

# Gulf of Mexico News



NOAA Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

December 15, 2006

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## NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

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### ***NOAA Hails Congressional Passage of Fisheries Bill***

NOAA is hailing the passage by Congress of a bill to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This final step was years in the making, with much debate and compromise between the House, Senate the administration, conservation groups and fishing industries. "All of us at the Department of Commerce and the NOAA Fisheries Service are pleased with the tremendous support for the bill from our constituents," said Bill Hogarth, director of the NOAA Fisheries Service. "Along with commercial and recreational fishing groups and environmental organizations, we have found common ground in our shared goal to secure strong fishing industries and healthy marine ecosystems, and this legislation will help us achieve that goal." [Read the Full Story](#)

### ***Commerce Secretary and NOAA Administrator Announce New National Hurricane Center Director Bill Proenza***

Commerce Secretary [Carlos Gutierrez](#) and [NOAA](#) officials, Under Secretary Conrad Lautenbacher and National Weather Service Director D.L. Johnson, today named Xavier William (Bill) Proenza to replace [Max Mayfield](#) as the Director of its [National Hurricane Center](#) and two other divisions of the NOAA Tropical Prediction Center in Miami. Proenza will become the Director upon Mayfield's retirement on January 3 after 34 years of federal service at the hurricane center. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is an agency within the Department of Commerce.

Proenza, long-time director of the [NOAA National Weather Service Southern Region](#), will be actively working with Mayfield this December handling post-season hurricane evaluations and conference preparation. "Although Bill has big shoes to fill as America's calm and trusted voice in the eye of the storm, his experience and his ties to the emergency management community will be a national asset in preparing our coastlines from tropical weather threats," said Secretary Gutierrez.

"Bill directs warning and forecast services for the most active severe weather region in the United States, the Southern Region, where nearly 90 percent of the nation's hurricanes make landfall. He has made hurricane preparation and the local forecasting of flooding, tornadoes and high winds by our network of weather forecast offices his top priority," said retired Navy Vice Admiral [Conrad C. Lautenbacher](#), Ph.D., under secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. "He is an effective and knowledgeable leader and well respected by our partners in emergency management and the media." Proenza started his career with the National Weather Service at its National Hurricane Center and with NOAA's Hurricane Hunters in the mid '60s and went on to serve in a number of field, headquarters and leadership capacities across the nation. He has been director of the National Weather Service Southern Region since 1998. The Florida State University graduate is a long-standing member of the American Meteorological Society and the National Weather Association, and has held appointments in both professional agencies. In 2001, the AMS recognized him with its prestigious Francis W. Reichelderfer Award for outstanding environmental services to the nation. In 2003, Proenza was elected as an AMS Fellow.

"Bill was the natural choice for this position," said Brig. Gen. [David L. Johnson](#), U.S. Air Force (Ret.), director of the NOAA National Weather Service. "His passion and enthusiasm to expand the nation's

hurricane program, combined with his extensive experience in leadership and operational roles, will serve the nation well.”

“I certainly look forward to working with the outstanding National Weather Service teams at the National Hurricane Center and the coastal Weather Forecast Offices across our nation,” said Proenza. “While we were fortunate to have had a below-normal Atlantic Hurricane Season in 2006, with no land-falling hurricanes, we remain in an active hurricane period with its continued challenges to protect life and support the economic well being of the nation. Working closely with our many partners in the scientific community, emergency management and the media, I am confident we will meet those challenges and continue to advance the science of tracking and warning for devastating hurricanes and tropical storms.”

The Tropical Prediction Center is part of the [National Centers for Environmental Prediction](#) of the [NOAA National Weather Service](#), and is home to three divisions including the National Hurricane Center, which provides forecasts of the movement and strength of tropical weather systems and issues watches and warnings for the U.S. coastal and surrounding areas. The Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch provides support for satellite and radar analyses, and the Technical Support Branch supports the Center’s computer and communications systems while developing new techniques for tropical cyclone and tropical weather analysis and prediction.

## ***NCCOS-sponsored Research to Improve Prediction of Harmful Algal Bloom Events and Prevent Impacts in the Gulf of Mexico***

In a major synthesis of data from research supported by the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) Ecology and Oceanography of Harmful Algae Blooms (ECO HAB) and the Monitoring and Event Response for Harmful Algal Blooms (MER HAB) Programs, as well as other projects, researchers propose a specific sequence of events to explain the nearly-annual blooms of *Karenia brevis* in Gulf waters. These blooms, also known as “red tides,” cause fish and marine mammal kills, closures of shellfish beds, and human respiratory irritation, which lead to significant health and economic impacts. Understanding key event processes, such as the transport of iron-rich Saharan dust to the Gulf of Mexico, can provide early warning. Recognition of the relative importance of natural and anthropogenic nutrient sources that sustain prolonged blooms will clarify whether nutrient reduction will be a useful prevention strategy. The authors extrapolated from their experience in the Gulf of Mexico to hypothesize that the recent global increase in *Karenia* blooms may be stimulated by increased desertification and eutrophication. For more information, contact Leigh Zimmermann [leigh.zimmermann@noaa.gov](mailto:leigh.zimmermann@noaa.gov) or Quay Dortch at [quay.dortch@noaa.gov](mailto:quay.dortch@noaa.gov).

## ***Reduced Estuarine Shrimp Levels Linked with Sediment Contamination***

Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) recently reported the results of a study supporting the use of grass shrimp as key indicator species of anthropogenic impacts in the coastal environment. Researchers based this conclusion on an investigation of the relationship between sediment-associated contaminant levels and effects on grass shrimp (*Palaemonetes pugio*) populations. The research at several contaminated sites in coastal South Carolina showed that as the overall level of sediment contamination increased grass shrimp population densities decreased. They also found that grass shrimp size was reduced at some of the contaminated sites. The grass shrimp, an inhabitant of estuarine

ecosystems, is an important prey species for commercially and recreationally important fish. For more information, contact Mike Fulton at [Mike.Fulton@noaa.gov](mailto:Mike.Fulton@noaa.gov).

## ***Review of State Abandoned Vessel Programs and Regulations Completed***

Using funds from the NOAA Coral Program, the Office of Response and Restoration's (OR&R) Abandoned Vessel Program recently completed a review of State and Territorial abandoned vessel programs and regulations. Although a pervasive problem in coastal areas, there are differences in how abandoned and derelict vessels are treated under State laws and there are no consistent national approaches to the problem. The report reviewed the programs, policies, legislation, and funding sources used by individual states and local governments to address abandoned vessels and to share those examples with other states and jurisdictions that are considering developing programs. This report and other information on the problem of abandoned and derelict vessels can be found on the OR&R website <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/vessels/>. For more information, contact [Doug Helton](#).

## ***Innovative Photographic Identification of Lionfish May Improve Forecasts of Their Inshore Limit and Future Distribution***

In an innovative approach, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers photo-identified a total of 25 lionfish on November 14, 2006 on two reefs in water greater than 100 feet deep off North Carolina to track their survival over winter and to better define the inshore limit for forecasting future distribution of lionfish. Lionfish perish at or below 10° C, a temperature recorded at these reefs last winter. More traditional tagging of lionfish to identify and track individuals was not feasible due to the possibility of diver injury from venomous spines while tagging individuals at depth and the survival rate of lionfish brought to the surface from 100 feet for tagging may be low. For more information, please contact Paula Whitfield at [Paula.Whitfield@noaa.gov](mailto:Paula.Whitfield@noaa.gov).

## ***Coastal Services Center Provides Tools for Hurricane Program Managers***

NOAA Coastal Services Center personnel presented information on inundation mapping and visualization tools for state hurricane program managers attending a Federal Emergency Management Agency meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. These tools include a remapping extension for ArcGIS that is applied to storm-surge zones, a historical hurricane tracks Internet mapping application, and additional geospatial resources for use before, during, and after a storm. NOAA staff also facilitated discussion on how geospatial technologies can assist in hazard mitigation planning. For more information, contact [William Brooks](#).

## ***NERRS 2006 Accomplishments Report Published***

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System's [2006 Accomplishments Report](#) has been published and is now available on the Web. The report details major highlights from Fiscal Year 2006, including the adoption of a new strategic plan for the system, the addition of Mission-Aransas reserve, the first in the state of Texas, and the development of the Coastal Seamless Network agreement between NOAA and the

Department of the Interior. The report also covers news from each of the NERRS mission sectors and highlights of activities from each of the 27 reserves. For more information, contact [George Cathcart](#).

## **In the Gulf States**

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### ***Dr. George Crozier to Chair US Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board***

Dec 14, 2006. Media Contact: Lisa Young 251/861-7509

Dr. George Crozier, Executive Director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL), has accepted the chairmanship of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Advisory Board. This voluntary position, which is in addition to his responsibilities as head of the DISL, will begin January 2007, and will continue for a two-year term.

According to its website, "The Chief of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) was created over 30 years ago as a means for the Chief of Engineers to gain outside, expert and independent advice on environmental issues facing the Corps of Engineers."

Dr. Crozier has been Director of the DISL since 1979, and has won numerous awards for his work on coastal management and science education, including the 1999 Walter B. Jones Coastal Steward Award presented by NOAA, and the Wright A. Garner Award from the Alabama Academy of Science. For more information on US Army Corps of Engineers' Environmental Advisory Board, visit [http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/hot\\_topics/eab.htm](http://www.usace.army.mil/cw/hot_topics/eab.htm). For more information on the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, visit [www.disl.org](http://www.disl.org).

### ***Alabama CMP Hosts Soils, Stormwater and Watershed Protection: Tools for Managing Erosion Meeting***

On December 6, 2006, the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program, along with the Coastal States Organization, Weeks Bay Reserve Coastal Training Program, and other local partners, hosted a Soils, Stormwater and Watershed Protection: Tools for Managing Erosion meeting, the first of a series of community workshops convened under the U.S. Ocean Action Plan in order to address nonpoint source pollution at a local level. This one-day training workshop brought together elected officials, developers, planners, engineers, and national resource managers from Alabama to improve their knowledge of the effective methods for managing erosion and preventing impacts of sediment-laden runoff. For more information, please contact [Elizabeth Mountz](#).

### ***AL Student Artwork Featured in 2007 Coastal Resources Calendar***

More than 1,000 students from Mobile and Baldwin county schools participated in an art contest held by the Marine Resources Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The annual contest promotes an awareness and appreciation of Alabama's coastal resources. The winning photographs are featured in Alabama's 2007 "Conserving and Enjoying Alabama's Coastal Resources"

art calendar. The calendars will be available free to the public in January 2007 at various locations, including Alabama Marine Resources offices in Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island.

There were 1,053 students from 40 schools who submitted art works depicting recreational and commercial fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, boating, keeping our beaches clean, seafood (shrimp, crabs, oysters and fish of the Gulf of Mexico), marine life (sea turtles, dolphins, invertebrates and fish of the Gulf of Mexico), fishing piers and artificial reefs, and Alabama Marine Resources Enforcement. The entries were considered by a panel of judges consisting of three artists and two marine scientists. From these entries, 72 were selected to be featured in the 2007 art calendar.

The Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium graciously provided the funds to have all winning entries matted and framed for exhibition in four different museums. In January and February of 2007 they will be on display at the University of South Alabama Library Gallery. From there they will go to the Mobile Arts Council for the month of April and then to the Mobile Museum of Art in May and June. Their final showing will be at the Eastern Shore Art Center in Fairhope during July. After that show the pictures will be returned to the students.

Alabama Marine Resources and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium thank all those who participated and congratulate the winning entries featured in the 2007 calendar. The winners in this year's contest are listed at <http://www.outdooralabama.com/news/release.cfm?ID=462>.

## ***Florida Agencies and Martin County Celebrate the Groundbreaking of the C-44 Reservoir/Stormwater Treatment Area***

--Acceler8 project to improve St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon--

**INDIANTOWN** – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and Martin County today celebrated the ground breaking of construction on the C-44 Reservoir/Stormwater Treatment Area near Indiantown in Martin County. Part of the Acceler8 initiative launched by Governor Jeb Bush in October 2004, the C-44 project will capture, store and treat stormwater runoff from the 116,500-acre C-44 basin in Martin County, decreasing flows into the St. Lucie canal and improving water quality in the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon.

“First-rate science, engineering and water resource management is making South Florida’s environmental restoration a reality,” said DEP Secretary Colleen M. Castille. “Today, as we celebrate another remarkable milestone, we are ensuring that the entire ecosystem of America’s Everglades will continue on this path of recovery and provide a healthy quality of life and a vibrant economy for Florida’s future.” A component of the larger Indian River Lagoon-South restoration project, this project consists of a 3,400-acre, 15-foot-deep above-ground reservoir that will hold 50,600 acre-feet of water, providing significant water storage for the C-44 basin. The project also includes a 6,300-acre Stormwater Treatment Area (STA), a man-made wetland, to capture and treat stormwater runoff before it enters the St. Lucie canal and, ultimately, the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon. New conveyance canals, embankments and a pump station are part of the project to aid in moving water through the reservoir and STA.

“We are thrilled to begin construction on this very important project in Martin County,” said Len Lindahl, governing board member of the SFWMD. “It is a vital piece of the Everglades restoration project – that is important to all residents of the State of Florida – and crucial to the health and well-being of the St. Lucie Estuary – which is of the utmost importance to residents of Martin County.”

Preliminary design began in March 2006 and construction of test cells was completed in June. The test cells provided engineers with critical water quality and seepage information to design and build the entire C-44 reservoir and STA on former agricultural land.

Announced by Governor Bush in October 2004, Acceler8 is stepping up the pace of funding, design and construction to complete eight Everglades restoration projects over seven years. The projects will restore 100,000 acres of wetlands, expand water treatment areas by close to 29,000 acres and provide 428,000 acre-feet of additional water storage for Everglades restoration a decade ahead of schedule. Six of the eight Acceler8 projects are already underway. Since February 2006, the State has expanded three Everglades Agricultural Area treatment wetlands and launched construction on the C-43 Caloosahatchee West Storage Reservoir, the Acme Basin B Discharge Project, the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir and the second phase of the Picayune Strand Restoration Project.

Under the leadership of Governor Bush, Florida has forged ahead to implement the \$10.5 billion, state-federal Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Since 2000, Florida has invested more than \$2 billion of the committed \$3.3 billion through the end of the decade to clean up and restore the famed River of Grass. For more information on Acceler8, please visit [www.evergladesnow.org](http://www.evergladesnow.org).

### ***Public Meetings on the Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan for Louisiana, Preliminary Draft***

In December 2005, the Louisiana State legislature established the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) as the single state entity with the authority to focus development and implementation efforts for comprehensive coastal protection. Over the past year and utilizing input from a wide variety of stakeholders, the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority has developed a comprehensive master plan for sustainable coastal protection integrating the two goals of hurricane protection and coastal restoration. A preliminary draft of the master plan is now available for public review and comment at [http://louisianacoastalplanning.org/prelim\\_draft.html](http://louisianacoastalplanning.org/prelim_draft.html). Public meetings to discuss the plan are scheduled at the locations and dates listed at <http://www.lacoast.gov/news/press/2006-12-04d.htm>.

### ***Christmas Trees Can Have Lasting Affect in Marsh***

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced today the parishes participating in its Christmas Tree Fence program. For 17 years now, the agency has provided grants to parishes along the coast that use recycled Christmas trees to help protect wetland areas by slowing wave action and erosion. In parishes that have established projects, wooden fences have been built in shallow open-water areas to hold the discarded trees. Citizens that discard their trees for recycling efforts are asked to leave them at the curb-side of their residence, free of flocking, bases, ornaments, lights, etc. For more information about the Christmas Tree program, contact Keith Lovell, DNR Coastal Restoration Project Manager, at 225-342-0202 and visit the website at [www.dnr.louisiana.gov](http://www.dnr.louisiana.gov).

### ***Mississippi Master Urban Forester Program***

The Mississippi Urban Forest Council is offering free training to communities impacted by Hurricane Katrina. The Master Urban Forester Program will provide 25 hours in urban forestry training to South Mississippi residents. In exchange, trainees must perform 25 hours of community service in their community.

Urban forests are the trees and other vegetation that grow in places where people live, work and play. This includes areas ranging from small communities in rural areas to large cities. Trees on public and private land, along streets, in residential area, parks and commercial developments are part of the urban forest. This training is designed to help residents better understand and communicate the advantages and expenses associated with the growth and management of urban forests.

Training will begin in January 2007 on a first come, first serve basis. Materials will be included free of charge. For more information, contact the Mississippi Urban Forest Council at 601-856-1660 or email Executive Director Donna Yowell at [dyowell@aol.com](mailto:dyowell@aol.com). More information on the Mississippi Urban Forest Council can be found on their website, [www.msurbanforest.com](http://www.msurbanforest.com).

## ***Texas GLO Encourages Kids to Enter Adopt-A-Beach Art Contest***

Grand prize is two round-trip Continental Airline tickets and a class party at Schlitterbahn Waterparks

AUSTIN —Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, is calling on Texas students to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Adopt-A-Beach “Treasures of the Texas Coast” Children’s Art Contest. The deadline to submit artwork is Friday, March 2, 2007. “Many little Texans never get to go to the beach, but this contest is an easy way to help teach them about the natural beauty of the Texas coast,” Patterson said. “If we want future generations to protect this treasure it’s essential they learn why it’s worth protecting.”

The contest began in 1996 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Adopt-A-Beach Program. The annual competition encourages Texas schoolchildren to learn more about the Texas coast and express what they’ve learned in their art. Open to students in grades K-6 across Texas, the contest motivates thousands of young artists each year. Artwork by sixth-grader Nicole Kastens, who attended Artie L. Henry Middle School in Cedar Park, earned the grand prize in the General Land Office’s Treasure of the Texas Coast 2006 Children’s Art Contest. Nicole’s drawing was chosen for her unique style of conveying the official Adopt-A-Beach slogan, “Trashing Texas Beaches Isn’t Cool.” Last year’s contest drew more than 6,700 entries from all parts of Texas.

Any medium may be used, but artwork may not be computer-generated. Three-dimensional art is ineligible. Artwork should be based on the theme, “Treasures of the Texas Coast” and show why the Texas coast is special to the student. Artwork also must incorporate the official Adopt-A-Beach slogan, “Trashing Texas Beaches Isn’t Cool.”

Only one entry per student is allowed, and all entries must have a completed parental release form taped to the back. Parental release forms may be printed from the GLO Web site located at [www.texasadoptabeach.org](http://www.texasadoptabeach.org). Each contest entry must be postmarked by Friday, March 2, 2007, and submitted on an 8 ½-inch by 11-inch sheet of white paper. Students are encouraged to color copy their artwork prior to sending it in as all artwork submitted becomes property of the Texas General Land Office and cannot be returned.

Two winners will be chosen from each of the 24 councils of government in Texas. From these 48 winners, one grand prize winner will receive two round-trip, coach class tickets fro Continental Airlines to any Continental destination in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America. The grand prize winner’s class will be treated to a party at one of three Schlitterbahn Waterparks in New Braunfels, South Padre Island or Galveston.

All 48 of the regional winners will receive a ticket to the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, two all-day passes to Schlitterbahn, prizes from Keep Texas Beautiful, a certificate of recognition from Commissioner Patterson and a calendar featuring the winning artwork. The grand prize winner's teacher will also receive a round-trip, coach-class ticket courtesy of Continental Airlines.

This year's contest sponsors are Continental Airlines, Schlitterbahn Waterparks, the Texas State Aquarium and Keep Texas Beautiful. For more information and contest guidelines on the Treasures of the Texas Coast 2007 Children's Art Contest, please contact the General Land Office at 1-877-TXCOAST or visit our Web site at <http://www.texasadoptabeach.org>.

## Other News

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### ***Feeding Sediment-Starved Tidal Marshes: Signs of Success in North Carolina***

Tidal marshes on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts are constantly fighting the dual enemies of sea level rise and diminished sediment supply in order to avoid being submerged and lost. One solution to this problem that has been explored in recent years is addition of thin layers of sediment to marsh surfaces to keep the marsh elevation high enough to combat inundation. This approach was taken at deteriorated (characterized by lower *Spartina* stem densities, shorter plants, lower marsh elevation, and lower redox potential) and non-deteriorated back barrier marsh sites in NC, with promising results. Sand was applied to experimental plots in thicknesses ranging from 2.5 cm to 10 cm. One year after the sand additions, stem densities of *Spartina* increased at all sites, regardless of the thickness of sand application. The greatest stem density increase, a doubling, was observed at the deteriorated sites, perhaps because the sediment addition led to greater soil aeration. Benthic microalgae also increased in abundance on the marsh surface in deteriorated and non-deteriorated plots, but the presence of grazers did not. The most oxidized sites were those at which medium and thick layers of sand had been placed, while the more reduced sediment profiles were found where the added sand layer was thinnest. Abundance and diversity of benthic organisms did not suffer at any sites due to sand addition, and the infauna in place in the treated sites reworked the sediment so that grain size profiles in the amended plots began to resemble those of the control sites one year after sediment addition.

The authors note that some or all of the post-amendment changes observed may be short-term – longer monitoring of amended sites should be undertaken, along with more large-scale research to determine optimum thickness and frequency of sediment application. For interested readers, another recent CESN-highlighted paper provides data on this type of marsh renourishment technique, with similarly positive results (CESN 28(4), Sediment Slurry Application Helps Delta Marsh Rise to the Challenge).

**Source:** Croft, A. L., L. A. Leonard, T. D. Alphin, L. B. Cahoon, and M. H. Posey. 2006. The effects of thin layer sand renourishment on tidal marsh processes: Masonboro Island, North Carolina. *Estuaries and Coasts* 29(5): 737-750. ([View Abstract](#))

## ***Gulf of Mexico Foundation Selects Restoration Grant Recipients***

The GMF's steering committee has chosen four restoration projects to fund in 2007 under the Gulf of Mexico Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) grant. Although additional projects may be chosen as well, the four projects to receive funding this year are:

- Helen Wood Park Wetland Restoration - Alabama
- Robinson Preserve Borrow Pit Revegetation - Florida
- North Vermilion Bay Terracing - Louisiana
- Galveston Bay Education and Restoration - Texas

Recipients of the 2007 Caribbean CRP grant are currently being decided upon. Read more at <http://gulfmex.org/restoration.htm>.

## ***Gulf Guardians Recognized for Protecting Environment***

(Dallas, Texas – December 13, 2006) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program presented awards today to recognize innovative efforts to improve the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. First established in 2000, the Gulf Guardian Awards honor businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf ecosystem healthy, beautiful and productive.

“The issues affecting the Gulf Coast are among the most dynamic and variable that the nation faces, and the collaborating partners who address these issues daily exhibit the diverse range of skills needed to advance environmental protection in the region,” EPA Regional Administrator Richard E. Greene said. “I applaud this year's winners of the Gulf Guardian Awards for their leadership and their ability to join together and achieve extraordinary goals.”

Awardees for the state of Louisiana included Parishes Against Coastal Erosion, which includes all Louisiana coastal Parishes, and the Greater Lafourche Port Commission (Port Fourchon). Texas honorees included The Coastal Watershed Program, Galveston Bay Estuary Program, SCENIC GALVESTON Inc., Harte Research Institute-Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Mr. Richard Benoit of League City.

Winners were presented with their awards at the 3rd National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration held in New Orleans, Louisiana. A first, second, and third place award was given in seven categories: binational, business, civic/nonprofit, government, individual, partnerships, and youth/education. The awards are sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its Gulf of Mexico Program.

The Gulf of Mexico Program was formed in 1988 to provide a broad geographic focus on the major environmental issues in the Gulf. It is a non-regulatory inclusive partnership of representatives from various sectors, including state, federal, business, agricultural, environmental and citizens and community leaders from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. More information about the [program](#) and the winners of the [2006 Gulf Guardian Awards](#) is available at <http://www.epa.gov/gmpo/index.html>.

## ***Corps of Engineers Expands Hurricane Protection System Online***

NEW ORLEANS— The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, Task Force Hope announced today it has expanded and updated its Hurricane Protection System Web site at [www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps](http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps). The Web site enables all stakeholders, including residents, elected officials, property owners, and the general public, to get the most up-to date information on the hurricane protection system's ongoing projects through online access.

Expanded information includes the status for all authorized projects. Projects can be found by clicking on the link for the appropriate parish. Project information includes the number of projects and the design, construction and completion status, along with contract progress and upcoming contract solicitations/awards.

The most recent issue of Task Force Hope's Status Report Newsletter is regularly posted under the "Items of Special Interest." "Items of Special Interest" also includes new project photos and levee assessment height maps, as well as links to the volume summaries of the released findings of the Interagency Evaluation Performance Task Force (IPET). The IPET looked at the performance of the hurricane protection system during Hurricane Katrina and evaluated how the system's components performed as part of an integrated system.

Additionally, a virtual media resource center, <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/mediacenter.htm> is now available online especially for media representatives to have quick access to news releases on Hurricane Protection System projects, Corps contact information and background on projects and Task Force Hope. Users who may have questions after reading the Corps material posted on the site will find contact information for public information officers.

"This Web site enables interested persons to have access to information on subjects ranging from contracting to pumping capacities," said Dan Hitchings, Director, Task Force Hope. "Visitors to the site will be able to examine several complex projects in detail to get a better understanding of the Corps' ongoing hurricane protection work."

## ***U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Publishes Final Environmental Impact Statement for Condominium Projects***

(Daphne, Ala.) – The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](http://www.fws.gov) today published in the Federal Register a Notice of Availability for its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beach Club West and Gulf Highlands condominium projects on the Fort Morgan Peninsula of Baldwin County, Alabama.

The final EIS was prepared by the Service to consider possible reaffirmation of the Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) issued to the developers of the two condominium projects in April 2002, and to assure that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to assess the significance of the proposed project on environmental factors have been fully met.

At the time the ITPs were originally issued, the Service prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the two projects. Following issuance of the ITPs, a lawsuit was filed challenging the decision and, with guidance from the court, the Service decided that preparation of an EIS was appropriate.

The final EIS takes into account conclusions drawn from an analysis of the cumulative impacts of all development on the Fort Morgan Peninsula in making its recommendations specific to the two condominium complexes. The final EIS was prepared after a careful review and consideration of all comments received during the public comment period.

Under the Endangered Species Act, an Incidental Take Permit may be issued if, after an opportunity for public comment, it is determined that: any taking of a threatened or endangered species will be incidental; the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking; the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the habitat conservation plan will be provided; and the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. These are the issuance criteria used by the Service.

Following publication of the final Environmental Impact Statement, the Service will complete documentation related to the applicants' requests for Incidental Take Permits and prepare a Record of Decision (ROD) regarding the permits. The ROD will be signed no sooner than 30 days following publication of today's Notice of Availability of the FEIS in the Federal Register.

You can request a copy of the final EIS by phone at 404-679-4144, by fax at 404-679-7081, by e-mail at [aaron\\_valenta@fws.gov](mailto:aaron_valenta@fws.gov), or by mail at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Southeastern Regional Office, 1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30345.

## ***Ocean Color Website Selected as Teachers' Top Web Pick***

The Goddard Earth Sciences Data and Information Service Center's (GES DISC) Laboratory for Ocean Color Users (LOCUS) (<http://daac.gsfc.nasa.gov/oceancolor/locus/index.shtml>) has been selected as the Teachers' Top Web Pick for December 2006 on the Bridge (<http://www.marine-ed.org/bridge>) Web site. The Bridge is the foremost source of online educational resources for oceanographic educators. LOCUS was submitted as an online data resource and received high marks from a "Teacher Reviewer of Online Learning" or TROLL. The reviewer stated that LOCUS "would be THE "lab" of choice that could be used for integration of data and to stimulate discussion on global issues that affect the ocean and therefore land as well."

## **Energy**

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### ***House Passes Domenici-Landrieu Oil and Gas Revenue-Sharing Plan*** **President Truman's Offer "accepted," 37.5% to go to La. and Gulf Coast States**

Senator Mary L. Landrieu: <http://landrieu.senate.gov/hrt/index.cfm>  
Contact: Adam Sharp (202) 224-0098 [adam\\_sharp@landrieu.senate.gov](mailto:adam_sharp@landrieu.senate.gov)

(Dec 8, 2006) WASHINGTON -- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed final legislation that includes the Domenici-Landrieu Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act, S. 3711, which opens substantial new areas to oil and natural gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and shares billions of dollars in revenues with Louisiana and other energy-producing Gulf Coast states for coastal wetlands restoration, hurricane protection and flood control projects. An additional share will be used to build parks and preserve green

spaces in all 50 states. The package also includes several key tax provisions, including a two year extension of the Gulf Opportunity (GO) Zone tax incentive that provides strong motivation to invest in the Gulf Coast.

"A mighty hurdle was cleared for Louisiana and the Gulf Coast today when the House passed the Domenici-Landrieu plan as part of a final legislative package," Sen. Landrieu said. "After almost 60 years, Louisiana will finally receive a fair share of the oil and gas revenues produced off our shores. This dedicated revenue stream is necessary to restore our coastal wetlands, build levees and construct an effective flood control system -- all of which will fend off hurricanes rising in the Gulf.

"This victory for Louisiana demonstrates how successful we can be when we work as a team and keep our focus. The Louisiana congressional delegation and Governor Kathleen Blanco, Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu and many local officials, business leaders and civic groups never stopped working to achieve this goal. Numerous groups have been essential to this effort, including America's WETLAND Campaign to Save Coastal Louisiana, Parishes Against Coastal Erosion, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Women of the Storm, Levees.org, Coast Guardians as well as national groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Chemistry Council, the Consumer Alliance for Energy Security, the Agriculture Energy Alliance and countless others."

### **Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act**

Sen. Landrieu and Senate Energy Committee Chairman Pete Domenici, R -N.M., coauthored the plan to open 8.3 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico and share 37.5 percent of the new revenues, dedicated to coastal protection, with Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi and Alabama. An additional 12.5 percent will be dedicated to the state side of the Land and Conservation Fund, which funds the acquisition of parks and green spaces across the country. The White House endorsed the bill in late July.

"The plan is essential for the recovery and long-term economic vitality of South Louisiana from Venice to Cameron because it will help us defend against hurricanes while at the same time protecting one of America's most vital ecosystems," Sen. Landrieu said. "It's also vital for the nation because it increases energy production along America's only Energy Coast and restores the wetlands that protect some of our nation's most critical energy infrastructure. It further serves the Louisiana economy by creating jobs and stimulating business activity, and does so in a fiscally responsible manner without raising the federal budget deficit."

In the last decade, the price of natural gas has shot up. The National Association of Manufacturers estimates that more than 3 million U.S. jobs have been lost since 2000. The Domenici-Landrieu plan allows for increased domestic energy production for the first time in 25 years, and geologists expect to find significant oil and natural gas reserves. The area is projected to produce enough natural gas to sustain more than 1,000 chemical plants for 40 years, and enough oil to keep 2.7 million cars running and 1.2 million homes heated for more than 15 years.

The Domenici-Landrieu plan is a significant step toward solving South Louisiana's coastal erosion, as Louisiana is projected to receive more than \$13 billion over the next 30 years. Coupled with that, the state is expected to receive \$12 billion in the next 10 years from the regular budget process and other previous legislation, such as The Breaux Act, the Coastal Impact Assistance Program, and supplemental appropriations bills, which Sen. Landrieu helped to craft from her position on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Bonding programs will also allow the state to begin taking immediate action to restore and protect the coast by relying on future funds.

## **Tax Extenders**

The legislative package the House passed along with the Domenici-Landrieu plan would extend tax breaks benefiting Louisianians. Most important among these is the Gulf Opportunity (GO) Zone tax incentive, which the whole delegation has been pushing Congress to extend. The GO Zone incentive passed in 2005 has allowed hundreds of businesses to invest in areas impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and to take a 50 percent tax reduction for new facilities or equipment, jumpstarting recovery by giving businesses an incentive to quickly invest. Current law requires that businesses put new facilities or equipment in place by the end of 2008, but the package will extend the benefit until 2010.

"The recovery effort resulting from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in my state and other Gulf states is beyond what the country has ever seen before," Sen. Landrieu said. "Many businesses need incentives, such as the GO Zone tax breaks, to encourage redevelopment in very difficult circumstances, which is essential to strengthening our economy and rebuilding our communities."

Also included in the tax package are extensions for college tuition deduction, a research-and-development credit and a deduction for teachers' out-of-pocket expenses.

The Senate, which passed the Domenici-Landrieu bill with a strongly bipartisan 71-to-25 vote in August, is expected to pass the combined revenue sharing and tax extender package this weekend and send it to the President for his signature.

## **Grant Opportunities**

### ***Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Proposals from States for 2007 Endangered Species Grants***

**December 6, 2006, Contacts: Valerie Fellows, (202) 208-3008 Tom MacKenzie, (404) 679-7291**

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) is currently seeking proposals from states and U.S. territories interested in securing Federal grant assistance to acquire land or plan for endangered species conservation efforts. For fiscal year 2007, the President's budget request for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund would provide approximately \$80 million in grant funding for conservation planning activities and habitat acquisition for federally protected species. Proposals must be submitted to the appropriate Service Regional Offices by February 7, 2007.

"Providing grants to our state partners is one of the most important tools we have to conserve imperiled species," said Service Director H. Dale Hall. "These grants enable states to build partnerships with local communities and private landowners to support voluntary stewardship efforts for wildlife conservation nationwide."

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and provides grants to states and territories to support participation in a wide array of voluntary conservation projects for species on the Federal list of threatened and endangered species, as well as for species that are either candidates or have been proposed for listing.

The Service is seeking proposals under three Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund categories:

**Recovery Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories for acquisition of threatened and endangered species habitat in support of approved recovery plans. Acquiring habitat in order to secure long term protection is often the critical element in a comprehensive recovery effort for a listed species.

**Habitat Conservation Planning Assistance Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to support the development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs). The purpose of an HCP is to ensure adequate protection for threatened and endangered species, while at the same time providing for economic growth and development. These grants provide support for baseline surveys and inventories, document preparation, outreach, and similar planning activities.

**HCP Land Acquisition Grants** - These grants provide funds to states and territories to acquire land associated with approved HCPs. Grants do not fund the mitigation required of an HCP permittee; instead, they support acquisitions by the State or local governments that complement actions associated with the HCP.

By law, the state or territory must have a current cooperative agreement with the Service and contribute 25 percent of the estimated program costs of approved projects, or 10 percent when two or more states or territories undertake a joint project. The grants are expected to be awarded during summer 2007.

For more information about these grants and grant application requirements contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Consultation, Habitat Conservation Planning, Recovery and State Grants, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, VA 22203, 703-358-2106. Information also can be accessed at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/>.

The Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund is identified in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance as number 15.615.

## ***Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Proposals for Funding Under the Private Stewardship Grants Program***

**December 15, 2006 , Contacts: Valerie Fellows, 202/208-3008 Tom MacKenzie, 404/679-7291**

The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) is seeking proposals for conservation projects to benefit imperiled species on private lands through its Private Stewardship Grants Program. This program provides federal grants on a competitive basis to individuals and groups engaged in voluntary conservation efforts on private lands that help federally listed endangered or threatened species as well as proposed, candidate and other at-risk species.

The Private Stewardship Grant program is just one of a variety of tools available under the Endangered Species Act that help landowners plan and implement projects to conserve species. These grants and cooperative agreements provide incentives to foster citizen participation in the stewardship of our nation's natural resources.

In 2006 the Service awarded 80 grants totaling more than \$6.9 million to individuals and groups to undertake conservation projects for endangered, threatened, and other at-risk species on private lands in 35 states.

For example, Audubon of Kansas received a grant of \$83,000 last year to work with four ranchers to conserve black-tailed prairie dogs and restore habitat for the endangered black-footed ferret. Trout Unlimited in Lincoln County, Wyoming was awarded \$120,000 to return water flows to a portion of Grade Creek which enabled Bonneville cutthroat trout to return to their historic spawning grounds. Landowners and their partners must submit their proposals to the appropriate Regional Offices of the Service by February 14, 2007. For additional information regarding this grant opportunity and how and where to submit proposals, please visit the Service's Private Stewardship Grants Website at: [http://www.fws.gov/angered/grants/private\\_stewardship/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/angered/grants/private_stewardship/index.html).

You may also contact: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Branch of State Grants, Endangered Species Program, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, VA 22203 Phone: (703) 358-2061. The Private Stewardship Grants Program is identified in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance as number 15.632.

## Training and Conferences

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### ***13th Meeting of the Mississippi River Basin & Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force***

The Task Force will meet to discuss the ongoing reassessment of the 2001 Action Plan for reducing, controlling and mitigating hypoxia in the northern Gulf of Mexico. A public comment session will be held at this meeting.

**Location:** Sheraton Crystal City Hotel (Arlington, VA, USA), phone: 703-486-1111

**Dates:** January 11, 2007

**Contact Information:** Katie Flahive, U.S. EPA, [flahive.katie@epa.gov](mailto:flahive.katie@epa.gov), Gia Grier, Tetra Tech, Inc., [gia.grier@tetrattech-ffx.com](mailto:gia.grier@tetrattech-ffx.com)

### ***Gulf of Mexico Alliance Nutrients Criteria Conference***

January 16 – 18, 2007 in Gulf Breeze, FL

On March 28, 2006, the Gulf State governors released The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan, which addresses five regional priority issues for the Gulf of Mexico: water quality, wetland and coastal restoration, environmental education, habitat identification and nutrient reduction. Within each priority issue area, teams have been formed to advance defined actions. For the Nutrients Team, the first goal is to increase regional coordination in the development of nutrient criteria.

To advance this first goal, the Nutrients Team will hold a Nutrient Criteria Conference on January 16-18, 2007 in Gulf Breeze, FL. Detailed conference information is available [online](#). The conference will focus on the status of criteria development at the federal and state level, review of current nutrient databases, and review of nutrient collection methodology. A poster session will highlight different nutrient measurement methodologies, nutrient reduction strategies, and ongoing nutrient collection studies, and how these might aid in the development of nutrient criteria in estuary and coastal waters.

Please register by December 29, 2006. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Pensacola Beach Hampton Inn for \$94 per night. Please call the Hampton Inn at (850) 932-6800 to make your reservations under the block "Gulf Alliance Nutrients Conference" by January 5, 2007.

For more information or if you have any questions, please contact [Juliette Finzi](#) or [Laurie Rounds](#).

## ***Project Wild Teacher Workshop to be Offered in January***

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is offering a Project WILD workshop on Saturday, Jan. 20, 2007 at Center Circle Park in Sulphur from 9 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

The workshop is designed to introduce K-12 educators to materials, activities and strategies along with hands-on practice to help participants integrate Project WILD into their teaching. Teachers are given an overview of the program, information about Louisiana's wildlife, lesson plans for incorporating Project WILD into their curriculum and an opportunity to participate in Project WILD activities from the guides. Correlations of Project WILD lessons to Louisiana's grade level expectations (GLEs) are also provided. Those who complete the course are provided a Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide and a Project WILD Aquatic K-12 Curriculum. Each participant will also get a certificate for six hours of professional development for this workshop. There are only 30 spaces available so sign up now! If you are interested in attending or for more information, please contact Theresa Cross at 337-491-2585 or [tcross@wlf.louisiana.gov](mailto:tcross@wlf.louisiana.gov) with your name, contact number, and mailing address.

## ***ARCHydro: A GIS Tools Workshop***

Class Date: Thursday, January 25, 2007

Class Location: US Army Corp of Engineers Annex Building

Class Cost: \$25.00

[Register online](#) by: 1/19/2007

As we learn more about our natural resources it becomes clear that one event or feature impacts another. This concept is especially true when it comes to managing watersheds. What occurs in watersheds a hundred miles inland can have a direct impact on sensitive coastal environments. Interactions between climate, weather, society, and the environment of a watershed present great challenges to coastal management.

ESRI's ArcHydro and its associated geodatabase tools create spatial and temporal relationships between rainfall, terrain, watersheds, rivers, streams and monitoring points. Estimations of flow across watersheds and to outlets provide managers with a better understanding of how these elements interact. ArcHydro can incorporate NEXRAD radar rainfall estimates to give watershed managers a better idea of the spatial coverage and amount of rainfall across the watershed.

The training will be beneficial to anyone interested in water resources applications of ArcGIS; especially state, city and county water managers. You will learn among the many capabilities how to:

- 1) Create hydro networks of rivers and streams
- 2) Define drainage areas linked via relationships to a hydro network
- 3) Download NEXRAD rainfall time series into ArcHydro
- 4) Connect geospatial features to time series measurements recorded at gauging sites.

Course instructors are John Cartwright and Louis Wasson of the GeoResources Institute. Please contact Mike Shelton (251-928-9792) or Marian Dicas (228-475-7047) for more information.

## ***National Water Conference***

The USDA-CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service) Water Quality Program brings university scientists, instructors and extension educators into more effective and efficient partnerships with Federal interagency priority programs while addressing water quality issues in U.S. agriculture. This program also provides the flexibility necessary for CSREES to bring the resources of researchers, instructors and extension educators into national initiatives and programmatic partnerships that target evolving water quality needs.

The USDA-CSREES National Water conference will provide opportunities for water quality professionals engaged in research, extension and education to share knowledge and ideas, to identify and update emerging issues, and to network with the CSREES National Water Quality Program and partner organizations.

**Location:** Marriott Savannah Riverfront, Savannah, Georgia

**Dates:** January 28 - February 1, 2007

**Contact Information:** Greg Jennings, PhD, PE, Planning Committee Chair  
Professor, Biological & Agricultural Engineering  
North Carolina State University  
Box 7912, Raleigh, NC 27695-7912  
E-mail: [Greg\\_Jennings@ncsu.edu](mailto:Greg_Jennings@ncsu.edu)

**Home Page URL:** <http://www.soil.ncsu.edu/swetc/waterconf/2007/home07.htm>

## ***Save the Date: 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference on Smart Growth***

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Chamber of Commerce will co-host the 8th Annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference-Smart Growth on **May 9-10, 2007** at the IP Hotel and Casino, Biloxi, MS. Registration will begin in January. Further announcements will be made soon. For more information, contact [Marcia Garcia](mailto:Marcia.Garcia).

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

