioned in 1976, was expected to settle upright in 212 feet of water, which would put her highest point about 60 feet under the surface for the recreational divers who will explore the vessel in the future. "There was a puff of smoke that came out of the carrier when they set off the charges," she said. "The divers will go down tomorrow to check the orientation of the ship."

The storied Oriskany, named after a Revolutionary War battle, was built at the New York naval shipyard in 1945 and served in the Korean War and in Vietnam, where some of its pilots, including Republican U.S. Sen. John McCain of Arizona, became prisoners of war. Reminiscing to CNN about his time on

board, McCain said he remembered best "taking off for the last time and then being shot down." While he said he wished the ship had been turned into a museum, as a diver himself, McCain was glad it was providing recreational possibilities. "As long as people like me are alive the memory of the Oriskany will be alive," McCain said. "The history books will be written about it as a very brave and valiant ship." Dozens of boats ferried U.S. war veterans out to the site, 24 miles off Pensacola, Florida, to witness the sinking.

The Navy spent about \$20 million to strip the ship of toxic materials, tow it to the site and send it to the bottom. A Florida State University study estimated the artificial reef would bring \$92 million a year in benefits to the local economy. Artificial reefs are created by the sinking of ships, old concrete pipes and other debris that becomes a lively habitat for fish, corals and other sea creatures. They are popular with scuba divers and can become major tourist attractions for nearby communities. The Oriskany was used as a set in the 1955 movie "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" with William Holden and Mickey Rooney.

Mastercard International Lends Iconic Priceless® Advertising Campaign to Florida's Hurricane Preparedness Initiative

TALLAHASSEE - MasterCard International announced today that it is launching a public-private partnership with Florida Governor Jeb Bush and the Florida Department of Community Affairs in which MasterCard will lend its award-winning "Priceless" campaign to the state of Florida for a print advertising campaign aimed at encouraging Floridians to prepare themselves for the upcoming hurricane season. The campaign will encourage Floridians to take advantage of an upcoming tax-free shopping holiday on purchases made for hurricane preparedness materials.

Beyond lending the "Priceless" campaign format to the state of Florida, MasterCard is also donating a print advertising buy in four Florida markets to help ensure Floridians know about the tax-free benefit offered as well as the importance of preparing to ensure safety and reduce property damage in a storm.

"Good corporate citizens are important members of our communities. As we work to instill a 'culture of preparedness' in Florida, I applaud the donation by MasterCard of its 'Priceless' campaign to help raise awareness of the State tax-free holiday and better prepare residents for the upcoming hurricane season," said Governor Jeb Bush. "Prepared residents are better equipped to provide for the safety of their families, reduce damage to their homes and recover more quickly from a disaster."

Governor Bush recently signed legislation to create a sales tax holiday from May 21 to June 1 on purchases made to prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. The MasterCard "Priceless" campaign will promote the tax-free period in the Tallahassee, Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach areas. "MasterCard is proud to help prepare Florida's citizens for the 2006 Hurricane season by offering our 'Priceless' advertising campaign to the tax-free preparation initiative," said Larry Flanagan, chief marketing officer, MasterCard. "The MasterCard 'Priceless' advertising campaign has evolved into a highly effective communications platform for reaching consumers. It is our hope that the campaign will help motivate Floridians to take action now to protect themselves from the type of storms that have been so devastating in recent years."

Having earned every major creative award in the industry and more than 100 individual awards, the MasterCard "Priceless" advertising campaign is routinely heralded as one of the most successful campaigns ever created. It is now seen in 105 countries and in 48 languages.

Florida DEP Awards Grant to City of Marathon

--City of Marathon to receive \$7 million grant for wastewater facility improvements--

MARATHON – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recently awarded a \$7 million grant to the City of Marathon to build wastewater collection, transmission, treatment, and disposal facilities in its Sombrero Beach area. The funding was made available by a specific appropriation from the Florida Legislature during the 2005 legislative session. In addition, the city is in the process of securing additional funding to pay for the balance of the project through the DEP Clean Water State Revolving Fund. Sombrero Beach is the initial installment on a plan to provide wastewater facilities for all of incorporated Marathon, replacing thousands of existing septic tanks and to preserve the sensitive coastal waters of the Florida Keys.

“Florida is committed to protecting all of our lakes, rivers, streams, aquifers, and coastal waters by using highly developed water quality improvement technologies,” said DEP Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “Through legislative appropriations and DEP’s State Revolving Fund, the Department is helping build and upgrade local government systems to ensure the highest standards are met.”

DEP established the State Revolving Fund to provide low-interest financing to plan, design and build public water, wastewater and stormwater systems. Funds can be used for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, reuse, estuary protection, and other water quality improvement projects. Funded by federal capitalization grants, state matching funds, loan repayments, and interest earnings, State Revolving Fund loans are offered at interest rates as low as 32 percent below current market rates. Repayments from earlier loans are used to make new loans, allowing the program to operate in perpetuity.

Under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush and the Florida Legislature, Florida has invested almost \$2 billion to improve wastewater treatment, clean up stormwater pollution and upgrade drinking water facilities, funding more than 950 projects statewide since 1999. Over the last six years, the State Revolving Fund Program awarded more than \$1.3 billion to plan, design and build water facilities across the state, including almost \$290 million last year.

For more information on the State Revolving Fund and other financial assistance, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/water/wff/index.htm>.

A New Framework for Planning the Future of Coastal Louisiana after the Hurricanes of 2005

The "New Framework" report was prepared by a working group of scientists and engineers as a rapid response to the national imperative to develop and execute a strategy for reducing hurricane risks in New Orleans and along the Louisiana coast, while sustaining the wetland-dominated landscapes that surround those population centers. Those coastal landscapes are important not only as a buffer from hurricanes, but also are of great value to the Nation for the natural resources and ecosystem services provided. This report focuses on how a sustainable coastal landscape, in combination with levee protection, can help secure long term hurricane protection for Louisiana's coastal population.

SEVERAL PRINCIPLE MESSAGES AND POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Hurricane protection for larger population centers, including the New Orleans region, can only be secured with a combination of levees and a sustainable coastal landscape.

- With presently observed subsidence rates and anticipated acceleration of sea-level rise, most - although not all - of the coastal landscape could be maintained through the 21st century. And with efficient management of the river's resources, this landscape could be expanded in some places.
- We must integrate planning, investment and management decisions under a new framework in order to secure these multiple purposes, while recognizing: the forces of nature; the imperative to protect life, property and communities; the value of natural resources and ecosystem services; the environmental and economic sustainability of the solutions; and financial constraints.
- The near-term critical restoration features selected by Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study (LCA) should be reexamined and prioritized to assure that they provide environmentally and economically sustainable approaches that advance both ecosystem restoration goals and support storm damage reduction.
- Storm damage reduction should be achieved through a combination of stronger inner defenses around larger population centers; broader, self-sustaining wetland landscapes that reduce storm surge and wave fetch; restrictions along artificial channels to limit storm surge propagation; and maintaining barrier islands along selected areas of the coast.

For more details, visit: http://lacoast.gov/news/press/2006-05-19/New_Framework.pdf

DMR to Enhance Mississippi Oyster Habitat through Grant-Funded Cultch Plants

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) will begin distributing approximately 13,000 cubic yards of cultch material (oyster shells) on two sites near the Henderson Point and the Telegraph reef areas south of Pass Christian, beginning May 31, 2005 and will last about 11 days. The sites were selected after gathering input from oyster harvesters in addition to on-site investigations of bottom types and other environmental factors.

Cultch plants consist of spreading oyster shell, unwashed limestone or concrete rubble over the water bottom, giving oyster larvae a clean surface on which to attach and grow. These plants are intended to enhance oyster productivity and increase fishing opportunities in south Mississippi through the continued development of existing reefs and the creation of additional new reefs.

Funding for this project is provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration through an award of \$1,551,876 from the National Marine Fisheries Service in support of Mississippi's Hurricane Ivan Shellfish Restoration and Enhancement Project. A portion of this award will be spent this spring and the remainder of the funds will be spent over the next two years. The grant awarded to Mississippi is a share of the \$9 million appropriated by Congress to assist the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana in recovering from the damage to oyster reefs caused by Hurricane Ivan.

“These funds will help enhance approximately 300 acres of Mississippi oyster habitat,” said Steve Breland, DMR Marine Fisheries Technician. “Once these shell plants are completed, the DMR will have created or enhanced more than 1,300 acres of oyster habitat in Mississippi since 1997. Cultch plants are one of the best methods we have of helping to ensure the continued success of the oyster fishery. We have been fortunate to have had great support from our elected officials, fishermen and processors who recognize the value of this industry.”

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the State by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of

these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.state.ms.us.

Debris Removal Nears Completion Across Mississippi

Release Date: May 24, 2006

» More Information on [Mississippi Hurricane Katrina](#)

BILOXI, Miss. -- More than 41 million cubic yards of debris scattered throughout Mississippi by Hurricane Katrina on Aug. 29 has been removed, according to state and federal recovery officials. About 1.70 million cubic yards of debris, or 4 percent of the estimated total debris statewide, remains to be removed. Debris removal is complete in 75 of Mississippi's 82 counties.

Debris removal is the clearance, removal and disposal of items such as trees, sand, gravel, building components, wreckage, vehicles and personal property. Debris already removed in South Mississippi's three coastal counties amounts to 22.87 million cubic yards, which is more than half of the total statewide

In Harrison County, crews have removed 10.82 million cubic yards of debris, or 97 percent of the estimated total. In Hancock County, 5.75 million cubic yards of debris has been removed, which is 94 percent of the estimated total. In Jackson County, 5.29 million cubic yards has been hauled away, which is 99 percent of the estimated total. In other south Mississippi counties seriously damaged by Katrina, Jones County debris removal is 99 percent complete and Pearl River County is 86 percent complete.

The costs for debris removal and emergency protective measures will be reimbursed 100 percent by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) until June 30, 2006. After that date FEMA will reimburse 90 percent of debris removal and the costs of emergency protective measures with state and local governments splitting the remaining 10 percent. FEMA funding of debris removal is scheduled to end August 28.

Updates from Mississippi Office of Recovery and Renewal

Governor Haley Barbour recently launched a new website, which includes a special section for the Office of Recovery and Renewal. The new Recovery and Renewal section can be reached directly at www.GovernorBarbour.com/recovery, and can also be accessed by clicking the "Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal" link on Governor Barbour's new official website, www.GovernorBarbour.com.

The website is intended to inform persons and entities affected by Hurricane Katrina about the resources available to help them recover. An issues section on the left side of the site contains links to funding resources and general information related to various topics. Citizens and groups are encouraged to browse the issues section to find resources to match their needs.

Mississippi Recovery Fact Sheet

The Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal has created a Mississippi Recovery Fact Sheet to track key recovery indicators. The fact sheet contains data concerning FEMA and Small Business Administration assistance, debris removal, housing permits, sales tax collections and other relevant information. [Mississippi Recovery Fact Sheet](#)

After Katrina: Building Back Better Than Ever

Copies of the final report of the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal, *After Katrina: Building Back Better Than Ever*, are now available to the public. Order forms are available on the Governor's Commission website, www.governorscommission.com.

Governor Haley Barbour & MEMA Director Announce Evacuation Survey Number for Six Southern Counties

Jackson – Governor Haley Barbour and Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Robert Latham announced today an evacuation transportation survey phone line to help local and state officials plan for future hurricane evacuations. MEMA will be hosting the hurricane evacuation transportation survey to help emergency management personnel plan for evacuation needs of residents who do not have their own transportation.

Residents in George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Stone and Pearl River counties who will need public transportation during an evacuation are urged to call 1-866-647-0966 (TTY 1-228-385-5769) between April 6 and May 26. The toll-free number will be open from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. until noon on Saturday.

Residents who call will speak directly with an operator who will ask them how many individuals are in their family who would need transportation and what county and community in which they live. Residents may also tell the operators if they have special needs that would prevent them from using a standard mode of transportation. No confidential or personal information is required.

The Texas Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan

The Coastal Resources Program, Texas General Land Office, announces the availability for public review and comment of the state's plan for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP).

DRAFT [Texas Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan \(305 kb\)](#)

The CELCP is a federal program created by Congress in 2002 and administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The program enables states to permanently protect coastal and estuarine resources by providing matching funds for local governments and state agencies to acquire lands from willing sellers (either fee simple or through conservation easements). This Texas CELCP plan is required to qualify the State of Texas to nominate coastal land conservation projects for federal funding from the CELCP. The plan will be reviewed and approved by NOAA in advance of funding availability.

Public review and comments of the draft plan are requested. Deadline for comments is June 16, 2006 (30 days from date notice is posted). Comments can be directed to Tom Calnan, thomas.calnan@glo.state.tx.us, Coastal Resources, Texas General Land Office, at 512-463-5100.

Jamaica Beach Dune Restoration Under Way

\$885,000 in hurricane storm surge protection just in time for hurricane season

AUSTIN — Just in time for hurricane season, an \$885,000 project is under way to rebuild the natural dune system along Jamaica Beach. The Texas General Land Office project is funded through the state's Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act (CEPRA) program in partnership with the City of Jamaica Beach. "These dunes will form an important natural seawall that will protect literally millions of dollars worth of investment in homes and city infrastructure," said Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office. "This project is a good investment, but dozens of other projects need to be done along the Texas coast."

The project will rebuild dunes along 3,000 feet of beach with about 30,000 cubic yards of beach-quality sand. That's enough sand to fill as many as 3,000 dump trucks. Sand fencing and dune grasses will also be planted to help stabilize the dune system for long-term recovery. The effort is set to finish by June 30.

Once the U.S. Corps of Engineers issues a permit amendment and enough beach-quality sand is found, a beach renourishment is also set to take place along Jamaica Beach. A lack of beach-quality sand in the Galveston area hinders projects and drives the costs up. Lockwood, Andrews and Newnam of Houston did engineering work for the dune restoration project. The project's construction contractor is Beaumont-based Apollo Environmental Strategies, Inc. Costs for the project were split, with the Texas General Land Office paying \$663,626 and the City of Jamaica Beach paying \$221,209.

The Jamaica Beach project is one of just 20 projects funded through the 2004 cycle of the CEPRA program. Funding for CEPRA was cut in half by the 78th Legislature, leaving just \$7.32 million to spend on more than \$36.5 million worth of projects coastal communities need. "For every good erosion project like this one in Jamaica Beach, there are three others that can't be funded," Patterson said. "That's unfortunate, because these projects help us protect the state's economic and environmental treasures."

Studies show the economic benefits of coastal erosion projects make them well worth the expense. A technical report on economic benefits of 13 CEPRA Cycle I projects was submitted by the University of Texas at Austin in August 2003. The report states, "the direct net economic benefits of these projects were impressive," and generated economic wealth in five ways:

- Reduced losses to public property from storm damage and erosion
- Preserved value of private properties in proximity to the project areas
- Generation of additional property tax revenue
- Sustained visitation and related tourist spending in the affected area
- Generation of additional user fees from recreational use of the coastal assets

The report concludes that total net benefits of the 13 CEPRA Cycle I projects will exceed \$127 million over 20 years. Texas is a relative latecomer in stepping up to fight coastal erosion. Because of that, in the 95 years the federal government has given the states money to fight coastal erosion, Texas has received only 1 percent of the total beach restoration money allocated. Florida, however, has gotten 32 percent of that money. New Jersey has netted 27 percent.

One goal of Patterson's Coastal Texas 2020 plan will be to increase the state's share of federal funding for beach restoration. Coastal Texas 2020 is designed to implement Patterson's vision of a comprehensive Texas approach to coastal issues that mixes local, state and federal funds with money from the private sector, while combining regulatory changes with market-based solutions. Coastal Texas 2020 is a long-

term, statewide initiative to unite local, state and federal efforts to promote the environmental and economic health of the Texas coast.

Texas, with 367 miles of beaches on the Gulf of Mexico, has the third-longest coast in the nation. But Texas suffers from one of the fastest rates of coastal erosion in the nation, with some of the most popular stretches of beach losing five to 10 feet of beach each year. More than tourism suffers from the effects of wind and water. Public tax base, wildlife refuges and vital infrastructure are eroding away. For more information on CEPRA projects, please visit the Texas General Land Office Web site at www.CoastalTexas2020.org.

Public Invited to Participate in Texas Reefing Program

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Artificial Reef Program is initiating a new reefing option in which organizations and members of the general public can participate. The new Public Reefing Program will enable persons to reef materials approved by TPWD at existing reef sites in the Gulf of Mexico that have been permitted to TPWD.

The Public Reefing Program will provide greater opportunities to enhance the artificial reef potential off Texas through direct participation of the general public in development of offshore artificial reefs along the Texas coast. It is designed to allow private citizens, organizations or corporations to deploy their own artificial reef materials creating new and expanded artificial reefs off Texas under the direction and guidance of TPWD.

Reefs created under the authority of the program will be placed on sites permitted to TPWD by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. TPWD currently holds numerous reef building permits, and is authorized by these permits to conduct reef development activities by placing inspected and approved artificial reef materials within these sites.

It is the Artificial Reef Program's intention to establish a 160 acre reef site nearshore of each major port area, including Galveston, Corpus Christi and Port Mansfield. In addition, other pre-existing sites can be used by the general public for the reefing of additional materials.

The TPWD Artificial Reef Program's goal is to provide artificial substrate that supports marine habitat which will develop into a complex reef community. Materials to be used in the construction of artificial reef units must be chosen with safety to the marine environment, durability and stability in mind.

Any person, organization, firm, or corporation wishing to participate in the Public Reefing Program and deploy materials to be used as artificial reefs must adhere to the rules and guidelines that will be established by TPWD and incur all costs associated with the acquisition, building, inspection, testing and deployment of the materials. All materials deployed under this program become the property of the State of Texas.

The Public Reef Building Program does not replace the Rigs-to-Reef or any other artificial reef program. It will be a means in which the general public can participate in the building of fishing reefs in waters closer to shore than many of the reefs currently managed by the program.

Participants should submit an application to TPWD listing the materials they would like to reef. Once inspected and approved, participants will be issued a reefing permit to deploy those materials at a pre-determined reef site.

Workshops for public input into the program will be held:

June 6, 7 p.m., at the TPWD Dickinson field office (1502 FM 517 East);

June 8, 7 p.m., at TAMU-Corpus Christi (Natural Resources Center, 6300 Ocean Drive);

June 13, 7 p.m., at Port Isabel (101 Port Road; actual building is part of Port Isabel High School right on Hwy. 100 between Laguna Heights and Port Isabel.)

For more information, contact Dale Shively, Artificial Reef Coordinator, at (512) 389-4686 or dale.shively@tpwd.state.tx.us or Paul Hammerschmidt, Resource Specialist, at (512) 389-4650 or paul.hammerschmidt@tpwd.state.tx.us.

Other News

EPA Posts Additional Sampling of Sediment in Flood Impacted Areas

Release date: 05/19/2006 Contact Information: Dale Kemery, (202) 564-4355 / kemery.dale@epa.gov

On May 19th, EPA posted results from sediment samples collected in March and April 2006 in the flood-impacted areas of New Orleans. These samples target public areas in residential neighborhoods where people are returning to their homes. Samples collected were analyzed for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, pesticides/PCBs, herbicides, diesel and oil range organic chemicals and metals. Results of the samples collected are being compared to Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) Risk Evaluation/Corrective Action (RECAP) Management Option 1 Standards for residential soils and to EPA's cancer-risk range for potential cancer-causing chemicals. Where chemicals exceed EPA and LDEQ criteria, we will work together to determine next steps.

EPA has posted the sample results according to ZIP code on its Katrina web site. For detailed results: http://epa.gov/katrina/testresults/sediments/residual_zip.html

EPA Administrator to Celebrate Georgia Aquarium's Designation as a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center

Release date: 05/24/2006 Contact Information: Laura Niles, (404) 562-8353, niles.laura@epa.gov

(ATLANTA- May 24, 2006) Georgia Aquarium, in Atlanta, will receive a highly prestigious national designation in a ceremony scheduled for May 25, 2006. Georgia Aquarium has been approved for inclusion as the United States' 19th Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center.

The 18 existing Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers are a network of aquariums and marine educational facilities that have pledged to work in partnership with federal agencies to educate and involve the public in protecting our nation's ecosystems. The network of Learning Centers and their federal partners was created in 1996 by Coastal America, a multi-agency partnership including 11 federal agencies and the White House Council on Environmental Quality. The partnership has the common goal regarding preservation of our coastal environment.

This designation is especially prestigious for the partnership because Georgia Aquarium is the world's largest aquarium and significantly increases the ability of the Learning Center network to reach an expanded public. A goal of the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan is to expand the Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center network and partnership. Georgia Aquarium was opened in November 2005 to great acclaim. Partnering with the Coastal America federal agencies will enhance Georgia Aquarium's ability to educate the public about important ocean and coastal issues. More than 1.9 million visitors have toured the Aquarium since its grand opening in November 2005.

Communities Get New Tool for Clean Air Strategy

Contact Information: Cynthia Fanning or Dave Bary, 214-665-2200 or r6press@epa.gov

(Dallas, Texas - May 18, 2006) Today the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched the 8-hour Ozone Flex (8-O3Flex) program, which gives communities a new tool to maintain health-based ozone standards. By joining the 8-O3Flex program, communities that are currently meeting health-based national ozone air quality standards can take steps to maintain or reduce air pollution and prevent violations of the 8-hour standard. This program will provide a way to maintain healthy air quality in the face of growth in industry and population. "The Ozone Flex concept was created and piloted in Texas," EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene said. "The 1-hour Ozone Flex program was so effective and well-received that we have updated it for the 8-hour standard and made it available nationwide."

To participate, a community would sign an agreement with EPA and the appropriate state environmental agency to take voluntary, proactive steps to improve an area's air quality by controlling emissions of ozone-generating pollutants. EPA and the states encourage communities to take advantage of this voluntary program to maintain cleaner air. "Voluntary programs that encourage proactive air planning make a lot of sense. I am glad that this approach may be embraced by others nationwide," TCEQ Chairman Kathleen Hartnett White said. "It is always encouraging to see cities in Texas embrace workable environmental solutions."

Corpus Christi, Texas, is considering applying for the 8-O3Flex program. "The 1-hour program worked well for Corpus Christi. We look forward to continuing our leadership in air quality, making the city a great place to live, work and raise a family," Corpus Christi Mayor Henry Garrett said.

Areas eligible to participate in the 8-O3Flex program are those designated in April 2004 as in attainment for the 8-hour ozone standard, that are currently in attainment and not subject to other federal and state ozone maintenance requirements. In addition, the area must have air monitors in place that meet state implementation plan requirements. The 8-hour ozone standard replaced the 1-hour standard in 2005. For more information about the 8-O3Flex program, including community eligibility requirements and program guidance, visit <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/t1pgm.html>.

Inland Flooding a Deceptive Hurricane Danger

Release Date: May 24, 2006

BILOXI, Miss. -- Inland flooding accounts for the majority of U.S. hurricane-related deaths, a fact not lost on Mississippi residents still reeling from Hurricane Katrina and a good reason to be alert in the new hurricane season that begins June 1. Inland Mississippi residents, as well as those on the state's Gulf Coast, should be prepared to evacuate ahead of a hurricane that could trigger deadly inland flooding, warn officials of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). "Heavy rainfall from hurricanes

can cause flash flooding and endanger people far from the Gulf Coast," MEMA Director Robert Latham said. "People should not think they are out of harm's way just because they live inland."

Evacuation readiness is the Week 7 focus of Mississippi's Stay Alert. Stay Alive. hurricane preparedness campaign. This also is National Hurricane Preparedness Week. The new hurricane season begins June 1. A study from 1970 to 1999 showed that freshwater flooding accounted for more than half - 59 percent - of tropical hurricane deaths. Such flooding is why 63 percent of U.S. hurricane deaths during that period occurred in inland counties. About one fourth - 23 percent - of hurricane-related deaths involve people who drown in, or are attempting to abandon, their vehicles. Nearly 80 percent of children killed by tropical hurricanes drowned in freshwater floods.

Here are some tips to help Mississippi residents avoid getting caught in hurricane-related flooding:

- When you hear hurricane, think inland flooding.
- Determine whether you live in a potential flood zone.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Keep abreast of road conditions through the news media.
- Move to a safe area before access is cut off by flood water.
- Do not attempt to cross flowing water. As little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- Develop a flood emergency action plan.
- Have flood insurance. Flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners insurance.
- Do not make assumptions. Check your policy.

FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is available to homeowners, renters and business owners in communities that adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood losses. This is done by regulating new construction in high flood-risk areas. More than 4.7 million flood insurance policies are in effect in about 20,000 participating communities nationwide, representing nearly \$793 billion worth of coverage. More information is available at FEMA's www.floodsmart.gov web site. The NFIP's Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) offers lower-cost protection for homes and apartments outside of known floodplains. Most single-family homes, townhouses and apartments in these areas are eligible for the lower PRP rates as long as the building does not have a significant history of flooding.

Hurricane Storm Surge Can Be Deadly

Release Date: May 22, 2006

BILOXI, Miss. -- Strong winds usually get top billing in hurricane news reports but, as Hurricane Katrina victims along Mississippi's Gulf Coast learned on Aug. 29, storm surges can be just as devastating. That's one more reason to be prepared for the 2006 hurricane season that begins June 1, officials of the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) warn.

Hurricane Katrina's 30-35-foot storm surge destroyed thousands of buildings and flooded thousands more along the Gulf Coast. The combination of a strong storm surge and high tide can be deadly, considering the shallow continental shelf along Mississippi's Gulf Coast that lets the storm surge flow far inland. "The storm surge presents the greatest potential for loss of life during a hurricane," said Jesse Munoz, acting director of the transitional recovery office for the Mississippi Hurricane Katrina recovery. "It is especially important that residents along the Gulf Coast be prepared to evacuate in advance of a hurricane."

Preparing for evacuation is the Week 7 theme of Mississippi's Eight-Week "Stay Alert. Stay Alive" Hurricane Preparedness campaign. May 21-27 also is National Hurricane Preparedness Week.

Storm surge is water pushed toward shore by winds swirling around a hurricane or other storm. This advancing surge combines with normal tides to create the hurricane storm tide, which can raise the mean water level 15 feet or more — up to 35 feet during Hurricane Katrina. The addition of wind-driven waves can cause severe flooding in coastal areas, particularly when the storm tide coincides with normal high tides. A shallow slope, such as Mississippi's, off the coast will allow a greater surge to inundate coastal communities. Storm tides, waves, and currents in confined harbors severely damage ships, marinas, and pleasure boats. The storm surge combined with wave action can severely erode beaches and coastal highways. Hurricane Katrina caused complete devastation of some coastal communities. Many buildings withstand hurricane force winds until their foundations, undermined by erosion, are weakened and fail. FEMA and MEMA officials advise residents faced with the double whammy of high winds and storm surge to be prepared — put together personal evacuation kits and evacuate when local emergency managers give the word.

Energy

FERC Staff Issues Draft EIS on the LNG Clean Energy Project

FERC staff prepared a [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#) for Gulf LNG Energy, LLC and Gulf LNG Pipeline, LLC (Gulf LNG)'s LNG Clean Energy Project. The project includes the LNG terminal located within the Port of Pascagoula; a 5.0-mile-long, 36-inch-diameter natural gas sendout pipeline; and associated pipeline support facilities all in Jackson County, Mississippi.

FERC's environmental staff concludes that, with the use of Gulf LNG's proposed mitigation and adoption of our recommended mitigation measures, construction and operation of the proposed facilities would have limited adverse environmental impact.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality cooperated in preparation of the draft EIS. Staff concludes that, the project would be an environmentally acceptable action (with appropriate mitigation) because:

- The LNG terminal facility would make use of a site previously used for dredged material placement.
- The LNG terminal facility would be located on lands designated for water-dependent industrial development with access to a deep water federal navigation channel.
- Gulf LNG would implement the FERC staff's Plan and Procedures to mitigate impacts on soils, wetlands, and waterbodies.
- Gulf LNG would implement approved mitigation and monitoring plans to minimize and mitigate for impacts on wetlands, EFH, and Gulf sturgeon.
- Gulf LNG has routed the proposed natural gas sendout pipeline so that it would be collocated with existing facilities to the maximum extent possible.

- Appropriate consultations with the FWS; NOAA Fisheries; and the MDMR Coastal Management Program would be completed before Gulf LNG would be allowed to begin construction.
- Appropriate safety features would be incorporated into the design and operation of the LNG import terminal and LNG ships.
- Operational controls would be imposed by the local pilots and Coast Guard to direct the movement of LNG ships and security provisions would be imposed 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.

Staff of FERC Issue Draft EIS on Casotte Landing LNG Project

FERC staff prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Bayou Casotte Energy, LLP, Casotte Landing LNG Project. The proposed project is located on Bayou Casotte (East Harbor), Port of Pascagoula in Jackson County, Mississippi and consists of an LNG import terminal and pipeline connections to existing natural gas pipelines.

FERC's environmental staff concludes that the Bayou Casotte Energy, LLP, Casotte Landing LNG Project with appropriate mitigating measures, as recommended, would have limited adverse environmental impact.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality cooperated in preparation of the draft EIS. Staff concludes the project would be an environmentally acceptable action (with appropriate mitigation) because:

- The siting of the proposed terminal site next to the Chevron Pascagoula Refinery would provide numerous synergies and environmental benefits, including use of existing services for security and safety, minimization of landowner impacts, and use of waste heat from the Refinery to accomplish LNG vaporization.
- Only short lengths of pipeline are required to tie in to the existing pipeline grid.
- The project would be unlikely to adversely effect Threatened or Endangered species.
- No residences are near construction areas.
- Bayou Casotte Energy would implement a modified version of the FERC's Plan and Procedures to minimize impacts on soils, wetlands, and waterbodies.
- No noise sensitive areas are located near the project.
- Appropriate consultations with the Corps, the EPA, the FWS, NOAA, SHPO, and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality would be required before Bayou Casotte Energy would be allowed to begin construction.
- Safety features would be incorporated into the design and operation of the LNG terminal facilities and LNG vessels.
- Operational controls would be imposed by the local pilots and the Coast Guard to direct movement of LNG ships, and security provisions would be imposed to deter attacks by a potential terrorists.

- The environmental and engineering inspection and mitigation monitoring program for this project would 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.

House Votes to Keep Offshore Oil Drilling Ban; Debates Natural Gas Ban

May 19, 2006 — By H. Josef Hebert, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House rejected an attempt Thursday to lift a quarter-century congressional ban on offshore oil drilling in coastal waters outside the western Gulf of Mexico amid arguments that new supplies are needed to lower energy prices. A proposal to end the long-standing moratorium as it applies only to pumping natural gas was expected to be voted on later in the evening as lawmakers moved toward late-night approval of a \$25.9 billion Interior Department spending bill. The proposal to allow oil drilling in waters off both coasts and in the eastern Gulf of Mexico -- areas off-limits to energy companies since 1981 -- was rejected by a 279-141 vote. It had been offered by Rep. Ted Poe, R-Texas, who called the drilling ban "an outdated policy" when the country wants to reduce its dependence on imports.

Separately, the House by a 252-165 vote passed a measure that would bar oil companies from receiving new oil leases unless they renegotiate past contracts that allowed them to avoid federal royalty payments even when oil prices soar. The measure is aimed at correcting a mistake by the Interior Department that led to oil and gas lease contracts being issued in 1998-99 that did not include a suspension of royalty payments if crude prices reached a certain level. Since then, prices have soared well beyond that ceiling, but these companies still have been exempted from royalty payments, costing the government as much as \$7 billion in lost revenues.

While the measure does not order these contracts renegotiated, the House action would put pressure on companies to do so, its supporters said. "Energy companies have been taking oil and gas from the American people for free and then selling it back to them at record prices," said Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-N.Y., sponsor of the amendment.

Supporters of the drilling ban, first imposed in 1981 and renewed by Congress each year since, scrambled to restore the natural gas drilling ban that had been stripped from the Interior spending bill in committee. Rep. John Peterson, R-Pa., argued that developing the offshore gas resources would pose none of the environmental risks -- mainly the prospects of a spill -- associated with oil drilling. Supporters of the ban argued that natural gas and oil drilling were too closely linked.

Lifting the moratorium for the first time in 25 years would allow energy development within three miles of shore along coastal areas "where tens of millions of our citizens have made it clear that they don't want any more drilling," said Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif. Capps planned to offer an amendment to continue the natural gas drilling prohibition.

Florida lawmakers -- both Democrats and Republicans -- said energy development off the state would threaten a multibillion-dollar tourist industry. Florida depends on tourism, "and we're going to protect it," vowed Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla. Opponents of the drilling prohibition argued that access to offshore oil -- and especially natural gas -- would drive down energy prices and help reduce the country's dependence on foreign sources of energy. "We have lost millions of jobs already because of high energy

costs, and we're going to lose millions more," said Peterson, who has tried unsuccessfully for two years to lift the offshore moratorium as it applies to developing natural gas.

Soaring natural gas prices, which have quadrupled since 1999, have forced companies -- especially in the chemical and fertilizer industries -- to consider moving overseas where fuel prices are much cheaper, he said. Peterson's measure would lift the congressional ban that prohibits the Interior Department from offering gas leases in waters along both coasts and in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. But it would not affect a presidential ban on drilling, issued by executive order, that is in effect until 2012.

Drilling proponents also faced an uphill struggle to get the moratorium lifted in the Senate, where senators from coastal states likely could block any such action. President Bush has said he has no plans to remove the drilling ban. But Capps said if Congress lifts its moratorium and declares that coastal waters should be opened to drilling, she fears the president "is going to revoke his moratoria" as well.

The offshore drilling issue has divided Congress largely along geographic lines. Lawmakers from coastal states --both Republicans and Democrats -- worried that drilling offshore could threaten their tourist and fishing industries and bring risks of environmental damage. "People don't go to visit the coasts of Florida or the coast of California to watch oil wells," said Rep. Sam Farr, D-Calif.

Training and Conferences

Storm Resistant Green Building Workshop and Tradeshow

Presented by: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' (DMR) Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GNDNERR) Coastal Training Program with support from the DMR's Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP), Mississippi State University (MSU), Audubon Mississippi, and Sowing Green Collaborative.

When: Tuesday June 6th, 2006 from 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

Where: Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center Auditorium (MSU, CREC)
1815 Popps Ferry Road Biloxi, MS 39532

Directions: <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/crec/Map%20to%20CREC.JPG>

1/2 DAY WORKSHOPS: 8:30am - 12:30 and 1:30pm -5:30pm

Attend either the AM or PM half day workshop. The trainers are southerners who worked in the Gulf prior to Katrina. They'll cut to the heart of how to practically incorporate green building, storm resistant practices & products into your projects. Walk away with valuable print resources to help long after the workshop is over.

PRODUCT TRADESHOW: 9am to 5pm

This select tradeshow is focused on the most storm resistant and green products. In addition, info on financial incentives for builders, contractors and owners will be available. Expect exhibits on stormwater, rainwater harvesting, energy, daylighting, insulated concrete forms, mold resistant insulation, passive technologies and survivability. All comers are welcome.

2 DAYS SPONSORED CONSULTING or IN-FIELD TRAINING By appointment
June 7th & 8th. Reserved for elected & government officials or design & construction professionals and developers. Meet one on one for assistance incorporating green building & storm resistant construction into your community. Trainers can come to your jobsite for tailgate training & tech assistance.

This is a FREE event!! To register for the workshop, or to request an appointment or in-field tech assistance with the Sowing Green Trainers, please contact Marian Dicas, the Grand Bay NERR's Coastal Training Program Coordinator, at 228-475-7047 or marian.dicas@dmr.state.ms.us.

MS-AL Sea Grant Workshop to Focus on Working Waterfronts

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium will host "Balancing Coastal Needs: Working Waterfronts on the Coast" from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on **Wednesday, June 7**, at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Service at 1815 Popps Ferry Road in Biloxi. The workshop will also be held in Alabama from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., **Thursday, June 8**, at the Bayou La Batre Community Center, 12745 Padgett Switch Road, in Bayou La Batre.

As more and more people move to the nation's coastal areas, many water-dependent businesses are being driven from waterfront property. While each community must define working waterfronts for itself, actions should be taken to ensure access for water-dependent industries, such as shipbuilding, seafood processing and commercial and recreational fishing.

The community forum will include discussion on defining working waterfronts, legal and financial options to help them develop and survive and actions that have been taken in other states.

Registration for the forum is free, and the event is open to the public. Lunch will be provided. Seating is limited. To register, email or call Jody Thompson, jody.thompson@auburn.edu, at (251) 438-5690 before May 31.

The Alabama workshop [registration form](#) is now available for download as a 29 KB PDF. The Mississippi workshop [registration form](#) is also available for download as a 41 KB PDF.

A Practical Guide to Conservation Easements

Wednesday June 21, 2006 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Presented by the Harrison County Board of Supervisors; Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain; Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' (DMR's) Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP), Coastal Preserves Program, and Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's (GNDNERR's) Coastal Training Program (CTP); and Mississippi Power Company.

MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center, 1815 Popps Ferry Road Biloxi, MS 39532

Directions: <http://www.msstate.edu/dept/crec/Map%20to%20CREC.JPG>

This one-day workshop is designed to provide information concerning the application and importance of conservation easements. Special agenda items include strategic planning for conservation easements,

easement preparation, estate planning, tax incentives, appraisal guidelines, and protecting easement properties. Target audiences include appraisers, attorneys, consultants, CPAs, developers, engineers, land managers, land owners, planning commissions, public officials, and realtors. CEUs/CLEs are available for attorneys (6 hours), CPAs (6 hours), and municipal officials (1 hour). CEUs for realtors and appraisers have also been applied for.

Registration fees are \$50 for individuals seeking continuing education credit and \$25 for all other participants who register on or before June 16, 2006. After June 16, 2006, all participants will be charged \$50. Fees include workshop materials, a copy of the book, *Preserving Family Lands: Book I* by Stephen Small, lunch, and break services.

To request a registration form, please contact Marian Dicas by phone, 228-475-7047 or email: marian.dicas@dmr.state.ms.us. For additional information about the workshop, you may also contact Judy Steckler (228-435-9191; judysteckler@aol.com).

Alabama – Mississippi Bays & Bayous Symposium

November 27-29, 2006

The Mobile Bay National Estuary Program in partnership with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant and the Alabama Center for Estuarine Studies invites you to join them in the historic city of Mobile, Alabama for a multi-disciplinary gathering to share information on the status of the Northern Gulf. Topics include water quality, living resources, habitat restoration, natural hazards and coastal development.

Request for abstracts and posters will be sent Summer 2006.

For more information, please visit: <http://ambbs.mobilebaynep.com/>

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