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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

Louisiana Marine Debris Project Planned

Volunteers are needed in Calcasieu and Cameron parishes for the Marine Debris Marking and Mapping Project on Calcasieu Lake, Moss Lake and West Cove from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturday, June 24.

Hurricane Rita scattered residential, industrial and vegetative debris throughout the estuary system, creating a hazard for recreational and commercial boaters, as well as their vessels and gear. In an attempt to make the lake safer, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Coast Survey, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program (Louisiana Sea Grant), Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), Lake Charles Power Squadron and the LSU Ag Center have teamed up to locate and mark as much of this marine debris as possible.

Volunteers will be provided with maps and markers and will travel in their own boats to assigned areas of the lake to make visual surveys. They will mark floating debris with buoys, and submerged debris will be marked with PVC pipe. Volunteers will remove any small debris they can safely bring to shore and will be asked to write down the location of any remaining large debris they encounter. This information will be used for mapping and future cleanup efforts. Marked positions will be posted on the Coast Pilot Disaster Impact Web site, <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/nsd/cpgulf/cpgulf.htm>, and on the Louisiana Sea Grant Web site, www.laseagrant.org/debris. Additionally, lake users are asked to visit the Louisiana Sea Grant site to report the location of any dangerous marine debris they have encountered.

Registered volunteers will be treated to lunch and drinks courtesy of the Lake Charles Pilots. Volunteers are asked to meet at 8 a.m. at Calcasieu Point Landing at 3955 Henry Pugh Blvd. in Lake Charles to register and pick up supplies.

This effort is made possible with involvement of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey with the funding and support of NOAA's Marine Debris Program, which is part of the NOAA Office of Response and Restoration (National Ocean Service). The NOAA Marine Debris Program works with other NOAA offices and partners to support national, state, local and international efforts to protect and conserve our nation's natural resources and coastal waterways from the impacts of marine debris. For more information, contact Tim Osborn, Tim.Osborn@noaa.gov, (337) 291-1111; Justin Farrell, jfarrell@lsu.edu or (225) 578-6348; or Paula Ouder, pouder@lsu.edu or (225) 578-6451; or visit www.laseagrant.org/debris.

Office of Coast Survey Prepares for Hurricane Season

Personnel from the Office of Coast Survey are conducting coordination meetings throughout the Gulf coast region with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pilot Associations, Port Authority, and industry representatives to discuss hydrographic survey response in emergency situations, such as hurricanes. The meetings are focused on communication contacts and conference calls before and after a hurricane landfall, hydrographic survey planning and survey operations, technical surveying issues, data standardization and formatting to facilitate use and decision making to open waterways for vessel traffic and information reporting. Operational logistics, such as availability of fuel for survey

vessels and food and lodging for responders are also a priority. For more information, contact [Howard Danley](#).

Recovery of Orphaned Drums and Hazardous Material and Oil Container Operations in Coastal Louisiana Ends

Hurricane Katrina and Rita littered the Louisiana coastal zone with tens of thousands of drums, cylinders, above ground storage tanks, and other containers that contained crude oil, refined petroleum products, chemicals and other hazardous materials. These pollution sources were a threat to both public safety and the coastal environment. On May 12, a 50-foot tall oil storage tank was emptied of remaining oil and recovered by crane barge in the Mississippi River Delta. This removal action signaled the end of a six-month emergency response action support by the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R)/Hazmat. In what was likely the largest recovery effort of its kind, more than 17,000 orphaned containers, 55 gallons and larger, were recovered in wetland habitats of coastal Louisiana under an ESF-10 Mission Assignment to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA and United States Coast Guard conducted the response action jointly in direct support to the State of Louisiana. OR&R supported the emergency response with full time on-scene scientists beginning with the first reconnaissance overflights in late October 2005 through the development of tactical plans, regulatory and natural resource trustee consistency agreements, and managing wetland and other technical specialist support during marsh recovery operations. For more information, contact [Charlie Henry](#).

NOAA Sponsors Southern Louisiana Portfields Initiative

On May 23-24, NOAA sponsored the Southern Louisiana Portfields Initiative kickoff in New Orleans, LA, bringing together six ports from southern Louisiana along with federal, state, and local partners to identify partnership opportunities. Participating ports include the Port of New Orleans, South Louisiana, St. Bernard, Baton Rouge, Port Fourchon and the Jefferson Parish Port District. A major component of the agenda was a "peer-to-peer exchange" with port representatives from New Bedford, MA, Tampa, FL, and Bellingham, WA. In addition, the ports discussed priority issues and partnership opportunities with a number of federal, state and local partners. For more information, contact [Kenneth Walker](#).

Federal and State Agencies Settle with Private Sector Corporation

NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Louisiana State Trustees settled with Devon Louisiana Corporation for injury to natural resources resulting from the accidental release of 300 barrels (12,600 gallons) of crude oil at North Pass in the Mississippi River Delta, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. Devon Louisiana Corporation agreed to pay \$117,940 for past and future Trustee assessment costs since the September 22, 2002, incident. The selected compensatory project alternative for marsh and biological injuries is the creation of an approximately six and a half-acre crevasse splay in the Delta National Wildlife Refuge along Octave Pass. The project is expected to create a sustainable, structurally and functionally equivalent emergent crevasse-splay marsh that compensates the public for lost services and resources due to the incident. The property is currently in public ownership and actively managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide sanctuary and habitat for waterfowl. For more information, contact [Troy Baker](#).

OR&R's Active Role in Vessel Removal Nears Completion in the Gulf of Mexico

The Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) is nearing completion of its work in support of the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) mission to remove hurricane-damaged vessels from Louisiana waters. To date, 1,554 vessels have been removed. While vessel removal operations are nearing completion, debris assessment and removal efforts are expected to continue through the summer. Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, OR&R staff have worked in the USCG salvage and wreck removal command posts in Alexandria and New Orleans, LA. OR&R provided environmental review of the salvage and wreck removal projects to prevent or reduce collateral environmental impacts. OR&R provided emergency response in the Gulf in the aftermath of last year's hurricane season with full-time, on-scene scientific support, and continues to play a major role in recovery and restoration efforts. OR&R has provided expertise in the development of tactical plans, regulatory and natural resource trustee consistency agreements, and the management of wetlands and other technical support. For more information, contact [Doug Helton](#).

NCCOS Remote Sensing Tool Improves Accuracy of Coastal Ocean Assessments

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) developed and is using a novel automated registration process to improve spatial accuracy of NOAA remote images for coastal ocean assessments of the southeastern United States. NOAA CoastWatch Advanced Very High Resolution Radiometer and Sea Surface Temperature images had spatial errors up to 10 km prior to 2004, and their use for coastal ocean assessments required costly and subjective manual correction. Images registered with the new automated process are being applied to develop forecasts of the ecological impacts of hurricanes on near-shore aquatic habitats. Details of the registration procedure will appear in the June issue of *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*. For more information, contact [Randy Ferguson](#).

Office of Coast Survey Supports Interagency Disaster Response Drill

Next week, two navigation managers from the Office of Coast Survey (OCS) will represent the Department of Commerce in the Department of Homeland Security's week-long operational test of a Joint Field Office (JFO) in Baton Rouge, LA. The drill is an interagency effort to build familiarity with the newly established JFO command structure in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season. When an incident is severe enough to require coordinated federal assistance, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in coordination with other federal departments and agencies, initiates actions to address the incident through the JFO. Senior federal representatives, collectively known as the JFO Coordination Group, direct their staffs to share information, establish priorities, and provide strategic coordination of federal management activities. During this drill, NOAA and other federal agencies will prepare to execute an efficient and coordinated response to potential disasters. For more information, contact [Jake Yoos](#).

Coastal Services Center Trains Alabama Coastal Managers in GIS

From June 13-16, NOAA's Coastal Services Center (CSC) will train coastal resources managers in Mobile, AL, in the basics of geographic information systems (GIS) technology and its application to

coastal management issues. Participants will include staff members from more than 40 state agencies, local governments, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). CSC instructors will work one-on-one with class participants and their spatial data to answer software and project questions. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Mobile District of the USACE are hosting the training. For more information, contact [Steve Walker](#).

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to Convene its Ad Hoc Shrimp Effort Working Group (AHSEWG)

Tampa, Florida – June 2, 2006 - The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) will convene meetings of the Ad Hoc Shrimp Effort Working Group (AHSEWG) to continue 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, 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 at 9:00 a.m. June 28, 2006 at the NMFS Galveston Laboratory, Building 216, 4700 Avenue U, Galveston, Texas. For more information, or for copies of meeting agenda, please call 813-348-1630.

In the Gulf States

Alabama Department of Environmental Management Provides Beach Monitoring

MONTGOMERY – Visitors to Alabama’s Gulf Coast public beaches will be able to get the latest water quality information this summer to help them make informed decisions about recreational use of coastal waters, thanks to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management.

ADEM’s coastal beach monitoring and notification program is underway for 2006. The department has resumed weekly collection of water samples at 25 public beaches in Mobile and Baldwin counties. “Our beach monitoring and notification program gives the public accurate information on water quality,” said ADEM Director Trey Glenn. “Alabama’s Gulf Coast beaches are major tourist attractions and we want to provide any assistance we can to help people safely enjoy these natural resources.”

ADEM scientists working with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Baldwin County Health Department will conduct water quality sampling and testing to establish overall water quality at each site. The program will stretch from Memorial Day through Labor Day with water at public beaches sampled twice weekly or more frequently as needed. Site selection and sampling frequency are determined using a risk-based evaluation and ranking process that considers the amount of use, the level of risk and any specific factors associated with a particular site.

Each monitored public beach will display a color-coded sign advising swimmers of water quality conditions and information about potential health risks associated with swimming or other water activities at the site. In addition to signs, water quality information will be available at www.adem.state.al.us. The website features a list of monitoring locations and maps.

Alabama has approximately 50 miles of beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and more than 65 miles of bay beaches where adjacent waters are classified for swimming. ADEM closely monitors these waters from its offices in Mobile.

Florida DEP Secretary Leads Hurricane Preparedness Workshop

--State working with petroleum companies to maintain supplies during storm events--

TAMPA – Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Colleen M. Castille today met with leaders of the petroleum industry to discuss fuel preparedness plans for the 2006 hurricane season. Representatives from British Petroleum, Shell Oil, Chevron, Exxon-Mobile, Hess, Citgo, Maritrans, the Florida Petroleum Council and the Florida Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association renewed their commitment to work with the State to ensure adequate supplies of fuel are available in the event of a storm.

“By planning ahead, working together and using fuel supplies wisely, we can better prepare communities for the storm season,” said Secretary Castille. “Establishing a thoughtful process between fuel companies and the State will also help restore reserves quickly in the event a hurricane or tropical storm disrupts supply.”

Florida’s ports, including Tampa and Miami, are expected to maintain a fuel capacity to supply the extra petroleum needed during a major storm. On a normal day, Florida consumes approximately 24 million gallons of gasoline. In a storm situation demand can double as residents and visitors fill their tanks and evacuate.

During a hurricane emergency, fuel is replenished based on regional priorities. Fuel is reserved first for emergency crews and first responders. Supplies are then replenished at retail gas stations with available power along major transportation corridors and in metro areas to support evacuees returning to areas affected by the storm. During hurricane season, the Florida Energy Office coordinates fuel supply and priority delivery requests by local governments, law enforcement and healthcare facilities throughout the state.

“Florida has worked diligently with the petroleum industry to learn from the challenges presented during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons,” said DEP Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs and Energy Mike Sole. “Our experiences during eight hurricanes and four tropical storms in 14 months underscored the importance of energy to our daily lives.”

Florida’s anticipated growth in energy consumption, together with its experiences during the unprecedented storm seasons of 2004 and 2005, underscore the state’s vulnerability to interruptions in fuel production, supply and delivery. In response, Governor Jeb Bush this year spearheaded the 2006 Florida Energy Act – a four-year, \$100 million plan to diversify the state’s fuel supply and promote energy conservation and efficiency. As the first comprehensive step toward a diverse, reliable and secure energy future, the Act reduces regulatory barriers to spur energy diversity and provides rebates, grants and tax incentives to stimulate the development of alternative fuel technologies. For more information on disaster preparedness, visit www.FloridaDisaster.org.

Floridians Can Access New Online, Interactive Tool to Create Family Preparedness Plans

With a new opinion survey showing that as many as one-third of Floridians are less prepared than they should be in the event of a major hurricane, Florida Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, along with the Division of Emergency Management and the Florida Association of Broadcasters, recently unveiled an outreach campaign to promote hurricane preparedness.

With a simple theme calling on Floridians to “GET A PLAN!” the campaign targets residents who have the ability to be prepared in the event of a major storm, but are not.

The campaign will include television ads, billboards and a new web-based family preparedness planning tool. The interactive site allows Floridians to design a customized family disaster plan. For more information visit www.floridadisaster.org.

Louisiana Recovery Authority Releases Second Quarterly Report

BATON ROUGE, La. - The Louisiana Recovery Authority today released its second quarterly report, outlining progress that's been made in recovery from February through May of 2006. The report highlights the launch of Louisiana's housing registry, the expansion of Louisiana's Bridge Loan Program, funding for infrastructure repairs and economic development, and the development and approval of *The Road Home* housing program. The executive summary and full report are available online at <http://lra.louisiana.gov>.

Southwest and Southeast Louisiana Emergency Evacuation Maps Now Online

May 26, 2006-- Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco joined the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, the Louisiana State Police, the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and the Southwest Louisiana Chapter of the American Red Cross in Lafayette and Lake Charles today to discuss the availability of the Southwest Emergency Evacuation maps and the contraflow plan for the region. Governor Blanco last week released similar evacuation maps for the Southeast region of the state. To read the full story, visit the [Governor's Web site](#). To download Emergency Evacuation maps for both the Southwest and Southeast regions of Louisiana, visit one of the following sites:

- [Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness](#)
- [Louisiana State Police](#)
- [Department of Transportation and Development](#)

Louisiana Action Plans Published for Review

BATON ROUGE, LA- The Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) and Office of Community Development (OCD) published action plans today for four economic development programs and an amendment to the Local Government Emergency Infrastructure Program, marking the opening of the official 10-day public comment period.

As outlined, these "action plans" propose expenditure of \$670.5 million in Louisiana's Supplemental Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The funding is part of the initial allotment of \$6.2 billion in CDBG funds appropriated by Congress in December for Louisiana's hurricane recovery. Another \$4.2 billion is currently under consideration in Congress. Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and the LRA have committed to use CDBG dollars to repair and rebuild the state's permanent housing stock; urge reinvestment in multi-family rental units; rebuild infrastructure, and provide short-term capital assistance and investment for the long-term recovery and growth of Louisiana's economy.

The action plans propose the expenditure of \$170.5 million for four economic development programs which include:

- \$95 million for a Long Term Recovery Loan Program to leverage an estimated \$550 million in funding for fixed assets, equipment, and working capital;
- \$38 million for a Small Firm Recovery Loan and Grant Program targeting firms that do not qualify for conventional financing and/or loans from the Small Business Administration;
- \$28 million for a Louisiana Tourism Recovery Program to revive the second largest industry in the state, in terms of employment; and
- \$9.5 million to provide technical assistance to small firms seeking to recover in a changed, post-storms marketplace or to start new businesses in the impacted communities.

The action plans also propose the expenditure of \$500 million for the increase and expansion of the Local Government Emergency Infrastructure program. Ninety five million dollars was initially set aside for this program to assist parishes that have adopted the latest available base flood elevations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and new statewide building standards to repair and rebuild their infrastructure. This amendment proposes increasing the total allotment by \$500 million, based on a careful review of damages with FEMA and local governments.

Citizens, community leaders and elected officials can access the plans online by [clicking here](#) and opening Action Plan Amendment 2 or request a copy by phone by calling (225) 342-7412. After the public comment period and the programs receive final approval from Governor Blanco, the LRA and the Louisiana Legislature, these action plans will be delivered to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington for final approval.

Mississippi Recovery Fair

The Governor's Recovery Expo has been scheduled for August 12th–13th at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum in Biloxi, Mississippi. This event will provide an opportunity for citizens, local officials and developers to come together and learn more about the tools for building the region's future. The Expo will be a comprehensive, convention-style event, open to the public, encompassing all aspects of recovery and renewal for the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The Expo will include both public and private entities that are involved in the rebuilding of coastal Mississippi. Expo features will include product demonstrations, house strengthening seminars, housing displays, informational seminars and much more. Continue to visit the Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal website, www.governorbarbour.com/recovery for the latest information and resources related to recovery.

Mississippi Building Code Enforcement Grants

The Mississippi Development Authority is administering a grant program to help coastal governments pay for additional code enforcement officials. Hancock, Harrison, Jackson and Pearl River counties, and the cities they contain, are eligible for the \$5 million grant program, which is funded by the Community Development Block Grant appropriated by Congress in December. The program will help communities build back stronger and safer by funding salaries, fringe benefits, travel and training for building code enforcement officials for one year. Applications are due by June 16th. Local officials should contact Jimmy Ware (601-359-3179) at the Mississippi Development Authority for more information on the grant program.

Ocean Springs Charrette

Ocean Springs recently hosted a charrette to develop ideas for improving the city's waterfront. The four-day session of intense design and planning ended with a town meeting, attended by over 200 residents who viewed presentations of the architects' plans. For more information on the charrette, [click here](#).

NOAA and Mississippi DMR Marine Debris Side Scan Survey Project

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Coast survey was funded to implement surveys of the coastal and offshore areas of Mississippi and Alabama and Louisiana that have been impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The objective is to find and chart and assist the U.S. Coast Guard (in providing information on the location, size, possible identify and clearance depth, etc) in removing hazards to navigation and to fishing vessels off of Mississippi's coast.

The reports and navigation incidents in the last several months indicate a large amount of hazards are found in the coastal bays, near shore and farther offshore areas. Using sidescan sonar, multi beam equipment, NOAA has surveyed extensively immediately after the hurricanes. However, the priority was surveying and assisting in clearing the navigation channels and port and harbors. Fishing areas have not been surveyed and hazards, in certain areas, can likely be dense and present real risks to fishing vessels working in these areas.

The four areas which are currently being surveyed are identified on the [map](#). These areas were identified made by DMR and NOAA personnel as a principal guide to determining the amount of marine debris in these locations and reducing the risk to navigation and shrimping and fishing vessels. The survey effort has shown that a small boat sidescan effort is successful in covering the nearshore areas. The eastern survey project area has a considerable number of debris or objects. A number of objects have at this time been identified as "Dangers to Navigation" and submitted to a Local Notice to Mariners and charting as a hazard.

NOAA is providing the graphics and is sorting the contact (debris) list by size and clearance depths and provide them to DMR, FEMA and USCG. We are happy to provide in formats to DMR to post to their websites and for distribution to the fishing and shrimping community through other means. NOAA and USCG will also review the contacts and may decide to list and chart some of them as hazards.

Texas GLO Announces \$1.3 Million to Move Homes Off Beach

AUSTIN — Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, today announced he is making \$1.3 million in state money immediately available to remove qualified houses from the public beach. He said he will also seek additional funding for this effort. The announcement comes as part of a larger plan to strengthen the Open Beaches Act and ensure public access to Texas beaches. It follows the end of a 2-year enforcement moratorium for houses on the public beach.

Patterson's "Plan for Texas Open Beaches" presents eight proposals, some of which include legislative measures for the upcoming 2007 session. The plan makes it clear that the Land Office will continue to pursue litigation to remove houses from the beach, as well as alternative means to address the problem. This is the most comprehensive plan to address the issue of houses on the beach since the creation of the Open Beaches Act in 1959. No other Land Commissioner has addressed this issue with this level of specificity. "The time to act is now," said Patterson. "As long as there is erosion of the Texas coast, this problem will not go away. I believe these proposals are a fair and equitable way to preserve public access to the beach while honoring private property rights. "We can no longer apply 1959 solutions to 2006 problems. These changes are long overdue."

June 7, 2006 marks the expiration of the 2-year moratorium order issued by Patterson that suspended the ability of state and local officials to file suit to remove 116 houses from the public beach. With the expiration of this moratorium order, the houses remaining on the beach, or seaward of the natural line of vegetation, become subject to removal actions from state and local officials. While the Land Office continues to pursue litigation, it has proven costly and time-consuming. Patterson's plan, however, calls for a variety of new ideas to be applied to the problem of private structures on the public beaches. "I'm proposing new tools for the toolbox," Patterson said. "Some may require legislative action, but some can be done today. All, I believe, will help ensure public access, protect health and safety and respect private property."

These include immediate steps to:

- Allow the Land Commissioner discretion to determine which houses on the beach constitute a public health and safety threat. This will allow the Land Commissioner to better prioritize efforts to remove houses that are in violation of the Texas Open Beaches Act.
- Adopt new rules to allow owners of houses on the beach to get repair permits or hook up to public utilities, as they could under the moratorium, but without protection from removal actions.
- Offer \$1.3 million in initial state financial assistance to remove houses from the beach due to severe erosion of the Texas coast, and seek additional funding.

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

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

"The Texas coast is eroding — there are homes on the beach now and there'll be more in the future," Patterson said. "It's crucial the state recognize the value of private property rights while the Land Office ensures the beach remains open to everyone. This plan strikes that balance."

Other News

Georgia Delegation Defeats Chattahoochee River Water Use Rider

Source: The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Date of Story: May 26, 2006, Summary by: Stephanie Showalter

Since 1990, Alabama, Florida, and Georgia have waged a contentious battle over water from the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River System. Alabama and Florida claim that increased water withdrawals by Georgia to support increased growth in Atlanta threaten economic development downstream. Although the three states and the Corps of Engineers are in the midst of a protracted, court-imposed negotiation, the Corps is revising its manuals governing water distribution rights for the Chattahoochee River. The Alabama delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives, fearing the revisions would give Georgia an edge in the negotiations, inserted an amendment into an appropriations bill for energy and water projects which would have prevented the Corps from updating water use plans to allow Atlanta to withdraw additional water from the Chattahoochee and Lake Lanier. In a surprising show of unity, the entire Georgia delegation worked together to defeat the amendment. The bill is now headed to the Senate where Georgia senators are sure to keep a close eye on their colleagues from Alabama and Florida.

Performance Evaluation of the New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Protection System

Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force Draft Final Report, June 1, 2006

The [Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force](#) (IPET) today is releasing the draft final report of its performance evaluation of the New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Protection System during Hurricane Katrina. This comprehensive evaluation was conducted by the IPET, a distinguished group of more than 150 government, academic, and private sector scientists and engineers who dedicated themselves solely to this task for the last eight months.

This report is being provided as a draft, offering provisional final results for the entire spectrum of the work accomplished, with the notable exception of the risk and reliability assessment, which, at the request of the ASCE External Review Panel, is undergoing validation and peer review and should be released later this month or in July at the latest.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Critical Habitat for Seven Freshwater Mussels

August 6, 2006, Contacts: Tom MacKenzie, 404/679-7291, **Jerry Zeiwitz**, 850/769-0552 ext. 223

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) announced today a proposal to designate approximately 1,200 miles of river and stream channel in the Southeast as critical habitat for seven species of freshwater mussels protected under the [Endangered Species Act](#) (ESA).

The proposed designations for these mussels encompass portions of river and stream channels in four northeast Gulf of Mexico drainages: the Econfinia Creek drainage in Florida, the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River drainage in Alabama, Florida and Georgia, the Ochlockonee River drainage in

Florida and Georgia, and the Suwannee River drainage in Florida. The seven mussels are the endangered fat threeridge, [shinyrayed pocketbook](#), [Gulf moccasinshell](#), [Ochlockonee moccasinshell](#), as well as [oval pigtoe](#), and the threatened [Chipola slabshell](#) and [purple bankclimber](#).

Public comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until August 4, 2006. Written comments on the proposal should be submitted to the Panama City Field Office, addressed to Jerry Ziewitz, at the above address. Written comments can be delivered to the Panama City Field Office, 1601 Balboa Ave., Panama City, FL 32405 attention Jerry Ziewitz. Comments may also be faxed to 850/763-2177, or sent by electronic mail (e-mail) to FW4ESFRPanamaCity@FWS.gov.

As listed species under the ESA, the seven mussels are already protected wherever they occur, and Federal agencies are required to consult on any action they take that might affect the species.

Grant Opportunities

Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership

Request for Preproposals for Projects in the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Territories of the Caribbean (Submittal Date: July 24, 2006)

The Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Partnership (GCRP) invites preproposals for its citizen-driven habitat restoration projects. The partnership is seeking to fund on-the-ground activities throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Territories of the Caribbean which restore marine, estuarine, and riparian habitats benefiting living marine resources and provide educational and social benefits by significantly involving the community.

The GCRP is a multi-year, regional partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program (CRP), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Gulf of Mexico Program - Gulf Ecological Management Sites (GEMS) Initiative, and the Gulf states and Caribbean territories. The purpose of this partnership is to strengthen the conservation efforts of the CRP and GEMS by supporting on-the-ground restoration activities and fostering local stewardship of ecologically significant areas.

Project Specifications:

Preproposals will be accepted for projects that involve restoration, creation, or enhancement of coastal habitats. For Gulf of Mexico projects, priority will be given to projects which are located within GEMS sites.

Funding:

Preproposals will be evaluated and selected by the GCRP steering committee, which consists of Gulf of Mexico Foundation staff, NOAA, US EPA Gulf of Mexico Program, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and other natural resource agency technical staff. Approximately \$280,000 is available for Year 2007 projects. Project funding levels will typically fall within the range of \$20,000 - \$50,000. The Partnership seeks to provide approximately \$40,000 to each state or territory assuming projects meeting the selection criteria are identified.

Preproposal Requirements:

Preproposals must be received by **July 24, 2006** and should be no more than two (2) pages in length. Preproposals must include all of the information requested and be formatted as shown in the guidance. Projects that meet the minimum partnership requirements will be invited to submit full proposals (approximate submittal date: October 15, 2006) that will more fully describe the activities to be accomplished and will include a specific timeline, a monitoring plan, and a detailed budget.

For questions about the application process, please contact:

Dr. Quenton Dokken, Executive Director, Gulf of Mexico Foundation or Kendal Keyes, Project Coordinator, Gulf of Mexico Foundation at: (361) 882-3939, info@gulfmex.org, or www.gulfmex.org

The Partnership for Restoring Coastal Louisiana Community-Based Restoration Program Solicitation for Proposals

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources gives public notice that it is requesting proposals from interested, qualified persons or firms (including public agencies and institutions) for a Community Based Restoration Project that provides on the ground restoration of estuarine or marine habitat. Copies of the Solicitation for Proposals (SFP) may be obtained directly from the [website](#) or from the Coastal Engineering Division of the Department Natural Resources, 10th floor, Room 1078, LaSalle Office Building, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802. They also may be obtained by calling Mr. Maury O. Chatellier, P.E. at (225) 342-5944 or by email request to maury.chatellier@la.gov. Please note that all requests must include a contact name, company name, mailing address, and telephone number.

Proposals may be sent to the Department of Natural Resources, Post Office Box 44027, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-4027, ATTN: Mr. Maury Chatellier, or delivered to the Coastal Engineering Division of the Department Natural Resources, 10th floor, Room 1078, LaSalle Office Building, 617 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802. Proposals must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. CST, Monday, July 17th, 2006 (closing date) after which time and date they will not be accepted. Proposals will be evaluated according to criteria defined in the SFP, and all proposers will be notified by electronic and U. S. mail of any contract awarded after such evaluation. Related Document: [Solicitation for Proposals](#).

Energy

Storm Water Rule Finalized to Comply with Energy Policy Act

Release date: 06/07/2006

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

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has finalized revisions to storm water regulations to advance the comprehensive energy policy enacted by Congress last year. This action, implementing an amendment to the Clean Water Act passed in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, modifies water permitting program regulations to clarify that uncontaminated storm water discharged from oil and gas field activities does not require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

This rule encourages voluntary application of best-management practices for oil and gas field

construction activities to minimize erosion and control sediment to protect surface water quality during storm events. It also retains the right of states to regulate these activities under other laws and authorities.

EPA will work with government, citizens, and industry to promote the importance of storm water management at oil and gas sites as it implements its rulemaking activities. This rule is effective June 12, 2006. Information on permitting of storm water discharges:

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/oilgas.cfm>

New Rule to Offer Greater Protection to Marine Life

Release date: 06/02/2006 Contact Information: (Media only) Dale Kemery, (202) 564-4355 / kemery.dale@epa.gov (Other inquiries) Janet Goodwin, (202) 566-1060 / goodwin.janet@epa.gov

(Washington, D.C. - June 2, 2006) EPA announced a final rule, established under the Clean Water Act, which will provide increased protection to fish, shellfish and other aquatic life. This action sets standards for cooling water intake structures at new oil and gas extraction facilities either at offshore or coastal locations. The rule applies to an estimated 124 new rigs and platforms expected to be built over the next two decades. These facilities could require as much as 20 million gallons of water a day to cool the equipment.

Derived from Section 316(b) of the Clean Water Act, this is the final action of a three-phase process that began by implementing requirements for new facilities, but did not include offshore or coastal oil and gas facilities. The second rule addressed existing power plants that use more than 50 million gallons of cooling water per day.

Cooling water intake structures at existing manufacturing facilities and certain power generators will continue to abide by section 316(b) requirements established on a case-by-case, best professional judgment basis through the water permitting program. The final rule does not change the regulatory requirements for facilities subject to the first and second regulations. More information:

<http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/316b/ph3.htm>

ConocoPhillips Withdraws Application for Compass Port LNG Project

ConocoPhillips 6/9/2006; URL: http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=32989

ConocoPhillips has withdrawn the application for a license under the federal Deepwater Port Act for its Compass Port liquefied natural gas (LNG) project that had been proposed for 11 miles off the Alabama coast.

"Over the past two years, ConocoPhillips has worked closely with the offices of Alabama Governor Bob Riley and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour and several federal agencies to address the issues associated with the application of Open Loop Vaporization technology," said Sig Cornelius, president of ConocoPhillips Global Gas. "It is clear that Governor Riley still has environmental concerns despite the independent scientific studies predicting minimal impact.

Therefore, ConocoPhillips has elected to withdraw its deepwater port application. At Governor Riley's request, ConocoPhillips will begin evaluating the economics of utilizing a Closed Loop warming system as an alternative to Open Loop vaporization. Compass Port remains an attractive location and the decision on whether or not to proceed with re-filing an application will be made after consideration of all the economic factors."

ConocoPhillips will complete the current work program that it has been supporting since October 2004 with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Lab to establish a comprehensive environmental baseline at the project site. The company will continue to pursue LNG supply options and explore other opportunities to site LNG facilities to meet growing needs for clean, abundant natural gas in the United States.

Training and Conferences

1st Minerals Management Service Marine Minerals Program Information Transfer Meeting

The meeting will highlight the work of the Agency's Marine Minerals Program and is intended to foster coordination and communication among interested parties relative to offshore sand borrow investigations in Federal waters and the conduct of environmental studies to evaluate the effects of dredging for beach nourishment. These studies are used in the development of leases which allow for the use of Federal sand for coastal restoration and wetlands protection projects.

Location: Crowne Plaza Melbourne Oceanfront, Melbourne, Florida, USA

Dates: June 20-22, 2006

Contact Information: Barry Drucker

Phone: +1 703-787-1296

Email: barry.drucker@mms.gov

Home Page URL: <http://www.signup4.net/Public/ap.aspx?EID=MARI10E>

4th Annual Gulf Waters 2006-Back to the Shelf, into the Deep and Beyond

As the hope and expectation of vast reserves increases so do the costs and challenges of doing business in the Gulf of Mexico. Deep water and deep shelf plays are facing challenges and limitations. In the summer of 2005 acts of nature converged on the Gulf of Mexico bringing the vulnerability, limitations and the country's reliance on these resources to meet its needs to the forefront. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will likely lead to new regulations and/or changes to existing requirements.

Uncertainty abounds with change being the only constant. Some questions that need to be addressed include:

- Will the changes provide more access to previously off-limits technically recoverable resources and increase domestic production?
- Can resolution to the disputes and debates over deepwater royalty relief, environmental concerns, off-limit areas for production, necessary improvements to and expansion of infrastructure and new rigs come in time for companies to continue developing the Gulf?
- Will technology be available in time?
- How has and will Congress and the government resource managers react to the challenges and limitations industry faces?

- What impact will developing alternative uses of the OCS have on the industry?

Location: Hilton Houston Westchase, Houston, TX, USA

Dates: August 29-30, 2006

Early Registration Deadline: June 30, 2006

Abstract/Proposal Submission Deadline: June 2, 2006

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